

PERSONNEL COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES
MARCH 12, 2020 RECONVENED MARCH 10, 2020 MEETING

PERSONNEL COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT: Hicks, Ward, Campbell, Skellie, Clary

PERSONNEL COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT: None

SUPERVISORS: Hall, Henke, Ferguson, Losaw, O'Brien, Haff, Hogan, Griffith, Rozell

Debra Prehoda, Clerk

Chris DeBolt, County Administrator

Roger Wickes, County Attorney

Al Nolette, County Treasurer

Melissa Fitch, Personnel Director

Media & Public

AGENDA AS PRESENTED IN COMMITTEE NOTICE:

- 1) Call to Order
- 2) Consider the following Policies/Procedures introduced at the March 10, 2020 Personnel Committee Meeting:
 - A. Washington County Policy on Employee Absences Stemming from Declared Public Health Emergencies
 - B. Amend the Employee Handbook Regarding Employees in Arrears for Sick Time
 - C. Authorize Remote Work for Employees at the Discretion of the Department Head
 - D. Temporarily Suspend the Staffing Pattern and Standard Personnel Committee Procedures for the Hiring of Temporary Per Diem Employees in Response to COVID-19
- 3) Other Business
- 4) Adjournment

Chairman Hicks reconvened the meeting to order at 9:00 A.M. Vice Chairman Henke making the quorum. Committee quorum as of 9:06 A.M.

CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING POLICIES/PROCEDURES INTRODUCED AT THE MARCH 10, 2020 PERSONNEL COMMITTEE MEETING:

The County Administrator provided a brief overview of the policies/procedures under consideration at today's meeting. A separate account line has been set up under Public Health to track all the expenses relating to the COVID-19 outbreak. Unsure at this time how any funds for the response to the COVID-19 outbreak will flow to the County from the State and Federal government. Public Health is the primary contact and people need to be screened for testing. He will work with Warren and Saratoga Counties on combining jail inmates if necessary. If these policies move forward to the full Board, he would like to put these in place retroactive to today.

- Policy on Employee Absences Stemming from Declared Public Health Emergencies – During a declared Public Health Emergency employees may be unable to report to work and fulfill their normal duties through no fault of their own and they shall not be made to use accrued benefit time to cover these absences from work.
- Authorize Remote Work for Employees at the Discretion of the Department Head – This is under extenuating circumstances and not for regular working at home. This would be on a case by case basis.
- Temporarily Suspend the Staffing Pattern and Standard Personnel Committee Procedures for the Hiring of Temporary Per Diem Employees in Response to COVID-19 – At the point of needing to bring in per diem nurses in Public Health, especially to answer the phones.
- Amend the Employee Handbook Regarding Employees in Arrears for Sick Time – Unsure if three days in arrears is sufficient and discussed if employees should have a doctor's approval to return to work but that presents concerns.

A motion to approve the above-mentioned policies/procedures and forward to the full Board for consideration was moved by Mr. Campbell, seconded by Mrs. Clary and adopted. Committee consensus was they are retroactive to today.

OTHER BUSINESS: We have a pandemic preparedness plan and that changes a few things for us and we have been working under that plan and following the procedures in the plan.

The meeting adjourned at 9:55 A.M.

Debra Prehoda, Clerk
Washington County Board of Supervisors

Washington County Policy on Employee Absences Stemming from Declared Public Health Emergencies

During a declared Public Health Emergency, whether declared by the federal, state or county government, employees of Washington County may be unable to report to work and fulfill their normal duties through no fault of their own. In such instances, it is the policy of Washington County that such employees shall not be made to use accrued benefit time to cover these absences from work.

For the purposes of this policy, the following definitions shall apply:

Declared Public Health Emergency: a formal, official declaration made by any federal, state or county public health agency pertaining to an acute public health crisis. This may include declared states of emergency stemming from public health crises.

Non-Voluntary Absence: an absence from work caused by the voluntary or involuntary quarantine or isolation of an employee when requested or ordered by any governmental agency or department with the authority to do so.

Policy Statement: In order to protect the health of the County's workforce and the members of the public they serve, Washington County takes seriously the need to isolate and/or quarantine individuals in response to emergent public health threats such as infectious diseases. In order to ensure that employees who must be isolated or quarantined for the protection of the public and their fellow employees are able to do so, the County will not require any such isolated or quarantined employee to utilize previously accrued benefit time to cover non-voluntary absences occurring pursuant to a formally declared public health emergency. Accrual of additional benefit time will proceed under the existing guidelines contained with the Washington County Employee Handbook while an employee remains out of work through a non-voluntary absence.

