

## One More New Year's Resolution: For New Jersey Municipal Administrations

**A**t the beginning of the year, we come up with new resolutions. “I’m going to lose 10 pounds.” “I promise to hit the gym every morning!” Unfortunately, we (or at least I) seldom accomplish these laudable resolutions.

But there are resolutions that we as local government officials should seriously consider. Over the years, I’ve tried to take this time when the weather is bad, there’s no place to go, and it’s quiet in the office to work on the following issues that are unique to administrations.

Of course, the most important concern at this time is work on the municipal budget and the annual reorganization with the myriad resolutions that need adoption. For some of us, we’re lucky enough to have wonderful municipal clerks and financial staffs who have these tasks in hand. Amid all this beginning-of-the-year activity, I suggest some new New Year’s resolutions for the next few months.

### Personnel Manual

Most municipalities have some form of a personnel manual. Many communities belong to Joint Insurance Funds. Usually, they provide model policies and procedures (PPM). This is a good time to take a few hours to review those policies to make sure that they are up to date and are being followed. Unfortunately, it’s all too common to have the PPM adopted and put on the shelf.

In my experience, I have noticed that when the PPM is adopted, it’s not fully

adopted as per New Jersey rules. So, here are some basic structural suggestions and the procedures that you should go through to ensure they will hold up if ever challenged.

**First**, collectively bargained agreements (CBA) take priority over a PPM. Where the CBA is silent, then the PPM is the policy.

**Second**, the PPM should be written as a series of individual policies and given unique identifying numbers. When you adopt new or amended policies, the manual can easily be updated. Each policy stands on its own, but all are included in one manual. Below is a suggested illustration of how each policy could be organized for easy reference and indexing.

TOWNSHIP OF BLOOMFIELD  
POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

POLICY NUMBER: 2020-01

Township Electronic Equipment Policy

Council Review: (Insert Date)

Union Review: (Insert Date due date for the unions to respond)

Final Adoption: (Insert resolution adoption date)

Purpose

This policy addresses the actions that must be taken by all employees who have been issued electronic equipment by the Township. This equipment is Township property and includes, but is not limited to: cellphones, tablets, laptops etc.

General Policy

Any Township issued equipment is intended for business use only. Employees are responsible for the physical security of any Township equipment issued to them.

**Third**, once you are satisfied that your policies are up to date, you need to make sure that the entire document and any amendments are adopted properly. I have found this step has not been completed properly. So, when you start the process of review, make sure that each policy, either the original full document or any amendments, are adopted in this manner.

1. Review the policy and procedure with governing body.
2. Send the policy to the unions for comment. Give them a specific date to return any comments. Make sure you keep a written record of this process, it is the one most overlooked. If the union has comments, and if you agree with them, amend the policy accordingly.
3. Finalize the policy and have it adopted by resolution of the governing body. Lastly, distribute the policy and have all the affected employees acknowledge receipt. Now you have a properly and legally adopted policy that can be enforced when necessary.

**Personnel Chart**

January is a good time to review your organizational charts. While this is not a requirement, having an organizational chart that is up to date, is a good practice. It should illustrate the hierarchy with each position, title, employee name, and salary. During the year, employees are moved based on need, and the organizational chart is then no longer accurate. I also included the updated charts in my budget documents to the governing body.

**Training**

These days, providing training for your employees has become easier with the numerous online training options available to you. This is the time to plan the training for the first half of the year. There are a few training programs that are required that I recommend you include in your training plan.

Harassment training, which includes sexual harassment and bullying, is a mandatory annual training requirement for every municipal employee. There are several online outlets for this training, but consider in-person training.

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Gathering employees together through a few sessions to review not only this

training, but any personnel policies that you may have adopted, is beneficial.

Other training that you might want to consider is use of medical leave, specifically the requirements of the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) and include the NJ Family Medical Leave Act. These two laws are similar but do vary. Make sure you explain the difference and how these two benefits are used properly. Obviously, you should have your policy on FMLA/NJ FLA up to date and adopted.

I hope you find these New Year’s resolutions helpful to you as you manage your personnel. The NJ League of Municipalities Labor Advisory Service does provide the opportunity for you to reach out to me for any clarification or questions. 📧

@ To speak with him about the NLJM Labor Advisory Service, email Matt@njcs.us



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