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HUMAN RESOURCES REVIEW
TOWN OF MILLIS, MA

12/31/24

UMASS BOSTON

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INTRODUCTION

After receiving a Community Compact Best Practices grant from the Commonwealth, the Collins Center for Public Management was engaged by the Town of Millis to conduct a comprehensive Human Resources Review including an analysis of, and make recommendations regarding, the possibility of shared Human Resources Department for the General Government and School Department. The Scope of Work was described as follows:

> *The project will study human resources (HR) operations, focusing on determining the most efficient structural options for providing HR services for the Town. The Town wishes to improve efficiencies and enhance the delivery of HR services by providing a cohesive approach to HR onboarding, benefit administration, policy development and administration by creating an effective and efficient centralized human resources function. The purpose of this study will be to analyze the provision of human resources services across the various departments of the town, including the school department, to make recommendations on the steps necessary and logistics of implementing a centralized human resources structure identifying changes that may eliminate redundancy, enhance services provided, decrease long-term costs, and/or improve service delivery as well as employee access to information through technology. Additionally, the Town seeks an analysis and recommendation on the potential of sharing HR services with the School Department.*

METHODOLOGY

The Collins Center conducted interviews with key personnel, including the Town Administrator, Assistant Town Administrator/HR Manager, Benefits Coordinator, Finance Director, Town Accountant, School Superintendent, Director of School Finance and Human Resources, IT Director, Executive Assistant, and School Payroll Specialist. In addition to interviews, three joint meetings were held with the stakeholders to discuss structure and procedures and brainstorm ideas and opportunities for efficiencies and improvement. An extensive review of documents, policies and procedures was also conducted.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations were derived after coalescing all the information received, documents reviewed, and meetings held, and are discussed throughout the report.

#	RECOMMENDATION STATEMENT
1	Create a new position of Human Resources Director (HRD) and remove human resources functions from the Assistant Town Administrator/Human Resources Manager position and centralize Human Resources functions from all departments, including the School Department under the direction of the Human Resources Director.
2	Create a School HR Generalist position in the School Administration Office, under the functional authority of the Human Resources Director and the administrative authority of the School Superintendent.
3	Change the position of Benefits Coordinator to be HR Generalist/Benefits Coordinator and remove the majority of the administrative/clerical duties performed for the Select Board from the position description.

#	RECOMMENDATION STATEMENT
4	Create a part time Administrative Assistant to the Town Administrator and Select Board to provide clerical, administrative, reception and accounts payable support.
5	Remove the majority of the human resources functions from the responsibility of the Executive Assistant to the School Superintendent and transfer them to the School HR Generalist position.
6	Change the Director of School Finance and Human Resources position to the Director of Finance and Operations, thus removing the HR role and transferring that to the HRD and the School HR Generalist.
7	Physically move the part time Payroll Specialist from the School Department to the Finance Office.
8	Update onboarding procedures for hiring authorities, and issue and enforce clear mandates of adherence to policies and procedures.
9	Conduct a personnel file audit to ensure personnel files are being kept properly, in accordance with personnel file regulations.
10	Conduct a review and create a tracking mechanism for benefited employees, hours worked and eligibility.
11	Create shared policies, procedures and guidelines regarding hours of work, part time hours, benefit eligibility and determining hours required for a position.
12	Conduct a review of software, systems and tracking used by and across the general government and the School Department to inform creating efficiencies and eliminate redundancies.
13	Evaluate and determine training needs for improved workflow through Munis or other software to streamline and remove redundancy in general HR, leave administration and payroll procedures.

DISCUSSION

The term "human resources" is broad and includes a host of functions which can be characterized as transactional or strategic. Human resources as a field have evolved through the years from "personnel" administration to "human resources" management.

Personnel administration is the title formerly assigned to human resources duties. In the 1980s, personnel administration consisted of enrolling employees in benefit plans, processing and distributing paychecks, hiring, and disciplining employees. The personnel department was merely an administrative function of the business. Concepts such as human capital or human resource management later emerged as Human Resources (HR) began to play a bigger role in the strategic direction of the organization. Personnel administration grew into human resources, which evolved in two separate but connected ways – strategic and transactional or functional human resources.

Transactional human resources are the "traditional" functions of benefits administration, policy development and administration, position descriptions, payroll, worker's compensation,

personnel file maintenance, collective bargaining agreement administration, vacancy posting and collecting applications and resumes. According to the Society for Human Resources Management, (SHRM,) these "transactional" functions are a way of "managing the employment relationship from recruitment and processing employees through retirement."

On the other hand, strategic human resource functions deal with the strategic direction of the organization and include long term goals. According to SHRM "HR needs to be approached from a holistic point of view encompassing every function of human capital management" and that organizational leadership, should work towards "creating an effective human resources infrastructure that supports an employee-centric, service-oriented strategic human resources organization." Strategic functions include long term planning, employee relations, training, succession planning, customer service and talent retention and development.

As communities and personnel issues have grown more complex, the responsibilities of town administration have also changed, expanded and have had more federal and state compliance demands placed on them. As such, many municipalities have encountered difficulties in keeping up with the legal requirements of employment, benefit, leave, and labor laws which can be difficult particularly in the fast-changing human resources landscape.

