

**Town of Auburn
Joint Personnel Board
Board of Selectmen, Library Trustees & Police Commission
October 30, 2019**

Selectmen Present: Richard Eaton, Keith Leclair and Todd Bedard

Library Trustees Present: Nancy Mayland, Elizabeth Michaud and Joseph Forest

Police Commissioners Present: David Dion, Dennis McCarthy and Michael Rolfe

Also Present: Alternate Library Trustees Brenda Beer and Marilyn Cavanaugh, and Bill Herman, Town Administrator.

Mr. Richard Eaton convened the meeting at 6:00 p.m.

Consideration of Potential Amendments to the Town of Auburn Personnel Policy

The Board has been presented with four proposed adjustments to the Town Personnel Policy and agreed it was best to take them up one at a time.

Section 1:12.21 – Anniversary Date: Mr. Herman noted the current definition of Anniversary Date has been interpreted differently by individuals over time. The intention of establishing all employees Anniversary Date moving forward is that it is the date of hire, which is also the first date on payroll for the Town. Sometimes, individuals are hired for their positions weeks or more before they actually commence working. This modification of the policy language is to make clear that it is the commencement of work that is considered to be the hire date or anniversary date.

The proposed change in policy would add the following language to Section 1:12.21: *“This is intended to be the first date a given employee is on payroll status for work performed for the Town or Griffin Free Public Library. The Anniversary Date shall be determined by the Selectmen’s Office through the Town’s official payroll records system.”*

Nancy Mayland moved to approve the proposed change in Section 1:12.21 Anniversary Date as proposed. Seconded by David Dion. A vote was taken; all were in favor, the motion passed unanimously.

Section 4:1.1 – Step Increases: Mr. Herman noted the Town is beginning to have employees who are reaching the maximum Step 20 in their position and, as a result, do not have the ability to advance any further. The proposal is to establish a potential Merit Recognition that could be paid in a lump sum fashion in lieu of a step increase. This payment would not increase the base pay of the individual, but does provide a recognition of good performance as a step increase is intended to do. The Merit Recognition could be provided annually to an employee based on a satisfactory job performance review in the same manner that step increases are provided.

The proposed change in policy would add the following language to Section 4:1.1: *“For employees who have reached the maximum of Step 20 for their position, the Town will consider the issuance of a Merit Recognition of a lump sum \$500.00 payment for full-time employees in lieu of a Step Increase at the time of the employee’s anniversary date of employment with the Town based on a positive job performance review.*

“An appropriate pro-rated amount for a lump sum payment would be considered for part-time employees depending on their average hours worked on a weekly basis.

“The Merit Recognition is a one-time payment and employees may be considered on an annual basis for this recognition in lieu of a Step Increase.”

Discussion ensued about this not really being a merit increase or recognition, and perhaps it should be called something other than “Merit Recognition”. After discussion, it was agreed the payment would be called “Alternative Step Compensation”.

Nancy Mayland noted the Board has discussed in the past the potential of re-establishing a true merit increase potential and she would like to have the Board not lose sight of that in the future.

Joseph Forest moved to change the title of the lump sum payment from “Merit Recognition” to “Alternative Step Compensation”. Seconded by Dennis McCarthy. A vote was taken, all were in favor, the motion carried unanimously.

Nancy Mayland moved to approve the proposed change in Section 4:1.1 Step Increases as amended. Seconded by David Dion. A vote was taken; all were in favor, the motion passed unanimously.

Section 6:3 – Voluntary Leave Donation Bank: Mr. Herman reported this would be a new section to the Personnel Policy that would establish a formal way in which employees may donate some of their unused leave time to other employees who have a need, but no leave time available to them. Informally, the

Town has had employees do this in various ways, and it is recommended that it would be best to have a formalized basis for achieving this end.

Overall, this does not add any expense to the Town or establish a new form or amount of leave time. It would only allow for the transfer of leave voluntarily from one employee to another, which would reduce the overall liability exposure of the accrued leave amount the Town currently would have.

The proposed change in policy would add the following language to Section 6:3:

- A. *Town employees may voluntarily donate accumulated earned time leave for the benefit of another employee who is unable to work due to an illness or injury and has exhausted all previously earned paid leave.*

- B. *To be eligible to receive voluntary leave donations, the employee must:*
 - 1) *Be a regular employee working at least 20 hours per week,*
 - 2) *Be experiencing a serious medical condition as defined by the Family Medical Leave Act that will require the prolonged / extended absence of the employee from duty and will result in a substantial loss of income to the employee due to the exhaustion of all paid leave available,*
 - 3) *Not have submitted a request for separation or retirement, and*
 - 4) *Have exhausted all paid time off balances (earned time or sick leave).*

- B. *In order to donate and/or receive earned time leave under this policy, requests must be routed through each employee's department head to Human Resources as soon as possible for inclusion in the next payroll. Human Resources will submit the request to the Town Administrator for approval. The requests should include:*
 - (1) *A written statement signed by the employee requesting authorization to receive donated earned time leave, indicating the commencement date when all other forms of leave have been or will be exhausted. (The Town Administrator may waive this requirement in the event that the employee is incapacitated.)*

 - (2) *A written statement signed by an employee who wishes to voluntarily donate paid leave, to include the amount of time being donated (in eight (8) hour increments only) to the Voluntary Leave Bank and ultimately credited to a specific recipient.*

- C. *Donations of paid leave shall be deducted from the donating employee's accumulated paid leave account (on an hourly basis) and transferred into the recipient's account (on an hourly basis) immediately upon receipt of the required requests. The value of*

donated leave time shall be calculated at the recipient's regular rate of pay at the time of disbursement. Unused donated paid leave time shall remain in the recipient's account.

