



PERSONNEL POLICY HANDBOOK



WELCOME

The City of Freeport would like to extend it's warmest welcome to you as an employee of this unique city.

Freeport is rich in history. It was a hunting and fishing area for the Karankawa Indians. Later, Brazoria County was the base for Stephen F. Austin in colonizing Texas. Prior to the Civil War, it was the site of major plantations that made use of the Brazos River for importing supplies and exporting agricultural products.

Velasco (now Surfside) was a Mexican fort until the Texas War for Independence, after which it became a small beach resort. An inland resort and farm community adopted the name of New Velasco, and became just Velasco after the 1900 storm leveled the old town. Much of the inland city was vacated in that storm, and most of the property became dormant until the Freeport Urban Renewal Agency began acquiring it in the 1960's.

Across the river from Velasco, Freeport was created in 1912 when the Freeport Sulfur Company established a town site and began mining sulfur at Bryan Mound.

In 1925 the Navigation District was created by vote, and began the work of diverting the Brazos River from its downstream course. This allowed the dammed lower portion to be dredged to form a dependable deep-sea port (Port Freeport).

The present industrial character of the area began forming when in 1940, Willard Dow purchased 823 acres to begin what is now known as Dow Chemical Texas Operations, the centerpiece of the world's largest basic chemical processing complex.

The cities of Lake Jackson, Clute, Richwood, and smaller communities formed nearby, and this group took the name Brazosport Area and chose to share a school district, community college, chamber of commerce, hospital, and other facilities.

Freeport is a popular Gulf Coast sportfishing site and the majority of the commercial shrimping activity of South Texas takes place in this area of the Gulf of Mexico.

Freeport offers many attractions; these include a Municipal Golf Course, numerous parks, community houses and pavilions, unique restaurants and shops, charter and party boat services, and an award winning school district.

As a city employee you are responsible for carrying out the "Goals of the City" through your departments' goals and objectives. This Policy Handbook sets the standards for all City of Freeport employees to accomplish the City's missions.

Goals of the City of Freeport

- ❖ *Recruiting, developing, and retaining qualified staff*
- ❖ *Providing friendly and professional customer service to our citizens*
- ❖ *Practicing fiscal conservatism*
- ❖ *Providing a safe and inviting environment in which our citizens can live*
- ❖ *Maintaining equipment and resources for delivery of quality services*
- ❖ *Providing for a well planned and strong infrastructure*
- ❖ *Developing a healthy local economy*

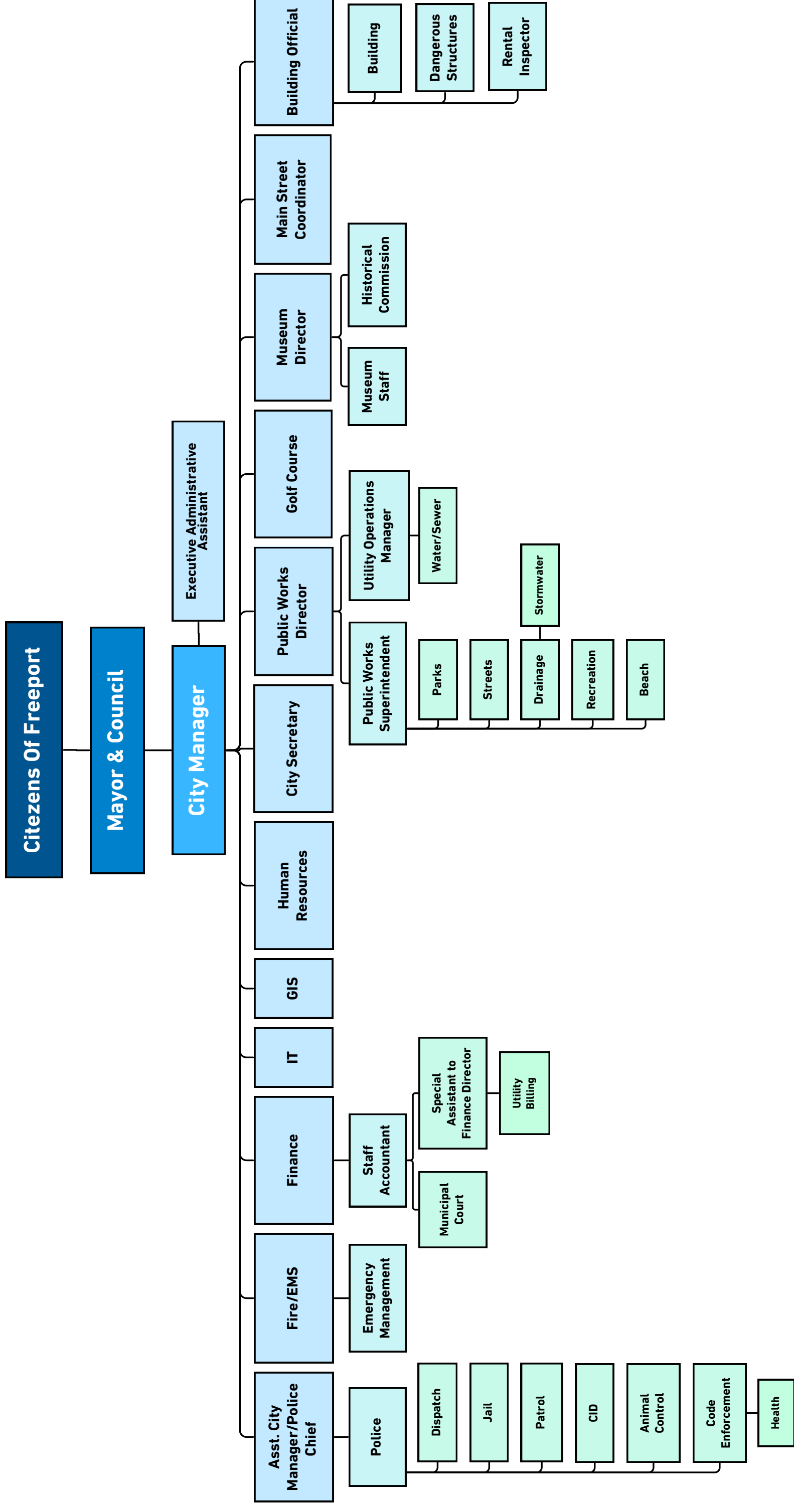
CITY
of
FREEPORT

VISION STATEMENT

The City of Freeport is committed to its citizens in procuring a quality of life that meets the high standards of its leadership.

Building partnerships with industry, schools, and citizens, the City will approach this century with a resolve to make Freeport the standard by which others set their goals.

ORGANIZATIONAL CHART



***TABLE OF
CONTENTS***

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>SECTION</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
CHAPTER ONE	GENERAL PROVISIONS	
1.01	Purpose of Policy Handbook	1-1
1.02	Conditions and Amendments	1-1
1.03	Non-Discrimination	1-1
1.04	At-Will Employment	1-2
CHAPTER TWO	ORGANIZATION AND PERSONNEL	
2.01	Role of Mayor and City Council	2-1
2.02	Role of City Manager	2-1
2.03	Role of Department Directors	2-1
2.04	Role of Operation Personnel	2-1
CHAPTER THREE	EMPLOYEE APPOINTMENTS	
3.01	Equal Employment Opportunity	3-1
3.02	Americans with Disabilities Act	3-1
3.03	Application Process	3-1
3.04	Nepotism	3-2
3.05	Drug Testing/Physical Examinations	3-3
3.06	Eligibility for Rehire	3-3
3.07	Transfers	3-4
3.08	Promotions	3-4
3.09	Employment of Minors	3-4
3.10	Definitions of Employment	3-5
3.11	Employee Evaluations	3-5
CHAPTER FOUR	PROBATION	
4.01	Purpose of Probation	4-1
4.02	Length of Probation	4-1
4.03	Completion of Probation	4-1
4.04	Removal during Probation	4-2
CHAPTER FIVE	STANDARDS OF CONDUCT	
5.01	Personal Appearance	5-1
5.02	Ethics	5-1
5.03	Violations of Policies/Acts of Misconduct	5-1
5.04	Conflict of Interest	5-2

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>SECTION</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
5.05	Gifts	5-3
5.06	Outside Interest	5-3
5.07	Public Office & Participation in City Elections	5-3
5.08	Solicitations	5-4
5.09	Personnel Records Access	5-4
5.10	Confidential Information	5-5
5.11	Meal and Break Time	5-5
5.12	Use of Tobacco	5-6
5.13	Alcohol and Drug Abuse	5-6
5.14	Gambling	5-7
5.15	Harassment in the Work Place	5-7
5.16	Retaliation	5-10
5.17	Workplace Violence/Weapons Policies	5-10
5.18	Searches	5-13
5.19	Use of City Owned Vehicles	5-13
5.20	Use of City Equipment	5-16
5.21	Use of Personal Vehicles for City Business	5-16
5.22	Use of Telephone/Cellular Phones	5-16
5.23	Information Resources Acceptable Use	5-16
5.24	Social Media Usage	5-20
5.25	Password Policy	5-22
5.26	Press Release/Media Relations	5-25
5.27	Remote Access Use	5-25
CHAPTER SIX	DISCIPLINE PROCESS	
6.01	General Provisions	6-1
6.02	Reasons for Disciplinary Action	6-1
6.03	Types of Disciplinary Action	6-3
CHAPTER SEVEN	GRIEVANCE PROCESS	
7.01	Right to Grievance	7-1
7.02	Grievance Procedure	7-1
CHAPTER EIGHT	ATTENDANCE AND LEAVE	
8.01	Attendance	8-1
8.02	Vacation	8-1
8.03	Holidays	8-2

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>SECTION</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
8.04	Inclement Weather	8-2
8.05	Sick Leave	8-3
8.06	Family Medical Leave Act	8-3
8.07	Worker’s Compensation	8-4
8.08	Leave Without Pay	8-4
8.09	Bereavement Leave	8-5
8.10	Judicial Leave	8-5
8.11	Military Leave	8-5
8.12	Mental Health Leave	8-5
8.13	Leave Donation Policy	8-7
8.14	Reasonable Accommodation for Pregnant Workers	8-9
CHAPTER NINE	EMPLOYEE WAGE AND BENEFITS	
9.01	Texas Municipal Retirement	9-1
9.02	Social Security	9-1
9.03	Group Health, Life, and AD&D	9-1
9.04	Long-Term Disability	9-2
9.05	Workman’s Compensation Insurance	9-2
9.06	Allowances	9-2
9.07	Overtime/Compensatory Time	9-3
9.08	Paydays and Hours of Work	9-5
9.09	Deductions from Pay	9-6
9.10	Longevity Pay	9-5
9.11	Tuition Reimbursement	9-7
9.12	Section 125 Flexible Spend Accts	9-9
9.13	Supplemental Insurance	9-9
9.14	Travel Authorization and Expense Policy	9-9
9.15	457 Deferred Compensation Plan	9-11
9.16	Education Pay	9-12
9.17	Certification Pay	9-12
9.18	Residency Incentive Program	9-14
9.19	Digital Voucher for Safety Shoes	9-15
9.20	Hiring Incentive for First Responders	9-16
9.22	Temporary Interim Pay	9-17
9.23	Professional Development Membership Coverage	9-17
CHAPTER TEN	EMPLOYEE SAFETY	
10.01	General	10-1
10.02	Motor Vehicle Safety	10-1

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>SECTION</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
10.03	Job Injuries	10-1
10.04	Hazard Reporting	10-2
10.05	Incident/Claim Reporting	10-2
CHAPTER ELEVEN	TERMINATION OF EMPLOYMENT	
11.01	Resignation	11-1
11.02	Termination	11-1
11.03	Reductions in Force	11-1
11.04	Exit Interview	11-1
11.05	Final Pay	11-1
CHAPTER TWELVE	MISCELLANEOUS	
12.01	Financial Responsibility	12-1
12.02	Hurricanes/Disasters	12-1
12.03	Department Policies	12-1
12.04	Emergency Closing Operations Policy	12-1
12.05	Emergency Event Leave Policy	12-5
CHAPTER THIRTEEN	SEVERABILITY CLAUSE	13-1
APPENDIX		
GLOSSARY		
INDEX		

CHAPTER

ONE

GENERAL PROVISIONS

CHAPTER ONE

GENERAL PROVISIONS

1.01 Purpose of Policy Handbook

The City Council of the City of Freeport deems it advisable to formulate a policy governing the relationship of the City with its employees. The policies in this handbook are guidelines only, and do not constitute any type of employment contract with any employee, nor are they intended to make any commitment to any employee concerning how individual employment action will be handled. This policy also represents an effort to establish governing principles for a fair and equitable system of personnel management. This policy is not intended to be all-inclusive and cover every conceivable personnel situation that might arise. It is understood that this policy will require modification from time and it should not be regarded as fixed or unchangeable, but subject to growth and change.

1.02 Conditions and Amendments

These policies shall become part of the employment conditions of each employee. Employment with the City shall be contingent upon the employee's compliance with all of the provisions of these policies applicable to such employee.

Changes to these policies may be recommended by any employee to their immediate supervisor to be forwarded to the City Manager. The City Manager has the sole authority to change these policies and regulations, subject to the approval of and such exceptions as the City Council may deem necessary.

1.03 Non-Discrimination

The City of Freeport will comply with the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and subsequent amendments thereto, and will not discriminate in its policies because of handicap, race, color, creed, national origin, religion, sex or age. However, it must be recognized that in certain job classifications and performance of the duties of certain positions, qualifications must be set that may direct or restrict, in certain cases, the field of applicants to those who qualify for that particular position. Also some restrictions will be placed on positions that require certain educational and experience qualifications.

It is the policy of the City of Freeport to comply with the Equal Employment Opportunity legislation and be in compliance as an Equal Employment Opportunity Employer.

1.04 At-Will Employment

The City of Freeport is an employment-at-will employer as defined under Texas common law. As such, the employment relationship between the employee and the City is terminable at the will of either the City or the employee, with or without cause, at any time without notice, and for any reason. The City may set rules and regulations governing the conduct of the employees, but no communication or practice shall limit or modify the employment-at-will relationship. This manual is not intended to create a contract of employment. No agreement or promise regarding an individual's employment is binding on the City unless it is in writing and signed by the City Manager or his/her designee. The provisions of this manual control over any conflicting statements made by any Department Director or Supervisor. The City Manager, with the approval of the City Council, has the right to change these policies at any time without notice.

CHAPTER

TWO

ORGANIZATION AND PERSONNEL

CHAPTER TWO

ORGANIZATION AND PERSONNEL

2.01 Role of Mayor and City Council

The City Council is comprised of four council members and the Mayor, and is the policy making body for the City of Freeport. The Mayor is the presiding officer of the City Council, and is the ceremonial head of the City government.

2.02 Role of City Manager

The City Manager is the Chief Executive and Chief Administrative Officer of the City and is appointed by the City Council. The City Manager is responsible to the City Council for the administration of all affairs of the City. The City Manager appoints and removes all employees, except those whose appointment or removal is otherwise provided for by the City Charter or specific ordinance. Except for purpose of inquiry, the Mayor and City Council shall deal with the administrative services solely through the City Manager and shall not give orders, either publicly or privately, to any employee of the City except the City Manager. Provided however, when the City Manager is unable to perform the duties of his/her office for any reason, or if such office becomes vacant, until an Acting City Manager is appointed, a qualified employee designated in writing by the City Mayor, with the consent of the City Council shall perform the duties of the City Manager hereunder.

2.03 Role of Department Directors

The Department Directors are to supervise their designated department within the City. These Department Directors are appointed by the City Manager. The City Manager and Department Directors make up the management team and are responsible for the efficient operation of City services through team leadership. With the approval of the City Manager, Department Directors may appoint personnel as supervisors to assist them in the fulfillment of their supervisory duties. Department Directors are expected to effectively lead their department employees in meeting and achieving the goals and objectives of their department and establishing policies, which are not inconsistent with these policies, which lead to the fulfillment of the City's mission.

2.04 Role of Operations Personnel

Operations personnel are those employees who are responsible for the day to day operation of City services. Each employee will have a general job description and will be assigned to a particular department. However, each employee works for the City of Freeport and as a City employee, may from time to time, at the discretion of the employee's supervisor, be assigned to jobs outside of his/her regular department and/or outside of the duties of his/her general job description.

CHAPTER

THREE

EMPLOYEE APPOINTMENTS

CHAPTER THREE

EMPLOYEE APPOINTMENTS

3.01 Equal Employment Opportunity

The City of Freeport is an Equal Opportunity Employer. No hiring or employment decision shall be based upon race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age or disability. However, it must be recognized that in certain job classifications and performance of the duties of certain positions, qualifications must be set that may direct or restrict, in certain cases, the field of applicants to those who qualify for that particular position.

3.02 Americans with Disabilities Act

In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990, the City of Freeport will provide reasonable accommodations to otherwise qualified individuals with disabilities as prescribed in accordance with the Act.

A “reasonable accommodation” may be provided when it enables the employee/applicant to perform the essential functions of the job.

3.03 Application Process – REVISED 02/20/2024

When a vacancy occurs in a City position, the Department Director shall notify the Human Resource Department of such vacancy by submitting a “Vacancy Verification Form”. The Human Resource Department will acquire the signature of the City Manager on the “Vacancy Verification Form” before announcing the vacancy and seeking qualified applicants. Once a vacancy is announced, any current City employee interested in the vacancy may apply by submitting a letter of interest to the Human Resources Director. If no current City employee applies for the position within 5 business days from date of announcement, or if no current City employees meet the minimum qualifications, applications will be accepted until the closing date specified by the Human Resource Department (typically two (2) weeks). Announcement process is as follows, advertised to City employees for 5 business days, then advertised in the local paper, and posted on the city’s website and other social media as appropriate. Department Directors may review and interview applicants prior to the closing date, but no final decision shall be made until after the closing date for accepting applications.