EXISTING STRUCTURE

The Town of Millis Home Rule Charter, Article III Executive Branch contains the following language:

> ***Position of Town Administrator*** *The town administrator shall be appointed by the board of selectmen and serves at the pleasure of said board. The town administrator shall be selected for executive and administrative capabilities and shall display the character, training, education and experience needed to perform the duties described in the Charter. The town administrator shall not have served in an elective office in the town government for at least two years prior to appointment.*

Article XIII of the Town General Bylaws contains the following language:

> ***Personnel Administrator****. The Town Administrator shall serve as Personnel Director to the Town and develop plans, policies and procedures for Board of Selectmen approval, and participate in the collective bargaining process.*
>
> ***Duties and Authority of the Personnel Director*** *The Personnel Director shall administer the Personnel Administration Plan. He shall establish for this purpose such policies, procedures and regulations consistent with the Plan as he considers desirable, except that no action of the Director may take effect unless approved by the Board of Selectmen.*

The Town Accountant and Department Heads shall keep such records of the employees of the Town as the Personnel Director may require. The Personnel Director shall keep such records of his own as he considers appropriate. All records of the Town by whomsoever kept pertaining to the Town's employees shall be opened to inspection by the Personnel Director at all reasonable times.

The Personnel Director shall prepare and maintain written job descriptions of the positions of all employees in the service of the Town, whether full or part-time, seasonal, casual, special, civil service or others, except those positions filled by popular election and those under control of the School Committee. Descriptions shall be classified by titles and into groups. Each group shall include those positions which involve substantially similar work or which have substantially equal scope of responsibility. These descriptions are not to be interpreted as limiting the scope of any position; and employees in the future, subject to provisions of the Plan, shall perform any incidental duties assigned by department heads, supervisors or other administrative authority. Said descriptions, titles and groups shall be established by the Town at the town meeting and shall become a part of this Personnel Administration Plan as Schedule A, entitled "Classification Plan." The title of a position in the Classification Plan shall be used to designate that position in all payrolls, budget estimates, official reports, memorandum, records or other matters involving the personnel or fiscal processes of the Town.

The Personnel Director shall recommend to the Board of Selectmen, for its approval, the minimum or maximum salaries, or single rate salaries, for the groups and positions in the Classification Plan. Said salaries shall be presented in an appropriate form to be approved by vote at the town meeting and shall become part of this Personnel Administration Plan as Schedule B entitled "Salary Plan."

The Personnel Director shall review, every three years, or more often if he considers it advisable: All positions subject to the Classification Plan to determine whether each group continues to include those positions which involve substantially similar work to which have substantially equal scope of responsibility; and The Salary Plan to determine whether it sets forth fair and equitable pay levels. After each such review, the Personnel Director shall recommend to the Board of Selectmen the action which he considers advisable.

The Personnel Director, with the approval of the Board of Selectmen, may tentatively add a new position to the Classification Plan or reclassify an existing position to a different group. Any such action shall cease to be effective after the close of the next following town meeting unless adopted by an amendment to the Classification Plan at that meeting.

No action of the Personnel Director may be construed as authorization to spend money for salaries or wages to employees in addition to that which has been lawfully appropriated for that purpose at a town meeting or which is lawfully otherwise available.

Upon recommendation of the Personnel Director, the Board of Selectmen may propose amendments to other Town bylaws or amendments to this Personnel Plan, which may affect the effective operation of the Personnel Administration Plan.

The Personnel Director shall summarize his activities annually in a report, which shall be published in the Finance Committee report.

The following Table reflects the current staffing performing the majority of the human resource functions for the General Government and the School Department.

DEPARTMENT	STAFF
Town Administrator/Select Board/HR	Town Administrator Assistant Town Administrator/HR Manager Benefits Coordinator
Finance/Town Accountant	Town Accountant Payroll Administrator
School Administration (related to HR)	Superintendent Director of Finance and Human Resources Executive Assistant Payroll Specialist (25 hrs/wk) Clerical Assistant (part time)

EXISTING HUMAN RESOURCES RESPONSIBILITIES

Human Resources functions are not completely centralized. Millis currently has functions of human resources being performed by both General Government and School Department employees. The following Table summarizes many of the key HR functions, but not all, being performed and by which staff.

HR Function	General Government	School
Recruitment and Advertising (job fairs, online postings, website)	ATA/HR Manager	Executive Assistant
Organize and facilitate hiring committees and searches for administrative vacancies (oversee questions, process)	ATA/HR Manager	Superintendent & Curriculum Director
Maintains records of recruitment process; resumes; questions, etc.	ATA/HR Manager	Executive Assistant
Appoints personnel	Town Administrator; ratified by Select Board	Superintendent
Determine scale placement of all hires	Town Administrator ATA/HR Manager	Superintendent
Determines hours/schedule of position	Town Administrator	Superintendent
Issues written conditional offers of employment	ATA/HR Manager	Executive Assistant

