

6-2-2020 draft

## Personnel & Policy (P&P) Committee Zoom Meeting

May 8, 2020 / 9:00-10:00 am

### Participants:

George LaPointe, Nate Rudy, Diana Scully, Patrick Wynne

### Discussion:

#### A. Expectations of City Employees during COVID-19

- If a firefighter is ill, he should not respond when there is a fire. This requirement will be approved initially as part of the Emergency Management Plan and will be ratified by the City Council in June.
- The City Manager shared a draft policy statement about the use of protective masks or face coverings for City employees. Based on information provided by the US and Maine CDCs, the policy is intended to 1) protect City employees, including first responders, by reducing coronavirus transmission and other illnesses; 2) protect public health; and 3) model good behavior to support public health initiatives in partnership with Maine CDC. The City will receive additional Protective Personal Equipment (PPEs) if there is a COVID-19 outbreak in Hallowell, so it can afford to make PPE available for City employees.

#### B. Personal Communications Guidelines for City Employees

- The Maine Municipal Association (MMA) has personal communications guidelines for their employees. The guidelines cover various forms of social media, letters to the editor of newspapers and personal endorsements.
- The MMA guidelines should inform the development of personal communications guidelines for Hallowell City employees.

#### C. Getting Back to “Regular” Work

- In addition to the essential focus on COVID-19, the City Manager would like the City Council and staff to get back to their other, ongoing work. The City Manager speaks with the Mayor every day, provides frequent updates to the City Council, and wants to reinforce that he is available to City Councilors and others with questions or concerns at any time.
- It was agreed that it is time to “normalize” meetings of the City’s committees, once again.
- It was agreed that the P&P Committee would reinstate its quarterly meeting schedule beginning in June, as a means of continually identifying and addressing questions that arise regarding the respective responsibilities of and communications between the City Council and the City Manager.

#### D. Possible Impacts of Austere FY 2021 Budget on City Employees

- Layoffs of Hallowell City employees would hurt the City because the staff is so small.
- There will be discussions with the union about the possibility of furlough days and salary.
- The budget will not be done by June, because the type and extent of COVID-19’s impacts still are not entirely clear. What will be the impact on the ability of people to pay their property taxes? Will revenue sharing decrease by 50%, as MMA has projected?
- It was noted that the new Assistant City Clerk position remains in the budget for now.

**Personnel & Policy (P&P) Committee Zoom Meeting**  
**June 2, 2020 / 10:00-10:55 am**

**Participants:**

George LaPointe, Nate Rudy, Diana Scully, Patrick Wynne

**Discussion:**

**A. Social Media Guidelines for City Employees**

- The City Manager sent a memo (dated June 1, 2020) to City employees with guidelines and expectations about their use of social media, especially as governments at the local, state and national levels respond to the Coronavirus pandemic.
- The City Solicitor reviewed these guidelines prior to their distribution to City employees.

**B. Coronavirus Fatigue**

- Coronavirus fatigue has settled in. For example, fewer Councilors consistently check in with the City Manager at the beginning of each week to let him know how they're doing. As time goes on, this is natural, but it for now it is still important to do this.
- There might be restrictions in the long term, so how best can Coronavirus Fatigue be addressed now?
- What had been new ways of doing things because of the pandemic are now becoming routine.
- Businesspeople and others are tired of the rules. Discipline to keep up with responses and restrictions is lagging, because of Coronavirus Fatigue.

**C. Challenges with Coronavirus Communications Methods**

- It has been harder to stay on top of policy issues that need attention and harder to mobilize to get things done. For example, the issue of the use of short-term rental property during the pandemic continues to be a grey area.
- How can the City Council and City Manager be more pro-active in resolving policy matters?
- How can we best communicate changes and expectations for re-openings and meetings? It was easier to close things down than it is to open them back up.
- Email correspondence is a good thing, because it documents what has been. However, this is passive communication. The sender doesn't know for sure if the email has been received, if the recipient doesn't respond.

**D. Possible City/Community Forum or Event**

- There could be a forum or event focused on the Coronavirus (e.g. facemask-making contest, book discussion about "The Plague" by Albert Camus, celebrating local heroes, and/or other activities to engage the Hallowell community.)
- If there is an interest in doing this, the responsibility for making it happen should not fall on the shoulders of City employees, including the City Manager. Perhaps a Council member or two plus community members could be tapped.

**E. Coronavirus Response in the Longer Term**

- What does a long-term Coronavirus response look like?
- Do we need to continue to use emergency orders, or is there another mechanism that still allows quick and nimble response when needed?
- Perhaps now is the time to get more Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) in anticipation of another wave of the Coronavirus in the fall.

**F. Summer Rec**

- The City Manager has asked organizers of the Summer Rec program to submit an operations plan, describing the steps that will be taken to assure that program participants will be kept safe pursuant to Coronavirus requirements and guidelines. He does not think the City of Hallowell should participate in Summer Rec this year if the plan is not forthcoming.