If, after reviewing and interviewing, the Department Director feels an appointment recommendation is warranted, he/she shall submit to the Human Resources Department a completed applicant package including Background Investigation signed by the Department Director and Human Resources Screening and Authorization Form signed by the Department Director. After reviewing the Background Investigation, the Human Resource Department

CITY OF FREEPORT – PERSONNEL POLICY HANDBOOK

will forward the applicant package to the City Manager with a recommendation. Once the City Manager has approved the applicant package, the Human Resource Department will contact the applicant to arrange for a pre-employment drug screen and physical. If the Human Resource Department and/or the City Manager do not recommend or approve the application package, the Department Director will be notified. However, if, the Department Director feels an additional search for qualified applicants is warranted, he/she shall notify the Human Resource Department, which shall reinstate the announcement process.

Any vacancy announcement shall state the City's commitment as an Equal Employment Opportunity Employer and shall specify the position title, required and preferential qualifications, and the deadline for and method of application. Such announcement shall also specify the location of a written job description for applicants.

Applications for employment with the City of Freeport shall be provided by the Human Resource Department and should be submitted to the Human Resource Department. Resumes may be utilized for initial screening of applicants. However, no person shall be employed by the City of Freeport without having a formal application on file with the City of Freeport.

As required by law, all solicited applications will be kept on file at City Hall for two (2) years.

All applicants will be required to meet the qualifications listed in the job description for the position they seek. Additionally, applicants may be required to furnish information that demonstrates compliance with the standards for employment prescribed in the job descriptions.

3.04 Nepotism – Revised 07/15/2024

In order to avoid conflicts of interest which may arise from the hiring, promotion, compensation and other conditions of employment offered to an employee's family member, the City limits certain familial relationships within the organization. An applicant may not be hired as an employee if that department already employs a person who is a family member of the applicant. Also, the City will not hire anyone (full-time or part-time) who is a family member of a Director.

A. Family Member

The City of Freeport defines a family member as:

- A relationship created by marriage includes: spouse, spouse's child, spouse's parent, spouse's brother, spouse's sister, spouse's nephew, spouse's niece, spouse's grandchild, spouse's grandparent, spouse's first cousin, spouse's aunt, and spouse's uncle; a relationship by marriage will also include step relations.

- A relationship created by birth (blood) includes: parent, brother, sister, child, grandparent, grandchild, aunt, uncle, niece, nephew, first cousin, great-grandparent, great-grandchild, great-aunt, great-uncle, great-niece, and great-nephew.
- Significant others who live in the same household.

B. Employees within the same department

If an employee becomes a family member of another employee who works in the same department, neither employee may be promoted to any position that has any supervision or authority over the other family member through the chain of command.

C. Employees within the same chain of command

If an employee becomes a family member of any employee in their chain of command or authority, directly or indirectly and neither employee voluntarily resigns or is able to transfer to another position within 60 days of the date the relationship begins, the person with the least amount of consecutive service time with the City is considered to have automatically resigned their position of employment on the 61st day.

D. Directors

If an employee becomes a family member of a Director, or if an employee becomes a Director and has a family member that is an employee and neither employee voluntarily resigns within 60 days of the date the relationship begins, the person with the least amount of consecutive service time with the City is considered to have automatically resigned their position on the 61st day.

E. Elected Officials

The City may not appoint or hire anyone to any office, position, clerkship or service to the City who is a family member of the Mayor or a City Council member.

Family relationships that existed or were established and properly reported to the City prior to the revised date of this policy (before August 1, 2024) will be accepted under this policy. Any change in relationships after the revised date of this policy (after August 1, 2024) will be subject to this policy and subsequent revisions.

3.05 Drug Testing and Physical Examinations

Before being appointed, and after a conditional offer of employment, a prospective employee shall undergo a thorough medical, and/or psychological examination, and a drug and alcohol test by a physician designated by the City. All employees are subject to the City's Policies and Procedures for a Drug-free Workplace and the City's Mandatory Drug Testing Program, along with the Random Drug Testing Program.

3.06 Eligibility for Rehire

Former employees will be eligible for re-employment with the City at the discretion of the City Manager; however, they shall not receive preference over other applicants on the basis that they were formerly employed by the City. If a former employee is rehired, he/she will be subject to all probationary periods as set forth in the policy handbook.

3.07 Transfers

The Department Director may transfer employees from one position to another within their department. Employees may also be transferred from one department to another with the consent of both Department Directors. The City Manager may also transfer an employee between departments to facilitate an efficient use of City personnel. All transfers must be reported to and approved by the City Manager before becoming effective.

A report of Disciplinary Action must be completed when a transfer is made for disciplinary reasons.

Employees interested in transferring to a vacant position within the City should submit a letter of interest to the Department Director and forward a copy to the Human Resource Department.

3.08 Promotions – REVISED 02/19/2019

The City of Freeport is committed to a policy of hiring and rewarding qualified employees and shall make every effort to fill vacant positions by promotion of current personnel. When a position becomes vacant, any interested employee shall submit a letter of interest to the Human Resource Department, in accordance with Policy 3.03 Application Process. The Human Resource Department will then forward letter of interest to the Department Director. This letter of interest will be reviewed along with other applications that may be received from applicants not currently employed by the City. All promotions must first be approved by the City Manager.

3.09 Employment of Minors

Minors may be considered for employment within the limitations of state and federal laws.

- I. 16-17 year olds may be hired for any nonhazardous jobs
- II. 14-15 year olds may be employed outside of school hours under the following conditions:

- a. No more than 3 hours on a school day
 - b. No more than 18 hours in school week
 - c. 8 hour maximum on non-school day
 - d. 40 hour maximum in a non-school week
 - e. Work may not begin before 7 a.m.
 - f. Work may not extend past 7 p.m., except between June 1 and Labor Day, when evening hours are extended to 9 p.m.
- III. Under special provision, 14-15 year olds enrolled in an approved work training program may be employed for over 18 hours in a school week, including during school hours; however, prior approval must be obtained by the City Manager.

3.10 Definitions of Employment

The following are definitions of employment status:

- Part-time - Employees who are budgeted to work 40 hours or less per pay period. (No benefits are received).
- Temporary - Employees hired for a defined period of time. (No benefits are received).
- Seasonal - Employees hired for a seasonal period of time. (No benefits are received).
- Full-time (Regular) - Employees who are budgeted to work at least 80 hours per pay period. (Benefits are provided).
- Probationary - Employees who have taken new job responsibilities and who are considered full-time (regular) employees.
- Contract - Individuals who have a written contract from the City to perform specified functions.

3.11 Employee Evaluations

It is the intention of the City of Freeport to recognize the performance of its employees through the administration of Performance Evaluations. These evaluations will assist in the determination of rates, status, employee strengths, and areas of needed improvement.

Performance evaluations shall occur at the discretion of the City Manager. All evaluations shall be executed by the employee’s Director or designated supervisor. Employees who desire to request an appeal of their evaluation may do so through the City’s Grievance Process.

CHAPTER

FOUR

PROBATION

CHAPTER FOUR

PROBATION

4.01 Purpose of Probation

The probationary employment period is utilized to secure the most effective adjustment of the employee to his/her new job responsibilities. During this time, the employee is closely observed by their supervisors to make sure they are fulfilling his/her job duties effectively and in a positive manner. The skills and attitudes identified during the selection process are evaluated and improvements made as needed.

4.02 Length of Probation

During the first six (6) months after original, rehire, or promotional employment, each employee shall be considered a probationary employee; unless, the probationary period is extended at the discretion of the Department Director.

The length of probation can be extended at the discretion of the Department Director on the basis of the employee's performance.

4.03 Completion of Probation

During the probationary period there will be a three (3) month and a six (6) month evaluation performed before an employee may be taken off the probationary status.

Once the probationary period is finished, the employee's supervisor must make a recommendation to the City Manager as to whether the employee exhibits the qualifications necessary for success in the position. The City Manager shall then appoint the employee to the position with regular status or remove the individual from employment with the City.

An appointment to regular status should not be construed as a guarantee of permanent employment by the City of Freeport. Regular status indicates that an individual has successfully completed the probationary period. Employment with the City is "at-will" and the City reserves the right to remove any individual from employment at any time with or without cause. Likewise, an employee of the City is free to resign from employment with the City at any time.

4.04 Removal During Probation

During the probationary period for original or rehire, a Department Director may remove an individual from employment at any time. Where probationary status is for a promotional appointment the Department Director may remove the individual from the position at any time, and may or may not reinstate him/her to his/her former position. All removals or reinstatements within the City are subject to the approval of the City Manager.

CHAPTER

FIVE

STANDARDS OF CONDUCT

CHAPTER FIVE

STANDARDS OF CONDUCT

5.01 Personal Appearance – REVISED 08/21/2023

The City of Freeport understands the necessity for each department to set their own dress standards. Therefore, each department will establish a dress policy for their employees based on the type of duties assigned. Any departmental dress policy established will prohibit discrimination based on hair texture and protective hairstyles that are commonly associated with a particular race or national origin.

5.02 Ethics – REVISED 02/19/2019

Personal conduct of employees should be such that it is a credit to themselves and the City. In matters of general conduct, within the scope of these policies, employees will be governed by the precepts of good moral behavior observed by law-abiding citizens.

The proper operation of democratic government requires that employees be independent, impartial, and responsible to the people, that government decisions and policy be made within the proper channels of the government structure, that public office not be used for personal gain and that the public have confidence in the integrity of its government. In recognition of these goals, a code of ethics for all City employees is adopted. The purpose of this code is to establish guidelines for ethical standards of conduct for all such employees by setting forth those acts or actions that are incompatible with the best interests of the City and interests affecting the City.

5.03 Violations of Policies/Acts of Misconduct

In general, violations of personnel policies or acts of misconduct by City employees shall be cause for disciplinary action. These violations and acts include, but are not limited to the following:

- Conviction of a felony.
- Conviction for illegal possession, transportation, use or sale of intoxicating liquors or drugs.
- Use or being under the influence of intoxicants or drugs while on duty or while in City uniform all or part, or operating a City vehicle.
- Engaging in sabotage or espionage.
- Theft from the City or from other City employees.
- Falsifying City records.
- Immoral conduct or indecency.
- Inciting or engaging in strikes or riots.
- Possessing firearms or explosives on City property or in a City vehicle without authorization. This also applies to employees with a concealed handgun license, except Peace Officers.

CITY OF FREEPORT – PERSONNEL POLICY HANDBOOK

- Falsifying information on employment application or employment documents.
- Provoking or instigating a fight.
- Fighting while on duty.
- Sleeping while on duty.
- Insubordination.
- Engaging in horseplay while on duty.
- Unauthorized absence from duty.
- Disregard for safety practice.
- Abuse or unauthorized use of City equipment.
- Neglect of duty.
- Deliberately restricting work output.
- Threatening, intimidation, coercing, or interfering with fellow employees.
- Wasting time, loitering, or leaving the place of work without permission.
- Excessive tardiness or absences.
- Failure to report an on the job injury within twenty-four hours, except injuries that occur during the weekend, which can be reported Monday.
- Failure to report an incident within twenty-four hours, except where they have occurred during the weekend, which can be reported Monday.
- Contributing to unsanitary conditions or poor housekeeping.
- Conduct subversive to proper order, discipline, or morale of municipal service.
- Violation of any of the Personnel Policies made in this manual

The above listings are not intended to be all-inclusive of the types of violations or acts of misconduct that may be cause for disciplinary action. If any employee has any question whether an action is in violation of City policy, they should refer their question to their Supervisor, Department Director, or the City Manager immediately.

5.04 Conflict of Interest

Employees shall conduct their affairs and actions so that there will be no conflict of interest with their employment by the City of Freeport.

Conflict of interest shall include but not be limited to:

- Soliciting, accepting, or agreeing to accept a financial benefit, other than from the City that might tend to influence the employee's performance of duties for the City, of that which the employee knows or should know is offered with intent to influence the employee's performance.
- Accepting employment or compensation that might reasonably induce the employee to disclose confidential information acquired in the performance of official duties.
- Accepting outside employment or compensation that might reasonably tend to impair independence of judgment in performance of the duties for the employee.
- Making any personal investment that might reasonably be expected to create a substantial

conflict between the employee's private interest and duties for the City.

- Soliciting, accepting, or agreeing to accept a financial benefit from another person in exchange for having performed duties as a City employee as a favor to that person.

5.05 Gifts – REVISED 02/19/2019

Gifts should never be accepted in exchange for an employee's favor or which would affect an employee's decision or recommendation. Assuming the gift is not given in exchange for any particular action, the gift may not exceed \$50 in transfer value. (A gift below \$50 may never be in the form of cash, a check, or gift card.)

In addition, an employee who makes decisions about contracts, purchases, payments, claims, or other financial transactions of the city is prohibited from soliciting, accepting, or agreeing to accept a gift from a person interested in or likely to become interested in the contract, purchase, payment, claim, or transaction.

This policy is not intended to apply to normal social practices associated with the member's official duties, where gifts are exchanged among friends, associates and relatives.

5.06 Outside Interest – REVISED 04/15/2019

Outside employment, which does not constitute a conflict of interest, interfere in the performance of their normal duties, nor involve the use of City time or equipment, may be permitted with the written approval of the City Manager.

Request for approval of outside employment must be made in writing in advance of accepting outside employment, and in each case, approval by the City Manager must be received in writing before the employee accepts outside employment. A copy of any written approval for outside employment will be placed in the employee's personnel file.

An employee of the City of Freeport is not permitted to engage in outside employment where such employment would, interfere with the performance of the employee's City duties, present a conflict of interest, result in misuse of City property or funds, or result in use of the City position for personal gain.

5.07 Holding Public Office and Participation in City Elections

No employee shall continue in his position with the City after becoming a candidate for nomination or election to any City of Freeport office. Additionally, no employee will be permitted to take an active part in any political campaign for an elective position in the City of Freeport. "Active Part" means making political speeches, passing out literature, writing letters, signing petitions, soliciting votes, and making public remarks about candidates for such elective positions. Any employee who violates the provisions of this section will be subject to disciplinary action.

CITY OF FREEPORT – PERSONNEL POLICY HANDBOOK

City employees are not required to contribute, directly or indirectly, to any political fund or offer any political service to any person or party. No employee shall be removed, reduced in classification or salary or otherwise prejudiced for refusing to do so. Any personnel employed with the City of Freeport, who attempts to require such contribution will be subject to disciplinary action.

The City of Freeport encourages all employees to exercise their First Amendment right to vote.

5.08 Solicitations

Solicitations for sale of items or donations and distribution of literature of any kind for any purpose without City Manager approval is prohibited by the public or City employees on City property during working hours.

5.09 Personnel Records Access

The City of Freeport maintains a personnel file for every employee. It is important that accurate, current records be maintained for benefits and employment purposes. Therefore, all employees are required to notify human resources immediately if there is any change in relevant personal or employment information such as changes in address, phone numbers, marital status, emergency contact, insurance beneficiary, number of dependents, or legal name.

All information contained in the personnel file is the property of the City of Freeport and is not available for review by anyone other than the employee, his or her Director, the City Manager, and the human resources department. Employees may examine their personnel files after contacting the human resources department in advance to schedule an appointment; however, these documents may not be removed from the City of Freeport's premises or photocopied without the specific authorization of the City Manager.

If an employee believes that information in their personnel file is incorrect, they must submit a written request to change the information to the human resources department. If such a request is granted by the City Manager, the human resource department will make the change and notify the employee of such change. If the request is denied, an employee can ask to place a statement of disagreement in the file. This statement of disagreement will become a permanent part of the employee's file.

The City of Freeport considers falsification of personnel records to be a serious offense and upon discovery can lead to disciplinary action up to and including termination.

As a municipality, personnel records are subject to the Open Records Act.

5.10 Confidential Information

All City files and information regarded as confidential by federal, state, or local regulations shall be maintained and appropriated according to those regulations.

Such files/information include, but or not limited to: personnel files, medical files, criminal/arrest records, claim files, court files, and any non-public information files.

Medical Information

The City of Freeport strives to protect the privacy of its employee's and citizen's medical information to the greatest possible extent. To that end, we provide the following guidelines regarding the confidentiality of medical information:

- Any medical information concerning employees will be maintained in separate, confidential medical files apart from regular personnel records. Only authorized employees may have access to such files.
- Employees are hereby notified that medical information concerning employees or citizens is absolutely confidential under state and federal laws and may not be discussed at any time with any person under any circumstances, unless an employee needs to do so in order to carry out his or her job duties, or unless the person discussing the information is talking with the subject of the information at that person's invitation. If an employee is concerned about a possible medical condition on the part of a coworker, the employee must receive that information from the coworker.
- Any employee who is found to have discussed medical information about another employee or citizen with anyone else is in violation of this policy, or who is found to have released such information without authorization, will be subject to disciplinary action, up to immediate termination. In addition, state and federal laws may subject such an employee to both civil and criminal action in a court of law.

5.11 Meal and Break Time – REVISED 5/15/2023

Except for public safety personnel, an unpaid lunch period is allowed during a work shift.

Employees in customer service will arrange their breaks so that service is always available. Lunchtime may not be substituted for time off work unless special authorization is granted by the City Manager. Office personnel should not consume food in view of the public, unless a substitute is not available in a customer service department.

Two 15-minute breaks shall be permitted as workload permits, one in the morning and one in the afternoon. Breaks are to be taken out of view of citizens if possible.

Nursing mothers will be provided with reasonable unpaid break time to express breast milk for up to one year after the birth of a child in accordance with applicable law. If an employee needs

time beyond the usual lunch and break times, the employee may use vacation or may make up time as approved by supervisor. Employees and supervisors are expected to agree, in advance, upon a break schedule and how the time will be counted or made up. A private room will be provided for nursing mothers to use. Employees who have a private office may use it if they prefer.

