



OFFICE OF THE TOWN MANAGER

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MEMORANDUM

TO: Town Meeting Voters

FROM: Jennifer Warren-Dyment, Town Manager

DATE: November 12, 2025

SUBJECT: Article 17: SAP-Personnel Committee Handout

This handout outlines the case for dissolving the Personnel Committee, as prepared by the Town Manager. The Select Board voted 4-1 to recommend the article to Town Meeting. The Finance Committee will be meeting on November 13, 2025 to make their recommendations.

Across Massachusetts, municipalities are shifting from Personnel Boards and Committees to an in-house HR model as the overall personnel environment has evolved in complexity. Part-time volunteer boards were designed for a different era of municipal operations. Today's HR environment requires full-time professional capacity to manage the volume, pace, and legal demands that define municipal employment.

Financial reviews by the Division of Local Services (DLS) routinely flag Personnel Boards/Committees as a duplicative and an unnecessary bureaucratic layer and DLS has commented that towns are ultimately "best served (by) having a professional manager who can develop and oversee a full-time, structured personnel management program, and this approach recognizes the growing importance of and risks inherent in personnel issues."

This handout outlines the rationale for updating Lunenburg's HR governance. The shift to a professionalized HR governance model is happening across the Commonwealth. This approach improves compliance, agility, reduces fragmentation, clarifies accountability, and aligns with modern labor law and risk management.

Respectfully submitted,

Jennifer Warren-Dyment
Town Manager

The Personnel Committee in Lunenburg

- Salary Administrative Plan (SAP) established in 1965
- In 2009 Lunenburg transitioned from a Chief Administrative and Financial Officer (CAFO) to a Town Manager
- In 2019 Lunenburg created and filled the position of Assistant Town Manager/HR Director
- Structure of the Personnel Committee in Lunenburg
 - Established by the Salary Administrative Plan, not the Town Charter or General Bylaws
 - 5 members who are residents of Lunenburg
 - Appointed by the Select Board
 - Three year terms
 - Town Employee may be called as a subject matter expert or non-voting member
- Lunenburg Personnel Committee disbanded May 29, 2024

What currently happens in the absence of a Personnel Committee?

In the event that the Personnel Committee does not have enough members to conduct business, the Town Manager shall have the authority to administer the Salary Administration Plan (§ 70-2, G)

Role of Lunenburg's Personnel Committee per Salary Administrative Plan (SAP)

What is the Salary Administrative Plan?

The Plan classifies certain positions of Town services into groups, establishes salary schedules, establishes so-called "fringe" benefits, or "indirect pay" provisions, such as holidays and vacations with pay, sick leave, and the like, and establishes a Personnel Committee to administer the Plan, as hereinafter provided, and to represent the interest of both taxpayers and Town employees.

What does the Personnel Committee do and what does this Article propose?

The Personnel Committee administers the provisions of the SAP, except for such duties as may be specifically assigned by statute, Town Charter or by-law to other Town officers, boards, or committees.

The chart below outlines the current SAP and the action proposed to Town Meeting under Article 17. Please also reference the full text of the Article in the document entitled, "Transmittal of Documents for the November 18, 2025 Special Town Meeting" which is available in the Office of the Town Clerk, online, and as a handout provided at Special Town Meeting.

Bylaw Section	Current Language	Proposed Action at Special Town Meeting
§ 70-1: Purposes and Scope	This by-law establishes a Salary Administration Plan, hereinafter called the “Plan”, which classifies several positions of town services into groups, establishes salary schedules, establishes so called “fringe” benefits, or “indirect pay” provisions, such as holidays and vacations with pay, sick leave, and the like., and establishes a Personnel Committee to administer the Plan, as hereinafter provided, and to represent the interest of both taxpayers and town employees.	Strike bold language.
§ 70-2 A.: Personnel Committee (Establishment)	There is hereby established a Personnel Committee consisting of five members, each residing in the Town of Lunenburg, to be appointed by the Select Board, and each member shall serve for a term of three years; provided, however, that of the members originally appointed, one shall serve a term of one year, two for a term of two years, and two for a term of three years, as designated by the Select Board. However, nothing herein shall be deemed to prohibit the chair of the Personnel Committee from designating a member of said committee to serve as a representative of said Committee on a study committee of the Town Meeting, nor shall such service affect the tenure of said member of the Personnel Committee. If any member of the Personnel Committee shall resign or otherwise vacate the office before the expiration of their term, the successor shall be appointed by the Select Board, at their discretion, to serve for the balance of the unexpired term.	Strike in its entirety.
§ 70-2 B.: Personnel Committee (Town Employee)	A Town employee may have a staff assignment to serve as a subject matter expert and non-voting member of the Personnel Committee and may be called upon from time to time to provide information requested by the Personnel Committee so that the Personnel Committee can make well informed decisions and proposals.	Strike in its entirety.
§ 70-2 C.: Personnel Committee (Structure)	Said Committee shall elect its own chair and vice-chair at their first meeting after June 30th of each year; and in the absence or incapacity of the chair, the vice-chair shall act as chair. The Committee shall keep a record of its official proceedings and actions, may establish its own rule of procedure	Strike in its entirety.

