



**Personnel Study Task Force  
Meeting Minutes (Final)  
September 26, 2022**

**PRESENT:** Co-Chairs Anne Rarich and Ruth Lauer; Paul Macone; and Bruce Button

**ABSENT:** None

**Others Present in Person:** Select Board Liaison Terri Ackerman; Staff Assistant Erin Mulcahy; Resident Mark Howell, Resident Ned Perry,

**Remote Participants via Phone:** Resident Anita Tekle

**Call to Order**

At 4:00 pm on Monday, September 26 in the conference room at 141 Keyes Road, Concord, Anne Rarich called the meeting to order by roll call vote, with A. Rarich, R. Lauer, P. Macone, and B. Button, all voting in the affirmative to open the meeting.

**Approval of Minutes**

On a **MOTION** made by Ms. Lauer and seconded by Mr. Macone, and on roll call **VOTE** (with A. Rarich, R. Lauer, P. Macone, and B. Button all voting in the affirmative), the minutes of the September 12<sup>th</sup> regular meeting and of the September 19<sup>th</sup> Public Forum, were unanimously **APPROVED** as drafted.

**Discussion of edits and feedback based on feedback from the 9-19-22 Public Forum**

Mr. Macone reported that he received feedback from the forum via email and verbal communications, in addition to a question received on an index card at the Forum, all of which has been forwarded to Ms. Tekle to formulate for the report.

Ms. Tekle communicated that she estimated that feedback received would consume the better part of 5 pages typed, once completed. There was an additional comment that had not yet been included.

Ms. Tekle reported that Mr. Mrachek, Personnel Board Chair, requested the addition of a footnote to communicate that the Town has contracted with a partner (GovHR USA) to conduct the Town's Classification and Compensation study and the work is underway. The PSTF members agreed to Mr. Mrachek's request and Ms. Tekle noted that she will add the footnote to the report.

Ms. Rarich observed that much of the feedback received after the forum was similar to the feedback received via the employee survey and suggested that the feedback would be reflected best as an Appendix in the report; "Appendix U". The Chairs agreed to proof Appendix U once completed. Ms. Rarich reported that she would resend the transmittal letter to Ms. Tekle to be included in the final report, as well.

Ms. Tekle agreed to resend the report including the final edits discussed and would send to the Co-Chairs.

On a **MOTION** made by Ms. Lauer and seconded by Mr. Macone, it was unanimously **VOTED** on a roll call vote (with Ms. Rarich, Ms. Lauer, Mr. Macone, and Mr. Button, all voting in the affirmative): To approve the revised draft report dated September 12, 2022 and Appendices A through U, pending Co-chairs approval of Appendix U, and the inclusion of footnotes made at Mr. Mrachek's request, as the FINAL report and thereby adopted by the PSTF on September 26, 2022.

Ms. Rarich and Ms. Lauer reported that while the Town Manager asked the PSTF to bear sustainability in mind with respect to printing, she did authorize Ms. Mulcahy to obtain a quote, if necessary, to print the final report. Ms. Mulcahy had obtained two estimates and had provided the lowest one to the Co-Chairs for consideration.

Ms. Lauer acknowledged the need to be mindful of sustainability, however, opined that the report in hard copy will be more readable.

Members considered the estimate aloud and the number of printed copies most appropriate. The members discussed hard copies made available for the Town Manager, each Select Board member, each Personnel Study Task Force member, the Personnel Board, each Town department, both library branches, and the Town Clerk.

Mr. Howell suggested that an archival copy for the library may be considered by the members.

The question about available budget was discussed. Mr. Perry and Mr. Howell generously offered, for the Co-Chairs consideration, to gift the Town necessary funds to print copies of the final report should Town funding not be available. The Co-Chairs accepted their offer graciously should the funds be needed. Ms. Mulcahy will present the PSTF request for printing to the Town Manager for her consideration following the meeting.

**Additional Correspondence:**

None

**Upcoming Meetings:**

- Meeting with Select Board – Monday, October 3, 2022, Town House, agenda time TBD

Ms. Ackerman noted that she is unable to be present at the October 3 meeting with the Select Board.

Ms. Rarich agreed to contact Mr. Johnson to inquire about a specific time and time allotment for the PSTF presentation on the October 3<sup>rd</sup> Select Board agenda.