Break practices not permitted are:

- Combining two or more breaks into one.
- Dividing one break into several smaller breaks.
- "Banking" break period time from day to day.
- Saving break time to extend lunch period or shorten shift.

5.12 Use of Tobacco

In an effort to meet the needs of smokers and non-smokers and to provide a pleasant and productive working atmosphere for all employees, the use of smoking and smokeless tobacco shall be confined to designated areas as determined by the principal facility Department Director.

All tobacco use is prohibited in any City vehicles, City buildings and while addressing the public.

5.13 Alcohol and Drug Abuse

The City of Freeport is responsible for providing a safe, healthy, and productive work environment for all employees and the public it serves, and expects all employees to report to work fit for duty and free from the influence of alcohol or drugs.

When reasonable suspicion exists to believe that an employee or City contractor is violating the provisions of this policy, the City reserves the right to request an employee to submit to a alcohol/drug test and/or inspection of employee or contractor work areas, which would include City vehicles, desks, lockers, and any personal items brought onto City premises including personal vehicles.

Any employee or contractor refusing to submit to an alcohol/drug test or inspection under this provision, will be removed from his/her position and be subject to discipline up to and including termination. For all testing, except pre-employment, the employee will be required to report to the testing agency within four hours of notification or immediately following an incident. If an employee fails to report within the appropriate time period, the employee is subject to termination.

Any employee testing positive for a prohibited substance will be terminated.

5.14 Gambling

An employee shall not engage or participate in gambling in any form while on duty, in a City uniform, or on City property.

5.15 Harassment in the Work Place – Revised 4/1/2024

The purpose of this policy is to maintain a professional, businesslike work environment, free from all forms of employee discriminations and to provide procedures for reporting, investigating, and resolution of complaints or harassment, sexual or otherwise.

It is the policy of the City of Freeport that all employees have the right to work in an environment free of all forms of harassment. Therefore, the City does not condone, and will not tolerate, any harassment. The City shall take direct and immediate action to prevent such behavior, and to remedy all reported instances of harassment, sexual or otherwise.

The City of Freeport prohibits harassment because of sex (including sexual harassment, harassment due to pregnancy, childbirth, or related medical conditions and gender harassment) and harassment because of race, religion, color, national origin, medical condition, physical or mental disability, age or any other basis protected by federal, state, or local law, regulation, or ordinance.

The City’s anti-harassment policy applies to all individuals involved in the operation of the City, and prohibits unlawful harassment by an employee including officers, supervisors, and co-workers, or by any vendors and/or independent contractors and their employees.

Non-employee violators of this policy are subject to expulsion from City facilities when harassment occurs on City premises. The City may discontinue service to violators of this policy. Furthermore, the City may report violators to the appropriate authority for civil or criminal action.

The City of Freeport prohibits retaliation of any kind against employees, who, in good faith, bring harassment complaints or assist in investigating such complaints.

Prohibited Harassment:

Prohibited harassment because of sex, sexual preference, race, religion, color, national origin, medical condition, physical or mental disability, age, marital status or any other protected basis includes, but is not limited to, the following behavior:

- Explicitly or implicitly ridiculing, mocking, deriding, or belittling any person.
- Making offensive or derogatory comments, slurs or jokes, and other verbal or physical conduct based on color, sex, sexual preference, religion, national origin, physical anatomy or characteristics, medical condition, physical or mental disability, or age either directly or indirectly to another person.
- Making threats of physical harm
- Physical contact such as pushing, punching, shoving, blocking another’s way, assault, or

CITY OF FREEPORT – PERSONNEL POLICY HANDBOOK

interference with another person's work.

- Making “unwelcome” sexually suggestive physical contact or gestures. Any verbal or visual sexually oriented jokes, comments, e-mails, drawings, photos, and propositions.
- Making threats or demands to submit to sexual advances or requests as a condition of continued employment, offers of employment benefits in return for sexual favors, or to avoid some other negative employment action.
- Retaliation against any employee for making an allegation of harassment or for participating in such an investigation.

Sexual Harassment:

Sexual harassment is defined as “unwelcome” sexual advances, request for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature when:

- Submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of employment.
- Submission to or rejection of such conduct by an employee is used as a basis for employment decisions affecting the employee.
- Such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an employee's work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment.
- The definition of sexual harassment includes conduct directed by men toward women, conduct directed by men toward men, conduct directed by women toward men, and conduct directed by women toward women.

Employers Responsibilities:

Each supervisor shall be responsible for preventing acts of harassment.

This responsibility includes:

- Monitoring the work environment on a daily basis for signs that harassment may be occurring.
- Counseling all employees in the types of behavior prohibited and the department procedures for reporting and resolving complaints of harassment.
- Stopping any observed acts that may be considered harassment, and taking appropriate steps to intervene, whether or not the involved employees are within his/her line of supervision.
- Taking immediate action to limit the work contact between two employees where there has been complaint of harassment pending investigation.

Each supervisor has the responsibility to assist any employee of this City, who comes to that supervisor with a complaint of harassment, pending investigation.

CITY OF FREEPORT – PERSONNEL POLICY HANDBOOK

Employees Responsibilities:

Each employee of the City of Freeport is responsible for assisting with prevention of harassment through the following acts:

- Refraining from participation in, or encouragement of, actions that could be perceived as harassment.
- Reporting acts of harassment to a supervisor immediately following the incident.

Complaint Procedures:

Employees encountering harassment shall tell the person that their actions are unwelcome and offensive. The employee shall document all incidents of harassment in order to provide the fullest basis for investigation.

Any employee who believes that he/she is being harassed shall report the incident to his/her supervisor as soon as possible. If for any reason you are not comfortable reporting the incident to your supervisor you may report it to:

- Your Department Head
- The Director of Human Resources
- City Manager

The City will conduct an investigation and, when necessary, take appropriate action.

The City will inform parties involved of the outcome of the investigation.

Upon receipt of a report on the investigation of a complaint of harassment against the City Manager, the Mayor shall present the report to the City Council. If the City Council determines that the complaint of harassment is founded, it may discipline the City Manager consistent with its authority under the City Charter, ordinances, resolutions or rules governing discipline of the City Manager.

In cases of harassment committed by a non-employee against a City employee in the workplace, the City Manager shall take all lawful steps to insure that the harassment is brought to an immediate end.

Disciplinary action may also be taken, against any employee who fails to report instances of harassment, or who files a complaint of harassment in bad faith.

An employee reporting an incident of harassment or assisting, testifying, or participating in the investigation of such complaint shall not be subject to any adverse employment action unless it is determined that the employee made the allegation knowing it was false.

Employees accused of harassment may file a grievance/appeal in accordance with the City's procedure when they disagree with the investigation or disposition of a harassment claim.

This policy is not intended to replace, but is in addition to, any rights or remedies an employee may have under the state and federal laws.

5.16 Retaliation

The City of Freeport complies with the State of Texas Whistle Blower Act and all other laws regulating retaliation. The City of Freeport encourages employees to report any alleged infraction of the law without fear of retaliation.

5.17 Workplace Violence and Weapons in the Workplace Policies

5.17-A Workplace Violence Policy (Adopted 05/18/2020)

The City of Freeport has a zero-tolerance policy for violence in the workplace. “Workplace Violence” is defined to include, but not be limited by:

- 5.17.1 Physically aggressive, violent or threatening behavior, such as attempts to instill fear in others or intimidation.
- 5.17.2 Verbal or physical threats of any sort, including via social media (see Social Media Usage Policy 5.24)
- 5.17.3 Any other conduct that suggests a tendency toward violent behavior. Such behavior includes, but is not limited to, excessive arguing, profanity, threats of sabotage of City property, belligerent speech or a demonstrated pattern of insubordination, and refusal to follow policies and procedures.
- 5.17.4 Causing physical damage to City facilities or defacing City property.

If any employee becomes aware of or observes any of the above referenced behavior or actions by a co-worker, contractor, customer, third party vendor, visitor, or any other party, he or she should notify his/her supervisor immediately. Supervisors are required to report this behavior to human resources immediately.

Employees should notify the human resource department if they are aware any non-work-related situation with the potential to erupt into workplace violence.

All reports of violence in the City of Freeport workplace will be taken seriously and will be investigated thoroughly and promptly. The City of Freeport will not tolerate retaliation in any form against an employee who makes a report of workplace violence.

If, after a thorough investigation, the City determines that workplace violence has occurred, appropriate corrective action will be taken, and discipline will be imposed on the offending employee. If a non-employee is responsible for the violent activities, the City will take corrective action to ensure that such behavior is not repeated.

Violating this policy may lead to discipline up to and including termination.

5.17-B Weapons in the Workplace Policy (Adopted 05/18/2020)

It is the desire of the City of Freeport to ensure, to the extent practicable, that the day-to-day operations of the City are conducted in a safe and proper manner and that its employees are provided a safe environment in which to work. This policy includes definitions, rules, and exceptions related to Weapons in the Workplace. This policy adheres to current legal requirements and government code; changes in legal requirements and/or government code will supersede related sections in this policy if necessary until the policy is updated.

DEFINITIONS:

The following words and phrases, when used in this section, shall have the following meanings:

- *Airgun* means an airgun, air pistol, air rifle, or any other device using air pressure, compressed gas, springs or any other means to propel a projectile through a barrel.
- *Building* means a combination of any materials, whether portable or fixed, having a roof to form a structure affording shelter for persons, animals, or property.
- *City premises* shall mean a building or any portion thereof, as well as, all personal and real property or any portion thereof, owned, leased, occupied or in any manner controlled by the City including, but not limited to, offices, parks, and vehicles. A city-owned vehicle does not include a personal vehicle of an employee who receives a vehicle allowance from the City.
- *Concealed handgun* is a handgun, the presence of which is not openly discernible to the ordinary observation of a reasonable person.
- *Firearm* means (i) any device designed, made or adapted to expel a projectile through a barrel by using the energy generated by an explosion or burning substance, or any device readily convertible to that use or (ii) an airgun.
- *Prohibited weapon* shall be defined by the Texas Penal Code Chapter 46. Weapons, including but not limited to a firearm, illegal knife, club, an explosive weapon, a machine gun, a short-barrel firearm, a firearm silencer, armor-piercing ammunition, a chemical dispensing device, a zip gun.
- *Handgun* means any firearm that is designed, made, or adapted to be fired with one hand.
- *License holder* means a person licensed to carry a handgun under Subchapter H, Chapter 411, Government Code.

CITY OF FREEPORT – PERSONNEL POLICY HANDBOOK

- *Reasonable suspicion* as used in this rule is a belief based upon objective facts sufficient to lead a reasonably prudent person to suspect that an employee is carrying a prohibited weapon in violation of this administrative rule.

RULE:

City employees may not possess a "prohibited weapon" as that term is defined in the Penal Code at any time as that is a criminal offense under the Penal Code. Further, at all times when acting within the course and scope of employment for the City, City employees are prohibited from carrying or otherwise possessing any "legal" weapons on any City premises. Some exceptions apply, as noted below:

Consent Requirement for Concealed Carry on City Premises: A person violates this rule if he/she carries a concealed handgun under the authority of **Subchapter H, Chapter 411, Government Code**, on City Premises without written consent from the City Manager and /or his or her designee, which may include the Chief of Police, Fire Chief, or Department Director. Entry on City premises with a concealed handgun by a license holder is forbidden without explicit consent.

Texas Penal Code Chapter 46.03 lists locations that weapons are not allowed. Therefore, consent will not be granted for entry on City premises with a weapon in the following locations:

- Section 46.03(1) Location of school activities;
- Section 46.03(2) Polling locations.
- Section 46.03(3) Courts and offices used by court personnel is prohibited to have firearms unless a Judge consents.

EXCEPTIONS:

Unless otherwise provided in a Police or Fire Departmental rule, regulation or order, this administrative rule shall **not** apply:

- (a) To a peace officer or a commissioned security officer hired by or under contract with the City and acting within the scope of that employment;
- (b) To an employee who holds a valid license to carry under Subchapter H, Chapter 411, Government Code (handgun licensing law) and either:
 1. carries a concealed handgun **with consent noted above** or
 2. with consent noted above possesses a handgun concealed in a locked and secured compartment or container in compliance with all applicable state and federal laws on City premises while rendering

services or acting within the scope of the employee's duties;

- (c) To an employee, with a license to carry under Subchapter H, Chapter 411, Government Code, who keeps a firearm and ammunition in a locked, privately-owned motor vehicle in a parking lot, parking garage, or other parking area that the City provides for employees; or who keeps a firearm or ammunition in a locked, privately-owned motor vehicle while traveling to or participating in an event or training related to City employment.

INVESTIGATORY PROCEDURES:

Investigatory searches will be based upon reasonable suspicion that an employee is carrying a prohibited weapon in violation of this administrative rule. If reasonable suspicion as defined herein exists, as determined by the employee's supervisor, in conjunction with the Human Resources and/or City Management, a search of the person, property, or City premises, wherein the prohibited weapon is suspected to be located, shall be required. However, if a search of an employee's property is required but the affected employee cannot for any reason be present, another employee may be asked to witness the search unless the nature of the search requires such confidentiality to preclude such employee from being present. No notice to the affected employee prior to an investigatory search is necessary. If such search reveals that a prohibited weapon is present or being carried in violation of this administrative rule, such violation will result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

5.18 Searches

The City of Freeport has adopted a search policy for the purpose of allowing the City to monitor compliance with reasonable work and safety rules and that all employees are subject to the policy. If a search is requested, it is not an accusation of theft or other wrongdoing; it is merely part of a city investigation. All searches must first be approved by the City Manager.

A search may include, but is not limited to, the employees, their work areas, lockers, vehicles if driven or parked on City premises or used on city business, and any other personal items brought onto City premises. All of the aforementioned areas are subject to search at any time. If the city allows employees to have lockers or other storage areas, the City will either furnish the lock and keep a copy of the key or combination, or allow the employee to furnish a personal lock; however, in that event, the employee must provide the City with a copy of the key or combination.

All searches will be conducted in a careful and considerate manner. If an employee refuses to submit to a search, it may lead to immediate termination.

5.19 Use of City Owned Vehicles – REVISED 1/06/2025

Vehicles are to be used for City business. A City vehicle may be assigned to a position or employee when it is more economical than payment of a car allowance or mileage reimbursement. To be eligible for assignment of a take-home vehicle, an employee must be subject to emergency call back during off duty hours to locations other than the employee's

CITY OF FREEPORT – PERSONNEL POLICY HANDBOOK

normal work station. No alcoholic beverages are allowed in City vehicles. No passengers may be transported in take-home vehicles except as required by official duties. Exceptions may be given in writing by Department Director (see General Rules below).

City vehicle assignments will be reviewed annually as part of the budget review process and for IRS reporting purposes

Human Resources will maintain a listing of employees assigned take-home vehicles by department. Department Directors are required to notify Human Resources of any changes occurring due to reassignment or turnover. Those employees that are assigned City vehicles to commute back and forth to work may be assessed a taxable benefit through his/her regular paycheck. The determination of this taxable benefit is made by Human Resources based on rules set forth by the IRS in Publication 15-B, Employer's Tax Guide to Fringe Benefits. This benefit is not a monetary benefit to the employee; however, it does increase the employee's taxes based on the value of the benefit. Police and fire vehicles used by employees on call 24-hours are normally exempt from the benefit tax liability. For those vehicles that are not exempt, the City will include an additional \$3.00 of taxable income on that individual's W-2 for each day driven home.

General Rules

Use of a City vehicle by an employee is neither a right nor a privilege rather it is a trust conferred to facilitate necessary performance of job duties. Use of a City vehicle should always lead to positive perception by our citizens.

If an employee drives a City-owned, rented or leased vehicle on the job or while carrying out City-related business, the employees must comply with the following:

- Drivers must have a valid State of Texas driver's license appropriate for the vehicle operated, must maintain a satisfactory driving record and must inform their supervisor of any change in status.
- Always observe all posted laws and speed limits.
- Always wear seat belts when the vehicle is in operation.
- City vehicles shall not be used to transport family members or other passengers not engaged in City business, without prior approval of the City Manager or designee.
- City vehicles shall be used only in the performance of City business, including meetings, conferences, or other business-related events. City vehicles shall not be used for private or personal business. Exceptions can be made if errand is in route to destination (stopping at the store on the way home). Personnel are prohibited from transporting personal property from one place to another, personal shopping trips, etc.
- Persons assigned a City vehicle may utilize the vehicle for meal purposes and authorized breaks within the general locality where the employee is performing duties or reporting for assignments.
- City vehicles shall not be used for transportation to and from work by any employee residing outside of a thirty (30) mile radius of the employee's normal work station without written approval by the City Manager or designee.

CITY OF FREEPORT – PERSONNEL POLICY HANDBOOK

- All maintenance and use records for City vehicles must be completed as directed by the employee's supervisor
- Report any broken, missing, or worn parts, tires, etc., or any needed maintenance of City vehicles to the appropriate supervisor immediately.
- All drivers must be eligible for coverage under the City's insurance policy.
- NO EMPLOYEE MAY OPERATE A CITY VEHICLE WHILE IMPAIRED BY ALCOHOL, PRESCRIPTION OR ILLEGAL DRUGS, OR WHEN THEIR PHYSICAL OR MENTAL CONDITION OTHERWISE PREVENTS SAFE OPERATION.
- The lack of a City provided take-home vehicle is not a sufficient reason for an employee to refuse to respond to an after hour call back. Call backs will continue to be governed by existing City and Departmental policies, and employees who refuse to respond may be subject to disciplinary action.
- Employees shall not operate a cell phone while driving a City vehicle. Employees may proceed to a nearby safe stopping place to conduct business calls received while driving.
- Unassigned vehicles shall not be taken home at night except in special instances approved by the appropriate Department Director.
- Employees shall not carry a weapon in a City vehicle unless required to do so as a part of their job.
- Should a City employee assigned to a City vehicle on a twenty-four(24) hour basis be absent from work for an extended period of time, the employee may be required to ensure that the vehicle is returned to the work place during the employee's absence.
- The consumption or possession of alcoholic beverages in City vehicles is strictly forbidden, except that an alcoholic beverage which is considered evidence can be transported.
- Permanently assigned City-owned vehicles must be safely parked or stored at the employee's residence when not in use.
- Employees assigned vehicles will ensure that all required maintenance and inspection needs of the vehicle are adhered to as prescribed by the Department Head.