	and may, subject to appropriation therefore, retain such clerical and other assistance, and make such other expenditures as may be necessary to the performance of its duties. Three members shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of the business of the committee, and the affirmative vote of three members shall be necessary to any official act of the Committee.	
§ 70-2 D.: Personnel Committee (Role)	The Personnel Committee is hereby authorized to administer the provisions of this by-law, except for such duties as may be specifically assigned by statute, Town Charter or by-law to other Town officers, boards or committees.	Strike in its entirety.
§ 70-2 E.: Personnel Committee (Structure)	The Personnel Committee may from time to time issue, amend, or revoke Administrative Orders for the purpose of giving effect to the provisions of this by-law, and for the purpose of giving effect to the provisions of such other by-laws and votes of the Town, pertaining to personnel administration, as said Committee may be responsible for administering and/or enforcing. Each such order shall be numbered in sequence, and said Committee shall maintain in the Town Office a file for all such orders issued, said file to be open to public inspection.	Strike in its entirety.
§ 70-2 F.: Personnel Committee (Access)	Except as otherwise provided by law, the Committee shall have access to all facts, figures, records and other information relating to the personnel of Town departments, and the same shall be furnished forthwith by any such department whenever so requested by the Personnel Committee, in such a form as said Committee may require.	Strike in its entirety.
§ 70-2 G.: Personnel Committee (No Committee)	In the event that the Personnel Committee does not have enough members to conduct business, the Town Manager shall have the authority to administer the Salary Administration Plan.	Strike in its entirety.
§ 70-5: New or Changed Positions	The Personnel Committee Town Manager tentatively may add new job title and descriptions to this Plan, establishing grades with minimum and maximum wage or salary brackets for the same, and reclassifying existing jobs, revising the description and the minimum and maximum wage and salary brackets therefore, and such addition or reclassification to be effective only for the period from the date of such action by the Personnel Committee Town Manager to the date of any vote with respect thereto adopted at a subsequent Town Meeting but in no case later than the next Annual Town Meeting unless such later date as may be specified by such vote. Any increase in wages or salaries under this section shall be effective only if funds	Shifts authority from the Personnel Committee to the Town Manager as shown to the left.

	are available for the purpose, and approved by the Finance Committee and Select Board.	
§ 70-6: Reclassification of Employees	No employee shall be reclassified to a job in another group, either higher or lower, until the Personnel Committee Town Manager shall have determined that such a reclassification will be consistent with the provisions of the Salary Administration Plan. Eligibility for a step increase of a reclassified employee will be granted one year from the date of reclassification.	Shifts authority from the Personnel Committee to the Town Manager as shown to the left.
§ 70-7: Job Descriptions and Interpretations	<p>A. The Personnel Committee Human Resources Director shall maintain written job descriptions of the jobs or positions in the Plan, describing the essential functions, requirements, and duties. The descriptions shall not be interpreted as either complete or restrictive and employees shall continue to perform any duties assigned by an employee's supervisor.</p> <p>B. Every three (3) years, the Personnel Committee Human Resources Director shall review the wage and salary schedules of all positions in the Plan, and be in a position to recommend to the Select Board any action deemed desirable to maintain a fair and equitable pay level.</p>	Shifts authority from the Personnel Committee to the Human Resources Director as shown to the left.
§ 70-8: Salary Schedule	<p>A. The Classification and Salary Schedule of the Salary Administration Plan, set forth in Schedule A of this by-law, shall consist of the maximum and minimum salaries and step-rate salaries for the groups and positions in the Classification and Salary Schedule. The salary range of a group shall be the salary range for all positions classified in such group.</p> <p>B. Irrespective of the period of time for which pay rates may be shown in the Salary Schedule, all employees shall continue to be paid on an hourly, weekly, monthly, or other basis, as at present, unless otherwise authorized by the Personnel Committee or by amendment of the Salary Administration Plan.</p>	Strike bold language.
§ 70-11: Transfers and Promotions	A. Upon promotion, the employee will be placed on the pay grade for the new position at the lowest step at which the employee would receive a pay increase. They may also receive at the time one or more step rate increases, provided the maximum for the job is not exceeded, if the Department Head recommends that qualification and performance warrant it, and the Personnel Committee Town Manager approves. If the Department Head should feel that there should be a trial period before	Shifts authority from the Personnel Committee to the Town Manager as shown to the left.