HR Function	General Government	School
Conducts reference checks	ATA/HR Manager & Dept Heads	Administrative Assistant
Process, track and review all SORI, CORI and fingerprint information on staff, coaches and volunteers	Benefits Coordinator CORI only	Executive Assistant
Coordinates pre employment physicals	Benefits Coordinator	Department Supervisors – No Central Coordination
Coordinates fingerprinting/drug testing	Benefits Coordinator Drug Testing	Executive Assistant
Issues appointment letter indicating start date; rate of pay, etc.	ATA/HR Manager	Executive Assistant
Verify and approve all employee actions; including hires, terminations, changes, leaves)	Town Administrator ATA/HR Manager	Director of Finance/HR and the Superintendent
Provides benefit information to new hire	Benefits Coordinator	Executive Assistant
Provides required forms I9, W4, Retirement, etc. to new employee	Benefits Coordinator	Executive Assistant
Liaison with the Schools/Town for onboarding personnel	Benefits Coordinator	Executive Assistant
Notifies HR about new hire	ATA/HR Manager	Executive Assistant
Receives and processes new hire packets	Benefits Coordinator	Executive Assistant
Initiates PAF Form and “Pink Sheet” tracking forms	Benefits Coordinator	Finance Office
Creates PAF from School for new hires; and forwards to HR	Benefits Coordinator for new hires; Town Accountant and Payroll Administrator	Payroll Specialist
Creates PAF for School for Wage adjustments; and forwards to HR		Payroll Specialist
Processes enrollments, adjustments, terminations for benefits	Benefits Coordinator	Finance Office
Creation of individual payroll deduction schedules for "School year only" (i.e., cafeteria workers) employees	Benefits Coordinator	
Payroll data entry	Payroll Administrator	Finance Office
Liaison with the Schools/Town Payroll department when questions arise	Town Accountant and Payroll Administrator	Director of Finance/HR and Payroll Specialist
Provide orientation for new staff	Dept heads	Department Heads
Collective Bargaining Negotiations	Town Administrator ATA/HR Manager	Director of Finance/HR and Superintendent
Oversee/administer Collectively Bargained Terms (Grievances, longevity calculations, Seniority, PTS Status)	ATA/HR Manager grievances; Payroll Administrator Longevity	Director of Finance/HR and Superintendent & Executive Assistant

HR Function	General Government	School
Investigations (complaints, Title IX, Harassment, Hostile Work Environment)	ATA/HR Manager	Superintendent & Administrative Team
Staff Counseling (EAP referrals, dispute resolutions, performance concerns)	ATA/HR Manager	Superintendent & Administrative Team
FMLA and other leave approval	ATA/HR Manager FMLA; Benefits Coordinator	Director of Finance/HR and Superintendent
Accrued leave tracking	Payroll Administrator	Superintendent, Executive Assistant, Director of Technology
Oversee leave accruals and sick banks as required	Town Accountant and Payroll Administrator	Superintendent, Executive Assistant, Director of Finance/HR
Oversight of compliance to HR policies related to personnel , state and federal laws	ATA/HR Manager	Director of Finance/HR
Data reporting to DESE and the State as required (OSHA, EEO, Diversity, EPIMS)	ATA/HR Manager	Varies and often performed by Technical, Clerical, or Professional employees depending on workload
Annual Mandatory Training production, distribution, tracking compliance (including Ethics, Harassment, Title IX, AUP)	ATA/HR Manager	Varies and often performed by Technical, Clerical, or Professional employees depending on workload
Diversity training, recruitment, interview structure, data tracking	ATA/HR Manager	Superintendent, Principals and Department Heads
Salary Budget Management	Finance Director and Town Accountant	Director of Finance/HR and Superintendent
Create, oversee and manage HRIS and all other HR systems	Town Accountant and Benefits Coordinator	
Provide counsel to administrators related to personnel issues, investigations and discipline	ATA/HR Manager	Superintendent
Oversee compliance with performance reviews; tracks process and progress		Superintendent
Coordinate with IT regarding staff access to buildings & systems (hires, changes, terminations)	Benefits Coordinator	Executive Assistant & Administrative Assist
Oversee and track of licensure; including tracking, waivers, renewals		Executive Assistant & Curriculum Director
Maintain personnel files and medical records for staff	ATA/HR Manager and Benefits Coordinator	Executive Assistant
Oversee mentoring program		Curriculum Director

HR Function	General Government	School
Manage unemployment claims, attend hearings as needed	ATA/HR Manager	
Manage employee wellness program	ATA/HR Manager	
Oversee deferred compensation benefits, provide information to staff (457, 403b)	Benefits Coordinator enrolls; Payroll Administrator deductions	Finance Director
Manage MTRS reporting		Finance Director
Provide compensation data and/or analysis as required	ATA/HR Manager and Accounting	Payroll Specialist
Provides terminated EE's with Cobra and unemployment information	Benefits Coordinator	Finance Office
Processes enrollments and terminations with NCRS	Benefits Coordinator	Benefits Coordinator
Processes enrollments and terminations with MTRS		Director of Finance/HR
Reconcile monthly MTRS & Norfolk County Retirement deductions	Payroll Administrator	Finance Office
Guide employees nearing retirement on the process to retire	Benefits Coordinator	Director of Finance/HR

DISCUSSION AND FINDINGS – STAFF RESPONSIBILITIES

Town Administrator, Selectboard, Human Resources and Payroll for General Government

