

PERSONNEL COMMITTEE MEETING

December 21, 2020

In Attendance:

Members Present: Chairman, Larry Chapman, Barry Mitchell, Rick Shew and Mayor Janet Winkler

Others Present: Town Manager, Rebecca Bentley, Chief of Police, Richard Blevins, Assistant Finance Officer, Michelle Coffey and Town Clerk, Tammy Swanson

Call to Order:

Chairman Larry Chapman called the Personnel Committee meeting to order at approximately 8:00 a.m.

Discussion of Vaccinations:

Rebecca stated that the reason she asked for the meeting was because of a COVID-19 leave and vaccine survey that was distributed by the Western Piedmont Council of Governments. She stated that the questions on the survey have already been answered by some of the neighboring communities, and she wanted to share the information with the Personnel Committee and get their thoughts on the questions as well.

Questions on the survey were as follows:

1 – Since the emergency leave for employees is expiring with the CARES Act legislation at the end of this month, are you extending the emergency leave through local policy? Rebecca stated that our policy does not end at the end of December - our policy extends as long as there is a Pandemic.

Rebecca stated that employees were allotted 80 hours of COVID leave. When an employee has exhausted their COVID leave, they would use their own time if they are out due to COVID. Rebecca explained that we also have the sick leave bank, and there are sufficient hours in the bank if an employee needs extra hours.

2 – Are you considering requiring or going to require that public safety or other high exposure employees take the vaccine?

***Consensus of the Personnel Committee – Do not require.**

Rebecca stated that the EEOC (Equal Employment Opportunity Commission) has given the “green light” for employers to require that their employees take the COVID-19 vaccine. She commented that although we are down the list to get them, we can require them.

Rick stated that Blue Ridge Healthcare is not requiring employees to get vaccinated, and UNC Healthcare is also not requiring them.

Chief Blevins stated that for whatever reason, his officers are very opposed to taking the COVID-19 vaccines. He stated that one agency in the area polled their officers, and over 50% stated that they would not stay if they were required to take the vaccine. He stated that he feels the younger officers are very opposed.

Rebecca stated that we require our officers to take the Hepatitis B vaccines or refuse it in writing. It was suggested that the same might could be done for the COVID-19 vaccine.

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Rick stated that if the healthcare agencies are not requiring COVID-19 vaccinations, he does not feel that we should require the vaccinations.

Larry stated that the last national survey showed that about 42% of the nation does not want to take the vaccine.

Chief Blevins asked if declining to take the vaccine would take away the 80-hour allowance. It was the consensus of the Committee that declining to take the vaccination would not take away the 80-hour allowance.

Michelle stated that some of the employees used the 80 hours when we sent employees home for 2 weeks earlier this year.

Rebecca stated that the vaccine does not prevent the virus, but just makes the symptoms less drastic.

3. For certain types of employees (e.g. public safety, high exposure) who decline to take the vaccine, are you requiring them to sign liability waiver (maybe like the Hepatitis B waiver)?

***Consensus of the Personnel Committee – Yes – require a waiver for the COVID-19 vaccine.**

Janet stated that all a waiver says is that the vaccine was offered to an employee and the employee declined.

4. Are you offering an incentive for those that take the vaccine (example: an extra day of vacation)?

***Consensus of the Personnel Committee – no incentive for taking the COVID-19 vaccine.**

5. Are you going to require employees who take the vaccine to continue wearing masks?

***Consensus of the Personnel Committee – employees who are vaccinated will be require to continue to wear masks.**

Update on CARES Act, COVID-19 Impact on Staff and Hepatitis-B Vaccines:

Rebecca commented that among our 30-person staff, we have had 33% out due to COVID-19, with three employees testing positive. She stated that we are still requiring the masks, riding alone, etc. Rebecca reported that to date, we have spent approximately \$30,000 due to COVID-19, with all the funds being reimbursed by CARES Act funding. This funding will be ending on December 31st unless something in the new legislation allows for an extension.

Discussion of Hepatitis B Vaccination - Rebecca stated that she polled the Dept. Heads to find out who has taken the Hep-B vaccine. Chuck stated that two of his employees have not received this vaccine. Rebecca stated that she checked to see who needed the Hep-B vaccine, and it is the employees who could be exposed to blood. Since injuries sometimes happen in playing sports, the Recreation Dept. employees could be administering first-aid and could be exposed to blood. Rebecca commented that currently the only employees we require to have Hep-B vaccines are Police.

Rick asked if our employees have had bloodborne pathogens training.

Rebecca stated that the Police Department has had the training.

Rick stated that it would probably be a good idea for the Recreation Dept. to have the training as well.

Larry added that it would probably be a good idea for the Public Works Dept. to also have the training.

Rick stated that there are two levels of bloodborne pathogens training – 2-hour and 4-hour.

Chief Blevins stated that they get the 2-hour training.

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Rebecca stated that she would set up bloodborne pathogens training for all of the Town Staff. She asked if the Committee would like to add Hep-B vaccines for the Recreation Department.

***Consensus of the Committee – Add Hep-B vaccines for the Recreation Department.**

Rebecca commented that she would add the Recreation Department to the Hep-B vaccine policy.

Personnel Changes:

Chief Blevins reported that Officer CJ Curtis is leaving the Police Department as of December 29th. Chief Blevins stated that he has already received applications, and he added that he may be doing some shuffling of the staff in the Department. CJ has been employed with the Town since Jan. 2016. He is planning to pursue a career in automotive mechanics, and he may even get involved with some drag racing. Chief Blevins stated that CJ did a great job as a patrol officer and as a resource officer at CCC & TI, and he wished him the very best with his future endeavors.

Adjournment:

Motion: (Rick Shew/Barry Mitchell) to adjourn the meeting. Unanimously approved.

Tamra T. Swanson, Town Clerk