



**City of Biddeford**  
**Personnel Committee**  
June 26, 2025 at 2:00 PM  
City Hall Council Chambers  
and via Zoom

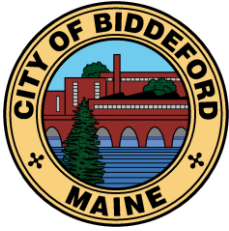
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Or call in by phone: +1 312 626 6799

Meeting ID: 994 9339 4654

Passcode: 210575

1. Call to Order
2. Approval of Minutes
  - 2.a March 18, 2025 Minutes
  - 2.b May 20 2025 Minutes
3. Discussion
  - 3.a Workplace Safety Policy Update & Additions
  - 3.a Workplace Safety Policy - DRAFT
  - 3.b Recommendation for 4% Cost-of-Living Adjustment (COLA) for Non-Union Employees  
– Effective July 1, 2025 (Non-Union COLA Brief FY26)
4. Other Business
5. Adjourn



# PERSONNEL COMMITTEE MEETING

March 18<sup>th</sup>, 2025

Via Zoom

4 PM

Meeting Minutes

## ITEM 1 Call to Order

Chair Councilor William Emhiser called the meeting to order at 4:02PM with Councilors Norman Belanger and Doris Ortiz present via zoom. Also present via zoom were Diana DePaolo (Director of Human Resources), Daniel Hammond (Safety & Training Coordinator), Lynn Abbott (HR Specialist), Shelly Gibson (Deputy Director of HR), and Chief Lawrence Best (Fire Department). Councilor Scott Whiting was absent and excused from this meeting.

## ITEM 2 Approval of Minutes

Councilor Belanger made a motion to approve the minutes from February 18<sup>th</sup>, 2025. Councilor Ortiz seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

## ITEM 3 Discussion

### 3.a First Responder

Diana DePaolo gave an overview of the current program and relevant activities utilized by the City. Both the Fire and Police Departments are extremely busy, understaffed, and facing forced overtime. As a result, it is unfair to ask them to find their own mental health support (or create those programs in-house), given the amount of work they are presently managing. The City is currently talking with first responders in both departments to see what they need, talking with family members, and ultimately are trying to plan proactively for the future.

Overall programs like this, and what the City has done already, are proven effective, in terms of improved mental health and workplace stress, and from a cost-effective standpoint. There are mental health clinicians currently available for first responders on-site with the City, but for a limited amount of time. This proposal increases those supports and resources. If the hours of availability are increased weekly to 6–12, the average must be maintained, but the City will only be billed for the time used.

This funding would also support programming through the CISM model (Critical Incident Stress Management), which allows for more immediate debriefing and management of post-traumatic stress right after an incident occurs. These might be group sessions, 1:1 sessions, and, depending on the support needed, scale of trauma, etc., could lead to a more clinical referral for an employee (outside of the City resources), which is sometimes needed. Building out a peer support training program will build trusting relationships and help stay on top of employees needing support from each other. Currently, having check-ins for first responders has shown to improve the turnaround time in getting an employee back to working at capacity.

Ideally, the City will create one support team for the FD and PD, where weekly office hours would still be available for 1:1 support, in addition to group training courses re: resiliency, quarterly family trainings, and direct referrals for services as needed. Both Chief Best and Diana shared that other municipalities are doing similar and reiterated that prevention is essential in this work and the recognition of these supports have really come a long way in the field.

Both Diana and Chief Best clarified that employees are currently using the services offered and this proposal will increase access to supports, save the City money, and ultimately create programming that is catered to Biddeford First Responders based on relationships and trust built with consistent providers. As more employees access these resources and find them helpful, they will share their experiences with colleagues and then it's likely that more will consider doing it. Overall, employees are much more receptive to behavioral health than they used to be.

Questions from Councilors were posed about insurance crossover, and the current annual check-in the City requires for all first responders. This proposal recommends continuing check-ins, but with a consistent provider, on-site, that employees can access when needed and build a relationship with overtime. Employees may also need more than one session, or none at all, but this proposal allows for more options. It's essential to recognize this proposal prioritizes the health of employees and also aims to save the City significant amounts of money in the long run (avoids additional sick/leave time, etc.).

It is unclear exactly what insurance supports for union employees because of what the City already requires for annual check-ins (and mental health services are not necessarily guaranteed through any additional insurance options). Additionally, Councilor Ortiz and Diana agreed that finding a trusted mental health professional with availability, even if the employee *wants* to see them, is extremely difficult. This proposal gives employees an opportunity to see if it works for them, with less barriers.

