



**City of Biddeford
Personnel Committee**

July 22, 2025 at 3:00 PM

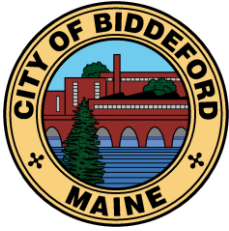
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Meeting ID: 921 6139 7071

Passcode: 614618

1. Call to Order
2. Approval of Minutes
 - 2.a June 26 2025 Minutes
3. Discussion
 - 3.a WCSIP – Worker’s Compensation Safety Incentive Program Update
 - 3.b Recommendation for 4% Cost-of-Living Adjustment (COLA) for Non-Union Employees
 - 3.c Request for RFP re: Wage Study
4. Other Business
5. Adjourn



PERSONNEL COMMITTEE MEETING

June 26, 2025

2pm (Council Chambers & Zoom)

Meeting Minutes

ITEM 1 Call to Order

Committee Chair and Councilor William Emheiser called the meeting to order at 2:01PM with Councilors Scott Whiting and Norman Belanger also present. Councilor Doris Ortiz was 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, via zoom), and Sarah Hulbert (Administrative Assistant). Several other employees were also present.

ITEM 2 Approval of Minutes

Councilor Whiting made a motion to approve the minutes from March 18th, 2025. Councilor Belanger seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

Councilor Whiting made a motion to approve the minutes from May 20th, 2025. Councilor Belanger seconded the motion. There was one adjustment to the minutes regarding a word clarification. With that adjustment, the motion was approved unanimously.

A motion was made by Emheiser to adjust the order and start with 3.b.

ITEM 3 Discussion

3.b Non Union COLA FY26

Diana recommended a July 1 increase and the potential for a larger wage study, for the Personnel Committee to review first, including comparables. The brief includes the CPI, organizational considerations, and how to keep up with staff and municipal growth. Diana made a recommendation for 4% raises and spoke to the Acting City Manager prior to his vacation regarding this request. Diana explained that there is existing money in the budget and also in the Personnel Reserve, in addition to additional money that won't be used for FML given the City's choice to use a private plan.

This raise would not include seasonal employees but rather all 'regular' part-time employees.

Assistant Public Works Director, Joey Lovejoy shared his feedback, particularly in support of the 4-day work week. He also expressed frustration that he has more vacation than he is able to use and can't buy it back, while some of his subordinates that had access to that prior practice are able to do so. He expressed the lack of incentive with unlimited sick time, especially when it isn't used. He suggested that additional money be put into retirement as an alternative.

Chief Fisk expressed that vacation buyback is a real challenge as department heads can't take 6 weeks off but the union heads can which feels complicated.

Chief Best stated that Non-Union staff will be appreciative of an upcoming wage study because there are compression issues within the Fire Department that need to be addressed.

Mike Koerner stated that if the COLA is a cost-of-living increase, is it really considered a raise, without any attention to merit?

Councilor Belanger recommended the 4%, in addition to a wage study, and to look at the cost of vacation buyback. He asked the HR team to determine what cost that buyback could have for the City and any subsequent recommendations, in the interest of remaining competitive as an employer.

Councilor Emheiser agreed and said that a cost adjustment in the immediate term would be prudent, with a proper wage study to look at other potential increases to happen in the coming months.

Councilor Belanger made a motion to recommend the 4% COLA FY26 increase to the Council. Councilor Whiting seconded the motion. The motion passes unanimously.

It was stated that an additional \$27,000 would need to be found for the COLA's.

3.a Workplace Safety Policy

Daniel gave an update regarding our current policy in the Non-Union manual, stating it is brief and doesn't expand into other areas. This piece of workplace safety will build towards the third-tier compliance which saves the City substantial funds on workers' compensation. This draft was also shared with the City's Safety Committee and most of what is mentioned in it is already being done (and at times, even more). Regardless, Daniel wants to be sure the City has a baseline for expectations and training.

Director of Public Works Jeff Demers commented that these updates and accountability meetings have really helped his team. This sentiment was shared by other employees in the audience.

Councilor Belanger made a motion to approve the Workplace Safety Policy with a few edits (Page 4, seasonal issues, parking lots/snow and ice removal – should include all vehicles; taking out the zones about colors because they are too confusing; change policies to the order they are in the document), Councilor Whiting seconded the motion. The motion is approved unanimously.

ITEM 4 Other Business

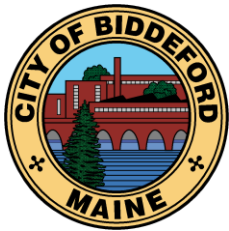
Councilor Emheiser asked Diana to prepare a proposal for the committee to review regarding the wage study, including a range of cost. It should also include information about merit-based increases, strengths, drawbacks, etc.

ITEM 5 Adjourn

Councilor Emheiser adjourned the meeting at 2:33 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: Tuesday, July 22, 2025

Meeting Time: 3:00 PM

Agenda Item No: 3.a

Item Description: Worker's Compensation Safety Incentive Program Update

Submitted by: Daniel Hammond, Safety & Training Coordinator

Key Terms:

WCSIP – Worker's Compensation Safety Incentive Program

Executive Summary:

The City of Biddeford Recently met requirements to enter the third tier of the Maine Municipal Associations WCSIP program. This will result in a 10% discount on the City's Worker's Compensation bill for the 2026 policy period.

