City of Canton Personnel Manual

Approved by Canton City Council on May 21, 2026
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CITY OF CANTON PERSONNEL MANUAL

Dear Employee,

Welcome to Team Canton! We're glad you're here. You were selected because we believe you will help advance our goals through teamwork, collaboration, and excellent service. Every role matters, and our employees are our greatest asset.

This personnel manual is a resource for information about City policies, procedures, benefits, and other employment matters. It is intended to support smooth operations and is updated over time as improvements are made.

We are guided by our award-winning Roadmap for Success, shaped by our Mayor and Council and informed by our community. As part of Team Canton, you play an important role in building the best community for our residents, businesses, and guests.

We ask all employees to Lead with Excellence. City Council and I are committed to supporting you and valuing you as a professional member of our public service team.

Please read this manual and follow the policies it outlines. Each employee's performance is essential to our success and the continuation of our benefits.

This manual is not an employment contract and does not guarantee employment for any specific period. The City may revise these policies as needed; updated versions will be provided when changes occur.

Welcome aboard! We look forward to your contributions.

Yours in service,

Billy Peppers,
City Manager

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A WORD ABOUT THIS MANUAL

This Personnel Manual outlines the City of Canton's ("City") general rules, policies, and procedures regarding employment. It is intended to serve as a reference guide to assist managers and employees in understanding and navigating personnel matters. The Manual is advisory in nature and does not address every potential workplace situation or issue.

The provisions contained in this Manual are not binding on the City and may be interpreted, modified, suspended, revoked, or amended at the City's sole discretion, at any time, with or without prior notice. This Manual is designed to provide management with general guidance in making personnel decisions, while the City remains committed to full compliance with all applicable local, state, and federal laws.

Certain job classifications may also have additional rules or requirements specific to their duties. Employees are expected to comply with all policies and requirements related to their positions. If a conflict arises between job-specific rules and the provisions of this Personnel Manual, the provisions of this Manual will take precedence.

This Manual, except for as otherwise specifically provided, applies to all employees of the City with the exception of elected and appointed officials, contract workers, and volunteer personnel.

Nothing in this manual or in any of the City's personnel policies creates or constitutes an employment contract, promise, or guarantee, whether express or implied, between the City and any employee. Nothing in the manual is intended to provide any assurance of continued employment or any guarantee of continuity of benefits or rights. All employees are employed at-will, meaning employment may be ended by either the employee or the City at any time for any reason with or without cause. Nothing in this manual or in any other City document changes the employee's at-will status or otherwise creates any type of contractual right. Only a written agreement approved and authorized by the City Council can alter the at-will employment relationship or create a binding employment contract. Any written or oral statements or promises to the contrary are hereby expressly disavowed and should not be relied upon by prospective or existing employees.

CHAPTER 1 - EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY AND ACCOMMODATIONS

1.1 Equal Employment Opportunity

The City of Canton is an equal opportunity employer. We are committed to ensuring fair and equitable treatment in all aspects of employment, including recruitment, hiring, promotion, compensation, training, and termination.

Employment decisions are made without regard to race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, age, disability, genetic information, or any other status protected by law. We do not tolerate discrimination, harassment, or retaliation of any kind.

This policy applies to all employees and individuals conducting business with the City, including contractors, vendors, and visitors. It is our policy to adhere to all applicable federal, state, and local laws.

1.2 Americans with Disabilities Act

The City is committed to providing equal employment opportunities to qualified individuals with disabilities and ensuring full compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and all applicable federal and state laws. This policy applies to all aspects of employment and application for employment. In accordance with the ADA or other applicable law, the City will provide reasonable accommodations to qualified individuals with disabilities unless such accommodations would present an undue hardship on City operations or would pose a direct threat to the health or safety of the individual or others.

Individuals with a disability may request a reasonable accommodation at any point during the application process or during employment. The process of determining an appropriate accommodation involves an interactive dialogue between the individual and the City. It is the responsibility of the employee or applicant to initiate this process. To request an accommodation, an individual must complete an Accommodation Request Form (available through the Human Resources Department) and submit it to Human Resources for review and further action.

Upon receiving a request for accommodation, Human Resources will meet with the individual to clarify their need and identify the appropriate reasonable accommodation. As part of this process, the City may request documentation, including medical certification of the individual's disability and need for a reasonable accommodation. Failure to provide required medical information may result in denial of an accommodation. All medical information obtained in connection with an accommodation request shall be treated as confidential and maintained in a separate medical file in accordance with the ADA and applicable law and shall not be disclosed except as permitted by law.

1.3 Pregnant Workers Fairness Act

The City is committed to complying with the federal Pregnant Workers Fairness Act (PWFA) by providing

reasonable accommodations for known limitations related to pregnancy, childbirth, or related medical conditions, unless doing so would impose an undue hardship on the operation of City business.

Reasonable accommodations may include, but are not limited to, the ability to sit or stand as needed, parking closer to the entrance of a building, modified work hours, appropriately sized uniforms and safety gear, modified job duties, additional breaks for restroom use, eating or drinking, break time to pump breast milk, and access to a private space, other than a bathroom, for pumping.

Employees who require an accommodation should contact Human Resources to begin the request process. Human Resources will engage in a timely interactive process to understand the employees' needs and determine an appropriate reasonable accommodation. This process may begin upon the employee's request or when the City becomes aware, through observation or other credible information, that a pregnancy, childbirth, or related medical condition may be affecting the employee's ability to perform job duties.

Employees should clearly describe the accommodation requested, preferably in writing. The City may request reasonable supporting documentation only when necessary to evaluate the request and as permitted by applicable law. Documentation will not be required when the limitation and need for accommodation are obvious, when the request relates to common and predictable needs associated with pregnancy or childbirth, or when prohibited by applicable law, including requests for reasonable break time or space for pumping breast milk. Employees are expected to cooperate in the interactive process, including providing necessary information and considering effective alternative accommodations when appropriate.

Individuals will be notified in writing of the City's decision regarding their accommodation request. Any individual who believes a reasonable accommodation has not been provided, who believes they have been discriminated against based on pregnancy, childbirth, pumping, related medical conditions, or disability, or believes they have been subjected to retaliation must follow the City's Complaint Procedure contained in this manual.

The City strictly prohibits retaliation against any employee for requesting, using, or inquiring about an accommodation related to pregnancy, childbirth, or related medical conditions.

1.4 Religious Accommodations

The City respects the sincerely held religious beliefs and practices of all employees and will make an accommodation, upon request, for such observances when a reasonable accommodation is available that does not create an undue hardship on the City's operations. An employee whose religious beliefs or practices conflict with their job, work schedule, or other aspects of employment and who seeks a religious accommodation must submit a written request to the City's Human Resources Director. Failure to provide the required information regarding an accommodation request may result in denial of the request.

1.5 Employee Complaint Procedure

All employees share the responsibility of maintaining a workplace that is free from unlawful or inappropriate conduct. If you feel that you have experienced or witnessed (1) harassment, (2) discrimination, (3) improper denial of a request for accommodation, (4) denial of requested leave under the FMLA, ADA, or otherwise, (5) retaliation, (6) violation of any policy of the City or policy in this Manual, (7) failure to pay overtime or other violation of the FLSA or wage payment laws, or (8) other unlawful or inappropriate conduct by anyone, including employees, supervisors, contractors, vendors, visitors, or customers, you are to notify the Human Resources Director immediately (preferably in writing within 24 hours). If you are not comfortable discussing the matter with the Human Resources Director or otherwise do not wish to discuss the matter with the Human Resources Director, you are to file your complaint directly with the City Manager.

Employees utilizing this Complaint Procedure are encouraged to use the Employee Complaint Form that is available from the Human Resources Department.

The City is committed to conducting a thorough, objective, and appropriate review of all complaints. Employees are expected to fully cooperate with any internal investigation initiated to examine potential violations of City policy, procedures, or other workplace concerns and maintain confidentiality around the nature and existence of the investigation. To the extent practicable and appropriate, the City will maintain the confidentiality of the complaint and its resolution.

If a violation is found, the City will take corrective action deemed necessary, which may include disciplinary measures up to and including immediate termination of employment. You will be informed of the outcome of your complaint once the review is complete. If you have questions regarding the status of your complaint, you may contact the Human Resources Director.

False Claims
We recognize that intentional or malicious false accusations of misconduct can cause significant harm to individuals and undermine the integrity of the workplace. Individuals making false accusations of misconduct will be disciplined in accordance with the nature and severity of the misconduct. We encourage any employee to bring forward any concerns or questions they may have regarding misconduct or this Policy with the Human Resources Director.

Anti-Retaliation
The City strictly prohibits retaliation against any employee who, in good faith, reports a concern or complaint, participates in an investigation, or exercises their rights under this or any other policy.

Retaliation includes but is not limited to:

- Termination or demotion
- Reduction in hours or pay
- Undesirable reassignment
- Harassment or intimidation
- Any other adverse action that may discourage an employee from reporting concerns

Any employee who believes they have been subjected to retaliation should report the matter immediately to the Human Resources Director or the City Manager. Allegations of retaliation will be investigated promptly, and appropriate disciplinary action will be taken if a violation is found.

CHAPTER 2 - CONDUCT

The City is committed to fostering an environment that is free of inappropriate or unlawful conduct. We will not tolerate any unethical or illegal conduct of our employees, business partners, contractors, or vendors. Anyone performing work on behalf of or for the benefit of the City is expected to comply with all applicable laws, regulations, ordinances and financial reporting standards.

2.1 Ethical Code of Conduct

Ethical conduct is essential to the City's success. Since the reputation and integrity of the City rests on the actions of its employees, it is vital that every employee understands and upholds the following standards of conduct for which they will be held accountable.

- Demonstrating honesty and ethical conduct, including actual or perceived conflicts of interest between personal and professional relationships.
- Accurate and timely disclosure in all reports or other public communications made by the City.
- Compliance with applicable laws and governmental rules and regulations.
- Prompt internal reporting of violations to an appropriate person or persons.
- Accountability for adherence.

2.2 Conflict of Interest

Employees of the City are expected to act in the City's best interest and avoid any personal activities or relationships that could interfere with their official duties. Any outside interest or activity that may compromise, or appear to compromise, an employee's judgment or objectivity constitutes a conflict of interest. Employees must report in writing any actual or potential conflict to the Human Resources Department. Self-assessment is discouraged; objective review ensures transparency and protects both the employee and the City. Employees should also consult with the Human Resources Department before engaging in outside employment, community service, or organizational roles that may raise concerns. Maintaining open communication helps prevent conflicts and ensures compliance with City policies. The City expects all employees to act with integrity and good faith in all professional matters.

Conflicts of interest diminish public confidence in the integrity and fairness of City government. Some examples include:

- Using one's position with the City for personal gain
- Showing preferential treatment to any person
- Undermining government efficiency or effectiveness
- Failing to maintain impartiality or independent judgment

- Making decisions on behalf of the City outside of official channels

2.3 Gifts

To maintain public trust and uphold ethical standards, City employees must not solicit or accept any gift, gratuity, or favor, direct or indirect, that could influence or appear to influence their official duties. Accepting gifts from vendors, suppliers, or citizens may create an expectation of preferential treatment and compromise the City's commitment to fair service. Employees may not accept gifts exceeding $25 in value from individuals or entities connected to their City duties without written approval from the City Manager. This policy does not prohibit: (1) occasional food or beverages of nominal value, or (2) promotional items of minimal value generally distributed to the public, provided they do not influence official actions.

2.4 Standards of Conduct

Each employee is expected to follow City policies and to maintain high standards of conduct. If an individual's behavior disrupts the operation of a department, appropriate disciplinary action will be taken. Disciplinary action may include a verbal warning, written warning, suspension without pay, or termination. Each situation will be evaluated individually, and nothing in this manual should be interpreted as a promise of a particular course of action.

It is not possible to list all acts that can lead to disciplinary action; however, below are some examples:

- Failure or refusal to follow verbal or written instructions – insubordination
- Inefficiency or unsatisfactory job performance
- Sleeping while on duty
- Dishonesty, theft or misappropriation of City funds
- Careless, negligent or improper use of or damage to City property or equipment
- Conduct which endangers others or results in property damage
- Failure to maintain professional working relationships with coworkers or the public
- Failure to report for duty at the designated time and place
- Excessive absenteeism or tardiness
- Failure to obtain or maintain a required license or certification to perform the job
- Failure to use safety equipment or to comply with safety policies
- Violation of the Equal Employment Opportunity or Ethical Code of Conduct Policy, or disrespect toward fellow employees, citizens, visitors or other members of the public
- Conduct unbecoming of a City employee, including actions that damage the employee's or City's reputation or raise concern
- Falsifying or misrepresenting information in timekeeping, personnel, or official City records
- Participation in any action that disrupts or interferes with the operations of the City
- Committing an act that endangers the personal well-being and/or property of others
- Possession of unauthorized firearms while on duty
- Violation of the City's Substance Abuse policy

- Unauthorized disclosure of confidential information from official City records
- Attempting to use political influence to secure a promotion, leave of absence, transfer, change of pay rate, disciplinary action or any work-related advantage
- Violating department regulations by an employee of that department
- Violating an ordinance of the City or a state or federal law
- Any other conduct which, at the City's discretion, warrants disciplinary action

These examples are not all-inclusive. Employees are expected to use good judgment and maintain professional, respectful conduct at all times. Disciplinary decisions will be based on the nature of the offense and the employee's overall work record, as determined by the City.