	<p>recommending the promotional step rate increase or increases, on recommendation of the Department Head, the Personnel Committee Town Manager may approve any such deferred promotional increase at the conclusion of the trial period.</p> <p>B. If an employee is transferred to a job with a lower rate range, or rate of pay, they shall enter it at the pay rate closest to their current rate or at the maximum rate for the job, whichever is the lower.</p>	
§ 70-12: New Personnel	<p>All employees shall be hired at the minimum of the rate range of the job for which the new employee is hired unless the Town Manager, after consultation with the Chair of the Personnel Committee, authorizes paying the employee at a higher step due to the employee's qualifications and experience or marketing conditions. The Personnel Committee Select Board must formally vote to approve any proposal by the Town Manager to pay the new employee above Step 4. The Town Manager may not use the provision of Section 70-2 paragraph G to hire a new employee above Step 4.</p>	<p>Removes the Personnel Committee Chair from hiring decisions between steps 2 and 4.</p> <p>Shifts authority from the Personnel Committee to the Select Board for hiring decisions over a step 4 as shown to the left.</p>
§ 70-14: Department Budgets	<p>Each Department Head shall include in the annual budget request, a pay adjustment section to provide funds for anticipated pay adjustments during the ensuing year, expenditures to be made therefrom only in accordance with the Salary Administration Plan with approval of the Personnel Committee.</p>	<p>Strike in its entirety.</p>
§ 70-20-1: Sick Leave Bank	<p>A sick leave bank shall be established, no later than June 30, 2025, for all employees, except those in a classification of Intermittent or Seasonal, by adoption of a formal policy by the Select Board, after consultation with the Personnel Committee, to assist eligible employees during medical emergencies.</p>	<p>Strike bold language.</p>

Arguments in Support of Change

Professionalized HR Outpaces Volunteer Board Models

The demands of modern day HR compliance are complex, fast paced, and ever-changing. FMLA interplay, FLSA/exempt duties tests, ADA/interactive process, new laws- such as wage transparency, changing labor market, risk management, etc. require professional expertise and the ability to respond rapidly. In many ways Personnel Committees reflect an older governance model that Lunenburg fulfills by employing full-time HR staff.

For decades, Lunenburg did not employ full-time HR staff and the role of the Personnel Committee was vital to town operations. However, since Lunenburg transitioned to a Town Manager form of government in 2009 and added a full-time Assistant Town Manager/HR Director in 2019, the core HR functions have shifted to professional staff by design. Additionally, the Town has dedicated Labor Counsel. Oversight remains with the bodies such as the Select Board, the Finance Committee, and Town Meeting in addition to the requirements of state and federal employment law.

Unified Accountability & Faster Cycle Times

Splitting authority among a volunteer board (advisory/approval) and a manager (execution) slows hiring decisions, classification updates, pay plan changes, and policy rollouts. Town finance and DLS-style reviews routinely flag duplicative boards as an unnecessary bureaucratic layer. Per the Division of Local Services, “when a community assigns human resource responsibilities to a particular person, generally speaking a personnel board becomes moot.”