Councilors Belanger, Ortiz, and Emheiser all agreed this is extremely important and will be challenging to approve from a budgetary standpoint. Councilor Emheiser encouraged Diana to consider plan B (what can be done/accomplished with less money), and to break down the proposal between what programs the City currently utilizes, what is the additional ask, and what is connected to/associated with what (i.e. what is already being spent versus what is incremental for this fiscal year versus the last). Everyone agreed that prevention is essential, and, from a budgetary perspective, it's difficult to prove what amount will be saved when something was prevented.

### **3.b City Manager Update**

There are currently a total of 7 candidates with City Manager experience and 7 who have Director level experience (or higher) within municipalities. March 24<sup>th</sup> is when the search committee will meet to review the packets regarding applicants, and they will determine who will be asked to join interviews. The first round of interviews will likely take place via zoom.

## **ITEM 4 Other Business**

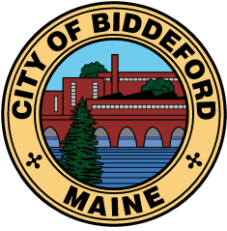
Councilor Emheiser asked if there were any updates on Paid Family Medical Leave. Diana shared that the school has determined they want to proceed with the private plan so the City will need to follow suit. This actually offers massive savings, the same benefits, and the rate is locked in until it expires (at that point the City can either return to the state plan or go back on the private plan). Diana will be presenting on this at the Council meeting on March 18<sup>th</sup>.

## **ITEM 5 Adjourn**

Councilor Belanger made a motion to adjourn at 4:53 PM, Councilor Ortiz seconded the motion; the motion was approved unanimously.

### **Personnel Committee Members:**

Councilor William Emhiser, Chair  
Councilor Norman Belanger  
Councilor Doris Ortiz  
Councilor Scott Whiting



# PERSONNEL COMMITTEE MEETING

May 20<sup>th</sup>, 2025

Via Zoom

4 PM

## Meeting Minutes

### ITEM 1 Call to Order

Councilor Norman Belanger called the meeting to order at 4:03PM with Councilor Doris Ortiz also present. Councilors Scott Whiting and William Emheiser were absent and excused from this meeting. Also present were Diana DePaolo (Director of Human Resources), Daniel Hammond (Safety & Training Coordinator), Lynn Abbott (HR Specialist), Shelly Gibson (Deputy Director of HR), and Sarah Hulbert (Administrative Assistant). Councilor Roger Beaupre and several other employees were also present.

### ITEM 2 Approval of Minutes

No minutes were posted and therefore will be reviewed in the next meeting.

### ITEM 3 Discussion

#### 3.a Non-Union Wage Discussion

Diana DePaolo shared an update on non-union wages and gave a summary of the published memo, highlighting the status of salary scales and wages, as well as existing challenges. She reminded the committee that currently, there is not a mechanism for where to place someone on the scale when hired and Department Heads do not have the capacity to increase or change wages within their own departments. In the past, the City Manager's office made decisions about wages, sometimes with little explanation.

The City has not done any type of audit or evaluation in nearly 9 years. This makes it difficult to stay consistent and equitable, particularly as the City grows, responsibilities increase, and staff numbers largely remain the same.

Diana recommended external compensation and classification study, COLA increases, effective July 1<sup>st</sup>, and additional non-wage-based compensation (stipends, bonuses, etc.). Additionally, giving Department Heads more agency to determine merit-based increases, as well as developing rubric for establishing compensation for new hires, starting at the lowest part of the pay scale. Administrative staff and Account Clerks are some of the lowest paid staff in the City.

Council Belanger asked for qualification regarding money in the current budget for any of the aforementioned suggestions. Brian clarified there was a specific dollar amount that could potentially cover COLA's.

Members of staff and the additional City Councilor spoke about the lack of bargaining/advocating power that non-union employees have. They also encouraged the committee to consider the range of work done within a variety of positions, including Department Heads. Staff feel that job descriptions should impact the pay scale, and staff culture (leadership, management, training, etc.) are all essential to the employee experience. Additionally, they brought attention to the fact that more recently, employees have been transferring to different cities and towns because of higher wages.

The Acting City Manager agreed that doing an assessment in-house is very comprehensive and not altogether feasible given the plethora of factors. He did state that the current budget does not include a lot of room for merit-based increases or retroactive pay if the City follows through with a survey/assessment and determines wages should increase.