As mentioned above, the number of staff in the Town Administrator/Select Board/HR office is three full time staff: The Town Administrator, Assistant Town Administrator/HR Manager, and Benefits. Coordinator. Each one of the positions wears many hats. (Appendix A has a summary of staffing of area municipalities)

In accordance with the Town's Charter, the Town Administrator has the responsibility for personnel administration. Through the years, the role of human resources has grown from being transactional, primarily onboarding, benefits and payroll to where it is today. One of the reasons the Assistant Town Administrator role was changed to include the responsibilities of HR Manager was because the Town was not performing all the necessary human resources for an organization the size of Millis. Additionally, the administrative support staff of the office was transitioned to be the Benefits Coordinator in recognition of the amount of work it takes to manage and administer benefits. What has suffered is the administrative support to the office of the Town Administrator and the Select Board. The ATA/HR Manager and the Benefits Coordinator perform all the clerical and administrative duties of the office, including preparing agendas and supporting the Select Board.

School Administration, Finance, Payroll and Human Resources for the School Department

As mentioned above, the staff involved in school administration, related to human resources is the Superintendent, Executive Assistant, Director of Finance and Human Resources, Payroll Specialist (part time), and minimum part time administrative clerical work being performed by a part time Paraprofessional in support of the payroll and human resources functions. As with the Town Administration, most positions wear many hats. While the Payroll Specialist is dedicated solely to payroll, the position is only 25 hours per week. The Superintendent, Executive Assistant and Director of Finance and Human Resources are performing human resources functions that should be assigned to a dedicated human resources staff person, at the expense of performing duties within their primary responsibilities. (Appendix A has a summary of staffing of area municipality municipalities)

Currently, many of the traditional HR functions are handled by staff whose primary jobs are to focus on other areas of running the district. Some are performing HR functions for which they are not trained.

The Executive Assistant to the Superintendent currently manages the recruitment of positions, the creation and maintenance of personnel files, offers of employment, CORI, SORI and fingerprints, provides benefits information to staff, processes new hire paperwork, communicates with IT and the Town offices on staffing assignments and access to buildings and systems. The work being performed is in addition to being the only administrative support to the Superintendent and the Director of Finance/HR. In most districts, Central Administrator has a dedicated Executive Assistant, not a shared one, and certainly not one that is primarily HR.

As in other aspects of the operations of the District, managers are performing tasks that should be the responsibility of subordinates. Both the Superintendent and the Director of Finance and HR are frequently performing duties that should be delegated. It is obvious in some instances that the work is being performed to ease the burden on staff, but it is not work that should be done at the salaries being paid for administrators. For example, the Superintendent of Schools frequently checks attendance records. While that can be helpful from a management or supervisory level, leave administration, tracking and management should be the responsibility of a human resources staff person. Similarly, as indicated in the Table of HR functions, the Superintendent is involved in placing new hires onto a specific pay schedule and in the approval of FMLA leaves. While policies and procedures need to be put in place and managed, the day to day work of these should be delegated to an HR staff person. Another example of work that should be delegated is work being performed by the Director of Finance and Human Resources that includes enrolling members in the MTRS and FMLA administration. While many of these are being performed out of necessity, there should be an HR staff person to do them.

DISCUSSION AND FINDINGS – KEY FUNCTIONS

In coalescing the data received from interviews, meetings, and review of documents the Collins Center makes the following observations as illustrative of findings. The following are **not** to criticize, but to illustrate issues needing to be addressed and the liabilities of not doing so.

Recruitment and Selection

The process for creating positions, advertising, screening, interviewing, offering, appointing and making salary determinations is varied. The general government positions follow a standard process coordinated by the Town Administrator's office and the Finance Office in cooperation with the department heads. In the School Department, the Executive Assistant begins the process carefully but the appointing and recommending authorities do not follow the necessary processes to provide for a formal system of onboarding. Hiring and recommending authorities have steps to follow, which are not always followed increasing delay and poor communication and transfer of information at critical times in the process of hiring and onboarding.

Onboarding

Onboarding has been a significant issue for the Town. Not enough coordination, consistent practices and resources are dedicated to the task of onboarding staff. Great strides have been made by staff in the Town Hall and in the School Department to improve the process. Sharing information around new hires has been challenging. Staff have met with the Collins Center and continue to meet on instituting a tracking and sign off system to ensure all stakeholders have the same information as soon as possible so that succeeding operations are not negatively impacted and delayed. The result may be a modified personnel action form or other system.

The tracking of onboarding will be accomplished. One of the specific challenges, however, is the lack of notice of a new hire in a timely fashion, which has resulted in new employees beginning to work without final sign off. Oftentimes, this is done out of necessity because the staff is critically needed. However, the Town Administrator, Select Board, the Superintendent, and School Committee should mandate and manage this issue. The liability of starting an employee without all the proper paperwork is significant. All preemployment steps and authorizations must be completed prior to the commencement of work. As mentioned above, the staff involved are creating systems to track and communicate, but it is a management issue that Principals and department heads across the Town are not consistently adhering to the required rules and processes and are not held accountable for their noncompliance.

Personnel Files

The review revealed that school department personnel files are not being kept properly, specifically with respect to the maintenance of medical information, which has a risk of HIPPA

regulation violations. The practice predates the current Executive Assistant. Without having trained staff the District and the Town may unknowingly be violating rules, regulations and laws.

