

ARTICLE 6 - PERSONNEL RELATED POLICIES

The Personnel Policies of the Town of Reading are adopted separately by the Board of Selectmen, and those policies apply to personnel who, in accordance with the Reading Home Rule Charter, are appointed by or report to the Town Manager, the Library Board of Trustees, and the Board of Assessors.

The following policies are adopted by the Board of Selectmen, not in their role as Personnel Board, but in their other roles, such as the appointing authority of the Town Manager (Section 6.1), or in their authority to determine regulations for payroll and other issues (Section 6.2).

Section 6.1 -Policy on Customer Service

The Town of Reading is committed to operating in an excellent customer service orientated manner throughout its entire operation. **Excellent customer service is our goal.** Excellent customer service means consistently and continually exceeding customer expectations, and results in an organization meeting the needs of its customers in a consistent and professional manner.

The Town's Mission Statement reads: *"The Town of Reading strives for excellence in all its services – from education to government – and seeks to enhance the social, intellectual, and leisure life of the community."* In furtherance of this Mission, the Town has adopted the following statement of values to provide guidance for employees and officials in how we go about doing the work of local government:

Values

The municipal government of the Town of Reading will be guided by the following values:

Integrity and Transparency

- Reading municipal government and its employees and officials will be guided by the highest standards of ethics and integrity.
- Municipal business will be conducted in an open manner with opportunities for public discussion and input into decisions.
- The community will be kept informed with open communication.
- All official business will be conducted in a civil, professional, and mutually respectful manner.

Excellence

- Excellence will be the standard for all municipal services, with continuous review and evaluation of best practices, incorporating new methods and technologies, striving for efficiency and cost effectiveness.
- Reading municipal government will make decisions based on careful planning consistent with town-wide goals.

Diversity

- Municipal government will encourage diversity and respect for differences in the conduct of its business and in recruiting and hiring personnel and in providing enrichment opportunities for the community.

Community

The following are values that the community holds in high regards:

- Social, Environmental, and Financial Sustainability
- Tolerance, Civility and Cultural Diversity
- Volunteerism and Civic Engagement
- Historic Preservation and Open Space
- Recreational, Cultural, and Educational Opportunities

While it is impossible for this Policy to describe every customer service situation that may arise, the standards explained in this Policy are guidelines that should govern our customer service at all times. The following are standards for excellent customer service:

- Treat customers with dignity, respect and courtesy at all times
- Actively listen to customers needs
- Communicate in clear language that is understandable to customers and staff
- Provide alternative means of communication with the Town including email, phone, fax, web site, and in person
- Respond to customer requests quickly and completely
- Help customers to achieve their goals within the applicable laws and guidelines
- Apply sound judgment in support of the needs of customers
- Help customers negotiate the Town processes for positive results
- Offer alternative approaches and options to help customers achieve their goals
- Simplify processes, forms, and procedures so that they are easy to use and to understand
- Provide a way for customers to provide feedback
- Assess customer feedback and incorporate changes to improve service

If an employee is confronted with situations not covered by this Policy, or has questions regarding the matters that are addressed in the Policy, the employee is urged to consult with their Supervisor or the Town Manager. Ultimately, employees need to use good judgment and common sense in providing service to customers in a manner that the employee would like to be treated if they were the customer.

1. Responsibility for Implementing this Customer Service Policy

Employee Responsibility - All employees of the Town of Reading are to be made aware of the importance of customer service within the Town's operation. Employees should be clearly aware that customer service abilities in all levels of their work will impact performance reviews and promotional opportunities. The Town of Reading will recognize excellence in customer service through the Employee Recognition Program.

Supervisors and Management Responsibility - Leadership by example is a key component to excellence in customer service. Town management must continually promote in their actions, words and writing the paramount importance of customer service standards. Performance reviews of management personnel will be impacted by the ability of a manager to provide high levels of customer service, and the ability

to train and supervise employees to do the same. Supervisors will ensure that customer service questions are included in all interviews of potential new employees, and will cover this policy and any additional customer service expectations in new employee orientations

Town Responsibility - All new employees will be provided with a customer service training class that includes an active listening component within one year of employment. All employees will be provided with an additional customer service or communications training as resources allow. This will be a part of the employee's individual development plan as part of their annual employee review.

2. **Internal Service Departments**

Several Town Departments are in existence to serve other Town Departments directly and not the general public. The Town's customer service standards are fully applicable to our internal service departments. The ability of the Town to meet its own needs in a professional, efficient and customer service orientated manner is a key ingredient to offering such a service to the public.

3. **Measurement**

The Town of Reading is committed to continual improvement of its operations based on the philosophy of excellence in customer service. Proper measurement of customer service initiatives is vital to this goal.