Revocation of Take-Home Authorization

Take-home authorization may be revoked:

- For failure to comply with the provisions of this policy;
- For a change in job assignment, duties, or responsibilities such that a take-home vehicle is no longer justified; or
- When it is in the best interest of the City of Freeport.

The above is not a complete and exhaustive list of vehicle use policies. Violations of any of the specific items listed, as well as the improper, careless, negligent, destructive, unauthorized, or unsafe use or operation of a vehicle, may result in loss of driving privilege or disciplinary action.

5.20 Use of City Equipment

The use of equipment by a City employee will be limited and its use will be governed, controlled, and approved by the employees' supervisor.

Any equipment damaged or broken due to negligence by the employee may subject the employee to disciplinary action.

5.21 Use of Personal Vehicles for City Business

The City will reimburse mileage at the Internal Revenue Service rate. Prior approval must be obtained from the Department Director. The City pays for maintenance costs through the mileage charge. Consequently, the City will not pay employees for maintenance or mechanical repairs.

5.22 Cell Phone Usage

General Use Guidelines

- All cell phones must be turned off or set to silent or vibrate mode during meetings, conferences and in any situation where incoming calls may be disruptive.
- Employees are expected to exercise discretion when using personal cell phones during working hours.
 - Excessive personal calls interfere with productivity and may distract colleagues.
 - Personal calls should be made during nonwork time when possible.
 - Employees should notify friends and family of the City's cell phone use policy.

Personal Devices

- The City of Freeport is not liable for the loss of personal cell phones brought into the workplace.

City-Issued Cell Phones

- City-issued cell phones may be provided when job responsibilities or operational needs require them.
 - Use of City-issued phones for personal reasons must be kept to a minimum.
- Employees in possession of a City-owned phone are responsible for preventing loss, damage, or theft.
- Upon resignation, termination, or request, the phone must be returned or made available for inspection.

Use While Driving

- Employees whose responsibilities involve driving and who are issued a City phone must:
 - Refrain from using their phone while operating a vehicle
 - Use hands-free technology if communication is absolutely necessary.
 - Safely pull over before placing or accepting calls.

CITY OF FREEPORT – PERSONNEL POLICY HANDBOOK

- Employees are encouraged to avoid complex or emotional phone conversations while driving.
- Special care must be taken in cases of traffic, poor weather, or unfamiliar routes.
- **Texting while driving is strictly prohibited.**
- Employees are personally responsible for any traffic violations or liabilities arising from cell phone use while driving.

Privacy and Recording

- Audio or video recording in violation of a persons' privacy in restroom and/or locker rooms is strictly prohibited.
- Any such violation will be treated as a serious offense and subject to disciplinary action

Compliance with Laws

- All employees are required to comply with local, state, and federal laws governing the use of cell phones.

Disciplinary Action

- Employees found to be in violation of this policy may face disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

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- All employees are required to comply with local, state, and federal laws governing the use of cell phones.

Disciplinary Action

- Employees found to be in violation of this policy may face disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

**5.22 Information Resources Acceptable Use (AUP) and Security Policy Agreement –
REVISED 10/17/2022**

Internet and intranet services are provided by the City of Freeport to support open communications and exchange of information and the opportunity for collaborating government-related work. The City of Freeport encourages the use of electronic communications by its agencies and employees. Although access to information and information technology is essential to the missions of government agencies and their users, use of Internet services is a revocable privilege. Conformance with acceptable use, as expressed in this policy statement is required. Agencies of the City are expected to maintain and enforce this policy.

Definitions

CITY OF FREEPORT – PERSONNEL POLICY HANDBOOK

5.22.1 System: The City of Freeport Internet/Intranet System and its communication transmissions.

5.22.2 City Information Resources: All Computer and telecommunications equipment, software, data, and media, owned or controlled by the City or maintained on its behalf.

5.22.3 Confidential Data or Confidential Information: All City Data that is required to be maintained as private or confidential by applicable law.

5.22.4 User: Any individual granted access to the City's Information Resources.

General

This policy applies to all uses of the Internet, but does not supersede any state or federal laws or City policies regarding confidentiality, information dissemination or standards of conduct.

The City of Freeport's Information Resources are provided to users for the purpose of conducting city business and are to be used for authorized purposes only. Brief and occasional personal use of communication systems or Internet is acceptable as long as it is not excessive or inappropriate, occurs during personal time (lunch or other breaks, or before or after regular work hours), and does not result in expense to the City of Freeport. The City Manager will determine the appropriateness of the use and whether such use is excessive.

Use is defined as "excessive if it interferes with normal job duties, responsiveness, or the ability to perform daily job activities. The City's Information Resources are provided as business communication tools. Electronic communication should not be used to solicit or sell products, distract co-workers, or disrupt the workplace.

Users must not interfere with the activities of others or use a disproportionate share of information resources. Examples of inappropriate computer usage includes, but is not limited to:

- Sending an unsolicited message(s) to a large number of recipients (known as "spamming the network").
- Consuming an unauthorized disproportionate share of networking resources (e.g., misuse of peer-to-peer applications).
- Deliberately causing any denial of service, including flooding, ICMP attacks, or the unauthorized automated use of a service intended solely for human interaction.
- Engaging in private or personal business activities.
- Misrepresenting oneself or the City of Freeport or impersonating another User.
- Using abusive, profane, threatening, racist, sexist or otherwise objectionable language in either public or private messages.
- Sending, receiving, or accessing pornographic or other illegal materials unless such use is required as part of the User's official duties as an employee of the City.
- Becoming involved in partisan politics.
- Using City information resources for the purpose of gambling, personal shopping or games.

CITY OF FREEPORT – PERSONNEL POLICY HANDBOOK

- Users shall never use City Information Resources to deprive access to individuals otherwise entitled to access City Information; to circumvent City computer security measures; or in any way that is contrary to the City’s mission(s) or applicable law.
- Use of unlicensed or otherwise unapproved software as set by the City’s Approved Software List.

User’s should report misuse of City Information Resources or violations of this policy to their direct supervisor or to Information Technology and/or Human Resources (as appropriate to the nature of the incident).

Using City Information Resources to create, view, transmit or receive racist, sexist, threatening or otherwise objectionable or illegal material is strictly prohibited. “Material” is defined as any visual, textual or auditory entry. Such material violates the City’s anti- harassment policies and is subject to disciplinary action. The City’s Information Resources must not be used to violate the laws and regulations of the United States or any other nation or state, city, province or local jurisdiction in any way. Use of City Information resources for illegal activity can lead to disciplinary action up to and including termination and criminal prosecution.

City employees, including contracted and temporary employees who are otherwise serving as an agent or working on behalf of the City of Freeport have no expectation of privacy regarding any data they create, send, receive, or store on City owned computers, servers, or other information resources owned by, or held on behalf of the City. The City may access and monitor its Information Resources for any purpose consistent with the City’s duties and/or mission without notice. In order to assure compliance with policy and state and federal laws, the City will comply with reasonable requests from law enforcement and regulatory agencies for logs, archives, or files on individual Internet activities. Existing rules, policies and procedures governing the sharing of work-related or other confidential information also applies to the sharing of information via the Internet/Intranet.

Users have no expectation of privacy regarding any City data residing on personally owned devices, regardless of why the Data was placed on the personal device.

All Users must comply with applicable City and System Information Resources Use and Security policies at all times.

Confidentiality and Security of Data

The City of Freeport owns the rights to all data and files in any of its Information Resources. Users must be aware that any communications sent and received using City Information Resources are not private and are subject to viewing, downloading, inspection, and archiving by the City at all times. The release of specific information is subject to applicable state and federal laws and City rules, policies, and procedures on confidentiality.

No employee may access another employee’s Information Resources without prior authorization from either the employee or the Department Director unless such use is

CITY OF FREEPORT – PERSONNEL POLICY HANDBOOK

authorized as part of that User's official duties as an employee of the city. If an unauthorized attempt is made or suspected to have been made by another employee or any third party to access a Users account or information, it must be immediately reported to a direct supervisor and/or Information Technology for investigation.

It is a violation of City policy for any employee, including system administrators to intercept communication or data intended for other Users for personal or unethical reasons or to satisfy curiosity about the affairs of others. Employees found to have engaged in such activities will be subject to disciplinary action.

Users shall access City data only to conduct City business and only as permitted by applicable confidentiality and privacy laws. Users must not attempt to access data on systems they are not expressly authorized to access. Users shall maintain all records containing City data in accordance with City and State Records Retention Policy and Records Management Guidelines.

Message Tone for Communications

City employees are expected to communicate with courtesy and restraint with both internal and external recipients. Communication should reflect the professionalism of the City and should not include language that could be construed as profane, discriminatory, obscene, sexually harassing, threatening, or retaliatory. Employees should remember that e-mail is a form of business communication and the language they use should reflect that fact at all times.

Communication Tampering

Communication received should not be altered without the sender's permission nor should communication be altered and forwarded to another user and/or unauthorized attachments be placed on another's message.

Internet Use

The Internet is to be used to further the City's mission, to provide effective service of the highest quality to the citizens of Freeport and staff and to support other direct job-related purposes. Supervisors should work with employees to determine the appropriateness of using the Internet for professional activities and career development. The various modes of Internet/Intranet accesses are the City's resources and are provided as business tools to employees who may use them for research, professional development, and work-related communications.

Employees are individually liable for any and all damages incurred as a result of violating City Acceptable use and security policy, copyright and licensing agreements. All City policies and procedures apply to employees' conduct on the Internet, especially but not exclusively, relating to: intellectual property, confidentiality, City information dissemination, standards of conduct,

CITY OF FREEPORT – PERSONNEL POLICY HANDBOOK

misuse of City resources, anti-harassment and information and data security. Violation of these policies and/or state and federal laws can lead to disciplinary action up to and including dismissal and possible criminal prosecution.

Internet/Intranet Security

The City has taken necessary actions to assure the safety and security of our network. Any User who attempts to disable, defeat or circumvent the City security measures is subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination or criminal prosecution.

City employees that inadvertently access a compromising web site or application on City Information Resources must notify their supervisor immediately. Documentation of such access should be forwarded to their personnel file.

5.23 A Prohibited Technology on City-owned Devices –

Except where approved exceptions apply, the use or installation of the social media service TikTok or any successor application or service developed or provided by ByteDance Limited, or an entity owned by ByteDance Limited is prohibited on all City-owned or -leased devices including cell phones, tablets, desktop and laptop computers, and other internet-capable devices.

The City of Freeport will identify, track, and manage all city-owned or -leased devices including mobile phones, tablets, laptops, desktop computers, or any other internet-capable device to:

- a. Prohibit the installation of a covered application.
- b. Prohibit the use of a covered application.
- c. Remove a covered application from a city-owned or -leased device that was on the device prior to the passage of S.B. 1893 (88th Leg, R.S.).
- d. Remove an application from a city-owned or -leased device if the Governor issues a proclamation identifying it as a covered application.

The City of Freeport may permit exceptions authorizing the installation and use of a covered application on city-owned or -leased devices consistent with the authority provided by Government Code Chapter 620.

Government Code Section 620.004 only allows the City of Freeport to install and use a covered application on an applicable device to the extent necessary for:

1. Providing law enforcement; or
2. Developing or implementing information security issues.

The City of Freeport will verify compliance with this policy through various methods, including but not limited to IT/security system reports and feedback to leadership.

An employee found to have violated this policy may be subject to disciplinary action including

termination of employment.

5.23B – Internal Software Management Policy

To ensure the security, integrity, and operational efficiency of City-owned or leased information resources, including mobile devices, computers, servers, and other internet-capable devices, the City of Freeport shall maintain an internal Approved and Prohibited Software List.

Compliance & Standards

This policy is proposed in alignment with federal security requirements, state-level best practices, and recognized industry standards for information technology management.

For departments subject to Criminal Justice Information Services (CJIS) requirements, such as the Police Department, the FBI CJIS Security Policy requires maintaining a documented, accurate inventory of all system components, including software versioning, licensing, and ownership under CJIS Security Policy v6.0, Section CM-8).

For all other departments, the City aims to voluntarily follow applicable state-level best practices set forth by the Texas Department of Information Resources (TXDIR). These include software inventory guidelines from the Information Resources Deployment Review (IRDR) and provisions from Texas Government Code Sections 2054.068 and 2054.0965, which support consistent oversight of IT assets, modernization planning, and cybersecurity risk management for state agencies.

Adopting these practices also supports best practices set forth by TXDIR and state cybersecurity statutes, promoting transparency, improved risk posture, and operational consistency.

Policy Guidelines

Only software listed on the Approved Software List may be installed or used on City-owned or leased devices. Department heads may submit software requests on behalf of their staff to the IT Department, providing operational justification.

The IT Department shall evaluate software requests based on security risk, licensing compliance, supportability, cost, compatibility, and operational need, and make a recommendation to the City Manager for approval.

Approval requires confirmation by the City Manager. The IT Department will coordinate the review process, provide technical evaluations, and maintain the official Approved and Prohibited Software List.

CITY OF FREEPORT – PERSONNEL POLICY HANDBOOK

Administrative revisions to the Approved and Prohibited Software List may occur without further action by the City Council, provided that no changes are made to the scope, intent, or authority of this policy. The list shall undergo administrative review and update at least once during each calendar year by the IT Department and the City Manager to reflect evolving security risks, software life-cycle changes, and operational requirements.

In cases where state-level cyber-security directives or mandates issued by the Texas Department of Information Resources (TXDIR) conflict with or supersede the City's Approved and Prohibited Software List, such state mandates shall prevail. The City's list will be updated accordingly to ensure full compliance with applicable state law and regulatory guidance.

Software in use at the time of this policy's adoption will be considered approved unless later reviewed and found to pose security or compliance risks.

Unauthorized software installation or use is strictly prohibited and may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination

5.23 Social Media Usage [Revised 1-22-2024]

The City recognizes that internet access using the City's Internet on both City and personal devices is efficient and effective. Employees have the right to speak out as private citizens on matters of public concern, so long as the speech does not unduly disrupt the operations or mission of the City. The City provides avenues by which employee complaints can be heard and addressed, without resorting to social media. Violations of the Social Media Policy may lead to disciplinary action, up to and including termination. An employee's use of social media, both on-duty and off-duty, must not interfere with or conflict with the employee's duties or job performance, or violate any City policy. The intent of these standards is to regulate the creation and distribution of information concerning the City, its employees and citizens through electronic media, including, but not limited to online forums, instant messaging and internet social media and blogging sites. Online behavior, whether on- or off-duty, must not otherwise cause harm to or misrepresent the City or its interests. Harassing, bullying, or demeaning coworkers, or otherwise creating a hostile work environment for any employee through online posting, violates this policy.

The term "social media" encompasses all platforms, including but not limited to: Facebook, "X" (formerly known as Twitter), Instagram, Tik-Tok, Snapchat, LinkedIn, blogs, and other online journals and diaries; bulletin boards and chat rooms, microblogging and all other social networking sites, instant messaging and the posting of video on YouTube and similar media.

Use of City's Internet:

Use of the City's Internet is a privilege and City employees must responsibly and ethically use

it. The City may monitor an employee's access, use, and postings to the City's Internet to: ensure compliance with internal policies; support the performance of internal investigations; assist management of information systems; and for all other lawful purposes. The City expects all employees to follow the Information Resources Acceptable Use and Security Policy Agreement outlined in Section 5.22.

Interpretation in Conjunction with Other City Policies:

This policy should be read and interpreted in conjunction with other City policies, including but not limited to, policies prohibiting harassment, discrimination, offensive conduct or inappropriate behavior.

EMPLOYEE GUIDELINES

Use of City's Social Media on Work Time:

Any blogging or posting of information on the Internet or other City social media sites must comply with the City's guidelines, regardless of where the blogging or posting is done.

- Employees are not permitted to engage in social networking of a personal nature while using any of the City's electronic social media sites.
- Employees must obtain written authorization from the City Manager or the Department Director to update or post on social media sites on behalf of the City and all content must be approved prior to posting. All of the employee's time spent updating or posting on City social media sites as part of the employee's job duties is compensable time that must be reported and counted in the calculation of overtime.
- No use of social media on work time and on City equipment on City-operated networks is considered private or confidential, even if password protected or otherwise restricted. The City reserves the right to access, intercept, monitor and review all information accessed, posted, sent, stored, printed or received through its communications systems or equipment at any time.
- Never disclose any confidential information in a blog or other posting to the Internet. Posting of confidential information may violate state law and subject the user to criminal penalty. All requests for City documents must be processed through the Public Information Act.
- Employees must abide by all federal and state law and policies of the City with regard to information sent through the City's Internet.
- Individual supervisors do not have the authority to make exceptions to these guidelines.

Use of Personal Social Media While Not on Work Time:

The City recognizes that many City employees utilize social media when not at work. The City requires that employees be aware of guidelines regarding posting of work-related information on personal social media sites, and they are listed below.

- If the employee’s social networking includes any information related to the City, the employee must make it clear to the readers that the views expressed are the employee’s alone and not reflective of the views of the City.
- Employees are encouraged to act responsibly on and off duty, and to exercise good judgment when using social media.
- Respect co-workers and the City.
- Do not put anything on your personal social media site that may constitute violation of the City’s Harassment policy. Do not post any pornographic pictures of any type that could identify you as an employee of the City. Be mindful that the City’s harassment policy covers both work and non-work time, including postings on social media sites.
- Do not post inappropriate pictures of yourself or others on your personal social media site containing images of City uniforms or insignia, City logos, City equipment or City work sites.
- Do not permit or fail to remove postings violating this policy, even when placed by others on your social media site.