Detailed Review:

Daniel Hammond has been working to get the City into tier 3 of the WCSIP program since he stepped into the Safety & Training Coordinator role in September of 2024. With the Personnel Committee's assistance and support over the past 6 months, new policies have been created and implemented regarding Incident Reviews and Workplace Safety. With these policies now in place the City has officially been verified to be complying with all the requirements for tier 3 of the WCSIP Program. This will result in a 10% discount on our Worker's Compensation bill for the 2026 policy period. The discount will remain in place for subsequent years if we continue to maintain compliance with all the requirements as identified below.

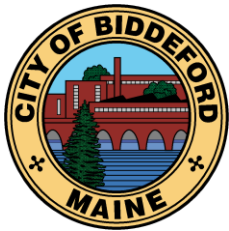
Verification Questions	TIER I	TIER II	TIER III
All departments are in compliance with the ME Dept. of Labor Bureau of Labor Standards: Safety Policies are in place Training is current for all staff Facility and equipment inspections have been completed	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Key personnel assigned safety responsibilities	<input type="checkbox"/>		
A process to communicate safety concerns to all employees is in place	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Leadership is aware of and reviews first report of injury, incidents and accidents	<input type="checkbox"/>		
A slip trip and fall safety policy is in place		<input type="checkbox"/>	
A lifting and back safety policy is in place		<input type="checkbox"/>	
An office ergonomics safety policy is in place		<input type="checkbox"/>	
A comprehensive PPE Program in place or Job Safety Analysis are completed		<input type="checkbox"/>	
Agrees to respond to MMA corrective action recommendations within 90 days		<input type="checkbox"/>	
A safety committee holds meetings at least quarterly and minutes are documented		<input type="checkbox"/>	
Annual administrative review of safety policies is documented		<input type="checkbox"/>	
Leadership attends/participates in Safety Committee meetings or Management reviews and signs off on Safety Committee minutes			<input type="checkbox"/>
Preferred providers are used			<input type="checkbox"/>
A written accident/incident review policy is in place			<input type="checkbox"/>
A wellness program or similar alternative is offered to employees			<input type="checkbox"/>
A return-to-work policy (light-duty) for all departments is in place			<input type="checkbox"/>

Funding Source:

N/A

Staff Recommendation:

N/A



CITY OF BIDDEFORD

205 Main St.
Biddeford, Maine 04005

PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

Meeting Date: Tuesday, July 22, 2025

Meeting Time: 3:00pm

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%	Average – 3.72%

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:

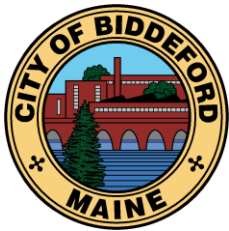
The current Non-Union workforce for the City as of June 2025, not including grant funded positions which have no impact on the budget, account for \$5,232,291 in wages in the budget. For a 4% COLA, the total increase would be \$209,291. The amount currently budgeted for increases is \$182,436. Additionally, 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 on 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.



CITY OF BIDDEFORD

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PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

Meeting Date: Tuesday, July 22, 2025

Meeting Time: 3:00pm

Agenda Item No: 3.c

Item Description: Request for RFP re: Wage Study

Submitted by: Diana DePaolo, Director of Human Resources

Key Terms: N/A

Executive Summary:

The Human Resources department would like to put out a Request for Proposal regarding a compensation study, based on previous committee meeting discussions and the established need outlined below.

Detailed Review:

The City of Biddeford has an opportunity to evaluate and enhance its current non-union wage scale. The last comprehensive wage study conducted by an external consultant was completed in 2016. Since that time, the City has made limited updates—primarily through annual cost-of-living adjustments (COLAs) and discretionary merit increases that were historically determined by the City Manager. However, there has been no formal mechanism for evaluating individual performance for compensation purposes or for ensuring equity and market competitiveness across all non-union positions.

Recent concerns have been raised by both employees and department heads, particularly among staff at the lower end of the wage scale. These concerns include:

- **Market Competitiveness:** Some staff have learned that their current wages are not aligned with those of peers in surrounding municipalities, particularly in comparable roles.
- **Hiring and Placement Inequities:** The City has faced challenges in placing new hires appropriately within the scale. Candidates with more experience may be placed higher on the scale but may not meet performance expectations once in the role. Conversely, less experienced hires may exceed expectations but are placed at the lower end of the scale with no path for early adjustment.
- **Lack of Merit-Based Flexibility:** Department heads currently lack the authority or mechanism to adjust wages for employees who significantly exceed performance expectations or who assume additional responsibilities—such as in the case of the Codes Department managing additional workloads due to natural disasters.

- **Subjective Decision-Making:** In the past, decisions regarding merit increases and salary adjustments were handled directly through the City Manager’s office, often without detailed explanation or a transparent process, leading to concerns about fairness and clarity.
- **Roles and Responsibilities:** The City has expanded and become more complicated to serve over the past several years. Almost no department has seen an increase in staff as the workload has expanded. The increased demand for task-related work is evident to staff, and there has been no increase to staffing or an adjustment to wages despite increasing work demands.

In recent years, the City has implemented a COLA adjustment each July 1. Prior to that, the City Manager determined various increases based on individual merit assessments. Currently, however, there is no formal merit-based structure in place, nor is there a clear methodology for internal equity review.

Recommended Options for Consideration:

1. **Approve an External Compensation and Classification Study:**
 - a. This would provide an objective assessment of market competitiveness, internal equity, and position classification.
 - b. Although a study could not be completed before the July 1, 2025, fiscal year deadline, the City could consider retroactive implementation of any adjustments based on the study’s findings.

Funding Source:

Staff Recommendation:

The Human Resources Department recommends that the Personnel Committee approve the creation and distribution of a Request for Proposal regarding a wage study for City staff.