Health Benefits

The Collins Center understands the issue of health benefits and accrued benefits for part time employees has recently been discussed. The issue of which accounts are charged for the cost of leave and benefits is a budget issue. The eligibility, requirements and granting of benefits is a legal as well as management issue.

A critical issue is hours assigned, and hours worked, which must be done in accordance with state and federal laws, CBAs and local policies. At least in one instance, a part time employee was given additional hours in another department, in a different job classification, which made the person eligible for benefits when they would not have been otherwise. Practices such as this should not be allowed not only because of the cost of a family medical plan for working just a few hours more than the threshold of hours, there is potential for violating rules regarding the employment in two different positions for the same employer, or in a different union.

It is also unclear what number of hours is considered full time, thus the calculation of a half-time full-time equivalent may have different hours assigned, which can impact benefit eligibility.

Administration of Leave Usage and Entitlement

Leave entitlement and usage is not being managed in a consistent are careful manner in the School Department. The use of paid and unpaid time for eligible leaves is a critical aspect of human resources, particularly in a unionized environment. It requires knowledge of not only the state and federal laws as they pertain to leaves, but also policy language in each collectively bargained agreement (CBA). Improper or lack of closely managing leave, entitlements and application of CBAs and laws is costly in terms of dollars expended or leave granted, but particularly costly if policies and practices are not applied equally or fairly across departments, locations and staff.

Retirement Enrollment and Reporting

As referenced above, there is not a dedicated person coordinating reporting to the MTRS and the Retirement Board. Reconciliation on enrollments, retirements, transitions and reporting should be delegated to appropriate staff.

OPPORTUNITY AND LIABILITY COSTS

Opportunity Costs

In addition to the above-stated issues, there are many tasks that are not being done at all, which

has a significant impact and cost. In addition to not tracking leaves of absence, the district is unable to point to a person who oversees compliance to School Committee polices as they relate to personnel. Compliance with the collectively bargained benefits, state and federal laws, OSHA, workers compensation, HR data, diversity and inclusion, unemployment claims are some of the areas currently not being managed by a trained staff member. Professional development, training, wellness and workforce development opportunities are not sufficiently being addressed by the organization. Having qualified, trained staff performing human resources functions improves the work environment for staff and provides support to other professionals and frees them up to focus on their job specific priorities.

Risk and Liability

The total employee compensation expense allocated in the FY2025 Budget for the Town of Millis is over $33.6 million dollars, representing approximately 74% of the overall $45.1 million-dollar operating budget. Insurance premiums, reimbursements and retirement costs represent approximately $7.5 million of that expense. The fact that the only full-time dedicated HR related position is the Payroll Administrator in the Finance department is an indication the Town needs to reevaluate the allocation of resources.

Not only is having trained and dedicated human resources staff good business from the perspective of best practices and investing in an organizations largest asset and cost, humans, it is a liability not do so. Attached to the report is information about the cost to defend lawsuits.

Without professionally trained and dedicated human resources staff, organizations can face significant risks including: increased legal liability from issues like discrimination or harassment claims, low employee morale due to lack of support and development opportunities, poor hiring practices, non-compliance with employment laws, decreased productivity, and difficulty managing workplace conflicts, ultimately impacting the organization's success. (Attached to the report is a sample HR Risk Assessment Planning tool) The following Table includes a sampling of key risks in having insufficient human resources management.

HR RISK ITEM	DESCRIPTION
Legal issues	Increased vulnerability to lawsuits related to discrimination, wrongful termination, sexual harassment, pay equity, and wage violations due to improper hiring practices or lack of clear policies.
Compliance issue	Failure to comply with employment laws regarding safety standards, equal opportunity, and employee benefits, leading to potential fines and penalties

HR RISK ITEM	DESCRIPTION
Union and Employee Relations	Claims of CBA violations, Unfair Labor Practices, Grievances often arise when HR is not administered consistently across and organization
Employee dissatisfaction	Low morale and high turnover rates as employees feel undervalued, lack career development paths, and have no proper channel to address concerns
Ineffective recruitment and onboarding	Difficulty attracting top talent and properly integrating new employees, leading to decreased productivity
Poor performance management	Lack of structured performance reviews and feedback mechanisms, hindering employee growth and hindering performance improvement
Lack of training and development	Missed opportunities to provide employees with necessary skills and knowledge to perform their jobs effectively and prepare for upward mobility which impact succession planning.
Negative organizational climate and culture	A toxic work environment can arise due to lack of clear expectations, poor communication, and inadequate conflict resolution mechanisms.

Source: Summarized from LinkedIn articles

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Collins Center coalesced all the information gathered through interviews, observations, review of documents and its knowledge of best practices to develop the following.

1. **Create a new position of Human Resources Director (HRD) and remove human resources functions from the Assistant Town Administrator/Human Resources Manager position and centralize Human Resources functions from all departments, including the School Department under the direction of the Human Resources Director.**

With an organization the size of Millis, having a centralized human resources function will enhance the organization, address gaps in operations and compliance and provide much needed technical and professional human resources support across the organization. As mentioned above, to not have full time dedicated staff to manage the largest asset, employees, is not sound business practice. Additionally, removing the human resources and clerical/administrative aspects of the ATA/HR Manager position will enable the ATA to provide more professional assistance to the Town Administrator with budgeting, communications, community engagement, employee relations and special projects.

