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TO: Goodhue County Commissioners
FROM: Melissa Cushing, Human Resource Director
DATE: August 17, 2021
RE: Personnel Committee Structure

BACKGROUND:

After researching and reviewing several historical documents, the Personnel Committee was formed sometime around 1999 when Steve Bloom was the County Administrator. The information we found stated the Personnel Committee is a standing committee of the County Board so notice is required to comply with the open meeting laws.

At that time, the committee consisted of the Board Chair, Vice Chair, Administrator and Special Projects Coordinator with voting privileges held by the Commissioner members only. (note: The Special Projects Coordinator position was dropped when the Human Resource Director position was created in 2002).

Another report we found stated the meetings will be held at the discretion of the County Administrator. The purpose of the meetings was to evaluate and recommend staffing levels, restructuring of departments and revisions to pay grade levels. All recommendations would be forwarded to the County Board meeting.

Sometime around 2006-2007, Springsted was contracted by the County to put together a 5-year workout plan due to budget constraints. Through that process, the Personnel Committee was evaluating every position because of the budget concerns but those evaluations were only meant to last for two years.

In 2017, we were asked to review the hiring policy and update our background process. In addition, the Board approved a list of jobs that could be replaced without Personnel Committee or Board approval. Part of the review process included an evaluation of background check process for each job to determine, for example, which positions should require a financial background check. We operate using this same job list today.

CURRENT ISSUE:

Several Department Heads and some Commissioners have asked us to review the Personnel Committee as it functions today and provide options for how the committee could function going forward.

"To effectively promote the safety, health, and well-being of our residents"

The Goodhue County website describes the Personnel Committee as follows:

This committee addresses issues relating to staffing levels, tuition reimbursement, and personnel policies. Recommendations from this committee are forwarded to the County Board for final approval.

Currently the Personnel Committee reviews hiring for certain positions as listed on the job title list. The Personnel Committee also discusses grade placement and new employee step placement. In addition, the committee has been involved in law suit settlement proposals, policy creation and re-writes, and adding unbudgeted positions.

OPTIONS:

The options to change the Personnel Committee are as follows:

1. Do nothing. Doing nothing is always an option but often not the best route to choose.
2. Shorten the hiring process. The hiring process for budgeted positions has been extensive and often takes several weeks to complete. The process that is followed has to comply with the personnel policy, merit system, union contracts, background requirements, notice to current employers and other obligations. One way to shorten the hiring process is to change the basic functions of the Personnel Committee thereby decreasing the time it takes to bring new employees onboard. The Committee structure could be changed to the following:

This committee may address and study issues relating to staffing levels, departmental structure studies, labor lawsuit settlements, non-budgeted new positions, non-traditional hiring approvals, succession planning, conflicted investigations/allegations, and personnel policies. Recommendations from this committee may be forwarded to the County Board for final approval or may just provide staff feedback.

3. Disband the Personnel Committee. We would like to discuss with the Personnel Committee the necessity of having this type of committee. We believe this committee is still necessary to assist the Board with the items listed in option #2 and we do not believe the Committee should permanently be disbanded.

RECOMMENDATION:

We believe the Board should allow the Personnel Committee to continue to function in a different way than it currently functions. We recommend option #2 above for the new make-up of the Personnel Committee.