Policies Committee Meeting Summary

October 26, 2022

Present: Jody Suhrbier, Mary Sue Wilson, Mickey Lahmann, Jennifer Pearson

Absent: John Skinder, Mary Barrett.

Next meeting is January 25, 2023 at 5:30 pm.

Policies discussed/reviewed:

*Jody circulated policies for review in advance. Mary Barrett shared proposed edits for two policies, and a redraft of a fee schedule policy. Committee members discussed the policies in the order captured below.*

1. Conflict of Interest

The committee agreed on two edits to the first paragraph, replacing “or dualities of interest sometimes” with “may” in the first sentence and “occur” with “may arise” in the second sentence. Purpose of these edits: to simplify language.

1. Bylaws

The committee discussed:

* Whether the name of our organization should be changed to capture the jurisdiction beyond Thurston County (south Mason). This topic came up because the name is captured on the title of the bylaws. Jody shared that many local DRCs have adopted new names that do not include a geographic reference (examples: Clark County is now Community Mediation Services and Lewis and Cowlitz is now Community Mediation Center and Pierce County is now Center for Dialog and Resolution). If we were to change our name, Jennifer suggested “South Sound DRC.” We discussed that a name change would be significant given our long-time brand and recognition as DRC of Thurston County. Jody noted she always introduces our organization as “DRC of Thurston County, also serving south Mason county.” This committee decided the issue of name is broader than the scope of this committee. We decided to capture our discussion in these notes, highlight the topic for the full board at its next meeting, and encourage a broader discussion at the board level, with this committee making no recommendation on whether to change the name or a timeframe for consideration.
* To capture recent practice, the committee agreed to recommend a change to the third paragraph of Section 3. The change would be: “Each director must live in Thurston or Mason County, unless the Board makes an exception for an individual director.”
* To complete an incomplete sentence, the next sentence should be edited as follows: “If the service area is expanded beyond these counties, each director must live in a county served by this Dispute Resolution Center.”
* The committee discussed whether to recommend a change to Section 9 (quorum). Quorum is defined as five members. Discussion included that 5 was a majority when there are nine board members but now when there are 14 board members. Committee members noted some difficulty in the past of securing a quorum and agreed to retain the number 5 (no recommendation for a change).

1. Executive Director Job Description (newly created, first time committee has reviewed)

Committee discussed and agreed to the following edits to this draft document:

* Under Reporting, “them” should be changed to “the Board.”
* Under Responsibilities, second sentence the sentence should be edited to read: “The Executive Director ~~in the~~ leads ~~of~~ the Leadership Team . . .”
* Strike “7 Member” from last bullet under essential leadership duties
* Edit Expectations of Team Members to focus this section on the ED’s role of fostering these expectations. Edits:
  + Caption of this section: ED fosters organizational culture;
  + Edit the introductory language to read: The Executive Director sets the organizational culture and promotes by leading through example expectations of team members including:
  + Change each following bullet to active “verb” focused; e.g., “meaningfully engage in . . .” “show commitment” “take responsibility”
* Conditions of Employment – last sentence first paragraph replace “supervisor” with “Board.”
* Conditions of Employment – last paragraph edit as follows: “The Dispute Resolution Center is an at-will employer, which means that either the Executive Director or the DRC may terminate employment at any time, and for any or no reason. A newly-hired Executive Director must complete a 90-day probationary period, after which the decision to continue employment will be made.”

1. Executive Director Succession Procedures (newly created, first time committee has reviewed)

Committee discussed and agreed to one edit to this draft document: at the end of the initial paragraph under Planned Succession of ED, “determine” will be replaced by “recommend to the Board” – to make clear that the committee is charged with recommendations (not decision-making) in the listed areas.

1. Fee Schedule

At our last meeting, the committee discussed and agreed that the nature of the fee schedule policy was more “ministerial” with content that didn’t justify board committee oversight. Mary Barrett offered to carve out the portion of the policy that represented “policy” and the remaining content would be converted to a fee schedule that would be managed by the executive director and staff. In advance of our meeting, Mary circulated a first draft of her effort and the committee reviewed and discussed the draft.

The committee generally liked the approach Mary took. The committee asked Jody to work on revisions to the draft to capture: (1) the statutory standards for fees and the narrative that fees won’t be a barrier to service; and (2) add all training types (not just custom training). The committee will review a second draft at its January 2023 meeting.

Thereafter, the committee adjourned.

Next meeting: January 25, 2023.