



Town of Simsbury

933 HOPMEADOW STREET

SIMSBURY, CONNECTICUT 06070

**Personnel Sub-Committee
Special Meeting
Wednesday, April 13, 2022
Main Meeting Room, Town Hall**

MINUTES

Members Present: Wendy Mackstutis, Amber Abbuhl, Sean Askham

Staff Present: Melissa Appleby, Eric Gomes, Tom Fitzgerald

Others Present: Attorney Mike Harrington

The meeting was called to order at 8:02am.

1) Approval of Minutes

The minutes of March 10, 2022 were approved by consensus.

2) Exit Interview Process

Mr. Gomes gave an overview of the Town process when it comes to an employee separating from service. The Town offers employees the opportunity to discuss in person, through written comments, or through a take home survey depending on each employee's choice. Mr. Gomes said most employees leave on good terms and the exit interview process is a way to gain productive feedback. Feedback is always shared with the Town Manager and relevant department head.

Mr. Harrington gave an overview of exit interviews from his legal perspective, including how other towns approach this process. He said that in most instances, organizations tend to structure the interview as a conversation. Mr. Harrington stated that verbal conversation with open ended questions is the best way to gain feedback from current employees or from outgoing employees. Most employees know that if comments are written down they can be disclosed through a Freedom of Information Act request. He noted that exit interviews should be considered just one part of the overall employee feedback environment. He said while exit interviews can be useful in potentially identifying specific issues, input from current employees can be even more valuable.

Mr. Askham said that people might not be aware that the Town Manager is the Personnel Director under the Town Charter. Discussion ensued regarding the Personnel Sub-Committee and Board of Selectmen role in these types of matters. Mr. Harrington provided examples of organizations that offer a periodic update to their board of directors about the status of human resources/labor relations issues.

Discussion ensued regarding the ability of employees to access human resources, the Town's harassment policy, and the personnel rules and regulations. Ms. Abbuhl asked how employees are made aware of town policies. Mr. Gomes explained that in the new hire orientation process he

reviews town policies and employees sign a form stating they have reviewed them. Ms. Appleby noted that the Personnel Rules and Regulations are posted on the Town's website.

Ms. Mackstutis mentioned that an employee that recently left told her they were not offered an exit interview and that she wants to make sure everyone is extended an offer to an exit interview. Mr. Gomes corrected saying that he offered that employee an exit interview and it was not taken. Ms. Abbuhl mentioned that the new exit interview form includes a sign-off section for employees for them to acknowledge that they were given the opportunity and declined to participate.

Mr. Askham asked Mr. Harrington to advise on how Board members should handle feedback provided to them by employees. Mr. Harrington reviewed the staff resources available to the Board members through the Town Manager's Office/Human Resources, and advised that the feedback be immediately shared with the Town Manager and Human Resources Coordinator for follow-up.

Ms. Mackstutis further inquired about the role of the Personnel Sub-Committee in processing employee feedback. Mr. Harrington noted that the Sub-Committee's role would depend on the issue that was raised. For example, if there are general concerns about the benefits package offered by the Town, that would be a policy matter that may be relevant for the Sub-Committee to discuss.

The members of the Personnel Sub-Committee agreed that they would like to see a "state of HR" update on an annual or semi-annual basis to discuss what is happening in trends and other items from a HR standpoint. Mr. Harrington discussed that a general update could be given in a public session and then a more detailed update can be given in an executive session to the Personnel Sub-Committee members. The Sub-Committee also agreed that the update of the Personnel Rules and Regulations should be a priority.

3) Overview of Grievance/Arbitration Process

Ms. Mackstutis asked whether the Personnel Sub-Committee receives updates on grievances. Mr. Harrington said that a general update could be provided periodically through a "state of HR" update.

Mr. Harrington reviewed examples of some recent grievances. Ms. Abbuhl asked about the trends, and discussion ensued regarding the frequency of grievances. Mr. Harrington noted that he has worked for the Town for approximately eight years, and he does not believe that there has been more than an average number of grievances. Mr. Harrington informed the group of the difference between grievance arbitration and interest arbitration.

Adjourn

Mr. Askham made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:10am. Ms. Abbuhl seconded the motion. All were in favor and the motion passed unanimously.

Following adjournment, the Personnel Sub-Committee and staff met to discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining for the units represented by CSEA.

Respectfully Submitted,
Thomas Fitzgerald
Management Specialist