5.24 Password Policy: (Revised 10-17-2022)

Objective

Passwords are an important aspect of computer security. They are the front line of protection for user accounts. A poorly chosen password may result in the compromise of the City of Freeport’s entire City network. As such, all City of Freeport employees (including contractors and vendors with access to City of Freeport systems) are responsible for taking the appropriate steps, as outlined below, to select and secure their passwords.

This policy establishes a standard for the creation of strong passwords, the protection of those passwords and the frequency of change. This policy may be updated as needed to comply with changing industry standards related to system security. IT System Administrators designated by the City may advise users on variations required for different systems and/or shared servers at City facilities.

Police and Fire Department systems may have more stringent standards based on Criminal Justice Information Systems (CJIC) requirements.

Scope

The scope of this policy includes all employees or approved third-party vendors who:

- Have access to, or are responsible for account access, on any system that resides at any City of Freeport facility;
- Who have access to the City of Freeport network;
- Who store any non-public City of Freeport information.

User Authentication

Every user must be assigned a unique user account (user ID) and a password for access to City of Freeport systems. Shared or group user IDs are prohibited for user-level access, unless a shared system is specifically designed and identified as such by the designated City IT System Administrator. Systems and applications must authenticate using a password or token entry. The use of non-authenticated user IDs (i.e., those without passwords) or user IDs not associated with a single identified user are prohibited. While third-party vendors' systems may have varying threshold definitions, the City requires that City accounts, and recommends that third party accounts, be established to lock a user out after a maximum of six invalid login attempts within a maximum of 30 minutes. Locked accounts should remain locked for at least 30 minutes or until the Information Technology (IT) System Administrator unlocks the account. Users may contact the IT department to have their account unlocked. Multifactor authentication or virtual escorting are required for all users accessing City of Freeport systems remotely.

Password Management

Passwords must be created and managed in accordance with this section.

Password Requirements:

- All user-level City of Freeport system passwords need to be changed immediately following any account security compromise (or suspected compromise) or when otherwise recommended by Information Technology.
- New passwords cannot be the same as the previous four passwords.
- Passwords must be at least eight characters in length. Longer is better.
- Passwords must contain both uppercase and lowercase characters (e.g., a-z and A-Z).
- Passwords must contain at least one number (e.g., 0-9).
- Accounts shall be locked after six failed login attempts within 30 minutes and shall remain locked for at least 30 minutes or until the Information Technology (IT) System Administrator unlocks the account.

To unlock an account or change a password without logging in, some City of Freeport systems require the IT System Administrator to provide a new temporary password to the user. In such cases, passwords must be provided verbally and the user must immediately log in and change

CITY OF FREEPORT – PERSONNEL POLICY HANDBOOK

the account password.

Passwords should not be shared with anyone, including third party vendors' IT support personnel, unless approved by the City' IT System Administrator. Note that Freeport City Hall and the Freeport Police Department may have different IT System Administrators.

All passwords are to be treated as sensitive, confidential information. If someone requests your password(s), please inform him or her that you cannot provide that information per City of Freeport policy and contact the IT System Administrator about the request. If you suspect an account or password has been compromised, report the incident immediately and change all related passwords.

The IT System Administrator or authorized outside “penetration testers” may perform password cracking or guessing on a periodic or random basis to test the security of the City of Freeport network. If a password is guessed or cracked during one of these scans, the user will be required to change it. Password cracking and guessing are not to be performed by anyone outside of the City’s IT Systems Administrators or an approved third-party auditor.

The IT department strongly encourages the use of a password manager program to help ensure that all passwords are strong, unique and easily changed. Users should request for more information on password managers allowed on the City of Freeport network and for assistance in getting the password manager installed and configured on their computer.

Guidelines for Password Construction

A strong password:

- Contains both uppercase and lowercase characters (e.g., a-z and A-Z).
- Contains digits and punctuation characters (e.g., 0-9 and !@#\$%^&*).
- Is at least 6-15 alphanumeric characters long and is a passphrase (e.g., “Ohmy1stubbedmyt0e”).
- Is not a single word in any language, slang, dialect or jargon (e.g., “password” or “Fluffy”).
- Is not based on personal information, names of family members, etc.

Passwords should never be written down or stored online. Employees should try to create passwords that can be easily remembered. One way to do this is to create a password based on a song title, affirmation or other phrase. For example, the phrase might be “This may be one way to remember,” and the password could be “TmB1w2R!” or “Tmb1W>r~” or some other variation.

Enforcement

Any employee found to be in violation of, or to have violated, this policy may be subject to

disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

5.25 Press Release/Media Relations (Adopted 9-6-2022)

Only the City Manager, Mayor, or other individual(s) designated by the Mayor or City Manager are authorized to speak with the media on behalf of the City. The City Manager and the Mayor shall collaborate on message development and coordinate who will handle press releases they deem necessary and in the best interest of the City.

Employees, Council members (other than the Mayor) and members acting in their capacity as a member of a committee or a board governed by the City shall not make statements, provide information for distribution, or provide background information on behalf of the City unless specifically directed to do so by the City Manager and/or the Mayor.

Provided that they have prior permission to do so from the City Manager or the Mayor, employees, Council members, and members acting in a capacity with a committee or a board governed by the City shall speak publicly on behalf of the City only in accordance with established public information procedures.

Failure to comply with the City’s Press Release/Media Relations policy shall be grounds for disciplinary action.

5.26 Remote Access Use and Bring your own Device (BYOD) (Adopted 10-17-2022)

Employees of the City of Freeport may have the opportunity to use their personal electronic devices for work purposes when authorized in advance by city management.

Electronic devices including personal computers, smart phones or other devices used to access, create or store City Information Resources, including email, must be password protected in accordance with City requirements, and passwords must be changed whenever there is suspicion that the password has been compromised.

To ensure the security of City of Freeport information, authorized employees may be required to have anti-virus and mobile device management (MDM) software installed on their personal or mobile devices. This MDM software will store all company-related information, including calendars, e-mails and other applications in one area that is password- protected and secure. In the event Mobile device management is required, the City of Freeport’s IT department must install this software prior to using the personal device for work purposes.

City Data created or stored on a User’s personal computers, smart phones or other devices, or in data bases that are not part of the City’s Information Resources are subject to Public Information Requests, subpoenas, court orders, litigation holds, discovery requests and other requirements applicable to City Information Resources. As such, City data created and/or shared on said device shall be maintained in accordance with the Public Information

requirements act.

Any personally owned computing devices on which confidential City data is stored or created must be encrypted.

All remote access to networks owned or managed by the City or System must be accomplished using a remote access method approved by the City or System, as applicable.

Each User will be held responsible for all activities conducted using the User's password or other credentials.

5.28 CDL TRAINING PROGRAM

The City of Freeport offers payment for CDL classes through an Inter-Local Agreement with the City of Lake Jackson as follows:

An employee wishing to participate in this training must submit a CDL Training Expense Agreement to the Public Works Director. If the Public Works Director approves, the request will be forwarded to Human Resources for approval. Final approval will be the City Manager.

If the employee voluntarily terminates employment with the City of Freeport prior to completing the course, the employee will refund the entire amount of the expenses paid by the City of Freeport.

If the employee voluntarily terminates with the City of Freeport after completion of the course and prior to completing twenty-four (24) consecutive months of active employment following completion of the course, the employee will refund the entire amount of the expenses paid by the City of Freeport.

This training agreement creates no contract of employment between the employee and the City of Freeport.

5.29 Academy Assistance Program for Public Safety Personnel – REVISED 05/18/2026

In an effort to attract and retain quality full-time Public Safety (Police and Fire) employees, the City of Freeport offers advance payment for either Police Academy or Fire Academy as follows:

The employee must submit a letter of interest and an educational expense agreement to their department director. If the employee is not a current employee of the Police Department or the Fire Department, the agreement must then be submitted to the requested academy profession's Department. The Department will determine if the requested employee meets the Department's hiring standards through current policies, procedures, and local rules. The employee will be informed of a decision on their request by Human Resources. The agreement will cover the cost of registration, tuition, fees, required books, and other materials to a maximum of \$5,250.00.

If the employee is unable to complete this course due to what the City Manager considers

CITY OF FREEPORT – PERSONNEL POLICY HANDBOOK

extenuating circumstances (such as illness of the employee or an immediate family member) and the employee receives a tuition or materials refund, the employee will give the full refund to the City via personal check within one week of receipt.

If the employee voluntarily terminates employment with the City of Freeport prior to completing the course, the employee will refund the entire amount of the educational expenses provided to the employee.

If the employee voluntarily terminates employment with the City of Freeport after completion of the course and prior to completing six consecutive months of active employment, the employee will refund the entire amount of the educational expenses provided to the employee.

If the employee voluntarily terminates employment with the City of Freeport after completion of the course and after completing six months of active employment but prior to completing 24 consecutive months of active employment, the employee will refund a prorated share of the educational expenses provided. The prorated amount will be based on the total amount of educational expenses provided divided by the percentage of time left in months from two years that the employee did not continue working.

The educational expense agreement creates no contract of employment between the employee and the City of Freeport.

CHAPTER

SIX

DISCIPLINE PROCESS

CHAPTER SIX

DISCIPLINE PROCESS

6.01 General Provisions

It is an objective of the City of Freeport to maintain an effective and productive work force in order to deliver quality services. Each employee is responsible for performing their job in a safe, productive, and effective way and within the instructions and standards established by their supervisor. In addition, employees are expected to maintain acceptable standards of conduct in their employment. Supervisors are charged with assisting employees in correcting unsatisfactory performance and unsatisfactory conduct through disciplinary procedures up to and including termination.

When taking disciplinary action, the City will adhere to the following general guidelines:

- Employees will be treated fairly and equitably. Action will be taken in an objective and professional manner and shall not be based on the personal feelings of the individual administering the disciplinary action.
- The decision to take disciplinary action shall be based on a careful assessment of the circumstances of each case. Factors to consider in the assessment are: the prior disciplinary record of the employee, and the potential effect of the violation on other personnel and/or the City organization.
- All disciplinary action shall be documented and forwarded to the employee's personnel file.

6.02 Reasons for Disciplinary Action

The following list of actions are intended to serve only as a guide to the types of problems for which disciplinary action may be appropriate. The list is not intended to be all-inclusive.

- Incompetence.
- Absenteeism.
- Absence without approved leave.
- Tardiness.
- Lying.
- Misuse of break periods.
- Inappropriate attire.
- Violation of departmental and city policies.
- Careless, negligent, or improper use of City property or equipment.
- Discourteous treatment of the public or other employee.

CITY OF FREEPORT – PERSONNEL POLICY HANDBOOK

- Neglect or carelessness in the performance of duties.
- Failure to meet or maintain specified conditions of employment, such as failure to obtain or maintain a license or certificate required as a condition for performing a job.
- Theft of, aiding in, or encouraging the theft of any property, public or private.
- Destroying City records without authorization.
- Falsifying information on City records, including his/her application for employment, medical information or other information concerning his/her employment status.
- Willful damage of public property or willful waste of public supplies, service, or equipment.
- Insubordination.
- Illegal use and/or possession of drugs.
- Physical assault committed on the job, upon a City employee, member of the public or City official.
- Using an official position or office for economic gain or soliciting favors or gratuities for performing services required by the employee's position.
- Disclosing confidential information.
- Unauthorized use or possession of City funds.
- Unlawful possession or use of dangerous weapons, such as firearms or knives on the job.
- Making threats against another employee or a member of the public.
- Engaging in any employment activity or enterprise that constitutes a conflict of interest.
- Using City property or equipment without authorization.
- Violating the City drug and alcohol abuse policy.
- Using abusive language toward employees, supervisor, or the public.
- Unnecessarily disrupting the work of other employees.
- Operating or conducting gambling on the job or on City property.
- Violating safety rules or practices which endanger the employee or others or damages City property or equipment.
- Playing tricks or jokes or engaging in horseplay on the job.
- Violating the City's sexual harassment or other harassment policies.
- Engaging in personal business while on duty without authorization of his/her supervisor.
- Failure to report damage to City property, equipment, or property of others.
- Unofficial use of City information.
- Sleeping on the job.
- Falsely reporting illness or injury, or otherwise attempting to deceive any official of the City as to a health or medical condition.
- Conviction of a felony or misdemeanor involving moral turpitude.
- Repeated conviction of a misdemeanor, whether or not involving moral turpitude.
- Unnecessary rudeness.
- Failure to meet credit obligations.
- Embezzlement.

Employees may also be dismissed by the Department Director or City Manager when, in the judgment of the Department Director or City Manager, it is in the best interest of the City, to maintain discipline within the organization.

6.03 Types of Disciplinary Action

The purpose of any type of disciplinary action is to insure that violations of policy or acts of misconduct do not occur again. Therefore, the type of disciplinary action administered in a given situation depends on an assessment of the cause and type of the offense. The following are some types of disciplinary actions that may be administered.

- Verbal warning
- Written warning
- Transfer
- Demotion
- Suspension with or without pay
- Termination

This list is not all-inclusive and other types of action may be utilized that fit the situation.

All disciplinary action shall be considered effective at the time that it is initiated by the Department Director.

CHAPTER

SEVEN

GRIEVANCE PROCESS

CHAPTER SEVEN

GRIEVANCE PROCESS

7.01 Right to Grievance

Any employee of the City of Freeport, who feels that they have been improperly or unfairly treated in their work relationship with the City, shall have the right to file a grievance (complaint). Employees are encouraged to use the following grievance procedure and will not be discouraged from submitting a grievance.

7.02 Grievance Procedure

Any employee who has a grievance may submit, within five (5) days, a written statement, with all pertinent details of the grievance, to his/her Department Director. Within five (5) days of receiving the grievance, the Department Director will meet with the employee to discuss the grievance and decide what action, if any, to take regarding the grievance and the employee's right of appeal to the City Manager. The Department Director will have five (5) days to render his/her decision concerning the grievance. If a satisfactory adjustment of the grievance is not reached, the employee may appeal, in writing, to the City Manager for an adjustment of the grievance. Such appeal must be made within five (5) days of the decision of the Department Director.

When an appeal is made, the City Manager shall be given a copy of the grievance, the result of the meeting with the Department Director, and the reason for the appeal. Within five (5) days of receiving the appealed grievance, the City Manager shall meet with the employee to discuss the grievance and decide what action, if any, to take regarding the grievance. The City Manager shall have ten (10) days to decide what action, if any, to take regarding the grievance and notify the employee in writing of the decision. The decision of the City Manager, regarding any action on the grievance, is final.

CHAPTER

EIGHT

ATTENDANCE AND LEAVE POLICY

CHAPTER EIGHT

ATTENDANCE AND LEAVE POLICY

8.01 Attendance

Employees are to be at their place of work on time as prescribed by their respective supervisor. All departments shall maintain daily attendance records. An employee who will be late for work for any reason should attempt to notify their supervisor before working hours begin. Unauthorized tardiness or absences will be cause for disciplinary action.

8.02 Vacation – REVISED 04/07/2025

All probationary or regular status personnel shall acquire vacation credits according to the following schedule and are entitled to take vacation with pay after reaching regular status and a minimum of six (6) months of employment with the City of Freeport. An employee may not use any accrued vacation until successfully completing the initial employment probationary period unless approved by the City Manager.

Year of Employment	Hours Per Year	Per Pay Period
0/4th	80 hrs	3.08
5th/14th	120 hrs	4.62
15th/over	160 hrs	6.15

Maximum Rollover Per Year: 160 hours

On their anniversary date any accrued hours in excess of the maximum rollover amount will be reduced to the maximum rollover amount. Any variance from this must be approved in writing by the City Manager. More than the allowable maximum will be lost.

No employee shall receive additional compensation for working through his/her vacation without the written approval of the City Manager. Department Directors may opt to be paid for up to 40 hours of unused vacation 30 days before their anniversary date. Vacation time must be scheduled with the Department Director, who shall consider the needs of the City, the number of personnel needed to effectively operate his/her department, and the schedule and desires of the employee. All vacation scheduled must be approved by the Department Director prior to being taken.

Personnel with regular status, who leave employment with the City, shall be paid for vacation time. The payment will be made in their final check.

An employee, who the city demotes, promotes, or laterally transfers will retain accrued vacation leave.

Employees on unpaid leave will not accrue vacation time.

Exception to this policy are Fire Fighters/EMS on a 53 hours' work schedule see the Fire Fighter/EMS combined vacation/holiday accrual policy Appendix A.

8.03 Holidays – REVISED 10/17/2022

All personnel with probationary or regular status are entitled to holidays designated by the City Council each year.

The holidays usually observed are:

New Year's Eve (half day)
New Year's Day
Martin Luther King Day
President's Day
Good Friday
Memorial Day
Juneteenth
Independence Day
Labor Day
Veteran's Day
Thanksgiving Day (2)
Christmas Eve
Christmas Day
Birthday Observation Day

Total of one hundred sixteen (116) hours per year.

All holidays shall be paid at the time of occurrence (exception: Fire/EMS). If an employee works on a holiday, that employee will be paid their overtime rate for the hours that they work on that holiday (Up to eight hours). **Note: (Sick/Bereavement policies apply with all pay policies).

Holidays may not be accumulated nor be carried over into the following calendar year without authorization of the City Manager. In addition, no compensation will be made for holidays that have not occurred.

Employees who are absent on a scheduled workday, before or after a holiday, may be required by their Department Director to submit a written statement from a physician attesting to their illness.