TITLE: To Authorize Remote Work for Employees at the Discretion of the Department Head

WHEREAS, many of the functions carried out by the County can only be done in person, and

WHEREAS, there are some jobs and duties that can be carried out effectively through remote means, and

WHEREAS, in cases of prolonged absences it may be beneficial to the County to allow certain employees to work remotely from their homes or elsewhere, and

WHEREAS, the County has the technology to facilitate this work in certain situations, now therefore be it

RESOLVED, Department Heads are hereby authorized to allow employees to work remotely under extenuating circumstances when either workloads or prolonged absences require it, and may it be further

RESOLVED, this is not to be done as a regular course of action and should only be done when absolutely necessary, and may it be further

RESOLVED, any Department Head authorizing such an arrangement must inform the Personnel Officer and County Administrator of such arrangement in writing, and may it be further

RESOLVED, the Personnel Officer and County Administrator shall have the authority to reject any such arrangement upon notification thereof by the Department Head, and may it be further

RESOLVED, any work being carried out remotely that entails access to sensitive files, data, or computer systems must first be examined and approved by the Chief Information Technology Officer.

BUDGET IMPACT: None. No additional computer equipment will be purchased to facilitate this.

TITLE: To Temporarily Suspend the Staffing Pattern and Standard Personnel Committee Procedures for the Hiring of Temporary Per Diem Employees in Response to COVID-19

WHEREAS, there is currently an ongoing outbreak of COVID-19 in New York State, and

WHEREAS, Washington County currently has several individuals under mandatory quarantine orders issued by Washington County Public Health, and

WHEREAS, in order to adequately respond to this situation, various departments may have the need to add temporary per diem employees to address rapidly increasing workloads, and

WHEREAS, compliance with the normal Personnel Committee procedures for the addition of staff is not feasible in this dynamic situation, and

WHEREAS, the County Administrator has recommended a temporary suspension of the Staffing Pattern and standard Personnel Committee procedures for the addition of temporary per diem staff to handle the workload associated with the County's response to COVID-19, and

WHEREAS, the Personnel Committee has reviewed and approved this recommendation, now therefore be it

RESOLVED, the Staffing Pattern and standard Personnel Committee procedures for the addition of personnel are hereby suspended solely for the purposes of temporary per diem staff to be added in direct response to the COVID-19 outbreak, and may it be further

RESOLVED, departments are hereby authorized to make emergency hires of temporary per diem employees to address increased workload stemming from the County's response to the COVID-19 outbreak, and may it be further

RESOLVED, these hires may only be made with the knowledge, consent and approval of the Chairman of the Board of Supervisors, the Chairman of the Personnel Committee, the Chairman of the department's oversight committee, the Personnel Officer and the County Administrator, and may it be further

RESOLVED, the County Administrator and Personnel Officer shall report any hires made under the provisions herein to the Personnel Committee, the Finance Committee and the Full Board of Supervisors on a monthly basis.

BUDGET IMPACT: Unknown at this time. All expenses related to the County's COVID-19 response are being tracked through a dedicated set of accounts within the Public Health budget. Regular reports will be provided to the Health and Human Services and Finance Committees.

TITLE: To Amend the Employee Handbook Regarding Employees in Arrears for Sick Time

WHEREAS, Section 7.003 of the Washington County Employee Handbook currently allows employees to go into arrears in sick time in the amount of one day for a period not to exceed three months, and

WHEREAS, when employees are sick, it is in the best interest of the employee, their co-workers and the public they serve for the employees to stay home until they have recovered and are no longer contagious, and

WHEREAS, in order to help maintain the health of the workforce and the public, Department Heads are encouraged and directed to send employees home when they display signs of illness regardless of whether or not the employee has accrued sick time to use toward those work days missed, and

WHEREAS, there are sometime legitimate reasons where employees have little to no sick time accrued and it is not desirable to have sick employees report to work in these situations, and

WHEREAS, Department Heads are those in the organization best situated to ascertain whether an employee's lack of accrued sick time is legitimate or through chronic misuse of this benefit, and

WHEREAS, in those cases where the situation is legitimate, it is desirous to allow the employee to go into arrears in sick time so they can avoid infecting coworkers and the public, now therefore be it

RESOLVED, that section 7.003 of the Washington County Employee Handbook is hereby amended to allow employees to go into arrears for up to three (3) days of sick time, and may it be further

RESOLVED, that Department Heads are hereby urged and directed to use this provision in extenuating circumstances only and to consult with the Personnel Officer prior to allowing arrears of any amount to occur.

BUDGET IMPACT: No direct cost, but could potentially lead to additional absences.