Customer Service Feedback - Each department must have a Customer Service Feedback log which should be an electronic document the results of which can be accessed by the Department Head and the Town Manager. Whether a complaint or compliment is formal or informal, written or verbal, it must be entered into the log. The substance of the log is up to individual departments, but must include at minimum the name of the customer if available, the time and date of the feedback, the nature of the feedback, the employee handling the situation, and the disposition of the situation. Feedback will be shared with the employee(s) involved and will be included in summary as part of the annual performance review.

Customer Service Survey - Every department will have available at each customer service point a return mailer card approved by the Town Manager which allows input on customer service performance. These cards shall be prominently displayed with easy customer access. Employees shall offer the card to each customer where there is a significant level of customer service (i.e. not just a request for directions, or matters of that sort) or at the end of service when the issue has been resolved. In addition, the email address of the customer service survey (in a format determined by the Town Manager) will be included at the bottom of every employee email response. This same information is available on the town web site. All cards will be returned to the Town Manager's office.

Adopted 2/9/10

Section 6.2 - Evaluation of the Town Manager

Since the position of Town Manager is of great importance in establishing the direction of Town Services, the Board of Selectmen formulates through this policy a process for evaluating the performance of the Town Manager at two levels:

1. Annual establishment of the Town Manager's goals for the coming calendar year.
2. Annual evaluation of the Town Manager's overall performance as defined in the role description for the position and in meeting established objectives.

6.2.1 - Goals

Prior to the end of the calendar year, the Town Manager shall submit in writing to the Board for discussion and mutual approval, a list of annual key goals that reflect the Town's needs and priorities. The Town Manager will then establish, with Department Heads, the specific objectives and work plan to accomplish the agreed upon goals.

During the year, normally at three-month intervals, there will be open sessions of the Board during which the Town Manager shall report progress in achieving the goals and objectives and receive feedback from the Board.

6.2.2 - Annual Evaluation

The annual evaluation of the Town Manager's overall performance shall be based on the role description for the position and the achievement of goals and objectives that had been previously agreed upon. The evaluation shall cover the previous year's performance.

With input from the Town Manager, the Board shall establish a role description for the position of Town Manager which may be reviewed from time to time at the request of either the Board or the Manager.

When changes in items on the role description are made by the Board, the Town Manager shall be given at least six months to demonstrate performance on the changed item before an evaluation on that issue is made unless the Manager and the Board agree otherwise.

An evaluation subcommittee, appointed by the Chairman, shall initiate the annual evaluation process late in each year by distributing to each Board member and the Town Manager:

- a copy of an Annual Evaluation Form,
- the current years goals and objectives and current progress reports from the Town Manager and
- the previous year's Evaluation Report.

Each Board member and the Town Manager shall submit the completed evaluation form to the subcommittee within four weeks. The subcommittee will then prepare a composite of the Evaluation Reports and submit this to the Board of Selectmen and Town Manager for presentation and discussion in a regular session of the Board of Selectmen. The Board will take into consideration the Town Manager's overall performance and progress in meeting the annual key goals and objectives in establishing the Town Manager's salary for the following year beginning July 1.

A copy of the Annual Evaluation Report is to be placed in the Town Manager's personnel file.

Adopted 12-13-94, amended November 1, 2005

Section 6.3 - Before-Tax Health Care Premium Payment Plan for Employees Paid Biweekly

The Town of Reading desires to establish a Cafeteria Plan, as permitted by Section 125 of the Internal Revenue Code and Section 132 of Chapter 697 of the Massachusetts Acts and Resolves of 1987, in order to permit eligible employees of the Employer to participate in the Employer's Group Health Plan on a basis which is intended to provide them with significant income tax advantages, as permitted by Section 125 of the Internal Revenue Code, as amended.

The Town of Reading desires that the Plan shall be effective for the pay period ending March 2, 1990, and that the Plan shall be known as The Town of Reading, Massachusetts Pre-Tax Health Care Premium Payment Plan for Employees Paid Biweekly (hereinafter referred to as "Plan"); said plan will be limited to those employees paid biweekly.

To implement and carry out the purposes of said Plan, the Employer does hereby establish the Plan as follows:

6.3.1 - Definitions

1. CODE shall mean the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as amended from time to time.
2. COMPENSATION shall mean total annual compensation earned by an Employee during a Plan Year as reported on Form W-2.
3. EFFECTIVE DATE shall mean March 2, 1990.
4. EMPLOYEE shall mean an employee of the Employer, paid biweekly.
5. EMPLOYER shall mean the Town of Reading, Massachusetts.
6. MEMBER shall mean an eligible Employee who is duly enrolled under the Plan.
7. PLAN shall mean The Town of Reading, Massachusetts Before-Tax Health Care Premium Payment Plan for Employees.
8. PLAN ADMINISTRATOR shall mean the individual(s) designated pursuant to Article IV to administer the Plan.
9. PLAN YEAR shall mean the twelve-month period which begins on March 1.

