

MINUTES OF THE GOVERNMENT OPERATION COMMITTEE  
CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS  
February 1, 2023 – 5:00 p.m.

Committee Members Present:      Councilor Richard R. Michaud, Chair  
   Councilor Matt Gerding  
   Councilor Don Austin  
   Councilor Nancie Cameron

Administration/Staff present:      City Manager Bob Belmore  
   City Clerk Kristen LaPanne

Others in Attendance:              Recovery Friendly Workplace Advisor Amy Donle  
   Recovery Friendly Workplace Coordinator Eileen Lawton  
   Lived Experience Panelist Randy Stevens

---

Chairman Michaud called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETINGS

***Councilor Austin made a motion to approve the minutes of the November 3, 2022 meeting. The motion was seconded by Councilor Cameron and passed 4-0.***

SOS, RECOVERY FRIENDLY WORKPLACE INITIATIVE

All in attendance gave introductions at the start of the meeting.

Randy Stevens shared his personal lived experiences with addiction and homelessness and what led him to the successful life he lives today, he attributed much of his success to a multitude of people and programs, and acknowledged the first employer that took a chance on him. He continued to explain that the support and encouragement he received from his workplace lessened barriers that could have caused major setbacks in his journey of recovery and shared that the opposite of addiction is connection, and his workplace provided a connection for him. Mr. Stevens commented on the continued connection that Recovery Friendly Workplace (RFW) staff has provided him as well as trainings to continue the support.

Councilor Austin stated that what strikes him as important listening to Randy speak, is the fact that an employer took a chance on him and without that it could have been a detrimental road block in his journey.

Amy Donle reiterated that the Recovery Friendly Workplace initiative is about connection. Ms. Donle added that the City would receive continued trainings online or in-person at no cost. Eileen Lawton stated that it is important for employers to remember that in becoming a Recovery Friendly Workplace, they would have a Wellness Program in there “back pocket” that offers ongoing support and guidance through SOS’s peer to peer support.

Councilor Michaud asked if the City would receive pamphlets or brochures allowing employees to reach out for support anonymously. RFW staff confirmed yes.

Councilor Gerding acknowledged that the RFW Initiative encompasses a lot and wondered, other than policies, what other things would the City need to do to implement the program. Ms. Donle stated that from her point-of-view, ongoing training and education to City staff would be beneficial as well as the City sending staff to attend the annual 2-day SOS conference and other trainings and events offered throughout the year. Mr. Donle added that as the Somersworth City and School advisor, she would be the point of contact reaching out to check-in and offer trainings as needed including an annual renewal process.

Councilor Austin asked if Ms. Donle is the liaison to the State. Amy explained that the RFW program is an initiative under the Governor's Office but they are under the umbrella of Granite United Way.

Councilor Austin wondered if there was a way to connect with other Cities and Towns that have implemented RFW policies which would allow the Committee to ensure there are no barriers within the City's current Ordinances or policies. City Manager Belmore doesn't believe that implementing the RFW Initiative will be an issue regarding any of their Ordinances or policies.

Manager Belmore thanked Mr. Steven's for sharing his experience with the Committee and congratulated him on this recovery and success. He asked Ms. Donle if the City needed to submit a letter of intent. Ms. Dolne believes that one may have been submitted sparking this conversation however she stated it really isn't a letter of interest rather a form which can be completed online via their website.

Manager Belmore expects that he would consider inviting Amy Donle to attend a Department Head meeting to share the RFW work that they do and to branch out on additional training for them or their departments when appropriate.

Councilor Gerding commented about the potential for the City to serve as a resource to the Community by hosting trainings that invite other local RFW businesses in an effort to incorporate the initiative throughout the City. Ms. Donle added that inviting her team to Community events can help spread the word and mentioned that SOS is opening an RFW restaurant at the former Teatottallers Restaurant. Manager Belmore suggested perhaps inviting the RFW advisor to the City's upcoming employee Wellness Fair in April, Ms. Donle expressed interest in attending.

Councilor Gerding asked the City Manager if staff are able to take days off or receive reimbursement for professional development, Manager Belmore confirmed yes and noted that there are multiple training opportunities for staff through Primex and the NH Municipal Association for free or at a low cost.

Councilor Austin commented that due to the stigma of addiction, he thinks that employees could be suffering with addiction whether it be them or an individual close to them and would like to see an awareness campaign included in the trainings.

Ms. Donle thanked Randy for coming to share his experience with the Committee and expressed appreciation for the Committee's consideration. Ms. Lawton asked what the Committee envisions as their next steps. Manager Belmore does not think the Committee needs to create an Ordinance and that implementation will not necessarily be difficult. He expects he might the craft the RFW Initiative into Administrative Regulations that he issues, the Committee agreed.

There was discussion pertaining to what the Councilors need to do and it was recommended by Manager Belmore that the Committee sponsor a Resolution supporting the implementation of the program to full Council. Councilor Gerding suggested having a Council commission or representative pertaining to the initiative, Belmore stated that perhaps having the City's advisor provide periodic updates to the full Council would be beneficial. Councilor Austin mentioned that the Hilltop Mental Health and Wellness Commission Chair resigned but that they have been looking to continue the Commission in a new direction that can get things done.

The Committee discussed the Somersworth School District working towards implementing the RFW Initiatives and have taken steps necessary to move forward. Manager Belmore stated that he would gather information from Superintendent Lane pertaining to what the School has done so far and report back. *Councilor Austin made a motion to support a Resolution to implement the Recovery Friendly Workplace Initiative within the City of Somersworth's City Departments. Councilor Gerding seconded the motion and passed 4-0.*

The Committee scheduled their next meeting for Thursday, March 2, 2023 at 5:00 p.m.

#### ADJOURNMENT

*Councilor Austin made a motion to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Councilor Cameron and passed 4-0. The meeting adjourned at 5:49 p.m.*

Respectfully submitted,

---

Kristen LaPanne, City Clerk