2. **Create an HR Generalist in the School Administration Office, under the functional authority of the Human Resources Director and the administrative authority of the School Superintendent.**

The School Department has approximately 245 employees and not one full-time dedicated HR position. The Director of Finance and Human Resources does not have the time to dedicate to HR matters. Much of the HR work is being performed by the Executive Assistant. The Payroll Specialist is part time, and a few additional hours are being provided by a part time employee. Creating an HR Generalist would provide school-based professional and technical support and relieve the responsibilities currently being performed by the Executive Assistant, Superintendent, and Director of Finance and Human Resources.

3. **Change the position of Benefits Coordinator to be HR Generalist/Benefits Coordinator and remove the majority of the administrative/clerical duties performed for the Select Board from the position description.**

By removing the clerical and administrative assistant responsibilities duties assigned to the position, including reception, Select Board minutes, and accounts payable duties, the HR Generalist/Benefits Coordinator position will be able to expand the HR aspects of the position to include duties that will enhance services and coordinate more regularly with the School Department. The areas to be enhanced are the compliance issues that pose a risk to the Town such as COBRA, FMLA, HIPPA, Workers Compensation and others. Additionally, the position will be critical to the improved onboarding process currently being reviewed and improved.

4. **Create a part time Administrative Assistant to the Town Administrator and Select Board to provide clerical, administrative, reception and accounts payable support.**

The Town Administrator and Select Board functions do not have sufficient administrative support. The Benefits Coordinator and the Assistant Town Administrator/HR Manager provide administrative support, but not to the level that is needed. The Town will need to evaluate the number of hours and rate of pay for the position. It is recommended the position be a part time, non-benefited position. The position will alleviate the clerical and administrative work from the ATA/HR Manager and the Benefits Coordinator by assisting with reception, Select Board minutes, and accounts payable duties. While the office is “all hands on deck”, the executive office of the Town should have a dedicated administrative assistant with the responsibility of customer service, Select Board support and administrative support to the office**.**

5. **Remove the majority of the HR functions from the responsibility of the Executive Assistant to the School Superintendent and transfer them to the School HR Generalist position.**

The School Department will need to assess which functions should be retained by the Executive Assistant, such as official appointment letters, contract interpretation, etc. However the onboarding and tracking functions should be removed and placed with the HR Generalist. A key role of the position will be policy and procedure compliance and serving as the conduit across the School Department and with the HRD, HR Generalist/Benefits Coordinator and Finance Office. Having a dedicated School Department HR Generalist will enhance the employee experience, and provide professional technical assistance to Principals, Managers and Supervisors. The HR Generalist position will be able to assume many of the HR responsibilities being performed by other staff out of necessity, including recruitment, selection and onboarding, leave and attendance administration, CBA and policy compliance**.**

6. **Change the Director of School Finance and Human Resources position to the Director of Finance and Operations, thus removing the HR role and transferring responsibilities and duties to the Human Resources Director and the School HR Generalist.**

The Director of Finance and Human Resources wears many hats and performs many duties that should be delegated or transferred, including setting pay rates and MTRS reporting work. The School Department finance and operations work is broad and takes time. By creating the HR Generalist position and enhancing the HR function across the Town, the position will be able to be dedicated to managing the finances and operational aspects of the department.

7. **Physically move the Payroll Specialist from the School Department to the Finance Office.**

The School Department Payroll Specialist is a part time benefited position working 25 hours per week. The position used to be full time and was reduced in recent years. Physically moving the position to the Finance Office would provide cross training and better coordination and standardization of payroll processing across department. The extra hours currently being paid to the part time clerical assistant could be eliminated or added to the Payroll Specialist position or help fund the recommended School HR Generalist**.**

8. **Update onboarding procedures for hiring authorities, and issue and enforce clear mandates of adherence to policies and procedures.**

Because of workload and administrators wearing many hats, hiring managers have circumvented onboarding policies and procedures by allowing employees to begin working without final

authorization. It is a liability to allow employees to start working without proper steps being followed. With the creation of a School Department HR Generalist and the enhancement of the HR Generalist/Benefits Coordinator, the onboarding process will be centralized and streamlined, with the goal of a quicker, more efficient onboarding process which should alleviate the desire to allow employees to begin work without final authorization. However, moving forward, the practice should not be allowed and hiring managers should be held accountable.

9. Conduct a personnel file audit to ensure personnel files are being kept properly, in accordance with personnel file regulations.

As noted within, not all personnel records are being maintained appropriately. The Town should conduct a town-wide educational session, either in person or through a webinar, on the proper maintenance of personnel records and files. Once training occurs the Town should move quickly to audit and update personnel files and how they are maintained and retained.

10. Conduct an audit of the hours scheduled and worked for benefited part time employees

The Town does not sufficiently track the hours worked and eligibility for benefits for part time employees. An analysis of positions working or assigned between 18 and 30 hours should be conducted as soon as possible. The data to be evaluated includes hours assigned, hours worked, benefit eligibility.

11. Create shared policies, procedures and guidelines regarding hours of work, part time hours, benefit eligibility and determining hours required for a position.