Councilor Ortiz agreed that it would be effective to bring in an outside professional to evaluate the current scales and wages, just as we do with the unions. Employees work hard and are proud of the City and should be compensated accordingly. Wages are an essential part of staff retention. Councilor Belanger commented that the committee will likely want to involve the full Council in this discussion, given the effect it could have on the budget. He suggested a projected COLA on July 1<sup>st</sup>, with an additional combination of merit-based pay and other incentives, knowing that it's not possible to please everyone all of the time. He requested that the HR Director research what the cost of a compensation study/survey might be.

### **3.b City Hall Hours Discussion**

Councilor Beaupre shared that he brought this topic to the committee Chair, given some conversations with the public and at the Council level about the varied hours of City Hall. Some members of the public struggle to remember the hours because they lack consistency, and/or can't access City services when needed. The committee and attendees largely agreed that moving to a 5-day work week would be unfavorable, but considering consistent hours might be worth further investigation

Councilors Ortiz and Belanger made a point to share their appreciation for City staff and acknowledged the commitment and effort employees put in on a regular basis.

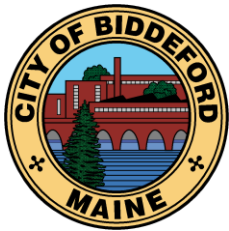
## **ITEM 4                      Other Business**

## **ITEM 5                      Adjourn**

Councilor Belanger adjourned the meeting at 5:04 PM.

### **Personnel Committee Members:**

Councilor William Emhiser, Chair  
Councilor Norman Belanger  
Councilor Doris Ortiz  
Councilor Scott Whiting



# CITY OF BIDDEFORD

205 Main St.  
P.O. Box 586  
Biddeford, Maine 04005

## PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

**Meeting Date:** June 26, 2025

**Meeting Time:** 4pm

**Agenda Item No:** 3.a.

**Item Description:** Workplace Safety Policy Update & Additions

**Submitted by:** Daniel Hammond, Safety & Training Coordinator

### Supporting Information/Documentation:

Workplace Safety Policy Draft

### Key Terms:

**WCSIP** – Maine Municipal Association’s Workers Compensation Safety Incentive Program.

**Workplace Safety** – Refers to the practices and policies that ensure the health and safety of employees in their work environment. Crucial for prevention of injuries and illness, legal compliance and enhanced productivity.

**Workplace Injuries** – Injuries sustained in the workplace.

**Slips** – Occur when there is insufficient friction between your footwear and the walking surface, leading to a loss of balance. Common causes include wet or oily surfaces.

**Trips** – Happen when your foot strikes an object, causing you to lose balance. This can be due to clutter, uneven surfaces, or obstacles in the path.

**Falls** – Result from slips or trips but can also occur due to other factors like poor lighting or lack of handrails.

**Lifting and Back Safety** – Refers to safe lifting and carrying techniques.

**Personal Protective Equipment** – PPE refers to protective clothing, helmets, goggles, gloves, and other equipment designed to safeguard the wearer from injury or infection.

**Office Ergonomics** - The science of designing a workspace to fit the needs of the worker. This involves arranging furniture, equipment, and tasks in a way that minimizes strain and maximizes productivity.

### Executive Summary:

The current Workplace Safety policy is brief and does not address specific workplace safety issues. By updating the policy to include Lifting and Back safety, Personal Protective Equipment, Slips, Trips and Fall, and Office Ergonomics policies we can increase safety awareness and work to reduce

workplace injuries while also meeting requirements of Maine Municipal Association’s Worker’s Compensation Safety Incentive Program.

**Detailed Review:**

The City of Biddeford currently has a Workplace Safety policy within the Human Resources Policies, Procedures and Benefits Manual (located on page 55). While the existing policy outlines general rules and expectations, it does not specifically address some of the most common issues that result in workplace injuries.

The City of Biddeford is currently taking part in the Maine Municipal Association’s Workers Compensation Safety Incentive Program (WCSIP). This tiered program provides discounts for workers’ compensation bills. Tier 1 provides a 5% discount; tier 2 provides a 7.5% discount and tier 3 provides a 10% discount. The city is currently working towards meeting all requirements in each of the three tiers and hopes to accomplish this by September of 2025. A Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) safety plan for all required departments is a requirement of tier 1. Policies regarding Slips, Trips and Falls, Lifting and Back Safety and Office Ergonomics are requirements of tier 2. By including each of these policies in the updated Workplace Safety policy the requirements of the WCSIP program can be met.