2.5 Prohibited Conduct

This Policy applies to all aspects of employment, including, but not limited to, recruitment, hiring, promotion, demotion, transfer, lay-off, recall, discipline, compensation, and benefits. Improper conduct also consists of misconduct that includes any unwelcome verbal or physical behavior based on a person's protected status or participation in protected activities, such as opposing unlawful discrimination or participating in a complaint process, as defined by law.

The City strictly prohibits any unlawful behavior that affects an individual's job benefits, unreasonably interferes with work performance, or creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment.

No one, regardless of position or authority, including managers, is permitted to engage in such conduct. Violations of this policy will result in appropriate disciplinary action.

If you feel you have been subject to the type of conduct prohibited within this Policy, you must report this conduct in accordance with the City's Complaint Procedure, which is contained in this Manual. You are encouraged to report any improper conduct early. You do not need to wait until the behavior rises to the level of an unlawful action.

2.6 Sexual Harassment

The City is committed to maintaining a work environment that is free of inappropriate or unlawful harassment. Unlawful harassment based on an individual's sex is prohibited. Unlawful harassment can take many forms and is not limited to one specific type of behavior. It may involve unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, or other verbal, visual, or physical conduct of a sexual nature. Such behavior may constitute sex-based harassment when:

- submission to the conduct is made explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of employment,
- submission to or rejection of the conduct is used as the basis for an employment decision, or
- conduct unreasonably interferes with an individual's work performance or creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment.

Examples of inappropriate conduct may include explicit sexual propositions, sexual innuendo, suggestive or demeaning comments, jokes targeting gender-specific traits, obscene or gender-specific language or gestures, displays of obscene or sexual materials, sexually explicit emails or text messages, and unwanted physical contact such as patting, pinching, or brushing against another person's body. Anyone who believes they have experienced or witnessed harassment is required to follow the City's Complaint Procedure, outlined in this Manual.

2.7 Prohibition of Other Types of Discriminatory Harassment

The City strictly prohibits any verbal or physical conduct that demeans, intimidates, or expresses hostility or aversion toward an individual based on race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, genetic information, or other protected group status as provided by law. Such conduct is a violation of City policy when it: (1) has the purpose or effect of creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment; (2) has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work performance; or (3) otherwise adversely affects an individual's employment opportunities.

2.8 Employee Personal Relationships (Fraternization)

Personal (romantic, dating, etc.) relationships between employees can have undesirable consequences for both the employees and the City, including but not limited to, perceived sexual harassment or favoritism. Therefore, employees are expected to exercise appropriate judgment and responsibility when entering into or continuing such relationships. Personal relationships where there is also a supervisory responsibility or any actual or perceived influence regarding salary, work assignments, performance, promotions, or other employment conditions are prohibited.

2.9 Workplace Violence

The City is committed to providing a safe environment for all employees. In this regard, the City will not tolerate any threats, acts of violence, or any related conduct that interferes with or disrupts the City's safe working environment.

Threatening or violent behavior includes any actions, toward people or property, which are severe, offensive, or intimidating enough to disrupt normal work activities. Examples include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Hitting or shoving
- Threatening to harm an individual or his/her family, friends, associates, or property
- Intentional destruction or threat of destruction of property owned, operated, or controlled by the City
- Harassing or threatening individuals through any form of written or verbal communication
- Intimidating or coercing an employee to do wrongful acts that would affect the business of the City

- Possession of unlawful or unauthorized firearms on City property, except as permitted by state law

All employees are expected to refrain from making threats, engaging in threatening behavior, acts of violence, or related disruptive conduct and are encouraged to seek assistance to resolve personal issues that may lead to acts of violence. If you have experienced or witnessed conduct that is prohibited under this policy, you are to report it in accordance with the City's Complaint Procedure.

2.10 Tobacco Use

The City is committed to providing a safe, healthy environment for employees, citizens, and visitors. In accordance with City Ordinance, all City buildings and vehicles are smoke-free. Smoking and tobacco use are prohibited on public property in the City and in all City vehicles. This policy applies to employees and visitors and includes cigarettes, cigars, pipes, smokeless tobacco, clove cigarettes, and electronic cigarettes or vaping devices.

2.11 Personal Appearance Policy (Dress Code)

Our City's professional atmosphere is maintained, in part, by the image we present to our co-workers and the public. The City expects all employees to present a neat, well-groomed appearance while at work. No dress code can address all contingencies, and this policy does not attempt to list all current and future clothing options. Employees are expected to use judgment in selecting work attire. If there is any doubt as to whether an aspect of attire is appropriate, the employee should assume it is not.

Employees with questions about what is appropriate for their position should contact their supervisor or department head who will determine when clothing or appearance does not meet these requirements.

The following are guidelines to assist employees in determining whether attire is acceptable.

- Casual clothing should not be worn to work other than on casual Friday or other days as announced by the City Manager. Even on designated casual days, clothing that works well for the beach, yard work, exercise sessions, or lounging is typically not appropriate for work.
- Clothing that is see-through, too tight or too baggy is unacceptable.
- Pants made of blue denim or fabric that resemble blue denim are only to be worn on casual Fridays or other occasions as announced by the City Manager.
- If leggings are worn, the shirt or dress worn with them must extend to the mid-thigh or below.
- Clothing should be well kept without holes, tears, patches, camouflage patterns, fading, frayed areas, sayings, graphics, or logos.
- Clothing should cover the chest, back, and midriff (including when standing, sitting, stooping, while arms are extended over the head or while bending over), and should not reveal undergarments.
- Shoes should be clean and without holes. Flip-flops, defined as a flat sole held loosely on the foot by a Y-shaped strap between the first and second toes, are not allowed.

- If an employee's position allows the wearing of a hat/cap, it should only be one issued by the City or one that is plain without an emblem, writing, or logo. Caps should be removed during meetings as appropriate.

Business Casual Attire: Employees are expected to dress in conservative business casual attire unless the day's tasks require otherwise, they are issued a City uniform, or their normal work attire is suitable for outside work. For purposes of this policy, conservative business casual refers to clothing that is in keeping with traditional standards for business attire. Examples of business casual attire include:

- Collared shirt, casual button-down, polo, blouse
- Blazers or jackets especially for presentations and important meetings
- Sweaters, sweater vests, cardigans
- Dress slacks, casual slacks, khakis
- Skirts/dresses which fall no more than two inches above the knee when standing
- Dress shoes, loafers, boots, clean and conservative athletic shoes

Uniforms: Employees provided with City uniforms must wear them as instructed while on duty and keep them in neat and clean condition.

Outdoor/Physical Work: Employees who work outside in a physical capacity are allowed to wear jeans, khakis, or other appropriate clothing as determined by their department head. Employees who work outside or approach the public in their duties should always be identified as an employee by their city badge and/or apparel.

Casual Fridays: Unless otherwise announced, the City Manager has designated Fridays as casual days which allow the wearing of blue jeans and city-issued t-shirts, sweatshirts, and hoodies, or other casual attire as long as a neat and well-kept appearance is maintained, and the guidelines above are followed. Employees who are required to wear an official uniform may only dress casually if allowed by their department head.

Tattoos and Piercings: No employee may make a tattoo visible that might be offensive to a specific religion, race or gender or contain profanity or controversial phrases. Any employee who might have such a tattoo must keep it covered while at work or while representing the City. The City reserves the right to limit the number of piercings which are visible. Safety sensitive positions may have more stringent requirements and may be asked to remove certain types of jewelry and piercings.

Hygiene/Facial Hair/Fragrances: Good personal hygiene is always expected. Facial hair should be clean and neatly trimmed. Fragrances, if used, must be mild as patrons and other employees may be allergic or sensitive to perfumes, colognes, or other fragrant products.

Employees are expected to always observe our Personal Appearance Policy while at work or otherwise while representing the City. Employees who are determined to have unacceptable attire or appearance in violation of this policy may be requested to leave work and return in acceptable attire or appearance.

This absence will be deducted from accrued PTO or taken without pay. Violation of this policy may result in discipline, up to and including termination of employment.

The City reserves the right to interpret what is acceptable in the matter of overall appearance and to interpret and apply this policy to other aspects of appearance not specifically covered in this policy.

The City will reasonably accommodate employees covered disabilities and sincerely held religious practices about dress and grooming in accordance with applicable law, unless such accommodation would cause the City any undue hardship. Employees desiring such accommodation must submit a request in writing to the Human Resources Director for consideration and approval. Appropriate documentation of the need and basis for an accommodation may be required in connection with such a request.

2.12 Work Area Appearance

Employees are expected to maintain their work areas and common areas in a neat and professional manner. Additionally, sensitive or confidential information must be properly secured and put away when not in use to protect privacy and ensure a professional environment.

2.13 Progressive Discipline Policy

As an at-will employer, the City may end employment at any time, with or without cause or notice. However, the City is committed to supporting employee growth and, when appropriate, addressing performance or conduct concerns through progressive and constructive steps. This policy outlines the City's general approach to addressing performance deficiencies and misconduct in a fair and consistent manner while giving employees the opportunity to improve.

While the following steps are typically followed in sequence, the City reserves the right to determine the appropriate level of discipline and may bypass steps based on the seriousness of the issue. Human Resources will participate in disciplinary action beyond verbal counseling.

- **Verbal Counseling:** A private discussion to clarify concerns and expectations.
- **Written Warning:** Formal documentation outlining the issue, expectations for improvement, and potential next steps. This may be in the form of a memo or a Performance Improvement Plan (PIP).
- **Final Written Warning or Suspension:** Indicates continued deficiencies or serious misconduct and advises that further issues may result in termination.
- **Termination:** Employment may end if improvement does not occur or if the violation warrants immediate dismissal.

Employee Rights
Employees who receive a final written warning or suspension without pay may appeal to the City Manager.

2.14 Secondary Employment

No full-time employee may accept outside employment, including self-employment, whether part-time, temporary or permanent, without prior written approval from both the department head and City Manager. This approval must be in writing and retained in the employee's personnel file. Approval is valid for twelve (12) months from the date of approval and must be renewed annually if secondary employment is to continue. Each instance or change in outside employment will require separate written approval. Approval may not be granted when, in the department head's opinion, such outside employment presents a conflict of interest, is likely to interfere with the employee's duties, or creates the appearance of a conflict with the employee's service to the City.

Employees will not engage in any secondary employment during their assigned work hours with the City.
Failure to disclose secondary employment or to provide accurate and complete information may result in disciplinary action.

CHAPTER 3 - ADMINISTRATION OF PERSONNEL RULES

3.1 Mayor and City Council

The City Council is responsible for adopting rules and regulations consistent with the City Charter Section 3.16 - Personnel policies concerning:

- The method of employee selection and periods of employment,
- The administration of the position classification and pay plan, methods of promotion and application of service ratings thereto, and transfer of employees within the classification plan,
- Hours of work, paid leave, and other leaves of absence, overtime pay, and the order and manner in which layoffs shall be effected,
- Dismissal hearings as due process may require, and
- Other personnel notices may be necessary to provide for adequate and systematic handling of personnel affairs.

3.2 City Manager

The City Manager is responsible for administration of the personnel rules, regulations, and policies of the City and for interpreting the various provisions contained therein.

3.3 Amendments

Any section or provision of the personnel rules, regulations and policies of the City can be amended or changed by City Council at any time with or without notice.

3.4 Administration of Personnel Records

The Human Resources Director is responsible for establishing and maintaining an official personnel file for each employee of the City. Department heads are responsible for the forwarding of documents for inclusion in the personnel files of those employees assigned to their department.

Information to be retained in the personnel file of an employee includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Employee application
- Job description
- Job performance information
- Education/training information
- Personnel action forms
- Letters of appreciation, commendation, or discipline
- Other appropriate information, documentation and records for personnel administration purposes

In accordance with The Georgia Open Records Act, all information in an employee's personnel records will be considered public record except those deemed as exempt from disclosure by federal or state law.

All personal health information such as Workers' Compensation, FMLA, physician notes, etc. will be kept in a separate secure file for each employee in the Human Resources Department. No personal health information should be maintained by departments.

CHAPTER 4 - CATEGORIES OF EMPLOYMENT

Full-time employees are placed into classifications based on the responsibilities of their job and have different rules regarding overtime. Classification of positions are made by Human Resources in accordance with the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) and are listed in the Classification and Compensation Plan. All full-time employees are eligible to receive benefits outlined in Chapter 8.

4.1 Classifications of Full-Time Employees

Exempt: Not eligible for overtime compensation under the FLSA.

Non-Exempt: Eligible for overtime (one and one-half times the employee's regular rate of pay) for hours worked over 40 in a workweek. Only hours worked will be eligible for overtime pay. Paid Time Off, Holidays, or any other leave from work cannot be counted towards overtime compensation.

Police Officers: May be classified as exempt or non-exempt depending on their rank.

- Exempt Police Officers are not eligible for overtime under the FLSA.

- Non-Exempt Police Officers are eligible for overtime (one and one-half times the employee's regular rate of pay) for hours worked over 86 in a 14-day period in accordance with the FLSA 207(k) exemption.

4.2 Part-Time Employees

Part-time employees work less than thirty (30) hours per week. City-provided benefits are not offered to part-time employees.

4.3 Temporary Employees

Temporary employees are hired to perform a specific job for a short duration or as designated by each department. City-provided benefits are not offered to temporary employees.

