



Illinois Heartland Library System

MEMO TO: IHLS Board of Directors
FROM: Leslie Bednar
DATE: September 13, 2023
RE: Hiring Procedure

As we work through the policies and procedures related to returning to in-person meetings, another question has surfaced about our hiring procedure when faced with filling an open position mid-board cycle. We have consulted legal counsel; the recommendation below is based on those conversations.

Background:

In our 12+ years as a regional library system, there have been occasions when our policies have undergone review and update. One such review of the (then) IHLS Personnel Code in August 2014 led to a slight change in our hiring procedure. Decisions made by the board were eventually noted in a January 2017 non-binding opinion from the Illinois Attorney General that focused on 75 ILCS 10/6 (5):

5. To appoint and to fix the compensation of a competent librarian, who shall have the authority to hire such other employees as may be necessary, to fix their compensation, and to remove such appointees, subject to the approval of the board.

Current Process:

To date, our process is bringing new hire and termination recommendations to the monthly board meeting. Once the board approves, we set a start date with the new employee and proceed to onboarding. During the pandemic, we faced the challenge of final candidates finding work elsewhere between board meetings. To remedy this, we ask the board president to call a special meeting to offer final candidates the position as soon as possible.

Termination recommendations often follow the staff evaluation process, which includes the employee, supervisor(s), Human Resources, and Executive Director. Employees are placed on paid administrative leave pending the decision of the board at the next meeting. Since the beginning of the pandemic, paid administrative leave has resulted in an average of \$900.00 per employee terminated for cause.

Now that the board has returned to in-person meetings at public locations, we are loathe to ask for special meetings due to the burden it places on board members to drive to a public location for a meeting that lasts 10-15 minutes. We reached out to counsel regarding a process that allows the library system to offer positions to selected candidates mid-board cycle, terminate staff if necessary, and preserve the statutory responsibility of the board. Oftentimes, the positions we need to fill mid-cycle are Courier Driver and Sorter. These positions are critical to the normal function of delivery services.

Recommendation:

When we have a final candidate for an open position, we will do our best to follow our current procedure and include the recommendation in the board meeting packet before offering the position. In those cases where we need to fill a position mid-cycle, we will make an offer contingent on board approval. The employee may begin the onboarding process and the recommendation will be included in

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the board meeting packet. We are investigating small changes to our Bylaws and Employee Handbook that affirm this process.

A similar workflow occurs when we are faced with the recommendation to terminate an employee. Our evaluation system incorporates the necessary legal documentation. In addition to staff involved in the decision-making process, the board president is also made aware of the situation. The employee involved will be terminated for cause and the recommendation will be shared with the board as part of the next meeting packet.

Your consideration of this change is appreciated as we return to a regular meeting environment. In summary, we are not delegating Board authority in personnel actions to staff or the Director, we are providing an efficient, effective, and timely process for the Board's review and approval consideration in these matters. Please let me know if there are any questions. Thank you.