- D. The maximum amount of paid leave to be donated to any single employee shall be one hundred sixty (160) hours and eighty (80) hours per donor, to be disbursed at a maximum rate equal to a regular week's pay.*
- E. The use of donated leave time shall not serve to change any existing conditions of employment or extend an employee's tenure in a position.*
- F. The donation of earned time leave shall not be counted as part of the donor's "Minimum Usage Required" under Section 6:2.4*

Dennis McCarthy noted this is not a true "leave bank", but a transfer of leave time from one employee to another employee. There was agreement on that point, and that the term "Voluntary Leave Donation Bank" should be changed to "Voluntary Leave Donation".

The Board members discussed the proposal in general and how it would work. All individuals offered positive comments about the intent and purpose of the proposal.

Nancy Mayland moved to change the title of the system from "Voluntary Leave Donation Bank" to "Voluntary Leave Donation". Seconded by David Dion. A vote was taken, all were in favor, the motion carried unanimously.

Nancy Mayland moved to approve the proposed addition of Section 6:3 Voluntary Leave Donation as amended. Seconded by David Dion. A vote was taken; all were in favor, the motion passed unanimously.

Section 17:4 – Town of Auburn – Human Resource Office: Mr. Herman reported the Finance Director and the Finance Assistant have strongly recommended we formally establish a required employee orientation for all new hires to ensure they are fully orientated to the Town, its personnel practices and the benefit programs that are available. It is the intent to also have a more timely return of the needed documents required of new hires with some of them to be completed during this orientation.

The proposed addition to the policy would add the following language to Section 17:4: *"All new hires for the Town of Auburn or the Griffin Free Public Library shall be required to participate in an employee orientation with the Selectmen's Office. The employee orientation may take place any time after the individual is*

formally hired for a position, but under no circumstances will be later than their first formal day on the job. The employee orientation may take upwards of two (2) hours and new hires will be paid by the Town or the Griffin Free Public Library for the time involved at the rate of pay they will receive for the position they have been hired. The employee orientation is intended to ensure all appropriate personnel documents, files and records are provided and explained to the new hire, and completed by the same to enable the timely implementation of all appropriate employee benefits.”

The question was asked how the new hire will know this is required of them, and Mr. Herman indicated he intended to inform all department heads of this provision and that it shall be up to the department heads to send their new hires here for this purpose. It was suggested as written, this places no requirement on the department heads. The suggested change to wording of the first sentence was: “All department heads shall ensure that all new hires for the Town of Auburn or the Griffin Free Public Library shall participate in an employee orientation with the Selectmen’s Office.”

Elizabeth Michaud moved to change the first sentence to require department heads to send new hires for the employee orientation. Seconded by Todd Bedard. A vote was taken, all were in favor, the motion carried unanimously.

Keith Leclair moved to approve the proposed addition to Section 17:4 Town of Auburn – Human Resource Office as amended. Seconded by Joseph Forest. A vote was taken; all were in favor, the motion passed unanimously.

Consideration of Potential COLA / Step Increase for FY 2020 Budget

Mr. Herman noted the Board has jointly determined the potential of a cost of living adjustment (COLA) for Town employees, Step increases for Town employees, or potentially both to be included in the ensuing year’s budget. He provided the Board with a spreadsheet prepared by Finance Director Adele Frisella that details what current wages are for all Town and Library positions; what the amount would be if a 1.5% COLA were applied; what the amount would be if a 2% Step were applied, and what the amount would be if both a 1.5% COLA and a 2% Step were applied.

He noted the spreadsheet calculated the bottom line of wages at current levels with no changes totaled \$2,116,174; the bottom line with a 2% Step increase only is \$2,133,365; the bottom line for a 1.5% COLA only was \$2,139,051, and the bottom line for a Step and COLA increase is \$2,156,242.

Mr. Herman noted no increase is for a full 12 months in that if a COLA is granted, it would take effect April 1st, while Step Increases are presented at an employee's anniversary date, which are spread throughout the year. He also noted the Board of Selectmen and Police Commission, under the terms of the Collective Bargaining Agreement with the Auburn Police Union, are required to request a step increase for the positions covered by the agreement. Should the Town provide a COLA to other employees, the agreement indicates it will also be provided to the union members as well.

Dennis McCarthy moved to recommend budgeting for the provision of a 1.5% cost of living adjustment and a step increase for all employees which totals approximately \$2,156,242. Seconded by David Dion. A vote was taken; all were in favor, the motion passed unanimously.

Approval of Minutes – November 19, 2018

Nancy Mayland moved to approve the minutes of the November 19, 2018 meeting as presented. Seconded by David Dion. A vote was taken, all were in favor, the motion passed.

Adjourn

Nancy Mayland made a motion to adjourn; Todd Bedard seconded the motion; all were in favor, the motion passed unanimously, and the meeting stood adjourned at 6:30 P.M.