4.4 Essential Emergency Workers

All employees are considered essential; however, under emergency situations, Police Officers and Public Works employees are considered essential emergency personnel and are subject to be on call. If an employee does not report when requested or required because the employee deems the conditions to be too dangerous to travel from their home to their work location, the employee will be required to take PTO leave in order to be paid for the time missed. In addition, the manager or supervisor will review each case of non-report, and if deemed necessary, may issue disciplinary action.

If an Official City Emergency Closing is issued by the governing authority or its designee due to natural disaster or inclement weather, all administrative non-emergency personnel will receive pay for their regularly scheduled hours for that day. This does not apply to essential emergency personnel as noted above.

CHAPTER 5 - RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION

5.1 Policy

The City values qualifications, experience, and education in all hiring decisions; however, final candidate selection is based on the overall best fit for the organization and the specific role. The selection decision includes consideration of skills, competencies, alignment with the City's values and culture, and the ability to contribute to team and departmental goals.

5.2 Employment Applications

The City relies on the accuracy of information provided in employment applications and throughout the hiring process and employment. Any misrepresentation, falsification, or material omission of information or data may result in exclusion of the applicant from further consideration for employment. If such conduct is discovered in the application of a current employee, disciplinary action, up to and including termination may occur.

5.3 Posting of Open Positions

The decision to post open positions is made by the City Manager in coordination with the respective department head. The City may advertise job openings through internal job postings, website listings, or other means. At a minimum, all positions will be posted internally for three (3) days. Positions may be posted externally and internally as requested by the respective department head.

5.4 Assessments – Physical/Psychological

All positions will be subject to a pre-employment drug test and a criminal background check after an offer of employment has been made but prior to the employment start date. At the discretion of the City Manager and/or department head, the selection process may include, but is not limited to, one or more of the following: interviews; evaluation of education, training, and experience; credit, driving, and/or reference checks.

Some positions may require a medical, psychological, and/or fitness-for-duty exam after a conditional job offer. The City will arrange and pay for the exam through a designated provider. Employment is contingent upon satisfactory results.

5.5 Final Selection of New Employees

The final decision to fill a vacancy will be made by the City Manager based on the recommendation of the appropriate department head.

5.6 Internal Selection

When a current employee applies for and is offered a vacant position, the City Manager must approve and the department heads of each department will consult on the timing and circumstances of the transfer. The salary of the employee will be determined by the pay grade of their new positions.

5.7 Employment of Relatives

The City may allow the employment of a current employee's qualified relative provided such employment does not, in the opinion of the City, create a conflict of interest. For the purpose of this policy, "relative" includes spouse, parent, child, sibling, grandparent, grandchild, uncle, aunt, nephew, niece, stepparent, stepchild, stepsibling, and in-laws of the same, or any individual living in the same household or otherwise so closely identified with each other to suggest a family relationship.

Relatives may be employed within the same City department as long as no direct supervisory or subordinate relationship exists or could reasonably be expected to occur. Specifically, no employee may work within the same chain of command as a relative if that relationship could influence, or be perceived to influence, decisions affecting salary, work assignments, performance evaluations, promotions, career development, benefits, or other employment conditions.

Relatives of Elected Officials, City Manager, Assistant City Manager or employees within the Human

Resources, Finance, or Information Technology (IT) departments are not eligible for employment by the City.

CHAPTER 6 - CLASSIFICATION AND COMPENSATION PLAN

6.1 Classification

It is the City's objective to provide a fair, equitable and consistent method of compensation for all employees. The City's Classification and Compensation Plan is the official and approved system of grouping full-time positions into appropriate pay grades and pay ranges, the purpose of which is to effectively recruit qualified personnel and to ensure that salaries are equitable and commensurate with the duties performed by each employee. Human Resources will maintain the City's Classification and Compensation Plan.

6.2 Compensation

Each full-time position is assigned a pay grade with a minimum and maximum salary. No employee will exceed the maximum salary for their pay grade. Employees who have reached the top of their pay grade are not eligible for further annual increases unless the pay grade and/or salary range are adjusted or a written exception is authorized by the City Manager.

Maintenance of the salary ranges will be achieved through the budget process by increasing the ranges according to the Employment Cost Index (ECI) or the Consumer Price Index (CPI) recommended adjustments. These adjustments are intended to keep the salary ranges current with market conditions. If, after adjustments are made to a salary range, an employee's compensation is below the minimum of their position's salary range, they will be increased to the minimum of that range.

The compensation offered to an employee must be consistent with the compensation range and qualifications of the vacant position. Employees who meet only the minimum qualifications will typically be offered an entry level pay. Employees who exceed the minimum requirements may be considered for a higher starting salary based on factors such as the employee's skills, education, experience, and knowledge. A proposed salary above the minimum of the pay grade of the position should receive prior approval from the City Manager before an offer is extended.

6.3 Education/Certification Increases

The City encourages continued education and professional development of its employees. Pay incentives may be awarded to employees who demonstrate increased value to the City through self-improvement, advanced credentials, and sustained commitment to their roles.

Nothing within this policy guarantees an increase in compensation.

CHAPTER 7 - TIMEKEEPING AND PAYROLL PRACTICES

7.1 Work Periods

The City's standard work period for compensation purposes will be seven (7) consecutive days. In accordance with Section 7(k) of the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA), a Police Officer's work period will be a 14-day period.

7.2 Overtime

The City complies with the requirements of the FLSA and any applicable local law with respect to wages and hours. While there may be occasions when working overtime is necessary to meet our business needs, whenever possible, all overtime must be approved in advance by the department head or their designee before any additional hours are worked.

Non-Exempt hourly employees will be paid overtime at a rate of one and one-half times their regular hourly rate for all hours worked over 40 in a week (over 86 hours in a 14-day period for Police Officers.) Exempt salaried employees do not receive overtime pay.

If an employee feels they have been subject to an improper salary deduction, improperly classified as exempt or non-exempt, or has not been compensated for overtime pay they believe they are due, the employee must follow the City's Complaint Procedure. If it is determined that an improper deduction occurred or that an employee was not paid any overtime due, the City will reimburse the employee.

Holiday or any other form of paid time off will not be considered as hours worked when calculating overtime pay.

7.3 Recording Your Time

The City is committed to ensuring that all employees are paid fairly for all hours worked. To accomplish this, we must have an accurate record of the time that you work. The City uses an electronic timekeeping system to keep time records for non-exempt employees. Please keep the following guidelines in mind:

- Clock in at the start of your shift.
- Clock out at the end of your shift.
- Clock out any time you leave the building for non-City business that is not your meal break.
- Only you or your manager is authorized to clock in on your behalf. No one else may do so under any circumstances.

Accessing another employee's timesheet with the purpose of clocking in and/or out on their behalf will result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination. Any change to a timekeeping entry must be approved by your supervisor.
Each employee is responsible for accurately recording their time using the City's timekeeping system.

Non-Exempt employees are not to perform any work that is not recorded by the timekeeping system. If you feel you have not been paid accurately for all hours you have worked, please utilize the City's Complaint Procedure.

7.4 Mealtime

A sixty (60)-minute, unpaid meal break must be taken each day by all non-exempt employees with the exception of Police Officers. Your supervisor is responsible for approving the scheduling of this meal break. This time will be automatically deducted from your daily electronic timesheet.

If circumstances occur in which you are unable to take your 60-minute meal break, you must ensure your electronic time record reflects this by notifying your manager or Human Resources to make the official adjustment.

If you are asked or instructed by anyone in the City to perform work off the clock, you are directed to immediately report the situation utilizing the City's Complaint Procedure.

7.5 Breaks

The City does not designate formal paid break periods. Breaks may be provided based on departmental needs, at the discretion of the supervisor or department head, and should not exceed fifteen (15) minutes. Breaks, including "coffee breaks," may not be used to arrive late, leave early, or extend the lunch period.

The City complies with the Pregnancy Workers Fairness Act detailed in Chapter 1 regarding breaks for nursing mothers.

7.6 Call-Back Pay

If a non-exempt employee is called back to work outside of normal working hours, that employee will be guaranteed a minimum of two hours of regular pay.

7.7 Pay Advances

The City will not make payroll advances to employees.

7.8 Administrative Pay Corrections

The City takes reasonable steps to ensure that employees receive the correct amount of pay on the scheduled payday. In the event of an error in your paycheck, you should promptly notify Human Resources so that adjustments in pay and/or deductions can be corrected as quickly as possible. In the event of an overpayment, Human Resources or Finance will work with you to establish a reasonable repayment plan.

CHAPTER 8 - BENEFITS AND RETIREMENT

8.1 Administration of Benefits Plan

The City provides a comprehensive range of employee benefits, including medical, dental, vision, life and disability. The Human Resources Department is primarily responsible for the day-to-day administration of the City's benefits plan, in accordance with established policies and procedures. For detailed information about available benefits, eligibility, and coverage levels, please contact the Human Resources Department.

8.2 Eligibility

All full-time employees are eligible for benefits as determined in Chapter 4.

8.3 Continuance of Medical Coverage (COBRA)

The federal Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act (COBRA) gives employees and their qualified dependents the opportunity to continue their medical, dental, and/or vision insurance coverage under the City's health plan when a qualifying event would normally result in the loss of eligibility. A qualifying event may include termination of employment, employee changing to a part-time status, divorce, or a dependent child no longer meeting eligibility requirements. An employee will be provided written notice describing rights granted under COBRA when the employee or dependent becomes ineligible for coverage.

Employees are required to contact the Human Resources Department to report any change in personal status (or qualifying event) which might affect their benefits within 30 days of the event.

8.4 Workers' Compensation

Worker's Compensation is an employer-paid insurance program regulated by the State Board of Workers' Compensation which covers medical treatment and partial wage replacement if an employee is unable to work due to a workplace injury, illness, or medical condition occurring as a direct result of job duties or work environment. Injuries occurring during non-work activities, breaks, or due to willful misconduct are not covered. Employees must report any workplace injury to their supervisor immediately regardless of severity. Timely reporting is required to maintain eligibility for Workers' Compensation benefits. Supervisors must notify Human Resources promptly and ensure appropriate documentation is completed.

Additional information on Workers' Compensation is contained in Chapter 9 of this manual.

8.5 Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

The City offers an Employee Assistance Program (EAP) to support the well-being of employees and their immediate family members. This program provides confidential counseling and treatment services for

a wide range of personal issues that may affect an individual's health, quality of life, or job performance.

Common concerns addressed through the EAP include marital or family issues, divorce, financial difficulties, substance abuse, addiction, parenting challenges, stress management, grief and loss. Employees are encouraged to utilize this confidential resource to seek support when needed. Contact information can be found in the Employee Benefits Handbook provided by the Human Resources Department.

8.6 Defined Contribution/Deferred Compensation

Employees hired on or after January 1, 2022 will receive an employer contribution into a 401(a) defined contribution retirement account. In addition, the employee will be automatically enrolled into a 457b deferred compensation plan. The City will match the employees' 457b plan contribution on a percent-by-percent basis to a maximum determined by the City and approved by City Council. The employee will have the ability to direct their contribution into the investment choices offered by the plan administrator.

Contributions made by the employer will be vested immediately and will be portable after separation of employment based upon regulations defined in the City's plan document and guidelines defined by the IRS.

8.7 Defined Benefit Plan (Frozen)

Employees hired prior to January 1, 2022, will remain in the Defined Benefit Plan (GMEBS) which is provided through Georgia Municipal Association. Employees become vested after the completion of five (5) years of credited service. Employees enrolled in the Defined Benefit Plan are also eligible to contribute to the deferred compensation 457b plan and receive the City's matching contribution to the 401(a) retirement account on a percent-by-percent basis up to a maximum determined by the City and approved by City Council.

CHAPTER 9 - LEAVES OF ABSENCE

9.1 Holidays

The City observes the following holidays:

- New Year's Day
- Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
- Memorial Day
- Juneteenth
- Independence Day
- Labor Day
- Veterans Day

- Thanksgiving Day
- Day after Thanksgiving
- Christmas Eve
- Christmas Day
- Two City Flex Administrative Days (as determined by the City Manager each calendar year)

When a holiday falls on a Saturday, the preceding Friday will be recognized as a holiday for City employees. When a holiday falls on a Sunday, the following Monday will be recognized as a holiday for City employees. The City retains the discretion to modify the holiday schedule as needed.

Full-time employees will be paid 8 hours of holiday pay. Full-time Police Officers will be paid 8.6 hours of holiday pay for each of the holidays listed above. Non-Exempt employees authorized to work on a holiday as defined above will be paid at the rate of one and one-half times their normal hourly rate for hours worked on the holiday, in addition to the paid holiday hours. Since some positions require staffing 24 hours per day, 7 days per week, employees in these positions will be paid one and one-half times their normal hourly rate for hours worked on the actual holiday if it differs from the observed holiday.

9.2 Paid Time Off (PTO) Policy

Paid Time Off (PTO) is a flexible, all-purpose leave policy available to full-time employees and may be used for vacation, personal or family illness, or other personal needs. Employees are encouraged to use a minimum of 40 hours every 12 months to maintain healthy work-life balance.

Eligibility
Full-time employees accrue paid time off (PTO) in accordance with accrual rates and limits outlined in this policy.

