



HUMAN RESOURCES DEPARTMENT

City of Burlington

200 Church Street, Suite 102, Burlington, VT 05401

Voice (802) 540-2505

Fax (802) 864-1777

Vermont Relay: 7-1-1 or 800-253-0191

AGENDA

Human Resource Policy Committee

June 24th, 2022

Human Resources Conference Room/ Zoom Meeting
Human Resources Conference Room, 200 Church Street, Suite 102
8:30 am to 10:30 am

- 1) **Agenda**
- 2) **Approval of Minutes from March Meeting 03/25**
- 3) **Public forum**
- 4) **Welcome Councilor Gene Bergman - Introductions**
- 5) **Staffing Update/Police/Fire**
- 6) **Employee Safety Concerns**
- 7) **Adjournment**

Zoom Link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88915857211?pwd=5p070qVto1m9PX1sJYCX8U9Okz5Jxb.1>

Meeting ID: 889 1585 7211

Passcode: 129343

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8:30 am to 10:30 am

Present: Councilor Sarah Carpenter (SC), Councilor Gene Bergman (GB), Councilor Joan Shannon (JS), HR Director, Kerin Durfee (KD), and HR Coordinator, Jessie Anderson.

Meeting called to order by SC at 8:32 am.

1) Agenda

SC opened the meeting and moved to approve the agenda; JS moved to adopt the agenda and GB seconded it.

2) Approval of Minutes from March Meeting 03/25

SC took a motion to approve minutes from HRPC Meeting on March 25th, 2022; JS moved to approve the minutes and GB seconded.

3) Public forum

No members of the public were present for comments.

4) Welcome Councilor Gene Bergman – Introductions

Members of the committee welcomed Councilor GB to the HPRC committee.

GB welcomed others as well and shared gratitude for being able to work with the group on HR-related matters.

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5) **Staffing Update/Police/Fire**

Union Updates:

KD gave GB an overview of what the HRPC meetings entail and who is usually present during the meetings. KD added that the HR staff updates councilors on recruitment updates as well.

KD mentioned that the City now has a preliminary contract with AFSCME and that councilors will be notified with bargaining information.

She added that councilors will hear from IBEW on June 27th and by July 18th the councilors will need to rectify the contract with AFSCME.

KD said that bargaining is going well and that we are excited about completing the process.

GB asked how the process will unfold.

KD responded to GB saying that councilors will receive a summary of the contract and then a resolution will be created later.

Staffing Updates:

KD shared that there is currently major staffing issues in the Fire and BPD departments. She added that HR is working with the police department to fill positions but the concern here is that there is a limited amount of police officers and they are responsible for training the CSO while being in the field as well.

KD mentioned that councilors have requested us as a City to increase the number of CSOs so there can be more responses to needs within the City but offering them the needed training has been difficult due to lack of staffing and how long the process is.

She also added that we are struggling to address staffing issues in the BPD department and that we will need our councilor's support with informing others about staffing needs so that the Fire department does not respond to gun violence instead of the police.

KD shared that as a department HR and wellness committee worked hard to get specific mental health training for the firefighters. She also goes to the BPD and supports the CSO and CSL with 1:1 meetings.

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KD mentioned that she is also working hard to find qualified candidates to fill the leadership roles within the BPD by doing some lateral hiring outside the department.

She added that the police academy also takes a long time and that sometimes the candidates don't pass.

KD informed councilors that she is working with Meghan O'Leary at the BPD to change recruitment strategies and efforts to bring young people into the field and department.

GB asked KD if candidates who don't pass the police academy end up being trained as a CSO or CSL.

KD said yes and that the police chief usually makes sure they get trained as a CSO and they maybe eventually end up doing back to the academy because we can't afford to lose candidates.

SC added that the state needs a training program in Chittenden County.

KD responded saying that councilors can help here by advocating for the City to get more slots at the police academy. She also added that there is also a challenge in finding applicants even if we get the slots.

GB added that this is a huge issue in terms of police transformation and doing things differently from the way we have been doing things in the past.

He mentioned that we need to do things communally and we should perhaps turn to the community partners we have relationships with and have more community conversations to meet community expectations.

GB shared that people are supportive but still call constantly about not getting the service they need. KD added that GB shared a good point but there is a perception of the police and what is actually happening.

She shared that the deputy Chief is currently doing a lot of administrative work to meet the needs of the BPD but we need more community conversations and transparency.