An updated copy of the Workplace Safety policy is being presented to the Personnel Committee for their consideration which includes policies specific to Slips, Trips and Falls, Lifting and Back Safety, PPE and Office Ergonomics. While some of the city’s departments already have internal policies that address these issues, others do not. The proposed new policy is not designed to supersede existing policies that may be more detailed and specific for certain positions or departments. They are, however, designed to ensure that there is a base level of information shared with all employees regarding safety in the workplace and how they can avoid common workplace injuries.

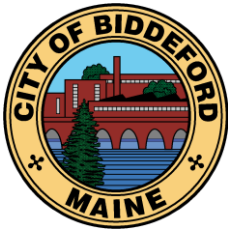
To ensure that employees are aware of their responsibilities regarding workplace safety, once the new policy is adopted, a Workplace Safety training session will be added to the city’s monthly new hire orientation. The Safety and Training Coordinator will also work with Department Heads and members of the city’s Safety Committee to ensure that all current employees are aware of the update to the policy and their responsibilities regarding workplace safety.

**Funding Source:**

N/A

**Staff Recommendation:**

Replace the current Workplace Safety policy in the Non-Union Handbook with the proposed new Workplace Safety Policy.



# CITY OF BIDDEFORD

205 Main St.  
Biddeford, Maine 04005

## WORKPLACE SAFETY POLICIES

Safety and health protection is a quality of work life issue which has a high priority in all City business activities. The City's goal is to minimize human injury or illness and property loss or business interruption caused by accidents, fire, or other hazards. The City believes this will be achieved to the degree that all City employees accept and fulfill their safety and health responsibilities in each job. Individually, employees must recognize hazards, anticipate possible exposures and risks, and then act to eliminate or control them.

The City expects that all employees will make their best efforts to prevent industrial accidents and diseases. The City will provide the necessary directions and aid to accomplish this goal.

All employees must adhere to all Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), federal, and state regulations and comply with the following general rules:

1. Horseplay and practical jokes in work areas will not be tolerated.
2. Employees are to be careful when operating machinery and must see to it that themselves and others are not harmed by their machines.
3. Operating shortcuts that jeopardize employee safety will not be tolerated and will result in immediate discipline.
4. No employee should ever perform a task or work with equipment that they consider to be unsafe, or that they are unfamiliar with, haven't been trained on, or requires skills outside their skillset.
5. State and Federal regulations require that mandatory safety training be done annually. Employees are expected to attend these training courses. If training is scheduled at a time that is not convenient for the employee, the employee and/or Department Head must notify the Human Resources Department to arrange for an alternative training schedule.

Employees are responsible for:

1. Attending and completing initial, annual and ongoing training relating to workplace safety, as required.
2. Complying with all workplace safety training, policies and procedures.
3. Asking for help when they need it.
4. Immediately reporting any accident or injury to their supervisor.
5. Immediately reporting unsafe conditions, equipment, or observed practices to their supervisor.
6. Using Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), as required.
7. Using alternative materials handling equipment, as needed.
8. Making suggestions to supervisors or Department Heads that may improve employee safety.

The Safety and Training Coordinator is responsible for:

1. Ensuring appropriate training regarding workplace safety is provided for new employees.
2. Evaluating the workplace safety policy each year.
3. Ensuring that all recordable incidents are appropriately investigated.
4. Reviewing incident investigation reports to ensure root causes are determined and recommendations for corrective actions are in place.
5. Conducting individual ergonomic assessments when requested by employees and/or supervisors.
6. Assisting with annual and periodic facility inspections at the request of supervisors and Department Heads.
7. Liaising with the City's insurance companies regarding safety issues, policies, claims, and inspections.

Department Heads and Supervisors are responsible for:

1. Instilling general safety awareness relating to workplace safety.
2. Ensuring that sufficient employee time, supervisor support and funds are budgeted for the safety equipment and training necessary to comply with workplace safety policies.
3. Conducting initial and ongoing training for employees specific to their workplace and the hazards they may encounter.
4. Documenting (and maintaining records of) employee training, and ensuring employees remain current in their training, as appropriate.
5. Ensuring that employees comply with and adhere to established workplace safety policies and procedures.
6. Ensuring that annual and periodic inspections of their facilities take place and are documented as appropriate.
7. Ensuring that workplace hazard assessments are completed annually and documented as appropriate.
8. Ensuring that workplace safety hazards and issues are identified and appropriately eliminated or mitigated.
9. Ensuring that incidents are referred to an incident review team for analysis and that corrective actions are taken to prevent the hazardous conditions from developing again.
10. Communicating incidents to the Safety and Training Coordinator.