PTO will accrue bi-weekly based on completed years of service as follows:

Full-Time Employees		
Years of Service	Hours per Pay Period	Hours per Year
0-2 years	6.15	160
2-3 years	6.92	180
4-5 years	7.69	200
6-7 years	8.46	220
8-14 years	9.23	240
15+ years	10.00	260

Police Officers		
Years of Service	Hours per Pay Period	Hours per Year
0-2 years	6.62	172
2-3 years	7.42	193
4-5 years	8.27	215
6-7 years	9.08	236
8-14 years	9.92	258
15+ years	10.73	279

PTO will continue to accrue while on paid leave. PTO will not accrue during a pay period in which the employee was on unpaid leave of absence.

Maximum Accrual Limit
Full-time employees can accrue PTO up to a maximum of 480 hours. Full-time Police Officers can accrue PTO up to a maximum of 516 hours.

Use and Scheduling
PTO must be approved in advance by the employee's supervisor or department head. A department head may require an acceptable notification period for employees in their department in order to ensure appropriate coverage. If the need for PTO is unforeseeable, such as illness, the employee should notify their supervisor within a reasonable time frame prior to their scheduled start time. An employee wishing to use more than ten (10) working days of PTO consecutively should obtain approval from the City Manager.

Whenever possible, employes will be allowed to take PTO as requested. However, approval is subject to operation, staffing, and scheduling needs. The City reserves the right to limit the number of employees that may be on leave within a department at any given time. In the event of a scheduling conflict between two or more employees whose absences cannot be accommodated simultaneously, the department head will determine which leave request will be approved.

Employees are responsible for managing their PTO, allowing adequate hours for unplanned needs. Approved time off may be adjusted or cancelled if unexpected absences arise which cause an employee to utilize hours intended for future use. Negative PTO balances are not allowed.

Accrued PTO should be exhausted prior to taking unpaid leave. If an employee's work hours fall below their standard workweek schedule and the employee has available PTO, they are required to use PTO to make up the difference. This ensures consistency in timekeeping and compensation practices. Exceptions may be considered on a case-by-case basis with prior approval from the City Manager.

Any leave without pay, other than FMLA, must be approved by the City Manager.

Payment of Accrued PTO upon Separation
Upon separation from the City, employees will be compensated at their current hourly rate for PTO up to a maximum of 160 hours for full-time employees and 172 for Police Officers. If the employee has accrued more hours than the stated maximum payout, the City will pay half of the remaining balance. In the event of an employee's death, payment of the accumulated PTO up to the maximum amount will be paid to the employee's estate.

Re-Employment
If an employee with accrued paid time off (PTO) separates from employment with the City and is later re-employed, any unused and unpaid PTO from their prior service will be forfeited and will not carry over. Upon re-employment, the employee will accrue PTO in the same manner as a new employee.

9.3 Wellness Hours

To encourage employees to prioritize their health and well-being, full-time employees are provided three (3) days of Wellness Leave each calendar year to use for preventive health and wellness appointments. This includes annual exams, screenings, and other routine preventive care provided by a licensed healthcare professional such as primary care providers, specialists, dentists, or optometrist/ophthalmologist. Wellness Hours are for the use of the employee only and are not to be used to accompany a family member to a wellness appointment. Hours may be taken in minimum increments of one-half day and should be scheduled in advance.

If an employee wishes to use Wellness Hours, the request should be made in the City's timekeeping system and a physician's note or visit confirmation must be submitted to Human Resources no later than the last day of the pay period. The documentation should not contain any personal health information. If documentation is not received, the leave will be deducted from the employee's PTO.

Wellness Leave will be credited to a separate leave balance on January 1st of each year. Unused Wellness Leave will not carry over to the following year and will be forfeited if not used by December 31st. Unused Wellness hours will not be paid when an employee separates from employment.

9.4 Bereavement Leave

Full-time employees may be granted up to three (3) scheduled shifts of paid bereavement leave following the death of an immediate family member. Additional time off will require the use of PTO with approval of the employee's supervisor. Paid bereavement leave is eligible only for days in which an employee is scheduled to work. Immediate family is defined in this policy as: parent, spouse, child, sibling, grandparent, grandchild, mother-in-law, father-in-law, brother-in-law, sister-in-law, son-in-law, daughter-in-law, grandparent-in-law, stepparent, stepparent, stepsibling and stepchild. Bereavement Leave is also extended to a mother or father who has experienced the loss of an unborn child or stillbirth.

An employee should contact their supervisor as soon as possible when bereavement leave is needed. The City reserves the right to require an employee to document the death of a family member. Bereavement leave is not accrued and is not payable upon separation from City employment.

9.5 Civil Leave

Jury Duty
Employees who are summoned for jury duty will be granted leave from work to serve. Full-time employees selected for jury duty will receive leave with pay for the period of absence required for jury service. If excused from jury duty for a full or partial day, employees are expected to report to work or use PTO for the time missed. An employee may be required to present a statement from the court verifying jury service. The City reserves the right to limit the amount of paid jury leave.

Official Court Attendance
Any employee subpoenaed or ordered to attend court to appear as a witness or to testify in some official capacity on behalf of the City, state, or the federal government is entitled to leave with pay for the duration of their required appearance.

Other Litigation
An employee who needs to appear in court for personal reasons will need to use their accrued PTO. If no paid leave is available, the time off will be without pay.

9.6 Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA)

The City complies with all provisions of the federal Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA). The FMLA allows eligible employees to take up to 12 weeks of unpaid, job-protected leave in a 12-month period for qualifying family and medical reasons, as defined by law.

Eligibility includes full or part-time employees who have been employed for a minimum of 1 year and have worked at least 1,250 hours during the 12-month period preceding the request for FMLA leave.

An eligible employee may take up to 12 weeks of FMLA leave during a rolling 12-month period measured backwards from the date the leave begins. Qualifying reasons for FMLA leave generally include the birth or adoption of a child, care for a spouse, child, or parent with a serious health condition, an employee's own serious health condition, or qualifying exigencies arising from a family member's military service. The right to FMLA leave for the birth, adoption, or placement of a child expires 12 months after the date of the birth, adoption, or placement.

During approved FMLA leave, the City will maintain the employee's group health insurance coverage under the same terms as if the employee were actively working. If the leave is unpaid, the employee is responsible for reimbursing the City for the bi-weekly premiums.

Upon return from leave, employees will generally be restored to the same or an equivalent position, consistent with FMLA requirements.

If an employee and spouse are both employed by the City, the two are entitled to a combined total of 12 weeks of FMLA leave for the birth, adoption, or placement of a child, or care for a covered family member with a health condition.

Employees must provide advance notice of the need for FMLA leave whenever possible and may be required to submit medical certification or other supporting documentation as permitted by law.

Eligible employees may take up to 26 weeks of unpaid, job-protected leave in a single 12-month period to care for a spouse, parent, child, or next of kin who is a covered service member. A covered service member is a current member of the Armed Forces, including a member of the U.S. National Guard or Reserves, who has a serious injury or illness that was incurred in the line of duty while on active duty for which they are undergoing treatment, recuperation, or therapy or a veteran undergoing medical treatment, recuperation, or therapy for a qualifying serious illness or injury that was incurred or aggravated in the line of duty while on active duty within 5 years preceding the date of injury.

Employees should contact the Human Resources Department for additional information, required forms, or questions regarding eligibility, documentation, or leave procedures.

Paid FMLA Leave
Employees who meet the eligibility requirements for FMLA and experience a qualified FMLA event may receive up to three (3) weeks of paid FMLA leave which can be taken consecutively or intermittently over a 12-month period beginning with the date of the request. This paid leave does not extend or increase the 12 weeks of leave provided under the FMLA.

9.7 Leave Without Pay (Non-FMLA)

An employee who needs time off for medical or personal reasons, but who is not eligible for leave under the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) or other applicable laws, may be granted unpaid leave of absence at the discretion of the City Manager. In accordance with the City's Paid Time Off (PTO) policy, full-time employees should first use any accrued PTO prior to requesting leave without pay. PTO will not accrue while an employee is on unpaid leave.

All requests for a leave of absence without pay must be submitted in writing to the employee's supervisor who will then forward the request to the City Manager. The request should include the reason for the leave and the anticipated duration. Employees are expected to submit such requests as far in advance of the intended leave date as possible.

An unapproved leave of absence may be considered a violation of policy and may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

Employees must contact the City's Human Resources Department to complete required documentation and make payment arrangements for continued insurance coverage prior to the beginning of the unpaid leave of absence.

After returning from non-FMLA leave for medical reasons, the employee must submit a return-to-work release from their healthcare provider authorizing them to return to work and listing any restrictions. While the City will make reasonable efforts to return the employee to the same or a comparable position upon the conclusion of the approved leave, reinstatement is contingent upon operational needs and position availability at the time of return. If no such position is available, the employment

relationship may be terminated.

All such decisions will be made in accordance with applicable laws and based on a review of the circumstances, including any required accommodation.

9.8 Workers' Compensation Leave

The City may pay Workers' Compensation leave of up to three (3) weeks following an injury or illness which results from a work-related incident.

An employee with an on-the-job injury may be entitled to income benefits which will be paid directly to the employee by the City's Workers' Compensation insurance carrier. Per Georgia Law, the maximum amount Workers' Compensation insurance pays is two-thirds of the employee's average weekly wage, based on the prior 13 weeks, with a maximum weekly pay of $800.00. Worker's Compensation benefits will begin on the eighth day following the injury. Therefore,

- During the first seven (7) days following a work-related injury the employee will continue to be compensated at their regular rate of pay and for their normally scheduled work hours as long as the absence from work is medically justified by a physician on the Workers' Compensation Panel of Physicians.

- If the employee's absence continues beyond the first seven (7) days and the employee is receiving Workers' Compensation benefits at the maximum amount per week set by law, the City will supplement the employee's pay up to their regular weekly base amount for up to two (2) weeks but no longer than the time approved by Workers' Compensation.

- If the employee's absence continues beyond three (3) weeks, the employee may supplement their Workers' Compensation pay by using PTO but is not required to do so.

If an employee is only receiving Workers' Compensation pay from the City's Workers' Compensation insurance carrier, arrangements should be made with Human Resources to pay for the portion of insurance premiums which would normally be deducted from a City paycheck.

Workers' Compensation Leave runs concurrently with FMLA.

9.9 Temporary Modified Duty

The City may provide temporary modified duty for employees who are unable to perform their regular job duties due to temporary incapacity, including pregnancy, work-related injuries, or non-work-related medical conditions. Requests, such as for light duty, modified tasks, reduced schedules, or leave, must be submitted in writing to the Human Resources Director and will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. Approval, as well as the type and duration of modified duty, is at the sole discretion of the City.

This policy is not applicable to and does not supersede any available rights in connection with accommodations that are required under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), to leave that is required under the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA), or to non-FMLA medical leave. For any such requests, please see the City's respective Equal Employment Opportunity, Family and Medical Leave, and Leave Without Pay (Non-FMLA) Policies contained in this Manual.

The City reserves the right to terminate an employee if the employee is medically unable to return to their position within a reasonable time.

9.10 Military Leave

The City complies with all applicable provisions of the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA), which provides job protection and certain benefits for employees who serve in the uniformed services of the United States.

Employees who are members of the Armed Forces, National Guard, or military Reserves are entitled to a leave of absence for active duty, active duty training, or inactive duty training (such as weekend drills).

Paid Military Leave
Employees are entitled to 18 workdays of paid Military Leave per Federal fiscal year (October 1 – September 30) for required military training or active service. An additional 12 workdays of paid leave per Federal fiscal year is allowed if ordered to duty by the Governor in a state of emergency.

After exhausting paid military leave, employees may use accrued Paid Time Off (PTO) or take the remainder of their military leave as unpaid.

Reemployment Rights and Benefits
Employees returning from military service will be reinstated to the same position, or a position with equivalent seniority, status, and pay that they would have held had they not been absent, provided they meet all requirements under USERRA, including timely notification and honorable service. The City reserves the right to reemployment if the employee has accumulated five (5) years of leave taken consecutively or intermittently and whether paid or unpaid.

Health insurance benefits will continue in accordance with federal law; employees may elect to discontinue coverage for a limited period while on military leave.

Employees must provide advance notice and a copy of their official military orders to the Human Resources Department and their supervisor as soon as practicable.

Questions regarding military leave, benefits continuation, or reemployment rights should be directed to the Human Resources Department.

In addition, the Family and Medical Leave Act ("FMLA") and the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act ("USERRA") contain provisions regarding certain types of military leave. The FMLA's provisions regarding military leave are addressed in the Family and Medical Leave Act Policy in

this Manual.

CHAPTER 10 - EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE REVIEWS

The City utilizes an annual performance review process known as the Employee Roadmap, the format and administration of which will be determined by the Human Resources Department in collaboration with the City Manager each year. The Employee Roadmap is designed to identify accomplishments from the past year and establish goals for the upcoming year. Its purpose is to provide meaningful feedback on employee performance, recognize employee growth, identify areas for improvement, and encourage a productive one-on-one conversation between the employee and manager. Managers and supervisors are also encouraged to meet with each employee under their supervision periodically throughout the year to support ongoing communication and development.

A positive performance review does not guarantee an increase in compensation, a promotion, or continued employment since compensation increases and the terms and conditions of employment are at the discretion of the City.