8.04 Inclement Weather

Employees should not assume the City offices or operations are closed. We are a service operation and as such we are obligated to the citizens to perform our duties. In the event of conditions such as freezing, flooding, etc., employee safety will be considered. If you feel it is unsafe to drive you must contact your supervisor and notify him/her. If you cannot make it to work, you may be charged a day of personal leave or leave without pay. In the event of emergencies that require evacuation (such as hurricanes, major disasters), employees shall refer to their department policy pertaining to emergency procedures.

8.05 Sick Leave – REVISED 04/15/2019

All personnel, who have probationary or regular status, shall be eligible to earn up to fifteen days of sick leave per year. Credit shall accumulate at the rate of 4.62 hours for each bi-weekly pay period. Unused sick leave can accumulate to a maximum of 720 hours.

Sick leave will be charged by the hour and used for employee or family illness where the employee is too ill to be able to work safely, or an ill family member requires their presence. Family is defined as the employee’s spouse, children, parents, spouse’s parents, brother, sister, grandparents, or grandchildren.

Employees shall notify their supervisors of their intent to take sick leave prior to, or within two (2) hours before, the time they are scheduled to begin their duties. Failure to give such notification will require the absence to be charged as leave without pay, except in cases of an emergency or an unusual event.

To discourage the abuse of sick leave, employees that call in sick will limit their presence away from their residences, to the doctor’s office and pharmacy. Employees, who are out sick for three (3) consecutive days, will need a doctor’s full release before returning to work. The City of Freeport does not typically offer light duty in any of its departments. Personnel who violate the provisions of the sick leave policy shall be subject to disciplinary action up to termination.

8.06 Family Medical Leave Act

As required by the Department of Labor, the City of Freeport provides FMLA benefits to qualifying personnel. To be eligible for FMLA benefits, an employee must:

- (1) work for a covered employer
- (2) have worked for the employer for a total of 12 months
- (3) have worked at least 1,250 hours over the previous months; and
- (4) work at a location in the United States or in any territory or possession of the United States where at least 50 employees are employed by the employer within 75 miles.

CITY OF FREEPORT – PERSONNEL POLICY HANDBOOK

An eligible employee is granted up to a total of 12 workweeks of unpaid leave during any 12-month period with continued health care benefits.

It is the policy of the City of Freeport to run FMLA leave concurrently with any paid leaves. Along with other unpaid extended leaves of absence, sick leave benefits shall not continue to accumulate during FMLA leave.

Arrangements will need to be made by the employee to pay their share of insurance premiums and Flexible Spending accounts where applicable.

For further information and regulations concerning FMLA you may contact the Human Resource Department.

8.07 Worker's Compensation – REVISED 8/7/2023

Personnel injured on the job shall be eligible for leave with pay for up to seven (7) days (56 hours). These days shall not be charged against the employee's sick leave. Employees injured on the job will be eligible for workman's compensation on the eighth (8) day of injury leave upon certification of a physician that the employee is not able to fulfill his/her job duties.

Firefighters, police officers, or emergency medical services personnel shall be provided a leave of absence for an illness or injury related to the person's line of duty with full pay for a period commensurate with the nature of the line of duty illness or injury. If able, firefighters, police officers, or emergency medical services personnel may return to light duty while recovering from a temporary disability. If necessary, the City of Freeport shall continue the leave for at least one year. Any funds received by the employee for Workers' Compensation benefits from the City's Workers' Compensation carrier, will be signed over to the City for deposit. An employee cannot receive benefits from both the carrier and the City at the same time.

Municipal Personnel may return to a position with the City, although it may be a different position than the one they left, when a physician certifies that the employee is able to fulfill their job duties and return to work. After recovery from a temporary disability, a firefighter, police officer, or emergency medical services personnel shall be reinstated at the same rank and with the same seniority the person had before going on temporary leave.

No more than six (6) months may be authorized for municipal employees on injury leave without the approval of the City Council upon recommendation of the City Manager. If the one year statutory threshold on injury leave provided for firefighters, police officers, or emergency medical services personnel is met, the firefighter, police officer, or emergency medical services personnel may use accumulated sick leave, vacation time, and other accrued benefits before they are placed on temporary leave.

8.08 Leave Without Pay

The City Manager, upon recommendation of the Department Director, may grant leaves of absence, without pay, to employees who have achieved regular status. The maximum length of any leave of absence shall be six (6) months. The six month period does not include approved leave taken under FMLA.

If an employee remains on leave of absence in excess of six (6) months, that employee will be terminated, regardless of the reason for their absence.

Personnel granted leaves of absence may return to a position with the City, although it may be a different one from the one they left. When applicable, certification may be required.

8.09 Bereavement Leave

Personnel, who have probationary or regular status, may be granted up to 40 hours leave with pay, by their Department Director for cases of death of a member of an employee's immediate family. Immediate family is defined as the employee's spouse, children, parents, spouse's parents, brother, sister, grandparents or grandchildren.

8.10 Judicial Leave

Personnel, with probationary or regular status, who are summoned to serve on a jury or who are under subpoena are expected to serve or appear when called. Such absences shall be authorized, without loss of pay, provided that satisfactory evidence of such service or appearance is presented to the Department Director.

If an employee is excused from jury duty prior to end of shift, he/she will be expected to return to work or receive permission from his/her supervisor for authorized absence.

8.11 Military Leave

Employees, with probationary or regular status, who are members of the National Guard, or any reserve component of the armed forces of the United States, shall be entitled to leave with pay when ordered by proper authorities to be engaged in field training, encampment, or ordered to regular duty. Such leave shall be authorized for up to fifteen (15) days, to be computed as eight (8) hour days, during a calendar year.

Employees taking military leave of absence in excess of fifteen (15) days may elect to use some or all of their vacation to supplement their military pay. Employees must notify the human resource department of their request in writing.

8.12 Mental Health Leave – REVISED 08/21/2023

The use of mental health leave may be granted after a peace officer, dispatcher, firefighter, or Emergency Medical Service provider experiences a traumatic event during the scope of employment. Traumatic events that may occur within a peace officer's career can have varying degrees of severity and effect on any one individual. Command staff will need to be cognizant of what employees may be experiencing mentally and emotionally after a traumatic event. As soon as practical, it is important to meet with the employee, in a private setting, after experiencing the event to get a sense of the state of mind the employee may be. Each employee may experience the same type of traumatic event differently. Below is a non-exhaustive list of possible examples of traumatic events in the scope of employment that can have an effect on an employee's mental health.

- Any officer involved shooting
- Any investigations or incidents involving deaths of individuals
- Any investigations or incidents involving abuse of individuals
- The death, injury, catastrophic illness of a coworker

When such a traumatic event does occur while in the scope of employment, it is important for management staff to recognize that some employees may be negatively affected and need to be away from work to appropriately process the traumatic incident and perhaps seek mental health assistance from a professional. In addition, it is important to provide support for employees who need it.

Management/supervisors should privately meet with any individual who has experienced a traumatic event while in the scope of employment. Supervisors should ensure the employee will be supported as much as possible after experiencing the event. In addition, it is important for supervisors to determine if there is a need for the employee to use mental health leave. If a supervisor determines the employee may need the advice and help from a crisis intervention professional, this should occur as quickly as possible. Any employee who requests mental health leave and/or the assistance of a crisis intervention professional after experiencing a traumatic event, should be granted the requests. Regarding the mental health leave, it is at the discretion of command staff in determining how long the initial mental health leave should be. If additional mental health leave beyond that initially granted by command staff is needed the supervisor may require medical documentation from the individual's medical provider to substantiate the need for such additional leave.

After experiencing a traumatic event while in the scope of employment, it is prudent for the affected employee to openly communicate his/her current mental/physical status to their supervisor. Employees should be open to any suggestions by their supervisor in using mental health leave and/or seeking assistance from a crisis intervention professional. Your communications/conversations regarding your health status will be kept confidential by your supervisors and any other need to know management staff as required by state and federal law.

Once an employee has been granted use of mental health leave, the supervisor will code their timesheets as “absent with pay”. The maximum number of mental health days an individual may use is 10 days (80 hours) per Identified Traumatic Event. Any additional leave requested beyond the 10 days, the employee will need to use sick leave or the leave may be determined to be leave covered under worker’s compensation. The additional leave requested will also need to be substantiated in writing by the employee’s medical professional. In addition, the Chief or City Manager may request the employee submit to a fitness for duty requirement in order to return to work.

Mental health leave may be double-coded as FMLA as well. When an employee has used all 10 days of mental health leave and must use additional leave as applicable (e.g. sick leave or worker’s compensation leave), this other leave will also be double-coded as FMLA leave.

While utilizing mental health leave, employees will continue to earn any and all benefits, seniority and applicable special pays.

The City of Freeport will keep requests to take mental health leave and any medical information related to mental health leave under this policy confidential to the extent allowed by law and separate from the employee’s general personnel file. The City of Freeport cannot guarantee anonymity of information that is otherwise public or necessary to carry out duties required by law. A list of mental health facilities available in our area may be obtained from the Human Resource Department.

8.13 Leave Donation Policy REVISED 11/3/2025

The City of Freeport maintains a sick leave pool to alleviate hardships incurred by an employee or the employee’s immediate family if a life-threatening illness or life-threatening injury forces the employee to exhaust all available sick leave, vacation leave, and compensatory leave. The Sick Leave Pool is intended to lessen financial hardship caused to members by providing a source of additional paid sick leave.

Routine pregnancy/maternity is not considered a life-threatening illness or injury. However, severe pregnancy-related illness or complications afflicting the mother or child may be considered.

Definitions

1. **Eligible Employee** – A regular full-time employee who has been employed by the City for at least one (1) year.
2. **Immediate Family Member** – An employee’s spouse, child, or any other relative who resides in the employee’s household and is dependent on the employee for care.
3. **Life-threatening** – A disease or condition from which the likelihood of death is probable unless the course of the disease or condition is interrupted. Examples include:
 - Serious or terminal illness such as cancer
 - Serious or life-threatening accidents or injuries

- Chronic illness or injuries requiring intermittent absences, such as HIV or kidney disease requiring dialysis
Exclusions include: non-emergency elective surgery; injuries covered by workers' compensation; disabilities from drug/alcohol abuse; and self-inflicted injuries.
- 4. **Sick Leave Pool** – The accumulated sick leave hours donated by employees for use under this policy.
- 5. **Sick Leave Pool Administrator** - A committee comprised of the Head of Human Resources (or designee), the affected employee's Department Director, and the City Manager, designated to administer this policy.

Eligibility and Contributions

- Employees must:
 - Be employed by the City for at least one (1) year.
 - Be in good standing with City attendance policies.
 - Donate at least four (4) hours from their personal sick leave bank annually.
- Donation limits:
 - Up to 125 hours per year (not more than one-half of their earned sick leave per year).
 - Departing employees may donate their unused sick leave to the pool (note: sick leave is not paid out upon separation).
- Contributions are voluntary. Donors may not designate recipients.
- Enrollment opportunities:
 - Initial 30 days after adoption of this policy
 - Annually during open enrollment

To encourage participation in the Sick Leave Pool, employees who donate sick leave will be awarded additional vacation leave:

- For each (25) hours donated – 4 hours of vacation leave awarded.
- Maximum annual award – 20 hours of vacation leave (based on 125 hours donated)
- Awards credited at transfer time (October 1 during open enrollment, or at approved donation outside of enrollment)
- Employees separating from employment are not eligible for the incentive.

Use of Sick Leave Pool Hours

Requests

- Cannot be used with workers' compensation claims.
- Requests to withdraw require:
 - Written request before exhaustion of personal leave
 - Physician's statement of illness/injury, surgery, or disability, with expected duration
- The Sick Leave Pool Administrator considers:

- Information on the request form
- Number of pending requests
- Hours available in the pool
- Restrictions:
 - No more than 1/3 of the pool hours may be awarded to a single request
 - Recipients may receive no more than 480 hours (12 weeks) per fiscal year
 - Pool hours do not accrue sick, vacation, or holiday leave
 - Donated sick time is on an hour-for hour basis, not dollar value
 - Employees cannot borrow against future sick leave
 - Donations processed October 1 each year (open enrollment)
 - Employees on approved leave cannot donate
 - Recipient's personal leave must be exhausted first
- Employees on extended leave must:
 - Report weekly to HR (or designee) by phone
 - Provide updates after doctor appointments
- Nothing in this policy alters or extends protections under the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA)

**8.14 Reasonable Accommodations for Pregnant Workers Policy – ADOPTED
07/17/2023**

As required by the federal Pregnant Workers Fairness Act (PWFA), the City of Freeport will provide reasonable accommodations to employees and applicants with limitations related to pregnancy, childbirth or related medical conditions, unless the accommodation will cause undue hardship to the City of Freeport's operations.

An employee or applicant may request accommodation due to pregnancy, childbirth or a related medical condition by submitting the request in writing to human resources (HR). The accommodation request should include an explanation of the pregnancy-related limitations, the accommodation needed and any alternative accommodation(s) that might be reasonable. Depending on the nature of the accommodation, the individual may be requested to submit a statement from a health care provider substantiating the need for the accommodation.

Upon receipt of a request for accommodation, HR will contact the employee or applicant to discuss the request and determine if accommodation is reasonable and can be provided without significant difficulty or expense, i.e., undue hardship.

While the reasonableness of each accommodation request will be individually assessed, possible accommodations include allowing the individual to:

- Sit while working

CITY OF FREEPORT – PERSONNEL POLICY HANDBOOK

- Drink water during the workday
- Receive closer-in parking
- Have flexible hours
- Receive appropriately sized uniforms and safety apparel
- Receive additional break time to use the bathroom, eat and rest
- Take time off to recover from childbirth
- Be excused from strenuous activities and/or activities that involve exposure to compounds deemed unsafe during pregnancy

An employee may request paid or unpaid leave as a reasonable accommodation under this policy; however, the City of Freeport will not require an employee to take time off if another reasonable accommodation can be provided that will allow the employee to continue to work.

The City of Freeport prohibits any retaliation, harassment or adverse action due to an individual's request for accommodation under this policy or for reporting or participating in an investigation of unlawful discrimination under this policy.

CHAPTER

NINE

EMPLOYEE WAGE AND BENEFITS

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EMPLOYEE WAGE AND BENEFITS

9.01 Texas Municipal Retirement System

All employees with probationary or regular status will be enrolled as a member of the Texas Municipal Retirement System. Members will deposit by payroll deduction, eight percent (8%) of their gross salary. The City will match such deposit in an amount to be determined by state law and City Council ordinance (Currently 2 for 1).

If an employee leaves the service of the City, they may withdraw the deposits they have made, plus interest earned on those deposits. The deposits made by the City cannot be withdrawn unless the employee is eligible for retirement.

Members may also be responsible for paying taxes on the amount withdrawn and should communicate with Texas Municipal Retirement System in regards to possible taxation of withdrawn deposits.

Employees will become vested in the system after five (5) years of employment. “Vesting” means that employees who terminate their employment with the City after five (5) years and do not withdraw their deposits, will be entitled to retirement benefits, based on deposits and interest earned, at sixty (60) years of age or 20 years of service.

Employees should contact Texas Municipal Retirement System for information on retirement benefits or when preparing for retirement.

9.02 Social Security

All employees will make deductions, by payroll, to the Social Security system. The City will match the employee's contribution as required by Federal law.

9.03 Group Health, Life, and AD&D – REVISED 07/15/2024

All employees with probationary or regular status are covered by a group health, life, and AD&D insurance program. The premiums for this program are paid by the City. Employees may also cover their dependents under the health insurance program by paying the premiums for their dependents.

9.03 A Wellness Requirement

Because prevention and early detection are an integral part of a healthy workforce, beginning October 1, 2024, any employee who has not provided proof of completion of the wellness requirement (either biometric screening or wellness exam) by June 30

of the following year, will be charged an additional \$25.00 per pay period for medical premiums during the next fiscal year. The amount will be increased October 1, 2025 (for the 2026-2027 fiscal year) to \$50.00 per pay period. Please note that “proof of completion” only requires verification that the requirement was completed. No medical information or test results are requested.

See Human Resources, at City Hall, for additional information.

Section 9.04 Long-Term Disability – REVISED 06/03/2019

All employees with probationary or regular status are covered by a long-term disability insurance policy. This insurance policy provides for 60% of your monthly salary after 90 days of serious illness or injury, according to the following schedule. The premiums for this policy are paid by the City.

Maximum Benefit Period: Determined by your age when Disability begins, as follows:

Age	Maximum Benefit Period
61 or younger.....	To age 65, or 3 years 6 months, if longer.
62.....	3 years 6 months
63.....	3 years
64.....	2 years 6 months
65.....	2 years
66.....	1 year 9 months
67.....	1 year 6 months
68.....	1 year 3 months
69 or older.....	1 year

9.05 Workman's Compensation Insurance Program

All employees of the City of Freeport are covered by Workman's Compensation Insurance. Workman's Compensation Insurance covers employees if they are injured on the job. Any injury that occurs on the job or is job-related must be reported to the employee's supervisor immediately or as soon as a possible claim is noticed.

9.06 Allowances - REVISED 08/03/2020

At the will of the City, and if financially feasible, the City may provide allowances as describe below.

Uniform Allowances: The City may furnish uniforms or provide allowances for employees who must wear uniforms in the performance of their duties. Uniform allowances may be approved for certain positions when City uniforms are not issued. Uniform allowances must be approved by the Department Head and City Manager, and must be submitted to HR for entry into payroll. When applicable, uniform allowances are paid in payroll checks each pay-

period. Uniform allowances are \$600.00 per year, paid out at \$23.08 per pay period. This rate may be subject to change at the discretion of the City Manager.

Cell Phone Allowances: The City may furnish City-issued cell phones or provide cell phone allowances for employees who must routinely utilize personal cell phones in the course of daily work on behalf of the City. Cell phone allowances may be approved for certain positions when City cell phones are not issued, and are generally approved for management or Director-level positions. Cell phone allowances must be approved by the City Manager and must be submitted to HR for entry into payroll. Where applicable cell phone allowances are paid in payroll checks in the first pay pay-period of each month. Cell phone allowances are \$50.00 per month. This rate may be subject to change at the discretion of the City Manager.

