



CITY OF MANITOWOC

WISCONSIN, USA
www.manitowoc.org



June 18th, 2020

VETO

TO: Council President Eric J. Sitkiewitz
Members of the Common Council

FROM: Mayor Justin M. Nickels

SUBJECT: Mayoral Veto of Resolution 2020-0571

Council President Sitkiewitz and Members of the Common Council,

Please allow me to provide the Common Council with this written communication vetoing the Common Council's action on Resolution number 2020-0571 which pertains to: Extended Leave Policy – Employee Policy Manual which allows city employees to access up to 5 days of their extended leave bank each year without requiring the use of PTO (personal time off) first. This resolution was adopted by your body on June 15th, 2020 by a 7-2 affirmative vote (Absent: Alderman Brett Vanderkin).

I am vetoing this resolution for a plethora of reasons. However, the main goal of my veto is to encourage a more in depth conversation over employee time off benefits. I am hopeful that my reasons will encourage you to sustain this veto and send the conversation back to the Personnel Committee.

In 2011 we started conversations of employee time off benefits. There were concerns at that time over the extended leave bank that employees could bank sick days and at the time of their retirement would be paid out for all those hours. Some employees would have payouts well into the tens of thousands for those banked hours. The council at that time and myself changed that policy. However, unlike this current change, we didn't just look at that one portion of employee time off benefits. We looked at the whole. That is what I am encouraging the council to do this time.

Mayor Justin M. Nickels

CITY HALL • 900 Quay Street • Manitowoc, WI 54220
Phone: (920) 686-6980 • E-Mail: jnickels@manitowoc.org



This policy as adopted by the Common Council completely changes the nature of the concept of Personal Time Off. In 2011 we had separate codes for sick time off and vacation time off, along with the extended sick leave bank. The decision was made to eliminate the need for employees to pick sick time off or vacation time off and simply created the personal time off, which combined the two into one. Three (3) days were added to what every employee received for their vacation time off (at that time). These days which had previously been allotted to sick time off could now be used for whatever purpose an employee wanted to use it for: vacation, sick, sick child, snow day for child, or just a day away from work. That decision brings us to today, where we have an immediate time off policy (PTO), and an extended time off policy (extended leave bank).

The only thing this current action does is give all employees who are in the employee policy manual an extra five (5) days off. The intention may be for employees to use this for days they are sick, but the consequence will ultimately be 5 additional free days off, especially since there is no requirement to provide a doctor's note (or the like) to utilize any of these 5 days. Managers and myself also need to explain to employees that personal time off means they should use those days if they feel sick. That's why we increased PTO by 3 days a few years ago. Comments were made that employees don't want to use those days because they are not named "sick days". That belief needs to change. Employees would still receive up to 10 days a year that would be banked in their extended leave bank with a max of 50 days which could be achieved after 5 years of employment. I personally feel that is an extremely generous benefit for our employees.

The resolution states that COVID-19 is the purpose to re-evaluate our time off policy. I do not disagree with that. The world will be different for every organization moving forward and every employer will need to address the new normal. I would be supportive of interim actions to allow a more flexible time off policy for employees who have symptoms of COVID-19 while the pandemic remains. However, while this resolution's intention was to address current COVID-19 issues, it will ultimately extend well past the pandemic. It will literally be 5 extra days off each year for every employee well after the pandemic is over under the guise of "sick".

We need to look comprehensively at employee benefits whenever we make a change this drastic. We need to address the fact that not many employees even utilize their current extended leave bank (as was mentioned by employees at the Personnel Committee meeting on June 1st, 2020). We need to address whether that extended leave policy even matters anymore since employees have many other options to utilize such as Federal leave programs like the Family and Medical Leave

Mayor Justin M. Nickels
CITY HALL • 900 Quay Street • Manitowoc, WI 54220
Phone: (920) 686-6980 • E-Mail: jnickels@manitowoc.org

Act (FMLA). We need to address whether we should go back to the previous leave policy due to the changing work environments. We need to remember that employees received their scheduled pay increase on April 1st in the midst of the pandemic as businesses all around us were forced to close. We need to address if all of our policies will be flexible enough for all employees; COVID-19 or not. We need to address what the newer, younger workforce expects when looking for jobs. We need to address Human Resources concerns that even with this change, they still feel we are behind our comparables in terms of overall time off (as stated at the Personnel Committee on June 1st, 2020). We need to address flexible time off such as a telework policy which could allow employees to still work from home if their child is sick, or they are sick, without having to utilize any sick, vacation, or PTO days. We need to look at our time off policies for our employees comprehensively.

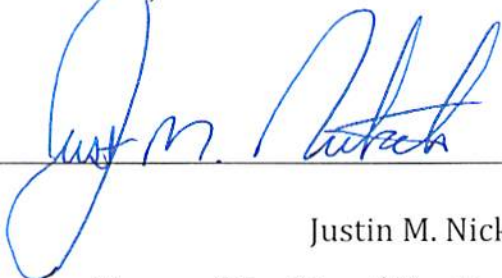
As you can see, I feel there is a lot more that should be addressed that was not addressed with this change. I view this action as a band aide approach which, as this policy is written, is simply covering a scar that will remain in place forever. The intention of an extended leave bank is to utilize those days (benefits employees receive) for major family or medical occurrences. This change is taking away the intent of an extended leave bank and allowing for immediate sick day(s) while still having personal time off days. This changes the nature of our policies and that is why I am asking you to consider a more comprehensive look at our time off policies for our employees. I am confident we can achieve everyone's goals if we have that conversation. I fear if this change that you adopted remains, it will make those larger conversations even more difficult and could ultimately take away from employees after they have already been granted these 5 extra days. I would rather get it right now so our employees are not in the middle of piecemeal changes.

I would be more than happy to have this conversation in the near future. I ask that you sustain this veto to do so.

Respectfully Submitted,

June 18, 2020

Date


Justin M. Nickels
Mayor of the City of Manitowoc

CC: Deborah Neuser, City Clerk (official record)

Mayor Justin M. Nickels
CITY HALL • 900 Quay Street • Manitowoc, WI 54220
Phone: (920) 686-6980 • E-Mail: jnickels@manitowoc.org