6.3.2 - Eligibility and Participation

- 1) Each Employee shall be eligible to become a Member in the Plan on the Effective Date of the Plan if he or she is eligible to participate in the Employer's Health Care Insurance Plan. All other biweekly Employees shall be eligible to become members of the Plan as of the first full payroll period following enrollment in the Employer's Health Care Insurance Plan.
- 2) Upon signing an agreement, employees who have satisfied the eligibility requirements as of the Effective Date shall become Members in the Plan. If an employee does not wish to become a member of the Plan, the Employee completes a waiver form declining participation in the Plan on a form provided by the Employer. An Employee who has satisfied the eligibility requirements after the Effective Date shall become a Member in the Plan unless the Employee completes a waiver form declining participation in the Plan on a form provided by the Employer.

- 3) Such participation shall be irrevocable and shall remain in force for the duration of the Plan Year, except as provided in Section 7.3.2 4). At least thirty days prior to the commencement of each Plan Year, each member shall be provided with the option not to participate in the Plan with respect to that Plan Year following completion of a waiver form in the form provided by the Employer.
- 4) A Member may revoke a benefit election after the period of coverage has commenced and make a new election with respect to the balance of the Plan Year if both the revocation and new election are on account of and consistent with a change of family status (e.g., marriage, divorce, death of spouse or child, birth or adoption of child or termination of employment of spouse). Such a revocation and new election shall be effective as of the first payroll period following notification to the Payroll Office.

6. 3.3 - Benefits - Payment of Premium

For Plan Members, all of the Group Health Care Insurance Plan premiums paid by the Employee will be paid instead directly by the Employer. Unless an eligible Employee waives participation in the Plan prior to the commencement of each Plan Year, it will be deemed that the Member agrees to have his or her pay reduced each pay period by the amount of the Employee's portion of the Group Health Care Insurance Plan premiums applicable to his or her coverage for such month. Any adjustment in the amount of such Group Health Care Insurance Plan Premiums during the Plan Year because of changes in the cost of such group insurance premiums shall be automatically reflected in the amount of pay reduction for the Plan Year as of the effective date of the adjustment.

6. 3.4 - Administration of Plan

The Town Manager shall appoint the Plan Administrator (consisting of one or more persons, appointed from time to time) to serve at the pleasure of the Employer. Any vacancy arising by resignation, death, removal or otherwise shall be filled by the Employer.

The Plan Administrator shall have such authority as may be necessary to discharge responsibilities under the Plan, including the following rights, powers and duties:

1. The Plan Administrator shall adopt rules governing Plan procedures not inconsistent herewith, and shall keep a permanent record of such actions. The Plan Administrator shall administer the Plan uniformly and consistently with respect to persons who are similarly situated.
2. The Plan Administrator shall prepare and file such reports as may be required by the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 (ERISA) or otherwise by law, from time to time.
3. The Plan Administrator shall have the sole responsibility for the administration of the Plan; and, except as herein expressly provided, the Plan Administrator shall have the exclusive right to interpret the provisions of the Plan and to determine any question arising hereunder or in connection with the administration of the Plan, including the remedying of any omission, inconsistency or ambiguity, and any decision or action in respect thereof shall be conclusive and binding upon any and all Members or former Members.

4. The Plan Administrator may seek the advice of such counsel and agents in such clerical, medical, accounting and other services as may be required in carrying out the provisions of the Plan. The Plan Administrator shall be entitled to rely conclusively upon, and shall be fully protected in any action taken in good faith in relying upon, any opinions or reports which shall be furnished by any such accountant, counsel or other specialist.
5. The Plan Administrator shall act by a majority of its persons at the time in office and such action may be taken either by vote at a meeting or in writing without a meeting. The Plan Administrator may authorize any one or more persons to execute any documents on the Plan Administrator's behalf.
6. The Plan Administrator shall serve without compensation for services as such.

The Plan Administrator shall discharge any and all duties solely in the interest of Members and former Members:

1. For the exclusive purpose of providing benefits to such Member or former Members, and, in the discretion of the Employer, defraying reasonable expenses of Plan Administration, and
2. With the care, skill, prudence and diligence under the circumstances then prevailing that a prudent man acting in a like capacity and familiar with such matters would use in the conduct of an enterprise of a like character and with like aims.