KD shared that the BPD needs more administrative support from non-sworn officers so the work that is needed can be done. She added that we need to think outside the box to support both the fire and police departments.

SC asked if the councilors can do anything proactive to help.

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KD said that she will talk to the police chief and ask about where councilors can support the department and that she will bring the new positions forward once they are created. She added that the police budget is always a concern and councilors can support it by being on board with budget items.

GB encouraged the committee to stay on top of things and continue to work hard to resolve these staffing concerns by taking action, engaging, and using their positions within the City to bring in new applicants and to make transformation happen within the community.

JD added that we need to hire at every single level within the BPD to meet community needs. She shared that the public is invested in public safety so we should empower them to share recruitment efforts within the community.

JS mentioned that it might be helpful to share our struggles around recruitment and let people know that we want to hire but we need their help.

JA shared that she will take the action item of creating the recruitment communication and image to send to councilors to share with their wards and the bigger community.

KD also added that a non-sworn police recruiter position was added within the budget for the 2023 fiscal year. She suggested that the person within this new role works with the HR department to expand police recruitment efforts.

KD mentioned that the collective bargaining process will help and we should see it as a recruitment benefit. She shared that she is working hard behind the scenes to make things happen.

JS added that we need people within the community to know that they can also support the BPD in administrative positions if they don't want to become police officers. She added that councilors can take the role of amplifying positions in this way.

SC also added that we create a new and positive narrative might bring more applicants into the organization.

GB shared that we should keep recruitment efforts as a continuous agenda item but it's not just about helping the police department. He mentioned that public safety is about keeping the community safe and meeting needs so we need to bring the community into the conversation.

GD shared that building a good and healthy public safety system is the culture we need to build.

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KD added that this is why she is here and that she will create some infrastructure within the city despite the challenges that Covid-19 brought about. She also shared that it will be helpful to build out and support the CSO and CSL positions.

6) Employee Safety Concerns

KD shared that the City is losing employees because they don't feel safe working at City Hall. She mentioned that a few employees have come forward with complaints about parking and parking in City garages.

KD added that she is concerned about employees not feeling safe about parking in the garages even though their parking is paid for.

She added that some employees have asked to continue working from home or asked to leave work early from home due to safety concerns.

KD mentioned that these concerns are not just from long-time employees but also new employees as well. She added that she has been working to figure out how to better support employees and is not sure if having more CSOs or CSLs patrolling the parking garages will help.

KD asked councilors to be sensitive about employee safety because it is starting to be a serious issue. She also shared that there are real safety concerns in the City.

SC asked how many people work in City Hall.

KD responded by saying that there are about 100 employees in City buildings around the HR office. She recommend that we might need to come up with an escort program or something to help and she asked that the councilors support the initiative when it comes before the council.

SC recommended that we might need security guards, brighter lights, and a camera in the garages to help with the public safety issue. She added that we should bring up the issue to the public safety committee as well.

GB responded by saying that a public hearing from the employees with representation from all City departments might be the way to go about it. He shared that having other players and departments within the process will allow us to get the full range of issues and we can then try to address them.

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GB shared that doing things in this internal way might help with solving the issues because employees will feel heard and those with the resources (DPW) will also be able to pour that into the process.

KD agreed and shared that she hoped employees came to the HRPC meeting. She shared that the Mayor has been trying to help and HR is also doing the work to help support and engage employees.

KD mentioned that she and the CAO Katherine Schad has discussed trying to form an employee safety committee to bring others into the conversation and keep safety as a standing agenda item for the HRPC.

SC added that if KD and Katherine put the group together the councilors can come to them and schedule a time to accommodate the employees being able to participate. JS seconded.

GB asked the group to consider having a field hearing in the City hall during the day and have it be separate from the HRPC meeting. He added that DPW needs to be there because they have the resources.

KD added that we need to bring the park rangers and patrol staff into the meeting to talk about what they do and how it is related to employee safety.

SC shared that having someone educate employees and do some internal training with dispatchers on how to react to random people screaming at the on church street might be helpful as well.

JS agreed and shared that she is also open to GB's previous idea. She also added that dispatchers need more coaching and training internally to respond better.

7) Adjournment

SC mentioned a tentative meeting planned for July 22, 2022, at 8:30 am. SC adjourned the meeting at 9:56 am; JS and GB seconded.

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