

**Town of Bernardston
Selectboard Meeting Minutes**



Board Members

Brian J. Keir

Stanley D. Garland, Chairman

Kenneth R. Bordewieck

Minutes for the meeting of March 14, 2024

Meeting held at Bernardston Town Hall
38 Church St, Bernardston, MA 01337

Selectboard Members Present:

Stan Garland
Brian Keir
Ken Bordewieck

Others Present:

Karen Kelly
Susan Bobe

Stan opened the meeting at 3:00 pm.

First Order of business. The Selectboard reviewed the Personnel Policy and Procedures, starting at Section 13. Ken was not present at the last meeting, so a quick review led into a discussion of the potential changes. The Town policy states that holiday pay is based on an 8 hour, five day work week. At present, employees that are working a 10 hour, 4 day work week are getting more holiday pay than the employees that are working an 8 hour, five day work week making it inequitable across the board for all employees. This creeps into sick and vacation days too, and makes it harder to track accruals. Section 2.23 accurately describes what a regular full time employee is. The entire policy will reflect hours instead of days.

Stan made a motion to adhere to the current policy, that holiday, sick, and vacation pay will be based on an 8 hour, five day work week. Brian seconded the motion, Ken abstained, and the motion was approved 2-0. Moments later, Ken removed his abstaining vote, changed his vote, as per 2-23 of the policy, and the vote was approved, 3-0.

Second order of business. The Selectboard acknowledged that Town Counsel will review the policy to ensure it is compliant with Massachusetts State Laws and Regulations.

Third order of business. The Selectboard agreed to strikeout section 13.4.3.

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Fourth order of business. Brian Miner joined the meeting at 3:30pm to discuss the Small Bridge Inspection Report (Eden Trail/Mill Brook) issued by MassDOT. Brian would like to set up an on-site meeting, at the bridge location, with the Selectboard and the Bernardston Conservation Commission to go over the plan on how the bridge will be prepared and to receive the Conservation Commission's approval to do the work. Brian would like to schedule the meeting during the week of March 25th, 2024. The repair will cost around \$6000 to \$8000 and the Selectboard needs to decide what fund to charge. The Town will apply for the Small Bridge Grant Program (\$500,000) that opens in May 2024. This would go towards a bridge replacement. Stantec was the company that did the design work on the bridge in the past, so the Town will see if we can resubmit the same design plan from Stantec with a new water sample, etc. Highlighted on the grant application will be the need for emergency services (police, ambulatory) and school buses to travel the bridge back and forth from Leyden. The water department may want to replace the main pipe during the project as well. Brian will coordinate that effort with the Bernardston Fire and Water District. The Town Administrator will set up the meeting with the Conservation Commission, Selectboard and the Highway Department.

Fifth order of business. The accrual of vacation time discussion commenced. An interpretation of the current policy is that vacation is pre-loaded. We will add a 14.15 that reads, "Employees who terminate prior to the end of the current fiscal year will be required to reimburse the Town via payroll deduction the difference (if any) between the actual vacation hours used and the amount of vacation hours actually accrued." This new language will make it easier for Susan to track accruals. Susan acknowledged that we need to merge the way the policy is written with the Harpers system. Stan disagreed that employees should be allowed to use unearned vacation hours. Brian made a motion to follow the accrual schedule based in section 14.3. Ken seconded the motion and added with the understanding that 14.15 applies. The motion was approved, 2-0. Stan was a nay.

Sixth order of business. Section 14.13 shall read hours instead of days. "Employees may carry over from one fiscal year to the next a maximum of 240 hours of accrued vacation time and prorated for part time employees. Stan voted no on the amount of carry over from one fiscal year to the next.

Seventh order of business. Section 15-3 will read, "Regular full-time employees shall be allowed 96 hours of sick leave per year. It shall be accumulated at the rate of eight hours per month worked". Stan disagreed on the amount of sick hours allowed per year. The Selectboard agreed that we
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need to add and clarify the definition of "retirement". For example, if an employee is eligible to receive the Franklin Regional Retirement System benefits, they can assume retirement status. If an employee is ineligible to receive the Franklin Regional Retirement System benefits, they can not assume "retirement" status. Earned time off was discussed. Ken and Brian would like to stay with 12 days of sick days a year (96 hours). Ken made a motion to leave the sick days at 12 days per year. Brian seconded the motion and it was approved, 2-0. Stan was a nay.

Section 15-9, Accrual of Sick Leave stays the same.

Section 15-10, Termination will read, "Upon termination of employees (including retirement) with the Town, all sick leave benefits, accumulated or otherwise, shall cease."

A discussion ensued about grandfathering current employees, protecting existing employees from the potential changes in section 15-10.

Brian made a motion to grandfather current employees. Current employees will not be affected by any changes made to the personnel policy. Ken seconded the motion and it was approved, 2-0. Stan was a nay.

Eighth order of business. Brandon Grover presented a hiring announcement for the Library Director. Brandon Grover, as the President of the Library Board of Trustees is the appointing official for library employees. Therefore, there is no approval required from the Selectboard.

In closing, Stan reiterated that he is very concerned about the tax increase and the reaction from the Town's residents. Selectboard wants to have a better understanding about the property assessment and would like to speak with the Assessors office before the annual town meeting. Stan wants to be forthcoming about the increases with the Town's people and anticipate the questions before they are asked at the annual town meeting.

With no further business to be discussed, Ken motioned to adjourn the meeting at 4:59 pm. Brian seconded and the meeting was adjourned.

Attested by: Karen Kelly, Town Administrator


Stanley D. Garland

, Chairman


Brian J. Keir


Kenneth R. Bordewieck

Town of Bernardston
Selectboard Special Meeting Agenda
Thursday, March 14, 2024, 3:00 PM



Bernardston Town Hall, 38 Church Street, Bernardston MA

Board Members

Brian J. Keir

Stanley D. Garland, Chairman

Kenneth R. Bordewieck

Agenda

Call to Order

Bernardston Personnel Policies and Procedures Review #2

Other Business Unknown at time of posting

Adjourn

This meeting was posted on Tuesday, February 27, 2024 at 4:30pm