Better Legal/Compliance Posture & Risk Control

When an HR misstep occurs, the Town, not volunteer board members, bears the liability and costs. Aligning authority with the manager who controls operations reduces ambiguity and litigation risk. Per the Division of Local Services, “the town ultimately is best served having a professional manager who can develop and oversee a full-time, structured personnel management program, and this approach recognizes the growing importance of and risks inherent in personnel issues.”

Arguments Articulated Against the Change

I have heard both directly and indirectly arguments that have been made against this Article and have generalized these arguments below. I have also provided my own comments to these general positions.

There Needs to be a Separation of Power and Duties

A concern has been raised about consolidation of power and the need for separation. However, in the absence of a Personnel Committee, the authority defaults to the Town Manager under existing bylaw. In addition, the Select Board presently appoints both the Town Manager and the Personnel Committee.

Too Soon/We Need More Time/We Need to Study this Issue

Some have stated while the elimination of the Personnel Committee may be a step that the Town ultimately takes, that this is too soon to be making that decision. Some have suggested more community dialogue/forum on the topic is necessary before bringing the vote to Town Meeting. Others have suggested that a Committee, such as the Bylaw Committee, should first consider the matter before it comes to Town Meeting.

These concerns are understandable. Ultimately, Town Meeting is the appropriate forum for broad community input. If voters reject Article 17 and specific issues emerge that warrant further review, we can address them together.

Examples of Action by Other Municipalities on Personnel Boards/Committees

The chart below is illustrative and should not be considered exhaustive. Comments are either from publicly available materials, such as Town Meeting handouts, or are those received in response to a survey conducted by the Assistant Town Manager.

Town	Action
Ashfield	Has not “officially” disbanded , but it has not had any members for four years and there has been no effort to revitalize, rendering the Committee essentially defunct . The rationale was that a small enough Town like Ashfield could handle its personnel matters through the Select Board .
Ashland	Board Eliminated and Authority Transferred to Town Manager/Select Board in 2020. Personnel Board is advisory.
Belchertown	Transferred the authority of the Personnel Board to the Town Manager, acting as the Personnel Director at the 2024 Annual Town Meeting.
Berlin	Personnel Committee active .
Boxford	<p>As part of the Town’s recent strategic planning efforts, the Select Board identified several boards and committees that are no longer active, lack enough members to function, or no longer serve a current role in town governance. One such body is the Personnel Board, which was originally established by bylaw in 1998 to support the development of personnel policies, classification and compensation plans, and a performance evaluation system.</p> <p>Over the past several years, many of the Personnel Board’s responsibilities have transitioned to staff within the Select Board’s office, particularly following the creation of the Administrative Services Manager/HR Coordinator role. In 2024, Boxford voters approved a new Town Administrator bylaw that designates the Town Administrator as the Chief Personnel Officer, further centralizing human resources oversight under professional staff. The bylaw change abolished the Personnel Board reflecting the Town’s current organizational structure and ensuring alignment with state law.</p>
Boylston	No Personnel Board- duties split between Town Administrator and Select Board.
Carlisle	2023 Town Meeting eliminated the Personnel Board. The Select Board retained the authority to conduct human resources for the Town and can delegate this to