Using the data collection in the recommendation 10 audit, a Town wide policy should be created. The data collected will inform the policies, practices and procedures that need to be adopted, particularly with respect to defining part time, number of hours actually worked and assigned, and benefit eligibility. While some positions need to be 22 hours, which triggers benefit eligibility, decisions on a case by case basis on assignment of hours and benefit eligibility must be done in cooperation and recognition of the significant cost of benefits. The cost of a family health insurance plan to the Town is approximately $39,000.00 per year. While benefits are an attractive recruitment tool, they are costly and providing benefits equally to full and part-time employees can create disparate treatment and equity issues. A tracking mechanism and approval process by appointing authorities and the Finance Office of benefited employees, hours worked, and benefit eligibility should be established as part of a policy or procedure. Incremental changes in benefit eligibility could realize significant cost savings.

12. **Conduct a review of software, systems and tracking used by and across the general government and the School Department to inform creating efficiencies and eliminating redundancies.**

The review has revealed the general government, and the School Department use a variety of tools, software and platforms to do the work. The School Department uses the Google Platform and has created tools to track and process employee information. The general government does not use Google. The financial software is Munis. As in any organization, people resist change and tend to continue with what they know, or the way things have been done. The working group has met and is moving forward with procedures to eliminate redundancy and increase communication and efficient sharing of information. Short and long range decisions about time and attendance software will need to be made.

13. **Evaluate and determine training needs for improved workflow through Munis or other software to streamline and remove redundancy in general HR, leave administration and payroll procedures**

With any change in application of procedures, processes, software and technology, there is a need for skill building, training and the updating of procedures. It is critical for success that all employees and managers are trained in any new system of method. Once decisions are made, the Town will need to evaluate competencies and to provide robust training.

LOGISTICS & CONSIDERATIONS

Leadership Collaboration

Moving forward, the Collins Center recommends the leadership team from the Town Administrator's office and the School Superintendent's office meet to establish a timeline for implementation of recommendations. The current employees performing HR work should be part of the discussion in matters of shifting duties and responsibilities.

Adjustments in Structure and Work Flow

Changes in job assignments for current employees can create stress and uncertainty. Millis employees seem excited and ready for the opportunity to work together but should receive support as they experience the change in methods and structure.

Reassignment of Duties

The Center has included recommendations in many instances of shifting, delegating or reassigning HR functions. It will be up to the stakeholders to determine exactly which duties are reassigned and to which positions.

Position Descriptions

With the recommended creation of new or revised positions, position descriptions will need to be updated/created and placed in the appropriate classification and compensation plan level.

Physical Location

The physical location of a human resources department may or may not be a challenge, depending on decisions made surrounding the location of staff.

Funding and Implementation

The Collins Center recognizes that not all recommendations will be adopted and/or implemented. Some may be rejected; others may be implemented over time as vacancies occur or funding becomes available.

CLOSING

Thank you for inviting the Collins Center for Public Management into your community. The Collins Center anticipates that the findings, observations and recommendations contained in this Report will help Millis on its path of creating a modern, efficient, legally compliant, professional and centralized human resources system. The Collins Center is available to discuss any aspect of the report with the appropriate stakeholders.

APPENDICES

Resources

Article: the Detrimental Impact of Poor HR Practices. https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/detrimental-impact-poor-hr-practices-organizational-success-majka-wuruf/

Article: Cost to Defend an Employment Lawsuit https://www.calltherightattorney.com/blog/2022/03/what-is-the-cost-to-defend-an-employment-lawsuit/

Note: The resources here are simply examples of articles on the subject matter and not intended to be recommendations or endorsement

COMPARATIVE STRUCTURES IN OTHER MUNICIPALITIES

Town /Department	Staffing
Millis Town Administrator/Select Board	Town Administrator ATA/HR Manager Benefits Coordinator
Millis Finance	Town Accountant Payroll Administrator
Millis Schools	Superintendent Executive Assistant Director of Finance/HR Payroll Specialist (part time)
Medway Town Administrator/Select Board	Town Manager Assistant Town Administrator Administrative Assistant
Medway Human Resources	Human Resources Coordinator/Benefits
Medway Treasurer/Collector	Payroll Administrator
Medway Schools	Superintendent of Schools Assistant Superintendent of Schools Superintendent Office Secretary (2 positions) Payroll/Benefits HR Director HR Secretary
Holliston Town Administrator/Select Board & Human Resources	Town Administrator Assistant Town Administrator/HR Director Office Manager Benefits Manager Clerk (part time)
Holliston Treasurer/Collector	Assistant Treasurer Payroll Clerk
Holliston Schools	Superintendent Assistant Superintendent for Finance Executive Assistant to Superintendent/HR Supervisor HR Administrative Assistant HR/Payroll Analyst
Norfolk Town Administrator/Select Board	Town Administrator Assistant Town Administrator/HR Director Executive Assistant (2 positions)
Norfolk Treasurer Collector	Assistant Treasurer Collector/Payroll Administrator Assistant Payroll Administrator
Norfolk Schools	Superintendent Business Manager Assistant Business Manager Executive Assistant HR Director