All full and part-time employees are subject to the Employee Roadmap process. New employees may be subject to reviews at three (3) and six (6) months from their start date in order to ensure a good fit for both the employee and the City. Additional reviews may be conducted at the City's discretion whenever deemed necessary.

CHAPTER 11 - EDUCATION ASSISTANCE/TUITION REIMBURSEMENT

The City recognizes that employee development is vital to the success of the organization. To support continued learning, the City may reimburse eligible employees for education-related expenses, up to the annual maximum amount permitted by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS).

Reimbursement applies to courses or programs offered through accredited institutions that enhance the employee's current job performance or support future promotional opportunities. Eligible education includes college credit courses, continuing education units (CEUs), job-related seminars, and certification exams. Approved courses may range from obtaining GED certification to master's degree level of studies.

To qualify, employees must currently be in a full-time status, have completed at least 12 months of continuous employment, remain in active pay status, and meet job performance expectations throughout the course or program. A passing grade or completion of the certification is required to receive reimbursement.

Tuition reimbursement is subject to annual budget approval by the City Council and is not guaranteed from year to year. The final approval and funding level, up to the IRS limit, is at the discretion of the City Manager and is dependent on available funds.

Reimbursement will not duplicate any payments received from other sources, such as federal or state education benefits (including VA benefits or HOPE Grants). Employees are required to apply for all external funding for which they are eligible, and the City will only reimburse the remaining cost not covered by those sources. All reimbursement requests must be accompanied by official receipts from the institution and documentation of the final grade or certification earned.

To receive reimbursement for educational expenses, employees should follow these procedures:

- Submit an Educational Course or Certification Request Form to their department head prior to enrolling in an educational course. If the department head approves the request, it will then be forwarded to the City Manager, Human Resources Director, and Finance Director for approval.
- Submit a Tuition Reimbursement Request form to Human Resources once a course or certification has been successfully completed. This form should be accompanied by receipts from school showing payment for the course or certification, proof of a passing grade or certification, and any documentation related to financial assistance from outside sources such as the HOPE Grant, GI Bill, etc.

Reimbursements requested more than six (6) months after completion of course(s) will not be accepted.

Reimbursements are for actual tuition fees only and do not include fees paid for books or any other miscellaneous fees.

Approved courses should be taken on the employees' own time unless the City Manager has granted approval for the course to be taken during work hours.

While educational assistance is intended to enhance employee development and performance, the City cannot guarantee that participation in educational programs will result in automatic advancement, job reassignment, or pay increase.

CHAPTER 12 - WORKPLACE SAFETY

The City is committed to maintaining a safe workplace for all employees and the citizens it serves. All employees are expected to actively participate in maintaining safe working conditions and to immediately report unsafe practices or hazards. To reinforce this commitment, the City has established clear safety objectives and employee responsibilities to guide the development and success of its Safety Program.

Objectives:

- Maintain safe and healthy working conditions.
- Safeguard City property and show the same respect and care for the property of the general public.
- Provide ongoing safety training and education programs so as to prepare all City employees to perform their duties economically, efficiently, and safely.
- Establish and maintain effective communication among supervisors, department heads, and

employees to ensure awareness of the types and frequency of crashes, property damage, and injuries, promoting greater involvement in the development and improvement of safety standards.
- Reduction in the number of work-related injuries.
- Prompt and thorough investigation of all crashes, property damage, and injuries to prevent recurrence.
- Conduct regular inspections to promptly identify and address unsafe acts and conditions. Correction of any unsafe acts or conditions once they have been identified.
- Establish and periodically review safety and health rules and regulations, making changes when necessary.
- Adherence to all applicable rules and regulations relating to safety and health including specific departmental rules designed to prevent injury or illness.
- Enforce fair and consistent disciplinary measures for violations of established safety and health rules, ensuring accountability and uniform application of policies.

Key Definitions
Understanding key safety terms helps ensure consistency in reporting and response. The following definitions apply throughout this policy:

- **Non-Preventable Incident:** An accident, injury, or property damage that occurs despite the employee following all laws, safety rules, and operating procedures.
- **Preventable Incident:** An accident, injury, or property damage that could have been avoided by taking reasonable precautions or following established procedures and/or laws.
- **Property Loss or Damage:** Loss or damage to City or public property caused by the employee's actions, whether preventable or non-preventable.
- **Safety Violation Report:** The reporting of any unsafe work-related act by any employee to a supervisor, department head, or City Manager.
- **Work Related Injury or Illness:** An injury or illness that occurs while performing assigned job duties or engaging in work on behalf of the city. Please refer to the Workers' Compensation policy in Chapter 8.

12.1 Responsibilities

A successful safety program depends on the shared responsibility of all employees. The following outlines key roles and responsibilities.

City Manager:
- Oversee the development and enforcement of all safety policies.
- Approve all new safety rules and regulations prior to implementation.

Department Heads:
- Implement City safety policies within their department.
- Develop and enforce department-specific safety rules.
- Provide leadership in preventing crashes, property damage, and injuries by holding regular

quarterly meetings with departmental personnel to review and discuss preventative measures.

- Ensure that all department personnel comply with safety and health rules and perform their duties with the highest regard for safety.
- Facilitate employee safety training.
- Review and submit timely reports to Human Resources.
- Cooperate with safety inspections and actively address any identified safety concerns within the department.

Supervisors:

- Ensure all employees under their supervision are trained for their assigned duties, are familiar with workplace rules, and understand that compliance is mandatory.
- Promote a positive attitude toward safety and health.
- Enforce safety rules consistently by promptly reporting noncompliance to the department head for appropriate corrective action.
- Be accountable for the safety-related actions of all employees under their supervision.
- Ensure proper paperwork is completed and submitted to Human Resources following an incident regardless of severity.
- Assist in identifying and recommending safety measures to help prevent future accidents.
- Proactively recommend corrective actions for deficiencies in facilities, procedures, employee training, or attitudes that adversely affect the City's safety efforts.
- Take action to shut down operations or remove personnel from hazardous conditions that pose an imminent danger to employees or the public and promptly report such actions to the department head.

Employees:

- Cooperate with all safety policies and follow all safety rules and regulations.
- Participate in safety training.
- Always wear appropriate safety clothing and use appropriate equipment.
- Operate machinery or equipment only after appropriate training and authorization.
- Be accountable for their own actions and ask for clarification of safety policies if necessary.
- Use extreme care to prevent injuries to themselves, co-workers, general public, and to prevent damage to City and private property.
- Report all unsafe conditions to their supervisor or department head immediately.
- Report all crashes, property damage, and injuries, no matter how minor, to their supervisor or department head immediately.
- Complete appropriate reports/forms following an incident regardless of severity.

Human Resources:

- Process completed Workers' Compensation Packet and coordinate with the Workers' Compensation insurance carrier to ensure employees receive care as needed.
- Communicate with the department, employee, and Worker's Compensation Claims Representative on follow-up care, light duty assignments, and return to duty of injured employee.
- Update and maintain the Workers' Compensation Panel of Physician's list and make it available to

all employees.
- Communicate with all departments regarding the process of handling a Workers' Compensation claim and updating materials as needed.
- Coordinate annual training.
- Conduct annual driving history checks through MVRs.

12.2 Safety Inspections

A representative from the City's Building & Safety Services department will conduct bi-annual inspections of all City owned and occupied facilities. Following each inspection, a written report outlining any identified hazards will be provided to the respective department head and the City Manager.

12.3 Damage to Vehicles, Heavy Equipment, or Property

Any damage to property whether City or public, must be reported to a supervisor or department head immediately. This includes vehicles, equipment, or property regardless of fault or severity of damage. The supervisor or department head will assess whether a police report needs to be completed. If the damage occurred to private property, the employee should attempt to notify the property owner. If the owner is unavailable, a note should be left which includes the contact information of the supervisor.

Employees should follow the policy on Workers' Compensation if any injury was obtained, regardless of severity. The supervisor should ensure an incident report is completed by the end of the shift and forwarded to the department head.

The department head must:
- Review the incident report for accuracy and completeness and submit to Human Resources within 24 hours of it being received.
- In coordination with the supervisor, if necessary, investigate the crash and determine whether it was "Preventable" or "Non-Preventable."
- Implement appropriate and permanent corrective measures to address the cause of the incident.

12.4 High-Visibility Safety Apparel Policy

To enhance safety and visibility, all City employees exposed to the hazards associated with moving roadway traffic or construction equipment are required to wear high-visibility safety apparel. Such apparel must meet the specifications of the American National Standard for High-Visibility Safety. The department head, or designee, is responsible for ensuring worker safety within the job site area and will determine the appropriate class of garments required for each specific job function.

12.5 Seat Belt Policy

To assure the safety of all employees, safety belts must be worn at all times by drivers and passengers

in any vehicle or equipment owned, leased, or rented by the City. This requirement also applies to privately owned or other vehicles when used for official business.

12.6 Driver/Driving Policy

This policy applies to all employees who operate a vehicle as part of their duties for the City, whether daily or intermittently. City vehicles are to be used by authorized employees for official City business only. Departments may have Standard Operating Procedures (SOP's) governing vehicle maintenance, usage, and operation. These SOP's must align with this policy and may include more restrictive provisions at the discretion of the department head.

Responsibilities:

- **Department Head:** The department head is responsible for ensuring that all employees who operate City vehicles or equipment meet the requirements of Georgia Department of Driver Services and comply with all other provisions in this policy. Human Resources will maintain a list of employees authorized to operate vehicles and heavy equipment.

- **Supervisor:** The supervisor is responsible for verifying that any employee operating City vehicles or equipment is fully familiar with its use before permitting them to operate it.

- **Authorized Driver:** The authorized driver must obey all traffic laws and City policies, avoid distractions, drive defensively and operate vehicles safely under all conditions.

Intoxicants
Drivers are strictly prohibited from using, possessing, transporting, or being under the influence of alcohol, drugs, or other intoxicating substances while operating a city vehicle unless transporting is required in the course of the employee's job duties.

Arrests/Convictions
Any employee who is arrested for a drug or alcohol related offense must notify the department head of the arrest within one business day. All convictions for alcohol or drug-related offenses must be reported to the employees' department head within one business day. The City reserves the right to take appropriate action including transferring the employee to a non-driving position or applying disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

Driver's License
Employees operating city vehicles or equipment must possess a valid Georgia driver's license for the class of vehicle they are driving. Obtaining and renewing the license is the employee's responsibility and will not be reimbursed by the City. However, acquisition of Commercial Driver's License's (CDLs) will be managed according to departmental standard operating procedures.

Loss or Suspension of Driver's License
Employees must report the suspension or revocation of their driver's license, regardless of their job

duties or length of the suspension, to their department head within one working day of receiving notice. Under no circumstances may an employee operate a City vehicle until their driving privileges have been fully reinstated.

Driver Standards
All drivers of City vehicles should meet the following requirements:

- Be at least 18 years of age
- Be an authorized driver for the City
- Hold a valid driver's license appropriate for the class of vehicle being operated

Driver Disqualification
Employees and/or applicants will not qualify to drive a city vehicle, nor be hired or transferred into a position requiring driving a City vehicle, if any of the following have occurred within the past 36 months:

- Conviction of any felony
- Conviction related to the sale, possession, or use of drugs
- Conviction of an alcohol or drug-related driving offense, including driving under the influence (DUI), driving while intoxicated (DWI), etc.
- Revocation or suspension of driver's license due to a moving violation
- Conviction of three or more speeding violations or one or more serious violations as defined in Official Code of Georgia (OCGA) § 40-6390 – 40-6-397
- Notification from the City's insurance carrier excluding the driver from coverage

The City reserves the right to take appropriate action if an MVR review reveals additional violations or any point accumulation of concern, even if not specifically listed above.

Additionally, an employee may be disqualified from driving a City vehicle if any of the above occur during the course of employment as reported by the employee or discovered in an annual MVR review.

Non-Employee Passengers
Drivers are not permitted to transport individuals who are not City employees unless the transportation is directly related to official City business, a law enforcement matter, or has been specifically authorized by the department head and/or City Manager.

Training Requirements-Defensive Driving Course
All authorized drivers are required to complete a city sponsored Defensive Driving Course as soon as possible after hire. Drivers must also attend a refresher course as outlined in their department's policy to maintain compliance and safe driving practices.

Traffic Violations
Employees are personally responsible for any citations, fines, or legal actions incurred while operating a City vehicle. All violations must be reported to the employee's supervisor immediately.

Personal Vehicles Used for City Business
Under certain circumstances, a City employee may use their personal vehicle to conduct official City

business only after obtaining approval from the employee's department head or designee. This typically occurs when a City vehicle is not available for running city errands, attending work-related training, or traveling to conferences.

The City assumes no liability for bodily injury, vehicular damage, or property damage incurred during the operation of a personal vehicle for City business. Any such liability remains the responsibility of the employee.

12.7 Vehicle and Equipment Use Policy

The City purchases or leases and maintains vehicles and equipment assigned to departments exclusively for conducting city business. These vehicles and equipment are highly visible and represent the City to the public. Therefore, it is essential that all City employees use them solely for their intended purposes and comply with the following policy.

This policy applies primarily to employees who drive City vehicles on public or private streets for city business but also extends to operators of off-road equipment (i.e. tractors, lawn mowers, etc.). Operators of off-road equipment are not exempt from requirements related to licensing, qualifications, maintenance, and safety procedures.

Each department may have its own standard operating procedures, which must be followed in conjunction with this policy.