**Public Comment:**

Mr. Howell stated that he was impressed with the PSTF report. He asked the PSTF for their thoughts on next steps. He wondered if the recommended changes to the bylaw would be simpler and easier to consume if it appeared in the report as a marked-up document. Mr. Howell encouraged the PSTF to consider taking additional steps beyond the creation of the document including offering suggestions about what the charge of the Personnel Board should look like. He commented that the report does an excellent job demonstrating the history yet doesn't specifically say what the recommended new charge really is.

Mr. Howell further opined that a conversation between the Personnel Board and the Select Board would be required to determine the Personnel Board Charge and suggested that the Personnel Study Task Force members may facilitate that conversation. He considered whether a workshop format may be beneficial. He wondered if the PSTF would consider drafting a charge based on what they have learned to get closer to the shared goals.

Ms. Tekle noted that Appendix Q reflects the recommended changes to the Personnel Board Committee Charge in a tracked changes format using red text.

Mr. Macone stated he does not wish to change the report. Mr. Button agreed.

Ms. Rarich asked Ms. Ackermann about the date of the Warrant Preview meeting.

Ms. Ackerman responded that the preview meeting takes place on a Saturday in December. If the Select Board or Personnel Board were proposing a warrant article(s) to alter the Personnel Bylaw, it must be written by January.

Ms. Lauer suggested that the parties that need to tend to this matter include the Select Board, Town Manager, Personnel Board, and the HR Director. Perhaps the parties will consider taking matters to the next step, assuming the next step is to submit a warrant article to Town Meeting.

Mr. Macone stated that he believes people need to see something is happening. He hoped that the Select Board may provide a bullet list of some potential changes being considered as an outcome along with a timeline for such changes of potentially 3-6 months. He wondered if incorporating change may be included in the Town Manager's outlined goals.

Mr. Button agreed with Mr. Macone and expressed concerns about the lack of commitment for next steps.

Ms. Ackerman responded that the Town Manager's goals were set in May so it is unknown how they would or could incorporate a goal off-cycle. In addition, she had recently met with the Town Manager and offered that it is her understanding that the Town Manager is in the process of assembling a team of staff to look at a redraft of the personnel bylaw.

Ms. Mulcahy offered that she believes this may already be included as #3 of the Town Manager's goals as she remembers seeing it somewhere.

Mr. Howell offered his observation that the timing may be late to propose a change to the Personnel Bylaw for this upcoming Town Meeting and he would suggest targeting 2024 Annual Town Meeting for that undertaking. However, updating the Personnel Board Charge is another matter that could be considered now.

Mr. Macone reiterated that even if change happens slowly and methodically, it must happen. He hopes to see the introduction of behavioral objectives that are actionable and measurable.

Ms. Mulcahy asked to offer her thoughts from an employee perspective. She stated it was difficult to watch the tension at the forum and she hopes that common ground can be forged collectively, and efforts now can be expended on devising a path forward in a positive way as opposed to the adoption of a "sides" perspective.

Ms. Mulcahy reiterated that it has been her honor to serve as staff liaison to the PSTF and is grateful for the opportunity, and for the hundreds of hours and steadfast commitment each of the members has dedicated. She noted it has been at times particularly uncomfortable for her as an employee to walk the fine line between Town staff and citizens charged by the Select Board to review sensitive employee issues. She is appreciative of the kindness, gratitude, and level of professionalism the PSTF members have shown her and for their willingness to respect the request made of them by the Town Manager to redact the employee survey in the spirit of collaboration and support of the Town Manager's dedication to bring positive change to the Town.

Ms. Mulcahy offered that the employee survey was largely successful and paved the way for more open communication and is symbolic of the trust employees are placing in the invitation to respond and in the Town Manager. Where 181 respondents could have written anything, they took the time to offer insightful, thoughtful comments, many of which expressed their love of the job they do, the community and citizens they serve, and the camaraderie shared with colleagues. It is her hope that the positive aspects of the survey will be embraced and utilized as a tool to strategize and prioritize improvements introduced by leadership.

Ms. Tekle noted that she will be more encouraged if there is a process identified going forward. She believes the report will incite greater compliance with personnel bylaws. Ms. Tekle wonders if the Personnel Study Task Force should be active a little bit longer before being dissolved until the Personnel Board and/or someone in a position of authority acknowledges that there are some problems, mistakes have been made, and we will do better going forward, as opposed to going on the defensive. Mr. Button offered his agreement.