Town /Department	Staffing
Bellingham Town Administrator/Select Board & Human Resources	Town Administrator Human Resources Director Administrative Assistant (shared w TA &HR) Administrative Assistant to Select Board
Bellingham Treasurer Collector	Assistant Treasurer Collector Payroll Coordinator
Bellingham Schools	Superintendent Finance Director HR Director Payroll Coordinator

SAMPLE HUMAN RESOURCES RISK ASSESSMENT PLAN OUTLINE

1. Compliance Risks

- **Labor Laws and Regulations**:
  - **Risk**: Non-compliance with federal, state, and local labor laws.
  - **Mitigation**: Regular audits of HR policies and training for HR staff on legal updates.
- **Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO)**:
  - **Risk**: Discrimination claims based on hiring, promotion, or termination practices.
  - **Mitigation**: Implement and promote diversity training; establish clear EEO policies.
- **Health and Safety Regulations**:
  - **Risk**: Violations of OSHA regulations leading to employee injuries.
  - **Mitigation**: Conduct regular safety training and inspections; create a safety committee.

2. Recruitment Risks

- **Talent Acquisition**:
  - **Risk**: Difficulty attracting qualified candidates for critical positions.
  - **Mitigation**: Enhance employer branding; streamline the recruitment process; utilize diverse recruitment channels.
- **Background Checks**:
  - **Risk**: Failing to conduct thorough background checks leading to unsuitable hires.
  - **Mitigation**: Establish a standardized background check process and regularly review it.

3. Employee Relations Risks

- **Employee Engagement and Morale**:
  - **Risk**: Low employee morale leading to high turnover.
  - **Mitigation**: Conduct regular employee surveys; implement recognition programs.
- **Conflict Resolution**:
  - **Risk**: Unresolved conflicts leading to a toxic work environment.
  - **Mitigation**: Provide conflict resolution training; establish clear grievance procedures.

4. Performance Management Risks

- **Performance Appraisal System**:
  - **Risk**: Inconsistent performance evaluations leading to perceived favoritism.
  - **Mitigation**: Standardize performance review processes and provide training.

5. Workforce Planning Risks

- **Succession Planning**:
  - **Risk**: Lack of succession planning for key positions leading to operational disruption.
  - **Mitigation**: Identify critical roles and develop succession plans; provide mentorship programs.

6. Compensation and Benefits Risks

- **Pay Equity**:
  - **Risk**: Pay disparities leading to potential legal issues and employee dissatisfaction.
  - **Mitigation**: Conduct regular pay audits to ensure equity and transparency.
- **Benefit Administration**:
  - **Risk**: Mismanagement of benefits leading to employee dissatisfaction.
  - **Mitigation**: Regularly review benefits packages and communicate changes effectively.

7. Technology and Data Security Risks

- **HR Information Systems (HRIS)**:
  - **Risk**: Data breaches or loss of sensitive employee information.
  - **Mitigation**: Implement robust cybersecurity measures and provide training on data protection.
- **Remote Work Policies**:
  - **Risk**: Inadequate policies for remote work leading to productivity and accountability issues.
  - **Mitigation**: Develop clear remote work guidelines and establish communication protocols.

8. Training and Development Risks

- **Skill Gaps**:
  - **Risk**: Inadequate training leading to skill gaps among employees.
  - **Mitigation**: Conduct regular training needs assessments and develop tailored training programs.

Conclusion

This HR Risk Assessment outlines key areas of concern for a municipal government and provides mitigation strategies to address potential risks. Regular reviews and updates to this assessment will help ensure that the HR department remains compliant, effective, and responsive to the needs of the workforce and the community.

Action Plan

1. **Review and Update Policies**: Establish a timeline for regular review of all HR policies.
2. **Training and Awareness**: Schedule training sessions on compliance and employee relations.
3. **Conduct Surveys**: Regularly assess employee morale and engagement.
4. **Monitor Legislation**: Stay informed about changes in labor laws and regulations.

SAMPLE COMMENTS ABOUT COST OF A LAW SUIT

Aby Farhad Novian | Mar 5, 2024 | Employment Law

The average cost for employers to defend an employment lawsuit can vary significantly depending on whether the case settles or goes to trial. On average, it costs employers around $75,000 to work with an employment lawyer to settle a claim before it reaches trial. However, if the case progresses to court, the expenses can skyrocket, with pre-trial defense costs easily exceeding $125,000. Given the potential costs and the complexity of employment lawsuits, it's crucial for businesses to seek competent legal representation for employment law issues.

Steffans Legal Defends Employers in Employment Claims in Pittsfield, North Adams, Springfield, Worcester, Lowell, Fall River, New Bedford, and Cape Cod

Being sued by a current or former employee is certainly not fun. Fortunately, if that's happened to you, you are not alone. According to a 2015 study, employers have a roughly 12% chance of having an employment charge filed against them. On average, those claims take 275 days to resolve and cost approximately $125,000 in attorneys' fees and settlement payments. Having a claim filed against you does not mean you've done anything wrong, but it does mean you will have to defend the claims, likely in court.

Employment law claims are not like other types of lawsuits, primarily because they are based upon unique employment statutes, provide for specific defenses, and implicate abnormal evidentiary concepts. As a result, if you are facing an employment lawsuit, you should retain an attorney that specializes, not dabbles, in employment law.