Driving by Authorized Employee
Only employees authorized to drive a City vehicle may do so. Human Resources will maintain a list of all authorized drivers. Drivers should not permit an unauthorized individual to operate a City assigned vehicle, except in the case of an emergency.

Theft
In the event a City vehicle is stolen, it must be reported immediately to the appropriate law enforcement agency. The department head and City Manager should also be notified as soon as possible. The City is not responsible for the loss or theft of personal belongings left inside City vehicles.

Unattended Vehicles
Drivers must not leave a City vehicle unattended without first turning off the engine, removing the key from the ignition, and securing the vehicle. Exception: Police vehicles may be left running if emergency lighting is required at a scene and the engine must remain on to support operations.

Vehicle and Equipment Appearance
City owned or leased vehicles are costly and highly visible assets used to deliver services to the community. As such, they should be always maintained in a clean and orderly condition. Litter should not be allowed to accumulate inside passenger compartments or in the beds of trucks.

Vehicle Use Policy Violations
Any violation of this policy may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination, in accordance with City policies and procedures.

12.8 Vehicle and Equipment Use & Maintenance Policy

Policy
Safe vehicle and equipment operation begins with the operator's familiarity with both the equipment and its capabilities. The daily condition of the vehicle or equipment is critical for safe and effective use. While the City provides resources for regular maintenance, the ultimate responsibility for ensuring the vehicle or equipment is in safe operating condition rests with the assigned operator.

Inspection
Before operating any City vehicle or equipment, the assigned employee should ensure the vehicle is in proper working order. A daily walk-around of the vehicle should be conducted and the following items should be checked at regular intervals but no less than once per month and a log of these inspections should be maintained:

- **Tires:** Inspect for proper inflation and overall condition, including tread wear and visible damage.
- **Safety Systems:** Verify the functionality of brakes, headlights, taillights, turn signals, emergency flashers, windshield wipers and washers, horn, and emergency equipment.
- **Electrical Components:** Ensure that all interior and exterior lights and other electrical equipment are functioning properly.
- **Exterior and Interior Condition:** Check for any visible damage to the body, windows, mirrors, or interior components.
- **Fluid Levels:** Inspect engine oil, coolant, transmission fluid, windshield washer fluid, and radiator levels. Check for signs of leaks under or around the vehicle.
- **Battery:** Confirm battery level, if applicable.
- **Gauges and Instruments:** Ensure all dashboard gauges and indicator lights are operating within normal ranges.
- **Operational Check for Mechanical Issues:** While in use, remain alert for mechanical defects such as unusual exhaust emissions, steering issues, alignment problems, or other irregularities that may not be apparent during a stationary inspection.

Any concerns or defects identified must be reported immediately to the employee's supervisor or department head, and the vehicle should not be operated until deemed safe.

Any unsafe condition that cannot be corrected must be reported to the employee's supervisor and a written report filed. No employee should operate a vehicle that is deemed unsafe or unfit for use. In addition to the standard daily checks, employees should also inspect the following as needed:

- **Cleanliness:** Ensure the vehicle interior is clean and free of loose items that could interfere with safe operation.

- **Spare Tire and Equipment:** Check the condition of the spare tire and confirm that all necessary tools and equipment are present and serviceable.
- **Routine Maintenance:** Verify that scheduled maintenance (e.g., oil changes, filter replacements, etc.) has been performed in accordance with the vehicle's maintenance schedule.
- **Safety Supplies:** Confirm that a fire extinguisher and first aid kit are present in the vehicle and safely stored.

12.9 Crash Review Policy

It is the policy of the City to implement and maintain procedures for the reporting, investigation, and review of all crashes involving City owned vehicles or equipment, City employees, and any other incidents deemed necessary by the department head and/or City Manager. This process ensures accountability, promotes safe driving practices, and helps prevent future incidents.

Scope
The department head and/or City Manager, or designee, will review all incidents involving City owned vehicles or motorized equipment that results in:

- Damage to City property
- Damage to civilian or third-party property
- Injuries to any individual

This review process is not intended to determine legal liability. It does not affect the City's obligation or authority to report, investigate, adjudicate or, when appropriate, defend against claims made by third parties.

Responsibility

- All City employees are responsible for understanding and complying with the provisions of this policy.
- It is the responsibility of the employee involved in a crash, and/or their supervisor, to promptly notify the department head.
- Supervisors and/or department heads are responsible for ensuring that all required reports and any necessary testing are completed as soon as possible following the incident.

Reporting

- A police report should be filed for all crashes involving a City vehicle or equipment that result in property damage and/or physical injury, including incidents involving private property.
- An Incident Report must be completed by all involved employees, witnesses, the employee's supervisor, and any other individuals with relevant information regarding the crash.
- The supervisor is responsible for submitting all reports to the department head within 24 hours of the incident of the crash including all reports, statements, and required test results.
- A detailed summary report must also be provided to the Human Resources Director.

Documentation
The following documentation and materials will be provided, when applicable:

- All reports including, but not limited to police reports, Georgia State Patrol reports, Sheriff's Department reports, Fire Department reports, EMS reports, and vehicle maintenance records.
- All written statements from involved parties, witnesses, and supervisors.
- Photographs and/or any visual documentation of the vehicle, equipment, or crash site.
- Any additional information or documentation as requested.

12.10 Disciplinary Action

Personal Injury and Vehicle Crashes
To establish and maintain a safe environment, disciplinary action, ranging from verbal warnings to termination, may be taken when safety policies are violated. Safety rules will be strictly enforced, and lack of awareness will not be accepted as a reason for violations. Department heads and supervisors are responsible for enforcing safety standards and determining whether an incident is classified as non-preventable or preventable based on crash reports and related documentation. Disciplinary decisions will be made by the department head and City Manager.

CHAPTER 13 - DRUG AND ALCOHOL-FREE WORKPLACE

13.1 Purpose

The City is dedicated to maintaining a safe and healthy workplace and recognizes that substance abuse can impair job performance and compromise the safety of employees and citizens. Therefore, the use of drugs and alcohol in the workplace is strictly prohibited.

This Policy outlines the City's expectations regarding drug and alcohol use, including the conditions under which pre-employment, post-accident, reasonable suspicion, and random drug testing may be required along with associated procedures. All employees are required to review this policy and to sign the Employee Acknowledgement form. By signing, employees confirm receipt of the Policy, affirm they have read and understood its contents, and agree to comply with all of its provisions.

This Policy will be enforced in accordance with all applicable laws.

13.2 Scope

The Drug and Alcohol Policy applies to all City employees when on City property or premises operated by the City, or while operating City-owned or leased vehicles, whether on or off City property, and while operating personal vehicles for City-related business. The Chief of Police may grant waivers to this policy in specific circumstances, such as during special investigations.

13.3 Policy

The unlawful manufacture, distribution, dispensation, use, possession, sale, or purchase of alcohol, illegal drugs, or other controlled substances is strictly prohibited at all times. Reporting for work, being present on City premises or in City vehicles, or participating in City related activities while under the influence of alcohol, illegal drugs, or other controlled substances also is strictly prohibited. Any violation of this Policy may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination. The City reserves full discretion to take all appropriate and lawful measures to protect the health and safety of its employees and the public it serves, and to enforce this Policy.

13.4 Prohibited Conduct

The following examples illustrate conduct that is strictly prohibited and may lead to disciplinary action, up to and including termination or disqualification from employment consideration. This list is not exhaustive but serves to highlight the types of behavior that are prohibited:

- Unlawful manufacture, distribution, dispensation, use, possession, sale, or purchase of alcohol, illegal drugs, or other controlled substances.
- Reporting to work under the influence of drugs, alcohol, or controlled substances without a valid prescription or abusing legally prescribed medications.
- Selling, purchasing, possessing, or transporting any illegal substance outside the scope of official duties.
- Tampering with or altering the results of any alcohol or drug test, whether for oneself or another employee, or attempting to produce a false negative result.
- Refusing to submit to drug or alcohol testing when requested by the City.
- Interfering with or failing to cooperate in the testing process.
- Failing to promptly and fully disclose all convictions, plea bargains, and parole or probation terms related to the buying, selling, transporting, manufacturing, possessing, or consuming of any controlled substance. Such disclosures must be made directly to the supervisor and apply to all relevant convictions and legal actions occurring after the effective date of this Policy.
- Being convicted of driving under the influence (DUI) or driving while intoxicated (DWI) while operating a City-owned, leased, or rented vehicle or while driving a personal vehicle while on City-related business.

Prescription Drug Use
Employees using legally prescribed medications or controlled substances as part of medical treatment must immediately inform their supervisor if such medications could impair job performance or pose a safety risk to themselves or others. Failure to disclose this information prior to performing work will be considered a violation of this Policy. The abuse of prescription medications or drugs will be strictly prohibited.

To enforce this policy, the City reserves the right to inspect and search employees' personal property when reasonable suspicion exists, as well as City-owned or leased vehicles, equipment, lockers, desks, cabinets, or other areas where prohibited items may be concealed. Refusal to submit to or

cooperate with such searches may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

13.5 Testing Procedures

All testing conducted under this policy will be performed at the City's expense. Testing will be administered by a licensed professional laboratory or medical clinic to ensure accuracy and confidentiality.

All drug screenings will consist of a 10-panel test which screens for the following substances:

Amphetamines (AMP); Marijuana (THC); Cocaine (COC); Opiates (OPI); Phencyclidine (PCP); Methadone (MTD); Methamphetamine (MET); Benzodiazepine (BZD); Barbiturate (BAR); and Ecstasy (MDMA).

Alcohol testing may be conducted by a Breath Alcohol Test (BAT) or as determined appropriate by the testing provider.

13.6 Pre-Employment Drug Testing

Pre-Employment drug testing will occur only after a conditional offer of employment has been made and before the employee's start date. Employment offers will be contingent upon the applicant providing a negative drug test result. Pre-Employment Drug Testing will not occur more than thirty (30) days prior to the anticipated start date.

If the physician, Medical Review Officer, or laboratory personnel has reasonable suspicion to believe an applicant has tampered with a specimen, the application will be disqualified from employment.

13.7 Reasonable Suspicion Testing

Any employee who reports to work in a visibly impaired condition will be considered unable to safely perform their job duties and will not be permitted to work. The employee's supervisor should consult privately with the employee to determine the cause of the perceived impairment and whether substance abuse has occurred. If substance abuse is suspected, the employee will be sent for a drug and/or alcohol test. The employee should not be allowed to drive, and the supervisor should arrange transportation to the testing facility. If the employee refuses safe transportation and attempts to operate a vehicle, law enforcement will be contacted immediately.

Examples of situations that may give rise to reasonable suspicion include, but are not limited to:

- Clear signs of substance use or impairment, such as the odor of alcohol or drugs emanating from an employee's person or belongings, direct observation of use, or physical symptoms including slurred speech, unsteady balance, disorientation, bloodshot eyes, or dilated pupils.
- Credible and specific reports from reliable sources indicating that an employee has consumed drugs or alcohol in the workplace.

- Discovery that an employee has used, possessed, sold, solicited, or transferred drugs while on duty, on City property, or while operating a City vehicle, equipment, or machinery.

13.8 Post-Accident Testing

Employees may be subject to post-accident drug and alcohol testing when they have appeared to have contributed to or caused a work-related unsafe condition or accident. Testing may also be required when involved in an accident in which medical treatment is required by the employee or other involved party, a citation is issued for a moving traffic violation while operating a City vehicle or private vehicle while on City business, or damage to City or private property has occurred.

Post-Accident testing should take place as soon as reasonably practicable after the accident has taken place but no more than three (3) hours after the incident for an alcohol breath test and no more than eight (8) hours after the incident for a urine drug test.

If an employee is unable to complete testing within the required timeframe due to injury or other extenuating circumstances, the employee must authorize the City to obtain relevant hospital records or other documentation to determine the presence or absence of drugs and/or alcohol at the time of the incident.

Refusal to submit to testing may result in immediate termination.

13.9 Random Drug Testing of Employees in Safety-Sensitive Positions

The City reserves the right to conduct unannounced, random drug and alcohol testing for employees serving in positions classified as safety sensitive.

Safety-sensitive positions are generally those positions in which impaired judgment or diminished physical or mental capacity due to drug or alcohol use could reasonably pose a significant risk to the employee, coworkers, or members of the public. While not an exhaustive list, safety-sensitive roles typically include positions that:

- Consist of duties that are conducted by a Police Officer
- Involve the possession or use of a firearm
- Primarily involve the operation or maintenance of motor vehicles, heavy machinery or other potentially hazardous equipment
- Require the holding of a Commercial Driver's License (CDL)
- Involve duties with a direct impact on public health, safety or security

The City retains the discretion to determine which roles meet the criteria for safety sensitive positions. A complete list of these positions will be maintained by Human Resources.

To facilitate random testing, identifying information of a safety-sensitive employee is entered into a testing pool from which selections are made using a computer-generated process to ensure true

randomization.

Testing dates will be unannounced and reasonably distributed throughout the calendar year. CDL positions will also be subject to alcohol testing. An employee's name will remain in the pool after being selected; therefore, it is possible for the same employee to be randomly selected again in the same year.

Human Resources will notify the department head of employees randomly selected for a drug test. The department head is responsible for informing the selected employees individually and directing them to report for testing within three (3) hours of the notification. If an employee is absent from work on the day of testing, the department head will wait to notify the employee to report to the testing facility when they return to work. Once notified, the employee will report within three (3) hours.

