

SUMMARY Operations Committee – Updated 5-11-21

1. Add language to Personnel Manual that all depts are bound by same rules

Vote: All ayes

Recommend to full CRC

Recommended new language as amendment to the Charter (Article 8, Section 8.20) and Personnel Manual (4.010 Exclusions) to explain why elected officials are exempt from the rules:

As a matter of law, an elected official is generally answerable only to the voters and to their oath of office. In Crossler v Hille, the WA State Supreme Court held that a district court judge was not bound by the county employment handbook. 136 Vn2nd287 (1998.)

Findings: The Charter Review Commission believes the San Juan County's Personnel Manual should apply to all employees of San Juan County whether elected or appointed, but understands as a matter of law, an elected official is generally answerable only to the voters and to their oath of office.

2. Public Records: Charter Section 10.50

Vote: All ayes

Recommend to full CRC

Recommended new language as amendment to Charter:

“San Juan County shall follow the Local Government Records Retention Schedules as required by state law. Records with long term retention value, that do not contain information exempt from public disclosure, shall be made available online to the public to the extent allowed by state and federal law. The County shall maintain a means to store and maintain, in perpetuity, records that can be accessed in a prompt and retrievable manner. The Public Records Clerk will continue to make records available for inspection and copying according to the SJC policies and fee schedule.

San Juan County values transparency in government. County departments shall strive to obtain maximum accessibility of their records and shall prioritize assisting citizens in accessing those records. To the extent feasible, frequently accessed records shall be available in an online format.”

Findings: The County should have more records available to the public online. In particular, Council proceedings and Planning Dept records were scanned for public access but never made it to the digital world. The plan to make records available was started, then stopped, and it is past time to complete the project. Public accessibility to records should be a County value and goal.

3. Ombudsperson, now referred to as Public Advocate

Vote: All ayes, motion passed

Recommended to Full CRC

Findings:

The Operations Committee recommends that an office of public advocacy be established for the purpose of receiving, accepting and responding to public inquiries. We also recommend that the office of public advocacy be blended with the current Public Records Clerk and that the new position be called Public Advocate. The Public Advocate is a community outreach position, accountable for organizing and implementing responses to citizen questions on how to navigate the county systems, and to give access and opportunity for citizens (including employees) to raise concerns and voice complaints. The Public Advocate will receive, respond and make recommendations to the Council and/or appropriate county departments on ideas or complaints concerning the operations of county government.

(To be included in Charter, possibly Section 10.60)

4. Language reinforcing anti-bullying

Vote: All Ayes

Recommended to Full CRC

Statement for inclusion in Charter 2.60 regarding Boards, Commissions and Committees

“San Juan County believes that all volunteer members of Boards, Commissions, and Committees shall be treated with dignity and respect. The County requires that all meetings conducting County business should be free from behaviors that can be considered harassing, abusive, disorderly or disruptive. This includes, but is not limited to, bullying (verbal, cyber, physical, gesture or exclusion), harassment, discrimination or workplace violence.

Please refer to the Personnel Manual for a more detailed definition.

It is the intention of San Juan County to promote safe and positive working environments that foster critical thinking and problem-solving activities for all our Boards, Commissions and Committees. “

Findings: SJC Personnel Manual contains detailed guidelines for employee behavior. It is time to add language that covers the behavior of Boards, Commissions and Committees with the expectation that volunteer members of Boards, etc. treat each other with dignity and respect.

5. Evaluate, and potentially expand, employee evaluation/satisfaction process for County Manager.

No Recommendation to CRC

Members felt no need to pursue any additional changes. It is believed another committee is handling the evaluation of County Manager tasks.

6. Evaluate Departmental/employee satisfaction of current chain of command/protections from executive pressures.

No Recommendation to full CRC

Members felt no need to pursue any additional changes. After discussion with James Wolf, it was understood that there are sufficient policies and rules in the Personnel Manual to cover this issue.

7. Review salary disparities between elected officials and department heads.

No recommendation for full CRC

Finding:

Since the Operations Committee's review of the salary disparities between department heads and elected officials, the Citizen's Salary Commission met and made the decision to increase the salary of elected officials, effective May 2021 pay period.