

**March 3, 2020**  
**Town Hall**  
**Selectmen's Meeting Room**  
**6:00 PM**

**Committee Members in attendance:**

Gary Whitehouse

**Committee Members in attendance via phone:**

Tracey Vasile, Brian Guild, Heidi Krockta, Nancy Bacher, Dennis Keefe (alternate)

**Staff in attendance:**

Michael Johns, Katie Lang

The meeting was called to order at 6:01 p.m.

**Discussion:**

Mike reviewed with Committee that the Board of Selectmen signed and adopted a temporary modification of leave requirements due to the Covid-19 pandemic. All but one union thus far has signed side letters outlining the terms. These terms are also being applied equally to Town employees, who are not union workers.

Change of the date on the Remote Work & Telecommunications Policy – should be April 1<sup>st</sup> and not the second, because it changed when the approved federal act was signed.

Tracey: Brought up the point of IT security with employees using personal laptops or desktops. If they were to download confidential information to their personal devices. How do we stop that?

Mike: A handful of employees are using Town issued laptops, which would – hopefully – help this potential problem. Others are using a VPN so they are “working” off their at work desk. Mike will add language with counsel to reiterate that no one should be downloading or storing confidential, personally identifiable, or any documents for that matter on personal property. Also, indicate on each letter that will be signed by employees, if they are using a Town computer device or their own personal device just so we can keep track.

Gary: Commented that Town devices would help stop employees downloading to their personal device.

Mike: The Town just does not have the supply. Never factored a time where we would need so many laptops.

Dennis: Who determines if the employee can telecommute?

Mike: Determined by the Town Manager. Need approval. If the employee decides that they need to self-quarantine, they would need to use their accrued sick time.

Gary: If the employee has an outdated personal device – who pays for the upgrade?

Mike: The Town has made it clear that we will not be paying for any upgrades upfront. Mike will work with counsel to make sure this is clearly outlined again.

Gary: What if someone is telecommuting and they download something to their personal device that then causes the computer to need repairs – who pays for that?

Mike: Will have to look into this and add to the procedure. Will ask counsel for language.

Nancy: How many employees are telecommuting?

Mike: We have 33 employees in Town Hall for example, of which 12-15 employees are in the building daily, some on a rotating basis to keep all essential functions operating, and the remainder are working their regular days and hours remotely. Everyone that is telecommuting is set up to work from home, or in the process of being set up by the Technology Department. Much of our business is still via phone. Should individuals not have a lot of work on a given day, we have asked for each role to start a succession planning binder to keep track of each positions daily responsibilities. Will help immensely with organizational succession, to avoid future breaks and slowdowns in public service that we have experienced in the past when we have an employee retire, leave for another position or is out for other extenuating circumstance, that requires someone temporarily covering the position.

Gary (possibly): Are we paying for employees at home wifi/internet connections.

Mike: We have indicated Town is not paying for employees at home wifi/internet connections. Will ensure this is clear in signed agreement.

Heidi: In some organizations, the technology tracks peoples downloads, but I don't know if we have that capability.

Brian: Even if employees are using a VPN, when there is a will, there is a way. If they want to store information, they can do a print screen, etc. They will find a way if they want it.

Mike: Will work with counsel to put in broad language about downloading/storing information.

Heidi: For employees on performance improvement plans(PIP) – are they able to telecommute?

Mike: Yes. The decision is made between the Department Head and the Town Manager. Mike checks in weekly with each Department Head who checks in with their team daily to track what they are doing day in and day out. Reports are generated weekly. A PIP would necessarily prohibit an employee from telecommuting, if it is in the best interest of the Town.

Mike: The Reassignment of Duties are loosely agreed upon by unions through the aforementioned side-letters. We have implemented a staggered work schedule. For example: the water teams usually travel in one truck with 2 workers but now we are one truck per one person, therefore a job might have a need for two workers so two trucks now show up. We want to have the flexibility to keep the Town running but also provide a safe work environment for employees.

Tracey: Can the reassignment of duties be done between departments?

Mike: Yes to an extent. Administrative duties of course can be spread.

Heidi: ADA compliant?

Mike: Yes. Always complying.

Dennis: On Return to Work Policy, will we be in compliance with CDC guidelines?

Mike: Yes, the CDC guidelines are very specific to healthcare worker, and we are trying to mirror this procedure as much as possible, and this will depend upon test kit supply and the ability to perform them, but will work with our professionals and labor counsel to make sure this language is clearly defined.

Mike: Sick Leave. The side letters will give the flexibility these teams need. We will mirror the newly signed Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA).

Question by Board member: question of who approves the sick time; is it at discretion of employees.

Mike: Will look into further clarification and have counsel review specific language.

Brian: Is it fair to make employees take their sick time and then move to the 2 weeks granted by the Federal Act?

Mike: In municipal government, we like nearly every other Town, are very generous with the sick leave of 15 days per year. In his opinion, the above is fair since the need for 15 days per year should be the exception, and on average sick time use is far less; additionally, we have sick banks build into contracts as a cushion for extreme cases.

Mike: Bill has sent a memo to all unions and nonunion that during this time, vacation days can carry over to the next fiscal year, due to the extreme circumstances. Personal time will not carry over as usual. The unions have previously agreed to make a sick bank for their employees, governed by the employees generally, where people can donate 1-3 days in the event one of their members runs out of sick time for a legitimate concern, as deemed by the employees. Some banks are empty but the Town and employees working to restore them.

Tracey: If you are diagnosed with Covid-19, can you work even if you want to? Is there a liability?

Mike: It is my opinion that if someone is diagnosed but feels well enough to work under approved remote agreement, and would rather work productively than use sick time, that it should be ok, but will check with counsel for any liability.

Tracey Vasile made a motion to accept all policies, Heidi seconded, and Motion passed 5-0-0.

Meeting adjourned at 6:52pm.

MINUTES APPROVED 9/14/21