

Present: Chair McClure, Alderman Whitcomb, Alderman Cupoli, Alderman Clifford, Alderwoman Tadio, Alderwoman Davis,, Ellen Coyle, Desarie Stone Feliciano, April Cioffi, Tyler Dahlin, Mayor Doenges

Alderwoman McClure called the meeting to order at 5:31 PM.

The committee began discussing the proposed background policy for the Parks and Recreation Department (RPD). HR Director Coyle presented the policy and noted that the committee members, particularly Alderman Whitcomb, had already provided questions and suggestions. The HR director clarified that the RPD policy is distinct from a more generic one that applies to other city departments, with the exception of the police department, which manages its own background checks.

The committee discussed Section 2 of the policy, which initially referred to "contact with children." HR Director Coyle and HR Director April suggested changing this to "contact with vulnerable individuals" to include adults who participate in programs at the Godnick Adult Center and other RPD facilities. The change was proposed to ensure comprehensive protection for all vulnerable populations served by the RPD.

A motion was made to approve the change from "children" to "vulnerable individuals." And passed 3-0.

Regarding the proposed section on background check waivers, which Alderman Whitcomb had questioned, Director Coyle clarified that the term "waiver" was a misnomer in this context. The policy was intended to address situations where background checks couldn't be performed, particularly for minor volunteers (e.g., 14-16 years old) who have no criminal record to check. A reference check process was suggested as an alternative for these cases.

The committee engaged in a lengthy discussion about the policy's language concerning independent contractors. Concerns were raised about the practical implications of requiring background checks for every contractor, such as plumbers or electricians, especially for one-time or emergency visits. The committee members questioned whether such checks were necessary if the contractors were not left unsupervised with vulnerable individuals.

Human Resources will revisit the language regarding independent contractors for discussion in a future meeting. In the interim, they will research how other municipalities handle this issue to gather more information and define "independent contractor" more clearly in the context of the policy.

The committee addressed a section outlining regular background checks for current employees and volunteers. The initial language stated that all full-time employees and part-time employees/volunteers who have contact with vulnerable individuals must be checked every two or more years. HR Director Coyle explained that background checks for positions working with vulnerable populations can be done for free through the Vermont Crime Information Center (VCIC), while other departments would incur costs.

The committee voted to approve background checks every two years, and this motion passed 3-0. However; after much discussion among members of the committee and other members of the board, this conversation has potentially been tabled until we approach budget conversations in October.

Further discussion of both documents will be had at a later time, the committee adjourned at 7:31pm.