It is important for employees to be aware of the risks posed by common workplace hazards and their responsibilities in relation to the prevention of workplace injuries. To further promote safety in the workplace and prevent incidents involving common workplace injuries, the following policies specific to Lifting and Back Safety, Slip, Trip and Fall Safety, Personal Protective Equipment and Office Ergonomics are in place.

### **Slip, Trip & Fall Safety**

Slips can occur when floors or other working surfaces become slippery due to wet or oily processes, floor cleaning, leaks, or from materials and debris left in walkways. Trips can occur due to uneven floors or working surfaces, protruding nails and boards, from stretched carpet or bunched floor mats intended to prevent slipping, from holes or depressions in working surfaces,

and from step-risers on stairs that are not uniform in height. Both slips and trips can result in falls. In addition, falls can occur when ladders are not maintained properly, and when stairways and elevated working surfaces are not designed properly.

### Housekeeping Standards

Housekeeping plays a critical role in the success of our slip, trip and fall prevention program. All employees have a responsibility to ensure and maintain good housekeeping. The following are minimum accepted guidelines:

1. Work areas are to be kept as clean as possible throughout each shift. Any mess and/or hazards created during each shift should be appropriately cleaned prior to the shift ending.
2. Walkways are to be kept clear of electric cords, hoses or any other potential hazards. If a walkway cannot be kept clear, it needs to be blocked off.
3. Spill areas must be secured until the spill is removed.
4. Items may not be stored on stairs, on walkways or in such a manner that it would be a hazard to anyone walking through. Similarly, emergency exits must remain clear and may not be blocked or obstructed.
5. Employees may be required to assist, as appropriate, with the cleanup of spills and picking up of debris to help ensure others are not injured on city property.

### Corrective Maintenance Procedure

If an employee comes across a slip, trip or fall hazard, they should take immediate action to eliminate the hazard.

1. Clean up spills immediately.
2. Protect all spill areas. If needed, get someone to help clean up the spill or guard the spill while necessary cleaning equipment is gathered.

If an employee comes across a hazard that is not easily fixable, they should:

1. Communicate the problem to an appropriate supervisor or Department Head. The hazard may be documented on a Workplace Hazard Report form.
2. The supervisor or Department Head will ensure that an appropriate custodian/housekeeping staff member or facility/maintenance manager inspects the hazard and determines an appropriate plan of action to resolve the issue.
3. If the hazard can't be immediately corrected, a temporary control may be put in place to prevent any injury.

Custodial and Housekeeping employees are responsible for:

1. Using barricades when slippery floors or other tripping hazards are present. Barricades may be removed as soon as the hazard is corrected.
2. Placing non-skid mats at building entrances during inclement weather. Mats should be inspected periodically or as needed to ensure they are properly controlling the hazard.
3. Cleaning up any spills and debris that they come across during building inspections or in the course of their regular duties.

4. Conducting self-inspections of the facilities they are responsible for and maintaining appropriate documentation.
5. Making suggestions to supervisors and Department Heads that would improve workplace safety.

### Mats and Runners

Our goal is to maintain all floor surfaces in a slip resistant condition. In work areas or situations where this isn't feasible, mats or runners may be used to provide slip resistance. It is everyone's responsibility to monitor mats and runners to ensure they continue to provide proper slip resistance and have not become a tripping hazard.

Where mats have been used to control wet areas, such as entryways to buildings, the following conditions require immediate action:

1. If pedestrian traffic leaves wet footprints when stepping off the mat, the mat needs to be replaced with a dry one or an additional mat needs to be placed at the end of the first mat.
2. If the mat has become wrinkled or bunched up it needs to be reset so it is flat and doesn't present a tripping hazard.

### Footwear

Proper footwear is an important component of slip, trip and fall prevention. Footwear needs to be appropriate for the task being completed. It is the responsibility of each employee to obtain and maintain appropriate footwear in a serviceable condition. Supervisors must ensure that employees wear appropriate footwear in the workplace.

### Seasonal Issues

The following procedures have been developed to combat the hazards brought forth by different seasons.