Automobile Allowances: The City may provide automobile allowances for employees who must routinely utilize personal automobile in the course of daily work on behalf of the City. Automobile allowances may be approved for certain positions when City vehicles are not assigned. Automobile allowances are provided at the discretion of the City Manager and are generally approved for senior management or Director-level positions or above. Automobile allowances must be approved by the City Manager and must be submitted to HR for entry into payroll. Where applicable automobile allowances are paid via payroll checks each pay-period.

Relocation/Moving Allowances: The City may provide a relocation/moving allowance as part of a recruiting package. Relocation/moving allowances are negotiated at the discretion of the City Manager and are generally approved for senior management or Director-level positions or above. Where applicable relocation/moving allowances are paid via payroll upon presentation of receipts.

9.07 Overtime/Compensatory Time

1. Employee Categories

- Exempt and Non-Exempt: Defined by the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA)
- Non-exempt employees: Subject to overtime/compensatory time rules.

2. Work Beyond Scheduled Hours

- Employees may be required to work outside regular hours without advance notice.
- Refusal is prohibited unless prior relief is requested and approved.
- Employees must request relief as early as possible if personal needs conflict.

3. Overtime Policy

- Compensation: Paid in money or compensatory time .
- Approval: Must be pre-approved by a supervisor before being worked.
- Calculation: Overtime includes education pay, longevity pay, and certification pay in the weighted rate.
- Leave Impact: Vacation, sick, or bereavement leave do not count towards overtime; only actual hours worked apply.

4. Fire/EMS and Police Work Periods

- City follows FLSA Section 7(k) for public safety personnel.
- Fire personnel: Overtime after 106 hours in a 14-day work period.
- Police personnel: Overtime after 80 hours in a 14-day work period.

5. Compensatory Time (Comp Time)

- Eligibility: Full-time, hourly, non-exempt employees only.
- Accrual Rate:
 - 1.5 hours of comp time for every overtime hour worked.
 - Thresholds:
 - 40 hours in 7 days (general employees)
 - 80 hours in 14 days (police)
 - 106 hours in 14 days (firefighters)
- Tracking: Must be recorded in the city's timekeeping system during the pay period earned.
- Approval: Requires pre-approval by supervisor and Department Director.
- Maximum Accrual: 120 hours. Any excess must be paid out or flexed within the same pay period.

6. Use of Comp Time

- Must be requested in advance, like other leave.
- Approval depends on staffing and operational needs.
- Supervisors must approve reasonable requests unless operations are disrupted.
- Employees are encouraged to use comp time within 6 months.
- Supervisors may schedule comp time to balance staffing and minimize payout liabilities.

7. Separation of Employment

- Any unused comp time is paid out at final regular rate of pay.
- Exceptions require written approval from HR and the City Manager.

9.07A Alternative to Overtime: Flextime – REVISED 06/01/2026

Purpose:

Provide an alternative to overtime through flextime scheduling, balancing operational needs, and employee work-life balance.

1. **Eligibility.** Applies to all City employees (hourly and salaried)
2. **Flextime in Lieu of Overtime.**
 - When overtime is needed, schedules may be flexed to substitute equivalent time off during regular hours.
 - Prevents overtime for hourly employees and ensures salaried employees stay within 40 hours.
 - Police/Fire: adjusted per their 7(k) periods.
 - Must occur within 30 days for hourly and salaried employees and may not be banked.
 - Substitution can be scheduled before or after the overtime, with supervisor approval.
3. **Approval Process.**
 - Must have prior supervisor approval. Directors must have City Manager approval.
 - Requests follow the same process as vacation leave.
 - Supervisors must ensure adequate coverage of city operations.
4. **Implementation.**
 - Supervisors should balance operational needs with employee personal needs
 - Flextime may include:
 - Adjusted start/end times
 - Compressed workweeks
 - Other schedule variations
 - Remote work, hybrid work, job-sharing, and comp-time may be considered if operationally feasible.
5. **Responsibilities.**
 - Employees: Maintain productivity and meet performance standards.
 - Supervisors: Monitor attendance, ensure communication, and document flextime arrangements.

Directors using Flex Time are subject to call back.

9.08 Paydays and Hours of Work – REVISED 06/03/2019

The City of Freeport pays on a bi-weekly basis. Checks are currently distributed to Department Directors on Fridays. Copies of checks that are direct deposited are available to employees through the payroll system self-service.

All Departments are subject to the Department of Labor regulations concerning hours of work. Directors and/or designated supervisors are responsible, at their sole discretion, for the scheduling of their department employees.

Exempt employees are not required to turn in a timesheet; however, the Human Resource Department must be notified of any leaves taken. Non-exempt employees must turn in a timesheet electronically.

9.09 Deductions from Pay – REVISED 08/21/2023

The City of Freeport may deduct money from an employee’s pay for reasons that fall into the following categories:

- Court ordered disbursements.
- Taxes.
- Premiums for medical/dental plans.
- Contributions made to retirement or pension plans.
- Contributions made to cafeteria plans.
- Over payments of wages.
- The cost of personal long-distance calls that an employee makes on the City’s phone systems.
- The cost of unreturned uniforms.
- The cost of repairing or replacing any supplies, materials, equipment, money, or other property that an employee damages, loses, fails to return, or takes without appropriate authorization from the City of Freeport during their employment.
- If an employee takes paid vacation or sick leave in advance of the date he/she would normally be entitled to it and he/she separates from the City of Freeport before accruing time to cover such advance leave, the value of such leave taken in advance.
- Voluntary contributions to a United Way of Brazoria County campaign with written authorization from the employee

Deductions from Leave

All absences from work for full-time (regular) status employees will require leave and/or compensatory time benefits to be used for those absences.

The City of Freeport will make all efforts to notify the employee before such deductions are made.

9.10 Longevity Pay – REVISED 08/05/2024

The City of Freeport provides longevity pay for all full-time employees in recognition of the value of long-term service with the City. Eligibility for longevity pay commences after an employee has completed one full year of continuous employment.

Effective in fiscal year 2021-2022 (Oct. 1st, 2020), Longevity Pay is paid-out to active, eligible employees on a per-pay-period basis. Eligible full-time employees earn \$60.00 per year after their first full year of employment, and this amount is paid-out on per- pay-period basis. An additional \$60.00 per year is added for each consecutive year of service thereafter if the employee is still employed on their anniversary date .The total longevity amount is pro-rated and paid-out on a per-pay-period basis.

Employees with six (6) or more years of continuous employment at the time of this rate change (10/01/20) may be grandfathered at their existing higher total annual amount, paid-out on a per-pay-period basis. This higher total annual amount will be frozen for our longer tenured employees until the new rate calculation surpasses the grandfathered total annual amount. At this point the new higher calculated amount will be paid, on a per-pay-period basis.

Longevity Pay is intended to be a recognition of long-term service for active employees. Because longevity pay is paid-out on a per-pay-period basis no pro-rated longevity pay is paid-out when an employee separates from employment.

9.11 Tuition Reimbursement – REVISED 04/15/2024

All regular status employees are eligible for 100% college tuition reimbursement for work related courses with the approval of their Department Director and the City Manager. The maximum tuition reimbursement is seven (7) hours per semester, not to exceed \$700.00 per semester, with a maximum of \$1,400.00 per fiscal year.

The City of Freeport will only reimburse courses that are completed with a minimum grade of 80% or B-. Reimbursement will be made after the course is completed and after required documentation is received, and is for tuition only, no books or supplies are covered by this policy.

9.11 A -Academy Reimbursement for First Responders – REVISED 9/29/2025

The academy reimbursement payments are one-time and non-accumulating allotments that are provided to entice an individual to continue employment with the City of Freeport as a First Responder (full-time peace officer or firefighter & EMT/Medic). The purpose of this academy reimbursement is to serve as a recruitment and retention tool, enabling the City of Freeport to attract top candidates and support long-term employment of qualified first responders. The applicable Police or Fire/EMS Department Chief shall interpret this program in alignment with its purpose. Their decisions may be appealed to the city manager, who will make the final decision. All payments are subject to applicable payroll and tax deductions. Employees receiving academy reimbursement payments will not be eligible for hiring incentive, but may still be eligible for other incentives offered by the City of Freeport.

To be eligible for academy reimbursement payments, the current employee must:

- Have successfully completed a state-approved Police, Fire, or EMS Academy within the last three years from the date of the agreement, passed required state tests, and be licensed, which license must be in good standing.
- Have selected the City of Freeport Police or Fire/EMS Department as the first employing agency as a full-time peace officer or firefighter & EMT/Medic immediately following academy graduation.
- Have successfully completed any required city probationary period and field training program.
- Have received no disciplinary actions of a written reprimand or higher in the previous 12 months from the date reimbursement is requested and must not currently be the subject of a complaint investigation at the time reimbursement is requested (eligibility date = 12 months from date of discipline).
- Have paid for the requested academy costs from their own personal funds that were not reimbursed in any manner or provided by another source (grant, military, scholarship, benefit, etc.).

The employee must submit a written request for each payment, accompanied by receipts from the educational institution where the academy was completed and a certificate of completion from the academy. Receipts may reflect the total cost of academy attendance, including tuition, required equipment, textbooks, and applicable testing or licensing fees. Requests are approved by the employee's Department Director and then forwarded to Human Resources and the City Manager for final authorization. Employees who wish to appeal a decision related to this policy may do so by following the City's established grievance procedure.

The maximum total reimbursement is \$5,000 lifetime maximum per employee. The maximum total reimbursement available is \$5,000. Payments will be disbursed in increments based on continuous service as follows:

- 6 months of service from agreement and completion of field training program or eligibility date, whichever is later - 25% of total academy costs
- 1 year of service from agreement or eligibility date, whichever is later - 25% of total academy costs
- 2 year of service from agreement or eligibility date, whichever is later - 50% of total academy costs

Failure to meet any of the above guidelines could require the employee to repay the City of Freeport. The amount may be withheld from the employee's final paycheck. Requests to waive repayment are approved by the employee's Department Director and then forwarded to Human Resources and the City Manager for final authorization. Employees who wish to

appeal a decision related to this policy may do so by following the City’s established grievance procedure.

9.12 Section 125 Flexible Spending Accounts

All employees with probationary or regular status are eligible to participate in the City’s pre-tax dependant care expense accounts and pre-tax unreimbursed health care expense accounts. These accounts assist employees by providing pre-tax options for their dependant care and health care needs.

9.13 Supplemental Insurance

The City currently offers full-time employees the opportunity to participate in supplemental insurance policies. These policies are offered through a representative of the providing insurance and are at the expense of the employee.

9.14 Travel Authorization and Expense Policy

Purpose

This Travel Authorization and Expense Policy shall apply to all City employees and City officials who travel out of the City on City business for public purposes. The purpose of this policy is to establish clear guidelines for applicable travel expenses and ensure proper accountability through itemized receipts and prior authorization.

Travel Authorization

All out-of-City travel on official City business must be authorized in advance by the department head or City Manager. Travelers must complete a Travel Advance and Expense Report prior to departure, stating the purpose, destination, dates, and estimated costs of the trip. Additionally, a course flyer, advertisement or event guideline must be submitted with travel report.

Allowed Expenses

In most cases a hotel room will be reserved via the use of a city issued credit card. Any purchases over the allotted credit card amount must be emailed for authorization to increase the card limit 3-7 days prior to travel. The following expenses will be eligible for reimbursement when incurred in the course of approved City business travel:

- A. Hotel Accommodations – Hotel stays must be booked in advance and for the duration of the authorized event only. Additional days beyond the event will not be reimbursed. Airbnb, short-term rentals, and non-hotel lodging will not be reimbursed. **Only applies to those traveling fifty (50) miles or more outside of Freeport, Texas.**

CITY OF FREEPORT – PERSONNEL POLICY HANDBOOK

- B. Mileage – Mileage for use of a personal vehicle, calculated from City Hall or the employee/city official's assigned work location (whichever is closer) to the event destination, reimbursed at the current IRS mileage rate. **Only applies to those traveling twenty (20) miles or more outside of Freeport, Texas.**
1. If the department has a vehicle for training that can be used, a request must be submitted to the department head or designee for the use a city owned vehicle for travel. If department vehicle is authorized, a city credit card/fuel card will be used for fuel for the duration of the trip.
 - a) Credit card/fuel card must be checked out prior to travel.
 - b) Receipts must be maintained by employee/city official.
 - c) Each receipt must state: the employee/city official name, the unit, mileage and the reason for use.
 - d) At the end of travel, receipts and credit card/fuel card must be returned to the department head or designee.
 2. If a department vehicle is not available for the travel, an employee/city official is permitted to take their personal vehicle and will be reimbursed at the current IRS mileage rate.
 3. If a department vehicle is available but the employee chooses not to use it, mileage reimbursement will not be provided.
- C. Meals/Per Diem – Daily per diem amounts will follow IRS guidelines. Meals provided by conferences or events must be deducted from the daily allowance. **Only applies to those traveling forty (40) miles or more outside of Freeport, Texas.**
1. To receive per diem prior to travel, requests must be submitted at 14 days in advance and must include travel location, travel dates and approved department travel authorization.
 2. Meal Receipt Reimbursement Guidelines:
 - a) Receipts must be itemized to clearly show all purchased items.
 - b) Gratuity reimbursement is limited to a maximum of 20%.
 - c) Dinner or late evening meals are eligible for reimbursement only during overnight travel.
- D. Parking – Parking fees at the hotel or at the event location will be reimbursed when supported by itemized receipts.
1. Parking fees included in the hotel bill and reflected in the total charges will be considered an approved expense.

Required Documentation

To ensure proper use of city funds, the following documentation is required:

- A. All expenses must be supported by itemized receipts.
- B. Summary credit card receipts will not be accepted.
- C. The receipts must correspond with training dates and times.
- D. All receipts must be submitted no later than ten (10) calendar days following return from travel, unless authorized by Department Head or City Manager.

Prohibited Expenses

The following expenses will *not* be reimbursed by the City:

- A. Airbnb, vacation rentals, or non-hotel lodging unless pre-approved by Department Head or City Manager.
- B. Rental cars, unless pre-approved by Department Head or City Manager.
- C. Hotel incidentals, including but not limited to movies, room service, mini-bar, spa, laundry, and personal purchases.
- D. Additional days at the hotel not directly tied to the City business purpose of the trip.
- E. Alcoholic beverages or personal entertainment.
- F. **Ride share services, including but not limited to Uber, Lyft, or similar providers, unless pre-approved by Department Head or City Manager.**

Travel Time

If travel is required to attend training, conferences, or events, other than the employee normal work station or within the city, travel time may be compensated. The following conditions are evaluated for travel time:

- A. For overnight travel, time spent in transit on both the departure day and return to day.
- B. For same day travel, time spent traveling to and from the training if outside the employee’s work station or city limits.

Enforcement

Failure to comply with this policy, including failure to provide itemized receipts, may result in denial of reimbursement and/or disciplinary action as deemed appropriate by the City.

9.15 457 Deferred Compensation Plan

CITY OF FREEPORT – PERSONNEL POLICY HANDBOOK

All employees with probationary or regular status are eligible to participate in the 457 Deferred Compensation Plan offered by the City of Freeport. This plan is an additional retirement savings options for the City of Freeport employees; however, no contributions will be made by the City. This retirement plan is offered to public service personnel only and is regulated by the Internal Revenue Service.

9.16 Education Pay – ADOPTED 09/08/2020 and Updated 11/02/2020

The City of Freeport provides education pay for all full-time employees in recognition of the highest degree earned according to the following schedule:

DEGREE	YEARLY		PER PAY PERIOD
Associate Degree	600.00		23.08
Bachelor Degree	1,500.00		57.70
Master Degree	2,500.00		96.16

All education pay is calculated based on the highest education level achieved (not multiple levels). In combination with Certification Pay in Section 9.17 the maximum combined pay for Education and Certification is \$ 5,000.00. Employees with existing Education and Certification pay above this maximum before October 01, 2020 will be grandfathered at their existing higher total annual amount, if all educational and certification qualifications are maintained.

Effective fiscal year 2020-2021 (Oct. 1, 2020) all education is paid-out on a per pay period basis, not annually. The per pay period calculation is the highest education pay level earned divided by 26 pay periods. In order to receive Education pay, appropriate documents (official certified transcript) must be on file in the Human Resource Department. Pay begins in the pay period following receipt of certified transcripts in HR. Education Pay is not retroactive. Because education pay is paid-out to active employees on a per pay period basis, no additional education pay is issued upon separation of employment.

These education benefits apply to qualifications above and beyond the minimum requirements stated in job descriptions.

9.17 Certification Pay – Updated 10/06/2025

General Policy

Effective fiscal year 2020-2021 (Oct. 1, 2020) all certification pay is paid-out on a **per pay period** basis, not annually. Written proof of certification is required. Pay begins in the pay period following receipt of the official certificate in HR. Certification Pay is **not retroactive**.

CITY OF FREEPORT – PERSONNEL POLICY HANDBOOK

Because Certification Pay is paid-out to active employees on a per pay period basis, no additional certification pay is issued upon separation of employment.

In combination with Education Pay in Section 9.16, the maximum combined pay for Education and Certification is \$5,000.00 annually. Employees with existing Education and Certification pay above this maximum before October 1, 2020, will be grandfathered at their existing higher total annual amount, if all educational and certification qualifications are maintained.

Certification Cost Reimbursement

If the City pays for the cost of a certification class and/or testing, the employee must remain employed with the City for a minimum of two (2) years following the date of certification.

- If an employee voluntarily separates employment prior to the completion of this two-year period, the employee must reimburse the City for the full cost of the certification class and/or testing.
- This condition applies regardless of whether the employee receives Certification Pay for the credential.
- The City reserves the right to deduct any owed reimbursement from the employee’s final paycheck, as permitted by law, or otherwise seek repayment.