The Employer shall indemnify the Plan Administrator and Employees of the Employer performing fiduciary duties under federal law to the extent that such officers or employees incur loss or damage which may result from such officers' or employees' duties or exercise of discretion under the Plan. Any other act or omissions will not be indemnified by the Employer in the event that such loss or damage is judicially determined or agreed by the officers or employees to be due to gross negligence or willful misconduct on the part of the Plan Administrator.

6.3.5 - Claims Procedures

Any Member or former Member who wishes to request an informal review of a claim for benefits or who wishes an explanation of a benefit or its denial may direct to the Plan Administrator a written request for an informal review. The Plan Administrator shall respond to the request by issuing a notice to the claimant as soon as possible but in no event later than thirty days from the date of the request. This notice furnished by the Plan Administrator shall be written in a manner calculated to be understood by the claimant and shall include the following:

1. The specific reason or reasons for any denial of benefits;
2. The specific Plan provisions on which any denial is based;
3. A description of any further material or information which is necessary for the claimant to perfect his or her claim and an explanation of why the material or information is needed; and
4. An explanation of the Plan's formal claims review procedure.

In the event that the notice concerning the information review is insufficient to satisfy the claimant, the claimant or his duly authorized representative shall submit to the Plan Administrator a written request for a hearing. The Plan Administrator shall hold a full

and fair hearing on the issue within thirty (30) days following receipt of the claimant's request for a hearing. The Plan Administrator shall then furnish a written decision which shall be written in a manner calculated to be understood by the claimant and containing specific reference to the pertinent Plan provisions on which the decision is based.

6.3.6 - Miscellaneous

This Plan shall be subject to amendment or termination at any time by the Employer; provided, however, that amendment or termination shall not affect any right to claim benefits arising prior to such amendment or termination, and provided further that after termination no person shall be considered to be a Member for any purpose of the Plan.

The Plan is intended to qualify as a "Cafeteria Plan" under Section 125 of the Code, and shall be construed and interpreted consistent with the requirements of that Section. The Plan shall be further construed and administered in accordance with the laws of The Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

Nothing herein contained shall be construed to constitute a contract of employment between the Employer and any Employee. The employment records of the Employer shall be final and binding upon all Employees as to participation.

Amended November 1, 2005

Section 6.4 – Selection Process - Town Accountant

The Board of Selectmen (BOS) appoints two town officials who report directly to the Board of Selectmen: the Town Manager and the Town Accountant. Based on experience the following process should guide future Boards of Selectmen in such searches in the future.

The right for the public to be able to monitor the work of town government, embodied by the open meeting law, does conflict with the right of privacy of applicants for senior Town positions. Therefore it is important that a screening committee be convened that can offer casual applicants some measure of confidentiality during the early stages of the selection.

For the position of Town Accountant the screening committee should be constituted as follows:

- Two members of the Board of Selectmen
- One member of the School Committee
- One member of the Finance Committee

The Town Manager and Human Resources Administrator should be available to staff the process. The School Superintendent should also be consulted because of the close working relationship between the Town Accountant and the School Department.

The screening committee members should not be staff of the department or board, but members themselves. Further, it is critically important that all official committee members be available for screening interviews (even if that means having candidates come back twice).

The most important step in the screening process is networking throughout the area to solicit qualified candidates. For Town Accountant this may be somewhat difficult because municipal staffs are so small that there are few assistant Town Accountants that

can readily apply for the step up. Reading offers great working conditions, but the salary range may make it difficult to attract strong candidates from other towns. It is only with flexibility that the Town will be able to recruit for this position.

The Town has previously developed job descriptions, advertisements and other documents with draft questions for the screening process that help with sparking discussion with the candidate. These documents should be preserved in the Human Resources office for future use and guidance.

The search committee should rate each candidate and compile the results. The committee should look for consensus candidates to bring forward to the Board of Selectmen for their interview process. In general not more than two candidates should be forwarded to the Board of Selectmen interview, as it involves public discussion. Before the final round of interviews are scheduled the candidates should be aware of the anticipated pay level and conditions of employment given their skills, background and experience so there is little misunderstanding once the more public process begins.

The screening committee should not be afraid to recommend a single consensus candidate if that candidate is unanimously supported by the group. However, under this scenario it is very important that there be a clear understanding of the basic conditions of employment before the public interview.

The screening committee should report to the Board of Selectmen and the public on its recommendation(s) and schedule public interview sessions. The interviews should be led by the screening committee members for the Board of Selectmen. It is important that the Board of Selectmen is comfortable with the candidates before making a selection. The Board of Selectmen should not hesitate to ask for more or different candidates or to ask the candidates to return for a second round of interviews.

The Board of Selectmen screening committee members should participate with the Town Manager and Human Resources Administrator on making the final offer to the successful candidate.

Approved 6/20/06