Any employee who fails to report for testing within the required three (3) hour timeframe, without reasonable and satisfactory explanation as determined by the department head, may be subject to termination.

If the testing facility notifies the City of a non-negative test result, the employee will be immediately removed from duty and placed on Paid Administrative Leave pending confirmation of the final results. The Human Resources Department will contact the appropriate department head and/or City Manager with the results.

The testing facility will send the non-negative sample to their Medical Review Officer (MRO) for further testing. The MRO may need to contact the employee to clarify medical information and determine if there is a legitimate medical explanation for the positive test. If there is a legitimate medical explanation, the test result will be reported back to the City as negative. The employee must be available to answer the MRO's phone call or return the call within 24 hours. Failure to answer or return a call to the MRO will result in confirmation of a positive drug test result.

If a positive drug or alcohol test is confirmed, disciplinary action up to and including termination will occur.

Retesting
Employees or applicants with a confirmed positive test result may, at their own expense, request a second confirmation test on the same preserved specimen. Employees will not be allowed to submit a new or additional specimen for retesting.

All specimens that produce a confirmed positive result will be preserved by the certified laboratory that conducted the confirmation test for a period of one (1) year from the date the test results are delivered to the City. During this period, the employee may request that a portion of the preserved specimen be retested at another approved laboratory of their choice, at their own expense. The second laboratory must test at the same or greater sensitivity for the identified substance as the original laboratory. The original laboratory is responsible for transferring the specimen and maintaining the integrity of the chain of custody during the transfer.

All costs associated with the additional test(s) will be the responsibility of the employee.

Opportunity to Contest Results
Employees and job applicants who have a positive confirmed test result may explain or contest the result to the City Manager within five (5) working days after receiving notification of a positive test result.

Confidentiality
All information obtained by the City through its substance abuse testing program will be treated as strictly confidential and will only be disclosed as permitted or required by law.

13.10 Employee Assistance Program

The City provides an Employee Assistance Program (EAP) to support employees in addressing substance abuse concerns and in accessing appropriate, effective treatment resources. The EAP offers confidential assessment, referral services, and short-term counseling to support employees who seek or require assistance.

If referral to a treatment provider outside of EAP is recommended, costs are the responsibility of the employee.

An employee who voluntarily discloses drug or alcohol abuse *prior* to being asked or required to take a drug or alcohol test may not be subject to disciplinary action *if* the employee seeks assistance and treatment through the City's Employee Assistance Program (EAP) or a similarly available treatment program. However, failure to comply with all requirements of a treatment program or continued use of drugs or alcohol during or after completion of such a program will result in appropriate disciplinary action if such use causes the employee to violate the City's Drug-Free Workplace Policy. The City reserves the right to randomly test the employee for drug or alcohol use for up to two (2) years after completion of a treatment program.

CHAPTER 14 - SEPARATION FROM EMPLOYMENT

14.1 Voluntary Resignation

An employee who wishes to resign from their position should provide their supervisor with a written notice at least two (2) calendar weeks in advance of the last day of work. The department head must promptly notify Human Resources and the City Manager.

Upon resignation, employees will be compensated for all accrued, unused PTO, up to the approved maximum limit, in accordance with the City's Paid Time Off (PTO) Policy. If deemed in the best interest of the City, the City Manager may approve pay in lieu of notice.

An employee's last day of work will serve as their final day of employment unless otherwise approved.

14.2 Job Abandonment

Failure to report to work for two (2) consecutive workdays without notification or prior authorization will be considered a voluntarily resignation due to job abandonment, effective the last day worked, unless extenuating circumstances are determined.

14.3 Involuntary Resignation

An employee who is involuntarily terminated for disciplinary reasons will be compensated for all accrued, unused PTO, up to the approved maximum limit, in accordance with the City's Paid Time Off (PTO) Policy. The department head must notify Human Resources of the impending termination.

14.4 Return of City Property

All City issued property must be returned in good working condition prior to an employee's separation from employment, regardless of the reason. If any items are not returned or are returned damaged beyond repair, the cost of the item(s) may be deducted from the employee's final paycheck, as permitted by applicable law.

14.5 Use of Paid Time Off During Notice Period

Employees separating from the City for any reason may not use Paid Time Off (PTO) during the two weeks prior to their last day unless approved in advance by the department head and the City Manager. In cases of medical necessity, a physician's statement must be provided to support the request.

14.6 Reduction in Force

The City Manager reserves the right to eliminate positions as needed.

It is important for all employees to understand that: (1) no employee is guaranteed any certain number of hours per week or a particular work schedule; (2) employees may be changed from part-time to full-time or vice versa; and (3) the City specifically reserves the right to make changes to employees' hours and work schedule without any advance notice or consent by the employee.

CHAPTER 15 - CONCERNS AND PROBLEM-SOLVING PROCEDURES

The City encourages open communication as unaddressed concerns can negatively impact both employees and the organization. Employees are encouraged to bring forward any issues, suggestions, or concerns to the appropriate members of management. Supervisors and department heads are responsible for listening carefully, taking concerns seriously, responding promptly, and helping resolve issues at the lowest appropriate level.

Employees should begin by discussing any concerns with their immediate supervisor, who is typically best positioned to understand and address the matter. Employees in the Police Department, when

practicable, should follow the established chain of command. Employees are encouraged to raise issues within five (5) working days of the action or decision that led to the concern.

If a concern is not resolved after speaking with the supervisor and following the chain of command, the employee may submit a written grievance to the department head within five (5) working days of the supervisor's response.
If the employee believes the concern remains unaddressed, or if they feel unable to approach their supervisor or department head, they may contact the Human Resources Director directly for assistance. Depending on the issue, Human Resources may ask the employee to first follow the standard problem-solving steps prior to a formal review.

Concerns involving discrimination, harassment, or any issue addressed under the Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) policy or other applicable policies must follow City's Complaint Procedure outlined in this manual.

The City values employee input and feedback is always welcome. Employees will not face any adverse consequences for raising concerns or filing a complaint through the City's Complaint Procedure.

CHAPTER 16 - WORKPLACE PRIVACY AND INSPECTION/MONITORING

The workplace is a professional environment, and employees should understand that personal items or communications stored on City property or equipment are not guaranteed privacy.

The City provides offices, desks, communication systems, and computers for work-related purposes. Although these may be individually assigned, all such equipment and the data contained within remain the property of the City. This includes any computer files created or stored on City systems. Unauthorized software or files may not be installed or used on City computers without written approval. Employees are discouraged from storing valuables, perishables, or personal items in desks, lockers, or other City-provided spaces, as the City does not guarantee the security of these areas.

The City reserves the right to access, search, and inspect any items or workspaces on City property including desks, lockers, file cabinets, etc., at any time, with or without reason, notice, or employee consent. This includes the right to review voicemails, emails, computer files, and computer files created or stored using City systems.

CHAPTER 17 - INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY & AI ACCEPTABLE USE

17.1 IT Acceptable Use Policy

This policy outlines the proper and secure use of all information systems, technology resources, and IT equipment owned by City. It covers the use of email, internet access, voice, and mobile IT equipment. This policy applies to all individuals who access or use City systems.

This policy applies to all information, regardless of format, which pertains to the City's business

activities, both domestic and international. It also extends to any information managed by the City on behalf of, or in relation to, partner organizations, contractors, or third parties. It also covers all IT and communication systems owned, operated, or managed by the City, including those operating on its behalf.

17.1.1 Computer Access Control – Individual's Responsibility

Access to the City's IT systems is managed through the use of unique user IDs, passwords, and/or authentication tokens. Each user ID and password must be assigned to a specific individual, who is solely responsible for any activity conducted under their credentials. All passwords must comply with the City's established security standards.

Individuals must not:

- Share their user ID, authentication token, or password with anyone.
- Leave their user account logged in on an unattended or unlocked device.
- Use another individual's user ID or password to access the City IT systems.
- Write down or disclose their password that could allow unauthorized access.
- Make unauthorized changes to City IT systems or data.
- Attempt to access information or systems they are not authorized to use.
- Exceed their authorized access level or business need when interacting with systems or data.
- Connect unauthorized devices to the City network or IT systems.
- Store City data on non-authorized devices or platforms.
- Share or transfer City data or software to external party without proper authorization.

Managers are responsible for clearly defining and communicating each individual's authorized access and limitations regarding access to IT systems and data.

17.1.2 Internet and Email Conditions of Use

Use of the City's internet and email systems is primarily intended for business purposes. Limited personal use is allowed, provided it does not interfere with job performance, be detrimental to the City's mission or objectives, violate any employment terms, or breach any legal obligations.

Each individual is accountable for their use of the City's internet and email systems.

Individuals must not:

- Use the internet or email for harassment, bullying or abusive behavior of any kind.
- Include profanity, obscene language, or derogatory remarks in communications.
- Access, download, send or receive any material (including images), deemed offensive by the City, including sexually explicit, discriminatory, defamatory, or libelous.
- Use internet or email systems for personal profit or side business unrelated to City operations.
- Engage in any form of gambling via City internet or email systems.
- Use the City's email network in a manner that could compromise its reliability or performance.
- Publish, modify, or comment on information related to the City online unless authorized to do

so.
- Send sensitive or confidential information externally.
- Forward personal (non-City) emails to City email accounts, such as messages from private email providers.
- Make formal or binding commitments on behalf of the City via internet or email unless officially authorized.
- Download or share copyrighted media such as music files, film, video files, etc., without proper licensing or approval.
- Infringe upon any property rights, including copyright, database rights, or trademarks.
- Download, install, or use any software from the internet without prior authorization from the IT Department.
- Connect City devices to the internet using non-approved or unsecured methods.

17.1.3 Clear Desk and Clear Screen Policy

To minimum the risk of unauthorized access or data loss, the City enforces a clear desk and screen policy:

- Personal and confidential business information must be secured using available system safeguards.
- Computers must be logged off or locked when unattended, using password protected screen locking mechanisms.
- Confidential documents should not be left unattended on printers or copiers.
- All sensitive printed materials must be disposed of in secure shredders or designated confidential waste.

17.1.4 Working Offsite

The use of laptops and mobile devices offsite is permitted; however, the following safeguards must be observed:

- Equipment and media must never be left unattended in public areas or visible inside vehicles.
- Laptops must be carried as hand luggage during travel.
- Whether at home, in transit, or in public, information must be secured against loss, theft, or unauthorized access.
- Extra caution must be exercised with mobile devices such as laptops, smartphones and tablets. They must, at minimum, be protected by a password or PIN and encrypted where possible.

17.1.5 Mobile Storage Devices

Only mobile storage devices authorized by the City, or those from trusted, verified sources, may be used. When transferring sensitive or confidential data, all devices must have appropriate security features enabled to ensure data protection.

17.1.6 Software

Employees must only use software authorized by the City on City owned computers. All software must be properly licensed and used in accordance with the vendor's licensing agreements. Installation of software is strictly limited to the City's IT department, and no unapproved software may be installed or used.

Individuals must not:

- Store an excessive number of personal files, such as photos or personal documents, on City IT equipment, as determined by the IT Department.
- Store personal media files, such as music, video, or games on City IT equipment.

17.1.7 Viruses and Malware

The IT Department has implemented automated antivirus and malware protection across all City systems. All computers are equipped with software designed to detect, prevent, and automatically remove malicious threats.

Individuals must not:

- Remove or disable anti-virus software.
- Attempt to delete virus-infected files or clean up a malware infection without first contacting the IT department.

17.1.8 Telephony (Voice) Equipment Conditions of Use

The City's voice communication systems are intended for business use. Personal use of these systems should be limited and only permitted under exceptional circumstances. Non-urgent personal calls should be made using personal devices and at an individual's own expense, without using City resources.

Individuals must not:

- Use the City voice communication systems for conducting personal business.
- Make hoax, abusive, or threatening calls to internal or external recipients.
- Accept collect calls, domestic or international, unless expressly authorized and directly related to City business.

17.1.9 Actions upon Termination of Employment

All City equipment and data, such as laptops, mobile phones, smartphones, USB drives, and other mobile storage devices, must be returned to the City upon termination of employment. Any access PINs, passwords, or security features on tablets or smartphones must be disclosed or removed prior to return.

All data, documents, and intellectual property created or accessed during the course of employment

remain the property of the City. Such information must not be retained, copied, or reused for any purpose following the end of employment.

17.1.10 Monitoring and Filtering

All data created or stored on City computers is the property of the City, and there is no guarantee of individual privacy. The City will make reasonable effort to avoid accessing personal emails whenever possible.

System activity may be logged where appropriate, and investigations may be initiated if there is reasonable suspicion of a policy violation. The City reserves the right to monitor all use of its IT systems, including internet, email, and other digital communications, to maintain system security, ensure operational effectiveness, and prevent misuse.

17.1.11 Discipline

It is the responsibility of each employee to report suspected breach of information security policies to their supervisor and the IT department.

All breaches will be thoroughly investigated. If the investigation determines that misconduct has occurred, appropriate disciplinary action will be taken in accordance with the City's disciplinary procedures.

17.2 Artificial Intelligence (AI) Usage Policy

The City recognizes that Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools may assist employees in performing certain tasks more efficiently. This policy establishes guidelines for the responsible use of AI tools and technologies by employees of the City. AI can enhance productivity and efficiency in municipal operations; however, its use must align with ethical standards, legal requirements, and best practices in governance.