1. Snow and ice removal
  - a. All building entrances are to be cleared of snow and ice and treated with salt and/or sand as appropriate, prior to the opening of business.
  - b. Exterior walkways are to be inspected and treated as needed.
  - c. Parking lots are to be inspected daily during periods of inclement weather. Any snow or ice that has accumulated between cars is to be removed as soon as practicable.
2. During the autumn, daily inspections are required in areas where leaf litter is identified as a potential hazard. Actions are to be taken to ensure walkways are clear of leaves.

### Workplace Inspections

1. Inspections should utilize an appropriate Slip Trip and Fall Prevention Checklist.
2. All functional areas inside and outside of each facility must be included in each inspection.
3. Any deficiencies or hazards must be acted upon as appropriate to remove the hazard, warn of it, or to close off the area in question.

Inspections are to be conducted:

1. Annually
  - a. Once a year, a team of people will conduct a thorough inspection of each department's buildings and workspaces.
  - b. The team may consist of the Safety and Training Coordinator, identified departmental inspectors/ members of safety subcommittees, and/or members of custodial/maintenance staff.
  - c. Goals
    - i. Eliminate/control hazards
    - ii. Highlight high-risk areas
    - iii. Assist in revising the checklists used during periodic inspections
    - iv. Evaluate the slips, trips and fall policy
2. Periodically
  - a. Occur monthly
  - b. Completed by each department's identified inspector(s) and/or custodial/maintenance staff
  - c. Consists of a walkthrough of the building using an appropriate Slip Trip and Fall Prevention Checklist
  - d. Goals
    - i. Eliminate/control obvious hazards
    - ii. Check on the progress of any work area highlighted by the annual inspection

## **Lifting and Back Safety**

To prevent injury, the following safe lifting procedures should be followed whenever lifting and/or carrying an object.

### **Lifting**

1. Before lifting anything, consider the following:
  - a. The size of an object
  - b. The weight of the object
  - c. The position of the object
  - d. How you should lift the object (Do you need help lifting?)
  - e. How you should hold the object (Can you get a secure Palm Grip?)
  - f. Where you must place the object
  - g. The area (Is it cluttered? Is the pathway clear?)
2. When lifting
  - a. Position feet so that one is slightly in front of the other.
  - b. Center your body over the object.
  - c. Bend with your knees, keeping your back straight.
  - d. Get a secure palm grip on the object.
  - e. Bring the object close to your body.
  - f. Lift with your legs.

## Carrying

When carrying a load, try and keep it in the power zone or green zone. The power zone is the area closest to your body. This area allows you to get the maximum lifting effect in the safest area.

There may be times when it is not possible to lift an object close to your body due to an object's irregular shape and/or size. Lifting with your hands somewhat outstretched, or with the object a little further away from your body, is lifting in the yellow zone. While this may be safe (depending on the size and shape of the object being carried), try to avoid carrying heavier objects in the yellow zone and take more breaks than you would if you were lifting objects in the power zone.

Lifting in the red zone (with a load above the shoulders, below the knees or beyond outstretched arms) **should be avoided at all costs**. A lift in this zone can cause serious bodily harm. If you think a lift needs to be done in the red zone, ask for help.

## Placing an Object Down

Whenever possible, place an object down on the edge of the surface you're carrying it to, then slide it into position. This prevents the need to reach forward and away from the green zone with the load, which can strain the back.

To place an object on a surface above shoulder height, first follow safe lifting procedures. Then lift it onto a lower shelf or your leg/hip. Readjust your grip so you can get more weight centered under it. Then proceed with the lift, making sure that you let your leg power do the work.

## Things to Avoid

Avoid the following scenarios as they come with an increased risk of injury.

1. Lifting more than you can carry
2. Lifting more than 50 pounds by yourself
3. Stretching, bending or twisting while carrying a load
4. Lifting with your back and not your legs
5. Pulling. If possible, push the load instead of pulling it.

Every lift is different and sometimes a perfect lift is not possible. If you are unsure how to safely perform a certain lift, reach out for help from either your supervisor or the Safety and Training Coordinator.

## Personal Protective Equipment

The purpose of this policy is to protect our employees by ensuring that Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) is provided, used, and maintained in a sanitary and reliable condition whenever necessary, due to hazards from processes or in the work environment. To the extent that it is

possible and feasible, the City of Biddeford will strive to remove or eliminate hazards or exposures through engineering means to eliminate the need for PPE.

