

POLK COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
September 14, 2020 - 10:30 AM
Emergency Operation Center (EOC) Womack Building Columbus, NC
Columbus, NC
MINUTES

PRESENT: Chairman Yoder, Vice-Chairman Melton, Commissioner Beiler, Commissioner Gasperson, and Commissioner Moore. Also in attendance were County Manager Pittman, Attorney Berg, Clerk to the Board High, media and citizens. (Commissioner Beiler participated remotely. No members of the media or public chose to attend the meeting).

1. Call to Order - Chairman Yoder.

2. Agenda Item(s)

A. Polk County Human Resources Policies & Procedures Manual.

The Commissioners were presented the draft revised policy to review in preparation for the work session at their June 15, 2020 regular meeting, along with a spreadsheet of all the changes made to the policy up to that point, which included technical changes, as well as new and substantive changes. Manager Pittman opened the discussion for questions, discussion.

Attorney Berg began with Section 1.1 Purpose of the Policy. She suggested removing those individuals not under the supervision of the County Manager, such as elected officials, and employees appointed by boards. The Board agreed to have Attorney Berg amend the wording of Section 1.1. They discussed that even though the policy does not pertain to those officials, they may still choose to use the County's policy for their employees.

Vice-Chairman Melton asked Tommy Oakman, Human Resources Officer, what the average probationary period was for most counties throughout the State. He replied he would have to research the topic for an exact number, but his understanding is they are usually six or twelve months. Sandra Hughes, Finance Director said the current Polk County probationary period for new employees is six months. Manager Pittman said new County Law Enforcement employees have a twelve month probationary period with a three month extension, for a maximum fifteen month probationary period. They reviewed Section 4.4 explaining probationary periods in detail. After discussion, the Board agreed to change the initial probationary period for new employees from six to twelve months, with one three month extension period for a maximum fifteen month probation to be consistent for all new employees. The new employees will begin accruing benefits the date of hire, and will be eligible to use vacation after six months of employment.

Manager Pittman pointed out a new incentive added to the policy Section 4.3.3 Employee Referrals. He said the best recruitment tool is word of mouth by

current employees. He explained this section gives employees an opportunity to earn a two hundred dollar bonus for referring an applicant who successfully completes their probationary period. The Commissioners said they liked the concept.

Manager Pittman used Section 5.8 Tuition Assistance Program, as an example of a technical change staff made that did not change the intent of the policy. He said by adding the phrase, *or successful completion of a pass/fail course* into the policy, it would modernize the document, as not all classes receive letter grades anymore. Presently, in the policy the only basis for tuition reimbursement is a grade point average or letter grade system. He said another example could be found in Section 5.13.5 Sick Leave Credit. The policy now requires employees provide a written request to transfer their unused sick leave to another agency. He said this will create a tracking mechanism to prevent discrepancies if the employee returns to Polk County at a later date, Attorney Berg said she could present a resolution for consideration to allow technical, procedural, and legal compliance changes to the policy to keep the document current and up to date without a formal review and Board approval for each change. Manager Pittman said any substantial change, especially those involving budgetary funds, would still be presented to the Board for approval before those revisions were made.

They moved on to Article VI. Conditions of Employment, they reviewed and discussed the following newly added, or enhanced sections: Section 6.4 Expectation of Ethical Conduct; Section 6.5.1 Conflict of Interest Guidelines; 6.5.1.1 Employees in Administrative Roles; 6.5.1.2 Business Relationships; Section 6.6 Employment of Relatives (Nepotism); Section 6.7 Relationships at Work.

After further discussion of Section 6.7 Relationships at Work, the Board decided to only keep the first paragraph of this section.

Mr. Oakman said he had a few documents he would like the Board to consider incorporating by form or reference into the document. Workplace Violence, Affordable Care Act (ACA), and Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Additionally, he recommended amending Section 6.8 Harassment by removing the last paragraph, and adding statements of prohibition, one on retaliation, and one on providing false information.

Vice-Chairman Melton said he initiated the policy review because it had been four years since it was last revised. He would like the Board to review the policy annually in January. Manager Pittman proposed the Commissioners consider reviewing the policy biannually, each January following the municipal election cycle (January of even years). He explained this would allow the newly elected Board time to become familiar with the County processes, before they are asked to review the human resources policies and procedures manual.

The consensus of the Board was for staff to revise the policy, and provide a summary of all substantive changes from the original document, including additional revisions discussed at the work session today, and present a resolution for technical changes by staff, that includes a biannual review

process, and present all the information to them for their review and consideration at an upcoming regular Board of Commissioners' meeting.

3. Adjournment

Commissioner Moore moved to to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Vice-Chairman Melton and the motion carried unanimously.

Attest:

POLK COUNTY BOARD OF
COMMISSIONERS

Ange High
Clerk to the Board

Myron Yoder
Chairman