Scope:
This policy applies to all City employees who utilize AI-based programs, applications, or tools in their official duties and/or while on City equipment.

Definition of AI:
For the purposes of this policy, Artificial Intelligence (AI) refers to software or systems that generate content, analyze information, or assist with decision-making through automated or machine-learning processes. Examples include AI writing tools, chatbots, image generators, and automated data analysis platforms. AI can generate text, analyze data, recognize patterns, and provide recommendations, but it requires human oversight to ensure accuracy, validity, and ethical compliance.

17.2.1 Personal Responsibility & Validation

Employees are responsible for verifying the accuracy, completeness, and reliability of AI-generated content before incorporating it into official documents, reports, or communications. AI should be used as an aid, not a replacement for professional judgment.

17.2.2 Transparency & Accountability

Employees may disclose when AI-generated content is used in decision-making processes or public communications; however, disclosure of AI usage should not alleviate responsibilities as outlined herein.

AI tools should not be used to make final decisions on policy, personnel matters, legal interpretations, or financial transactions without human oversight and validation.

17.2.3 Compliance with Laws & Ethical Standards

AI-generated content must adhere to all applicable local, state, and federal laws, including public records laws and data privacy regulations.

AI tools should not be used in a manner that discriminates, spreads misinformation, violates City personnel policies, or violates ethical standards.

17.2.4 Data Security & Privacy

Employees should avoid inputting sensitive, confidential, or personally identifiable information (PII) into AI platforms unless the tool has been vetted and approved for secure municipal use by the IT Director and City Manager, or their designee.

AI tools should align with the City's cybersecurity policies to mitigate risks related to data breaches and unauthorized access.

17.2.5 Approved AI Tools & Vendor Assessment

The use and extent of use of AI tools within City Departments should be at the discretion of the Director of those specific Departments.

The IT Department may research and recommend AI tools that meet operational needs while mitigating risks.

Employees are encouraged to use AI programs that have been approved by the City's IT Department to ensure security, reliability, and compliance with municipal policies.

Employees are encouraged to evaluate and may propose new AI tools for evaluation and use by

departments.

17.2.6 Training

Employees using AI tools should receive training on responsible AI usage, including verification techniques and ethical considerations.

Staff should remain critical thinkers when reviewing AI-generated content, ensuring that it aligns with municipal goals and public trust.

17.2.7 AI Use in Public Communications & Engagement

Any AI-generated public information, public engagement materials, social media content, or other communications typically managed by the City's Communications Department must be reviewed and approved by the Communications Manager before publication or dissemination.

AI tools may be used to assist in drafting public-facing content, but final approval must be granted by the Communications Manager to ensure accuracy, consistency, and compliance with City branding and messaging standards.

The use of AI-generated advertising, promotional materials, or public notices must align with any City policies on transparency and authenticity in public communications.

17.2.8 Public Records Compliance

AI-generated content may be classified as public records under Georgia law and must be retained in accordance with the State's records management and retention policies.

Employees must ensure that AI-generated documents are properly archived and accessible for public records requests.

17.2.9 Decision-Making & Legal Considerations

AI-generated content must not be the sole source for decision making in any City functions or activities including but not limited to legal, financial, and policy matters.

Any AI-generated materials used in legal, contractual, or regulatory processes must be reviewed and approved by the City Attorney or designated legal counsel before adoption.

17.2.10 Copyright & Attribution

Employees must ensure that AI-generated content does not infringe on copyrights or intellectual property rights.

Proper attribution must be provided when AI-generated content includes copyrighted material, and approval must be obtained before its use in official documents or public communications.

17.2.11 Ongoing Monitoring & Risk Assessment

The City's IT Department, in coordination with relevant departments, may conduct periodic reviews of AI tools to assess their compliance, effectiveness, and security risks.

Employees should report any concerns related to AI-generated content, bias, misinformation, or security vulnerabilities to the IT Department.

17.2.12 AI Use in Chatbots & Public Engagement Tools

AI-powered chatbots or automated response tools used for public engagement must include disclaimers informing users that they are interacting with AI.

AI-generated responses must be reviewed periodically by the Communications Manager, department heads, or their designees to ensure accuracy and compliance with City messaging guidelines.

Human escalation options must be available for residents who require additional assistance beyond AI-generated responses.

17.2.13 Prohibited Uses

Employees must not enter confidential, sensitive, or non-public City information into AI platforms.

Employees must not enter personnel records, employee information, medical information, or other protected data into AI platforms.

Employees must not enter citizen information, financial data, or legal documents into AI platforms unless specifically authorized.

Employees must not use AI to make or assist in personnel decisions, disciplinary actions, hiring decisions, or other employment determinations.

Employees must not represent AI-generated content as official City information without review and approval. AI must not be used to generate official records without human oversight unless authorized by the City Manager or their designee.

Employees must not use AI tools to manipulate or misrepresent information in any way.

Employees must not use AI for political advocacy or for purposes unrelated to municipal operations.

17.2.14 Enforcement & Review

Violations of this policy may result in disciplinary action as outlined in this manual.

The IT Department, in collaboration with the City Manager (or their designee), and the City Attorney will review and update this policy periodically to adapt to evolving AI capabilities and risks.

CHAPTER 18 - TRAVEL AND EXPENDITURES

This policy establishes the authorized expenditures for travel and meal expenses for all departments under the authority of the Mayor and City Council. It applies to all Elected Officials, City Manager, City employees, and board members who incur expenses while conducting City-related business.

Detailed operating guidelines and procedures for requesting or procuring travel and meal expenses will be provided by the Finance Department. These guidelines do not require City Council approval.

18.1 Appropriation

As part of the annual budget process, the City Council may review and approve departmental appropriations for travel and meal expenses. No department may incur travel-related expenditures unless an appropriation is available, or a budget amendment or adjustment has been formally approved.

18.2 Expenditure Approval

All travel- and meal-related expenditures must be processed in accordance with established procurement and purchasing guidelines. The Finance Department will issue reimbursements only upon receipt of proper documentation from the incurring departments, submitted either electronically or in writing.

18.3 Settlement of Disputed Reimbursement Claims

The Finance Department is responsible for reviewing all expenditure documentation to ensure compliance with applicable City policies and procedures. Reimbursement requests that do not meet these requirements will be returned to the originating department along with recommendations for correction. If the originating department disagrees with the Finance Department's recommendations, the City Manager will have final authority to determine whether the reimbursement is authorized.

18.4 Travel Expenses

The City will reimburse or directly pay for travel expenses incurred by Elected Officials, City Manager, and City employees when traveling on official City business. Eligible expenses include those related to attending education and training sessions, conferences, conventions, events, and business meetings involving third parties, such as other governmental entities and vendors. All employee

travel must be pre-approved by management.

18.5 Lodging

Lodging expenses are eligible for reimbursement when travel requires an overnight stay at a destination located more than fifty (50) miles from the employee's designated work location. Employees are expected to minimize lodging costs by obtaining government or other discount rates whenever available. Reimbursement for lodging shall be benchmarked against the applicable U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) per diem rates. When lodging costs exceed the applicable GSA rate by twenty percent (20%) or more, the traveler may be required to provide written justification.

For travel within the State of Georgia, employees are responsible for providing the appropriate tax-exemption documentation to the lodging facility to avoid sales tax and hotel/motel tax charges. Taxes incurred on in-state lodging may be ineligible for reimbursement and shall be subject to management approval. If an employee personally pays for lodging and later seeks reimbursement, the City shall reimburse only the eligible lodging amount, less any taxes from which the City would have been exempt.

Hotel accommodations for travel within a fifty (50) mile radius of the City requires prior approval from the employee's department head. Exceptions may be granted for Elected Officials, City Manager, department heads, and management personnel when overnight accommodations are reasonably necessary due to meeting schedules, early start times, late evening obligations, or other official business needs.

18.6 Transportation

Approved modes of transportation include personal or City owned vehicles, air travel, rail, taxis, rideshares, and public transit. The transportation selected should be the most cost-effective and practical option, taking into consideration both expense and time. When a City vehicle is available, it shall be used in lieu of a personal vehicle. Generally, mileage reimbursement will not be provided for travel using a personal vehicle within ten (10) miles of an employee's designated work location or residence.

Mileage
Mileage incurred while using a personal vehicle for authorized City business shall be reimbursed at the current IRS-approved mileage rate. This rate is intended to compensate the employee for fuel, wear and tear, maintenance, and other operating expenses. Reimbursement shall be limited to the cost of the most direct round trip route. Mileage associated with personal detours or side trips is not reimbursable. For purposes of calculating reimbursable mileage, the point of departure shall be the employee's designated work location or residence, whichever is closer to the destination.

Rental Cars
Rental car expenses, including rental fees and fuel, shall be reimbursed at actual cost, provided itemized receipts are submitted. Employees are expected to rent a mid-size or smaller vehicle unless a larger vehicle is reasonably justified based on the number of travelers, equipment needs, or other

business requirements. Any additional cost resulting from an unauthorized upgrade beyond the approved vehicle class shall be the responsibility of the traveler.
Employees should decline optional insurance coverage offered by rental car agencies, as the City's insurance policy provides coverage for authorized rental vehicles.

Air/Rail
Transportation via commercial airlines or rail services shall be reimbursed at actual cost, limited to coach or economy class fares. If a traveler elects to upgrade to business or first class, or changes travel dates for personal reasons, any additional cost shall be the sole responsibility of the traveler. Cost savings associated with extended or adjusted travel for personal convenience shall not be reimbursed or credited to the employee.

Mileage for one round trip shall be reimbursed between the employee's designated work location or residence, whichever is applicable, and the airport, rail station, other common carrier terminal, or approved off-site parking location. Use of rideshare or taxi service to and from the airport is discouraged and will be reimbursed only when documented as the most economical and practical transportation option.

Taxi/Shuttle
Local transportation expenses, including taxis, rideshare services, and shuttle transportation, are eligible for reimbursement when supported by itemized receipts and documentation of point-to-point travel details. All required documentation must accompany the reimbursement request. Transportation expenses incurred for personal purposes are not eligible for reimbursement.

Meals/Incidentals
Meal expenses shall be reimbursed on a per diem basis in accordance with the applicable U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) per diem rates. The per diem allowance covers eligible meal costs, including applicable taxes and gratuities. For partial travel days, reimbursement shall be limited to seventy-five percent (75%) of the applicable daily rate. All travelers, except the City Manager and Elected Officials, may request a per diem advance.

Meals included in conference registration fees, lodging charges, or otherwise provided at no additional cost shall be deducted from the applicable per diem amount. Requests for per diem advances must be submitted at least two (2) weeks prior to travel. Approved per diem payments shall generally be issued approximately three (3) to five (5) days before departure. Employees are required to return any per diem funds for travel days not attended or otherwise not eligible for reimbursement. Receipts are not required for per diem meal expenses.

Employees who receive a per diem allowance may not charge meals or incidental expenses covered by the per diem to a City purchasing card (P-Card) or seek separate reimbursement for those same expenses.

Meal expenses incurred during travel that does not include an overnight stay shall be reimbursed in accordance with the Non-Travel Meals of this policy.

Program/Seminar/Conference Fees
Charges directly related to the traveler's attendance, including registration or participation fees, shall be paid by the respective department, subject to applicable City expenditure and purchasing policies.

Telephone/Long Distance
Reimbursement for communication-related expenses, including telephone, fax, long-distance charges, internet access, and postage, may be approved when such costs are pre-authorized by the employee's supervisor and are directly related to official City business. Business communication expenses are limited to a maximum of ten dollars ($10.00) per day and must be supported by itemized receipts.

Laundry/Dry Cleaning
For travel lasting more than five (5) consecutive days, reimbursement for reasonable laundry and dry-cleaning expenses may be approved at actual cost, provided itemized receipts are submitted.

Family Members or Guests
Family members or guests may accompany an employee on official City travel; however, such individuals are not eligible for City reimbursement, and any additional costs incurred as a result of their travel shall be the responsibility of the employee. If a spouse or dependent accompanies an employee, only expenses directly attributable to the employee's authorized travel shall be reimbursed. Per diem allowances shall not be increased or adjusted due to the presence or travel of a spouse or dependent.

Elected Officials, City Manager, department heads, and members of City management may engage in official City business while traveling. Reimbursement for expenses such as meetings or business meals that are outside the primary purpose of the travel shall require appropriate supporting documentation and advance approval by the City Manager.

Employees traveling on official City business must comply with all applicable City workers' compensation policies in the event of a work-related injury.

18.7 Non-Travel Meals

Expenses for meals, snacks, or food may be reimbursed only under the following circumstances:

- During meetings held within regular business hours that are legally required or authorized by a department head, last more than four (4) hours, and extend through normal meal periods,
- Business meals with individuals who are not City officials or employees, provided that a specific City-related purpose is documented and discussed,
- Meals that are an integral and required component of a scheduled meeting that the employee is obligated to attend, or
- Emergency situations as determined by the City Manager or department head.

Receipts submitted for reimbursement must include sufficient documentation describing the purpose of the meeting and the names of all attendees.

18.8 Submission of Expenses

To be eligible for reimbursement, all travel-related expenses must be submitted to the Finance Department within a reasonable timeframe and no later than fourteen (14) days following the traveler's return from the trip. Expenses for non-travel meals must be submitted within ten (10) days of the date the expense was incurred.