### Hazard Assessment

The City of Biddeford will perform an assessment of each workplace to determine if hazards are present, or likely to be present, which necessitates the use of PPE. These assessments will consist of a survey of the workplace to identify sources of hazards to workers. Consideration will be given to hazards such as impact, penetration, laceration, compression (dropping heavy objects on foot, rollover, etc.), chemical exposures, harmful dust, heat, light (optical) radiation, electrical hazards, noise, etc.

Where such hazards are present, or likely to be present, supervisors will:

1. Select, and have each affected employee use the types of PPE that will protect the employee from the hazards identified in the hazard assessment.
2. Select PPE that properly fits each affected employee.
3. Ensure employees are trained in the use and care of PPE.

Department Heads, or their designee, will verify that the required workplace hazard assessment has been performed by completing a written certification which is dated and signed by the person doing the assessment. Whenever there is a change in process or in the workplace that might introduce or change an exposure or hazard, a supplemental assessment should be conducted to determine if there needs to be additional PPE provided or if there is a need for a change in the PPE provided. These supplemental hazard assessments will also be documented, and signed and dated, by the person performing the assessment. Workplace hazard assessments are to be reviewed and updated on an annual basis.

### Selection of PPE

PPE will be selected based on the hazards to which the workers are exposed or potentially exposed. All selections will be made with input from managers, supervisors and workers. Selection will be based on task performed, conditions present, duration of use, and the hazards and potential hazards identified. Selected PPE must meet all OSHA and other applicable standards.

### Care of PPE

Whenever practical, PPE will be assigned to individual workers for their exclusive use. Employees will be responsible for the PPE equipment assigned to them or used by them.

PPE will be regularly cleaned, inspected and stored according to instructions given during the training sessions or as directed by supervisors or Department Heads. Defective or damaged PPE shall not be used. Employees are to report any defective or damaged equipment to their supervisor for repair or replacement.

## Office Ergonomics

In compliance with Maine's Video Display Terminal (VDT) law, and to prevent workplace injuries such as Musculoskeletal Disorders (MSD), **all employees that operate a VDT for more than four hours daily must receive training regarding safe VDT operation.** This training must be completed within the first 30 days of hire and annually thereafter.

Employees should follow the guidelines listed below to ensure their VDT workstation is ergonomically optimized. Additionally, employees may request an ergonomic assessment of their workstation by contacting the Safety and Training Coordinator.

### Workstation Setup

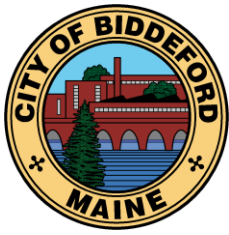
1. Monitor
  - a. The top portion of the monitor should be in line with your eye line. If you use progressive glasses, have the top of the screen line up with your top lip.
  - b. The monitor should be at about an arm length distance away.
  - c. If using dual monitors, the monitor used most of the time should be directly in front of you and the secondary monitor should be to one side and angled towards you. If both monitors are used for equal amounts of time, they should be positioned side by side and you should be positioned directly in front of where the screens meet.
2. Keyboard
  - a. The keyboard should be at sitting elbow height.
  - b. When typing, make sure that no part of your wrists or hands is in contact with anything. This includes rest pads.
3. Mouse
  - a. Make sure the mouse is on the same plane as the keyboard.
  - b. When using the mouse, make sure that your wrists or hands don't make any contact with the desk or rest pads.
4. Chair
  - a. Sit as far back in the chair as possible.
  - b. Make sure the small of your back is supported.
  - c. Leave at least three fingers of space between the end of your seat and the back of your knee.
  - d. Adjust the height of your chair so you can keep your feet flat on the ground and your knees at or below the same level as your hips.
  - e. Adjust arm rests so that you can type with your shoulders relaxed. If they make it so you scrunch your shoulders remove the arm rests entirely.
5. Phone

- a. Avoid cradling the phone with your shoulder.
- b. Use a headset whenever possible.
- c. If you use the phone frequently, keep it closer to your body to eliminate reach.

## Breaks

Static postures and repetitive motions are some of the main causes of Musculoskeletal Disorders (MSD's). Unfortunately, when it comes to office work these two things are often unavoidable. One of the ways to combat this is to take frequent, short, breaks. Once an hour ensure you stand up and move around. A simple walk around your office or to the restroom may be sufficient. Remember, although standing is better than sitting, standing in one spot is still considered a static movement and you should still take a break. Every two hours take an extended break where you move for more than just a moment and try to incorporate some stretching into the break.