Ms. Tekle commented that this sentiment is at the root of the Concord culture and of the Town's values to offer accountability.

Mr. Macone stated that the predominant theme of comments following the forum that he received is that the Town had an opportunity to respond, that the Town Manager was asked twice to respond. The Town Manager's response was, "I'm listening" and the sentiment from employees was they had hoped the response was "I hear you".

Mr. Button concurred and said that the conclusion drawn from the commentary is for the Town to act.

Mr. Howell stated that it is incumbent on the Task Force to lead this forward as other candidates are not ready. He further offered that the Finance Committee charge doesn't begin to address all the variables that the Committee may face yet it works. The Personnel Board charge should be more organic and reflective of the culture.

Ms. Lauer wondered aloud who is on the team assembled by the Town Manager to write the bylaw. How will the many silos be brought together?

Mr. Howell thought it may be helpful to ask or involve former Personnel Board members in the task. He offered that it would be a reasonable ask for the group to ask to have access to Town Counsel to establish the legal framework that the cultural piece rests in.

Mr. Rarich offered that it is possible that some bylaws are in violation of the policies.

M. Lauer stated that the takeaway from the forum was that there is support for the Personnel Study Task Force and a feeling of "ah-ha, you heard me" from employees. She opined that employees are not expecting the PSTF to fix everything but instead want to feel and be heard. Ms. Lauer reminded the members that the Select Board stated at the onset of the Task Force, don't write the personnel bylaw, but study it. The role of the PSTF is to bring the recommendations to the people who can fix it.

Ms. Rarich opines that there is no ownership of next steps. Employees need a clear indication that this is not the end of the line and acknowledgement that there have been issues.

Ms. Tekle agreed and reiterated the need to acknowledge the problems in order to move forward. Employees are at this next important juncture. Ms. Tekle recounted one of the comments received from the forum which asked, "Where can I go after the PSTF is gone?" and she expressed that comment made her feel sad.

Mr. Button expressed concern that the Select Board isn't going to take action.

Ms. Ackerman responded that the Select Board is not prepared to solve everything next week, but perhaps the PSTF would recommend the top 3 things to accept from the report and this can't be solved in one meeting.

Mr. Macone responded that the PSTF are consultants, and it is for the Select Board to contend with the glaring issues brought forth to them and conveyed in the report.

Ms. Rarich agreed and furthered that such action is not included in the charge of the PSTF.

Mr. Howell suggested that perhaps 3 priorities from this report could be looked at over the next 6 months.

Mr. Macone reiterated his position that it is for the Select Board to choose and decide the priorities.

Ms. Rarich agreed and further offered that the entire Select Board may not have consensus about the priorities which is also a consideration for the Select Board.

Mr. Howell had researched the Town webpage and discovered that although he did not find the Town Manager's goals, he did discover that the Select Board's goal #3 is to address and entertain a rewrite of the personnel bylaw.

Mr. Perry offered that for the Select Board presentation, the PSTF may consider presenting the 2-page executive summary broken into 10 slides. He suggested that the findings can be 2 slides and perhaps the finds and recommendations could be highlighted and presented by the Co-Chairs. Mr. Perry offered that while he didn't know which staff members were part of an assembled team by the Town Manager to look into the policies, he has specific noteworthy staff members he would recommend, if asked.

Ms. Mulcahy offered that it was her recollection from watching the most recent Select Board meeting, that Mr. Johnson opined that perhaps Appendix R should be moved up within the appendices of the report. Ms. Ackerman confirmed that was also her recollection from the meeting.

Ms. Tekle offered that in addition to what Mr. Perry suggested, she might suggest that Appendix Q, printed in color, be included in the Select Board packet for the presentation.

Mr. Button offers that he concurs with Mr. Perry's comment, and he would have recommended staff suggestions for the team assembled to rewrite the bylaw, as well. He stated that this cannot be rewritten by the Senior Management Team (SMT) in his estimation.

### **Adjourn**

On a **MOTION** made by Mr. Lauer and seconded by Mr. Button, it was unanimously **VOTED** on a roll call vote (with Ms. Rarich, Ms. Lauer, Mr. Macone, and Mr. Button all voting in the affirmative), to adjourn the meeting at 6:02 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

  
Erin M. Mulcahy  
Temporary Recording Secretary