	the Town Administrator or their delegate. The rationale for this change is to increase the efficiency of human resource management and ensure compliance with evolving human resource law . The Select Board, the Town Administrator, or the delegate can assemble advisory boards when necessary to help make decisions about the Town's employees.
Clinton	Personnel Board active .
Dartmouth	In 2014, Dartmouth eliminated the Personnel Board, stating, "it reflects the evolution of the Human Resources function in municipal government based on the hiring of a Personnel Administrator ."
Douglas	Douglas created the Town Administrator position in 2016 with a Special Act. The Act designated the Town Administrator as Personnel Director and enumerated the authority the position has. Went to Town Meeting and rewrote the Personnel By-Law to, amongst other things, make the board "advisory." Staff stated that the former Board were making recommendations that were illegal under labor laws and did not take the advice of staff.
Duxbury	The Town of Duxbury employs a full-time Human Resources Director and Human Resources Department. This is an area that has required in-house professionalization due to its increasing complexity. The Personnel Board currently serves in an advisory capacity, and is a vestige of governance prior to the creation of the Town Manager position. The Government Study Committee recommended that the Personnel Board be disbanded, and this occurred in 2018.
East Bridgewater	The former Personnel Bylaw was adopted when the employment laws changed very little year after year . It became necessary to change the employment policies of the town more frequently as the pace of change has increased. The Personnel Committee recommended replacing the bylaw to transfer their authority to the Board of Selectmen to update employment practices by policy and remain more proactive to changes in employment law. This authority transferred to Town Administrator/Select Board in 2021.
Fairhaven	Action at the 2017 Annual Town Meeting vested the administration of the Personnel System with a Human Resources Director who by experience and education is qualified to administer the system .
Franklin	Franklin does not have a Personnel Board . In 1978, the town revised its entire form of government to a city form of government with a Council-Manager. The 1978 revision put the following language in the charter under the purview of the Town Administrator . Since that time, all personnel policies, matters and decisions are under the Town Administrator with an empowered HR Department.
Grafton	The Town does not currently have a Personnel Board . Under the Grafton Town Charter, the Town Administrator is the Personnel Director, and has the authority appoint a Personnel Advisory Committee . However, in the absence of such a committee, any decisions regarding personnel fall to the Administrator.
Halifax	The duties and responsibilities associated with the Personnel Board have been distributed to the Board of Selectmen, the Finance Committee, the Treasurer-Collector, and the Town Accountant . This section of the website remains in order to archive the relevant documents associated with the Wage and Personnel By-Law. Authority transferred 2020.

Harvard	Personnel Board active .
Lakeville	In 2014 the Wage and Personnel Board was disbanded, allowing the board of selectmen to oversee wage and personnel matters directly .
Lancaster	A 2020 Human Resources Review by the Collins Center for Public Management concluded, “ As communities and personnel issues have grown more complex, the responsibilities of town administration have also changed, increased, and placed more compliance demands on communities. As such, many communities have encountered difficulties in keeping up with the legal requirements of employment, benefit and labor laws while adhering to personnel bylaws, which can be cumbersome, particularly in the fast-changing human resources landscape. Employment laws, state and federal mandates, and the changing workforce have required communities to be more flexible and able to make policy changes in an efficient manner. Because of this reality and practicality, we recommend the Town significantly modify its personnel bylaws. The bylaws should have a basic statement of purpose, equal opportunity and identify the Town Administrator as the Personnel Administrator and authorizing the establishment of a Personnel Policy Plan that will be administered by the Town Administrator and approved by the Board of Selectmen. Such a plan could contain almost all the provisions of the existing personnel bylaws and could easily be updated as needed. A separate attachment containing draft policies will be provided for your review. It is not clear if Lancaster formally voted to dissolve the Board, but Town Administration and the Select Board are administering the bylaw.
Nantucket	The decision to place the duty regarding town personnel with the Town Manager was made by the voters in a public process at Town Meeting by adopting the Charter in 1996 . This vote substantially changed town government in Nantucket to meet the expanding scope of the Town, creating the position of Town Manager and transferring the functions previously performed by the Personnel Board to the Town Manager.
Northboro	Personnel Board convenes once per year.
Norwell	Action at the 2024 Town Meeting abolished the Personnel Board. The revised bylaw established a personnel plan and designated the Town Administrator as the sole authority over the administration of personnel policies . The Personnel Board and Select Board were in support of the measure.
Shirley	Personnel Board convenes once per year.
Spencer	No Personnel Board
Sterling	The Town Administrator serves as the Personnel Director for the Town of Topsfield and administers the Town’s Personnel By-Law .
Topsfield	The Town Administrator serves as the Personnel Director for the Town of Topsfield and administers the Town’s Personnel By-Law . This includes a compensation plan, centralized record keeping; personnel rules and regulations; disciplinary procedures; appraisal system; and other elements deemed necessary. Change occurred in 2004, with the Personnel Board initially staying on in an advisory capacity.

Walpole	Town Meeting voted in 2022 to abolish Personnel Board and transfer its authority to the Select Board. The Town Administrator explained that the HR world has changed immensely, and the Select Board would be a better fit to handle necessary decision making. Day to day decisions are being by HR/Administration.
West Boylston	Personnel Board active - recent discussion on transition.
Westminster	Personnel Committee active .
West Newbury	Repealed its Personnel Bylaw (which had established the Personnel Advisory Committee) a couple of years ago, as an ongoing effort to bring Town bylaws and policies into alignment with the Town Manager Act adopted in late 2017.