DRAFT



# CITY OF BIDDEFORD

205 Main St.  
Biddeford, Maine 04005

## PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

**Meeting Date:** Thursday, June 26<sup>th</sup>, 2025

**Meeting Time:** 2pm

**Agenda Item No:** 3.b.

**Item Description:** Recommendation for 4% Cost-of-Living Adjustment (COLA) for Non-Union Employees – Effective July 1, 2025

**Submitted by:** Diana DePaolo, Director of Human Resources

**Key Terms:**

N/A

**Executive Summary:**

The City of Biddeford continues to face increasing challenges in retaining talent and remaining competitive in the broader municipal labor market. As the organization undertakes a longer-term review of its non-union wage structure, including a request for a compensation and classification study, it is essential that we address more immediate concerns related to inflation, equity, and internal morale. In response, the Human Resources Department recommends that the Personnel Committee approve a 4% cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) for all non-union employees, effective July 1, 2025. This recommendation addresses the rising cost of living, ensures Biddeford remains competitive with peer communities, and reaffirms our commitment to valuing and supporting our workforce.

**Detailed Review:**

Comparable Community Benchmarking:

A review of nearby municipalities with comparable size, services, and staffing demands shows that most have already committed to or implemented COLAs in the 3.5–4.5% range for FY26. These increases reflect the continuing impacts of inflation and the recognition that competitive wages are essential for retaining and attracting qualified public service professionals.

City/Town	FY26 COLA	City/Town	FY26 COLA
Saco	4.00%	Sanford	4.00%
Freeport	3.89%	Lewiston	3.00%
Falmouth	4.00%	Kennebunk	4.00%
York	2.58%	Windham	3.5%
Scarborough	4.5%	<b>Average</b>	<b>3.72%</b>

Half of these peer municipalities awarded 4.0% or higher, which means an increase for Non Union City employees would keep us in the upper half of our comparables. In this context, a 4% COLA for Biddeford is not an outlier; rather it is a competitive and data-driven response to regional trends.

#### Inflation and Cost-of-Living Pressures:

The latest Northeast Consumer Price Index (CPI) reports show that overall inflation rose 3.1% year-over-year as of April 2025, with core inflation (excluding food and energy) closer to 3.5%.

Meanwhile, specific categories like housing, transportation, and utilities continue to increase at even higher rates in southern Maine. These economic pressures are significantly impacting municipal employees, especially those at the lower end of the pay scale, and undercutting the value of previous wage adjustments.

A 4% COLA ensures that employees maintain, rather than lose, ground against rising living costs. Awarding less would effectively reduce real income, at a time when workloads remain high and labor market competition for public sector roles continues.

#### Organizational Considerations:

Biddeford's workforce has risen to meet the demands of a growing and increasingly complex City, despite few additions to staffing. Departments continue to operate with less than adequate staffing structures, yet expectations and public demand have only increased. While we are moving toward a more comprehensive wage structure, including merit-based pay and formal performance evaluation integration, a 4% COLA provides a critical bridge that supports staff in the near term and signals that their contributions are recognized and valued.

Without this adjustment, we risk losing ground in both competitiveness and morale, particularly when compared with neighboring municipalities that have already made similar or larger commitments to their staff.

#### **Funding Source:**

The current Non-Union workforce for the City as of June 2025, not including grant funded positions which have no impact on the budget, account for \$5,232,291 in wages in the budget. For a 4% COLA, the total increase would be \$209,291. The amount currently budgeted for increases is \$182,436. Additionally, in the personnel reserve, there is a \$74,037 available from the PFML allotment that is no longer needed due to the use of a private plan. That allows for the committee to use up to \$256,473 without overspending the currently allotted budget appropriations.

#### **Staff Recommendation:**

The Human Resources Department recommends that the Personnel Committee approve a 4% cost-of-living adjustment for all Non-Union employees, effective July 1, 2025. This recommendation:

- Results in no increase to currently budgeted wage/personnel money;

- Reflects current inflationary trends and cost-of-living data for the Northeast;
- Aligns with or slightly exceeds regional municipal benchmarks (average COLA = 3.72%);
- Supports internal equity and morale, especially as we await results of a compensation study;  
and
- Reinforces Biddeford’s position as a responsive and competitive public employer.

Providing this adjustment is not only fiscally responsible, but also an investment in employee stability, service continuity, and the City’s long-term ability to retain high-performing talent.