CERTIFICATION PAY

POLICE/TCO:	YEARLY	PER PAY PD
Intermediate	\$ 500.00	\$ 19.23
Advanced	\$ 1,000.00	\$ 38.47
Master	\$ 1,500.00	\$ 57.70
FIRE/EMT:	YEARLY	PER PAY PD
Intermediate	\$ 600.00	\$ 23.08
Advanced	\$ 900.00	\$ 34.62
Master	\$ 1,500.00	\$ 57.70
Fire Engine Operator/Driver	\$ 3,600.00	\$ 138.46
EMS (TDSHS):	YEARLY	PER PAY PD
EMT-Intermediate	\$ 2,400.00	\$ 92.31
EMT-Paramedic	\$ 4,800.00	\$ 184.62
DEPARTMENT SPECIFIC CERTIFICATIONS:	YEARLY	PER PAY PD

CITY OF FREEPORT – PERSONNEL POLICY HANDBOOK

Designated Language Interpreter [as deemed necessary by Director]	\$ 600.00	\$ 23.08
Functional Specialization: [approved by Director & City Manager; -excludes required minimums]	\$ 600.00	\$ 23.08
Secondary Specialization: (max of 2; second paid at 50%)	\$ 300.00	\$ 11.54

Key Notes

- Certification benefits apply only to certifications above and beyond minimum requirements stated in job descriptions.
- Examples of functional specialization include: Utilities/Wastewater, Heavy Equipment Operator, Pesticide Handler, SHRM-CP.
- Examples of language interpreter include: Spanish-speaking, if deemed necessary for departmental operations.

9.18 Residency Incentive Program – Revised 11/3/2025

In an effort to provide an incentive for full-time employees to reside in the City of Freeport, the City offers taxable incentive payments to employees. The incentive payments are not a part of the compensation of any employee who receives the payment.

PURCHASE OF A HOME WITHIN THE CITY OF FREEPORT. The City will provide a taxable incentive payment of up to \$10,000.00 to all full-time employees who do not currently own and reside in a residential property within the City of Freeport. If two employees jointly purchase a home within the City, only one employee is eligible for the incentive. This incentive will be paid out over five (5) years as follows:

- Upon receipt of copy of closing documents by Human Resources: \$2,800.00
- One year after closing: \$2,400.00
- Two years after closing: \$2,000.00
- Three years after closing: \$1,600.00
- Four years after closing \$1,200.00

LEASE OF RENTAL UNIT WITHIN THE CITY OF FREEPORT: For all City employees who do not currently reside within the City of Freeport, the City will provide a taxable incentive payment of up to \$4,000.00 to enter into a lease agreement for a single-family or multi-family rental unit located in the City of Freeport. If two employees jointly enter into a lease agreement, only one employee is eligible for the incentive. The lease must

be for a minimum of one (1) year. This incentive will be paid out over five (5) years as follows:

Upon receipt of copy of signed lease agreement by Human Resources: \$800.00
Each year following signature of lease agreement, as long as the employee still provides lease agreements proving residence in the City of Freeport: \$800.00 up to a maximum of \$4,000.00

9.19 Digital Voucher for Safety Shoes – Adopted 11/18/2024

The purpose of this policy is to establish guidelines for the issuance and use of digital vouchers for the purchase of safety shoes, ensuring employees have access to necessary safety equipment while maintaining financial accountability and control.

This policy applies to all employees eligible for safety shoe vouchers within the City of Freeport. This includes full-time employees who require safety shoes as part of their job responsibilities. Employees must be employed for 90 days prior to receiving a voucher.

Employees must be in roles that require the use of safety shoes as determined by their job description or safety regulations. Eligibility will be assessed and confirmed by the employee's Department Director and the Human Resources (HR) department.

Vouchers will be issued digitally via the company's designated platform or email. Vouchers will be issued on an annual basis. The value of the voucher will be determined by the HR department, based on the average cost of compliant safety shoes.

Vouchers can only be used at approved vendors listed by the City. The list of approved vendors will be reviewed and updated annually by the Human Resources and Public Works departments. Employees must select shoes that meet the company's safety standards from these vendors.

Vouchers are non-transferable and can only be used by the employee to whom they are issued. Vouchers cannot be redeemed for cash or any items other than approved safety shoes. Employees must redeem their vouchers within 90 days of issuance. Employees are responsible for any costs exceeding the voucher's value.

Returns and exchanges must be handled directly with the vendor, following the vendor's return policy. If an employee leaves the company within 90 days of receiving the voucher, the voucher will be voided, and the employee will be required to repay the voucher amount.

Employees are responsible for using the vouchers in accordance with this policy. Any misuse of vouchers may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination. The HR and Finance departments will conduct periodic audits to ensure compliance with this policy.

Any exceptions to this policy must be approved by the HR department in consultation with the employee's supervisor.

This policy will be reviewed annually and updated as necessary to ensure it remains relevant and effective.

For questions or further information about this policy, employees should contact the HR department.

9.20 Hiring Incentive for First Responders ADOPTED 9/29/2025

The hiring incentive payments are one-time, non-reoccurring, non-accumulating allotment that is provided to entice an individual to accept employment with the City of Freeport as a First Responder (full-time peace officer or firefighter & EMT/Medic). The incentive is to serve as a recruitment and retention tool, enabling the City of Freeport to attract top candidates and support long-term employment of qualified first responders. The applicable Police or Fire/EMS Department Chief shall interpret this program in alignment with its purpose. Their decisions may be appealed to the city manager, who will make the final decision. All incentive payments are subject to applicable payroll and tax deductions. Employees receiving hiring incentive payments will not be eligible for academy reimbursement, but may still be eligible for other incentives offered by the City of Freeport.

To be eligible for hiring incentive, the current employee must:

- Have successfully completed a state-approved Police, Fire, or EMS Academy, passed required state tests, and be licensed, which license must be in good standing.
- Have not been a peace officer or firefighter & EMT/Medic with the Freeport Police or Fire/EMS Department as of 10-1-2025.
- Have successfully passed all state and department required pre-employment testing and processes and hired the City of Freeport as a First Responder.
- Have successfully completed any required probationary period and initial field training program, with the exception of the first payment.
- Have received no disciplinary actions of a written reprimand or higher in the previous 12 months from the date reimbursement is requested and must not currently be the subject of a complaint investigation at the time reimbursement is requested (eligibility date = 12 months from date of discipline)

The employee must submit a written request for the second and third payment to the Department Director. Requests are approved by the employee's Department Director and then forwarded to Human Resources and the City Manager for final authorization. Employees who wish to appeal a decision related to this policy may do so by following the City's established grievance procedure.

The hiring incentive is paid in three increments. The first disbursement is included with the employee's first payroll with subsequent payments being eligible upon reaching designated milestones.

CITY OF FREEPORT – PERSONNEL POLICY HANDBOOK

The maximum total hiring incentive is \$5,000. Payments will be disbursed in increments based on continuous service as follows:

First payroll	\$1,000
1 year of service or eligibility date, whichever is later	\$2,000
2 years of service or eligibility date, whichever is later	\$2,000

Failure to meet any of the above guidelines could require the employee to repay the City of Freeport. The amount may be withheld from the employee’s final paycheck. Requests to waive repayment are approved by the employee’s Department Director and then forwarded to Human Resources and the City Manager for final authorization. Employees who wish to appeal a decision related to this policy may do so by following the City’s established grievance procedure.

9.22 Temporary Interim Pay – Adopted 11/18/2024

Temporary interim pay may apply to **at-will positions** that are vacant and require coverage on an extended-term basis. All interim pay assignments must receive prior approval from the **Department Head and City Manager**.

An employee who is temporarily assigned to perform the **full range of duties of a higher-classified position** for an extended period of **thirty (30) days or more while the City recruits a permanent replacement**, due to the extended absence of an employee in a higher-classified position or the vacancy of such position, may be eligible for temporary interim pay.

Eligible employees may receive a temporary increase in pay of **up to five percent (5%)** or the **minimum of the salary range for the higher-classified position**, as approved, for the duration of the interim assignment.

Temporary interim assignments under this section **do not constitute a promotion** and are **not subject to the City’s formal promotion policy** under Section 3.08.

9.23 Professional Development Membership Coverage

The purpose of this policy is to establish guidelines under which the City may cover or reimburse the cost of professional development memberships for employees. Professional development memberships are memberships in professional associations, organizations, or institutes that provide job-related training, certifications, continuing education, industry standards, or professional networking. Covered costs may include annual membership dues and mandatory fees required to maintain membership. These memberships are intended to support employee growth, maintain professional standards, enhance job-related knowledge and skills, and advance the City’s mission and service delivery.

This policy applies to all City employees, but is subject to department budgets, job relevance, and approval requirements outlined below.

- The membership is directly related to the employee's current position, department functions, or a clearly defined career path within the City.
- The membership provides a demonstrable benefit to the City (e.g., required certifications, continuing education credits, regulatory compliance, or access to professional resources).
- Funds are available within the department's approved budget.
- Memberships are issued to the employee unless the organization requires organizational membership.
- Memberships primarily for personal benefit or unrelated to City duties will not be approved.
- The City reserves the right to deny or revoke coverage if the membership no longer serves a City purpose or if budget constraints arise.

If an employee separates from City employment before the end of a covered membership term, reimbursement will generally not be required unless otherwise specified by department policy or agreement.

CHAPTER

TEN

EMPLOYEE SAFETY

CHAPTER TEN

EMPLOYEE SAFETY

10.01 General Safety

The City of Freeport desires to provide a safe working environment for its employees. To accomplish this, the City will provide all reasonable safeguards to ensure safe working conditions. The City recognizes the need to follow good safety principles, and therefore, believes that no job is so important and no order is so urgent that we cannot take time to perform our work safely. The cooperation of all City employees in observing safety rules and procedures will provide safe working conditions and accident free performance, which will benefit both the employees and the citizens of Freeport.

10.02 Motor Vehicle Safety

All employees of the City must have a valid Texas Drivers License to operate a City owned vehicle, and where required, a commercial license abiding by all DOT regulations.

It is the vehicle operator’s responsibility to operate his/her vehicle in a safe and courteous manner, and obey all traffic laws. City vehicles are constantly under observation of the citizens and must be operated in a safe manner.

Employees may be subject to reimbursement of cost incurred by the City due to an employee’s excessive neglect or due to multiple accidents involving an employee.

Employees shall immediately report all vehicle accidents to their supervisor, and the supervisor shall notify the Freeport Police Department. The employee shall not leave the scene of an accident until an investigation has been made. Failing to report an accident will result in disciplinary action.

An incident report must be immediately sent to the City Manager and the Human Resource Department.

10.03 Job Injuries

An employee must immediately notify his/her supervisor of any on the job injury. Failure to notify the supervisor is grounds for disciplinary action. The supervisor shall notify the Department Director, who shall notify the City Manager and the Human Resource Department.

The supervisor or injured employee shall complete or have completed an Incident Report, and submit or have it submitted, to City Hall within two (2) days of the incident.

10.04 Hazard Reporting

It shall be the responsibility of each employee to identify dangerous and hazardous conditions in and around their work area and report them to their supervisor, so that appropriate corrective action can be taken.

10.05 Incidents and Claims

Employees must immediately notify his/her supervisor of any incident or claim involving the City of Freeport. The supervisor shall notify the Department Director, whom shall notify the City Manager.

The supervisor shall complete or have completed an Incident Report, and submit or have it submitted, to City Hall within two (2) days of the incident.

CHAPTER

ELEVEN

TERMINATION OF EMPLOYMENT

CHAPTER ELEVEN

TERMINATION OF EMPLOYMENT

11.01 Resignation

To resign in good standing, an employee of the City must give 14 days notice to the department supervisor of his/her intention to resign. Employees who terminate their employment other than by discharge will receive their final paycheck on the next scheduled payday.

11.02 Termination

The Human Resource Department or Department Director will insure that all issued equipment owned by the City is returned, such as uniforms, City identification, keys, etc.

11.03 Reductions in Force

At any time, the abolition of any position or authorized reduction in force may be required at the discretion of the City Council.

11.04 Exit Interview

The Human Resource Department shall conduct an exit interview for all employees terminating employment with the City. The interview is for the purpose of completing the employee’s file by listing the person's reason for leaving City employment and insure that all issued equipment owned by the City is returned. All final paychecks must be picked up at the Human Resource Department.

11.05 Final Pay – REVISED 4/15/2019

Upon termination the employee will be paid as follows:

Pay Type	Payout
Holidays	All occurred holidays for the budget year **note – see holiday policy
Vacation	All will be paid **note – maximum carry over is 120 hours
Comp Time Earned	All will be paid
Sick Leave	Unused sick leave will not be paid
Regular and Overtime Hours	All hours worked will be paid
Vacation for Fire/EMS	All will be paid ** note – maximum carry over is 159 hours

CHAPTER

TWELVE

MISCELLANEOUS

CHAPTER TWELVE

MISCELLANEOUS

12.01 Financial Responsibility of Employees

Employees are expected to maintain a good credit standing and pay their obligations promptly, especially with respect to City taxes and utility charges. The City will not serve as a collection agency and failure to pay or make reasonable provisions for payment of obligations to such an extent that such failure is detrimental to City service, shall subject employees to disciplinary action.

12.02 Hurricanes/Disasters

See City of Freeport Hurricane Policy.

12.03 Department Policies

It is recognized that the various departments of the City may have, develop, and issue written policies for their specific departments. These individual department policies shall only be used to supplement and not to replace the City's Personnel Policy Handbook.

12.04 Emergency Closing Operations Policy

The purpose of this policy is to outline procedures to be followed in the event of a declaration of disaster or other emergency event during an emergency closing of City of Freeport operations. This policy will be in effect when the Mayor or City Manager closes City offices for business due to the emergency event. The City shall provide paid leave for "essential" and "nonessential" employees during an emergency closing, and/or disaster pay for employees called on to work in the event of certain emergencies including, but not limited to:

- a. Hurricanes
- b. Tornadoes
- c. Floods
- d. Other acts of God
- e. Nuclear, chemical, and biological emergencies
- f. Terrorist attacks
- g. Any other emergency declared by a federal, state or local authority

The local municipal authority shall be the Mayor, or in the Mayor's absence, the Mayor Pro-Tem or the City Manager if necessary.

CITY OF FREEPORT – PERSONNEL POLICY HANDBOOK

When there is an emergency closure of City offices, all essential employees, nonexempt and exempt (their salary will be converted to its hourly equivalent), who are required to work during an emergency closure will be compensated at one-and-one half times (1-1/2) their hourly rate for the duration of the emergency closure for all hours worked associated with the emergency. Worked hours must be properly recorded on the special timesheet, during which they actually worked. The term “actually worked” means time actively engaged in physical or mental exertion related to the City’s business (at the direction and control of the Department Head or Director) either on the City’s premises or actively engaged in the same manner in the City’s business off premises at the direction and control of the Department Head or Director. The term “actually worked” shall include stand-by and stand-by/sleep time as recognized under the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) only in instances where the employee is required by their Department Head or Director to stay on City premises engaged to wait on instructions to work and the employee does, in fact, stand by and/or sleep on the City premises. Following are examples for each FLSA classification:

Exempt -7 day FLSA – A Police Department Captain who is designated as an essential employee during an emergency closure will receive their regular scheduled hours as excused pay (EXC-Excused hours) plus one-and-one half times(1-1/2) their hourly rate for all hours worked associated with the emergency and hours will be recorded as DDO-Declaration Disaster Overtime. Their regular salary will be converted to an equivalent hourly rate of pay.

Nonexempt -7 day FLSA – Street Department or Parks Department employees who is designated as an essential employee during an emergency closure will receive the number of hours of excused pay (EXC) for each normally scheduled workday plus one-and-one half (1-1/2) times their hourly rate of pay for all hours (DDO) actually worked associated with the emergency during the emergency closure.

Police Officers -14 day FLSA - who are designated as essential employees during an emergency closure whose work week is based on a 14 consecutive-day work period with a maximum of 86 hours of straight-time pay, will receive the number of hours of excused pay (EXC) for each normally scheduled workday, plus one-and-one half (1-1/2) times their hourly rate of pay for all hours (DDO) actually worked associated with the emergency during the emergency closure.

Firefighters – 28 day FLSA - who are designated as essential employees during an emergency closure whose work week is based on a 14 consecutive-day work period with a maximum of 212 hours of straight-time pay, will receive the number of hours of excused pay (EXC) for each normally scheduled workday,

CITY OF FREEPORT – PERSONNEL POLICY HANDBOOK

plus one-and-one half (1-1/2) their hourly rate of pay for all hours (DDO) actually worked associated with the emergency during the emergency closure.

The maximum number of work hours which may be recorded for any work day is 24 hours during the first 72 hours of the emergency closure and 18 hours per day thereafter.

If an employee works in a building not owned by the City and it closes for business due to an emergency event and if the employee(s) cannot be utilized by the department at a different location, then the employee(s) will be compensated for their regular scheduled hours as excused pay (EXC). Excused pay hours do not count towards the earning of comp time or overtime hours.

Reserve Police Officer - Reserve Officers that serve under the Police Department, working the emergency closure, will be compensated at the equivalent of a Patrol Officer based on the City of Freeport Pay Schedule for the current fiscal year.

Non-exempt regular full-time and part-time employees who perform non-emergency job duties during the city closure shall record those hours as regular hours and be calculated and paid at the employee's base hourly rate.

Exempt employees who perform non-emergency job duties during the city closure shall record those hours as regular hours and count those hours towards the earning of comparable time off (hour for hour).

City employees classified as "essential" who fail to report to work as scheduled during an emergency closure event may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including job termination, if the employee is necessary to provide for the safety and well-being of the general public or is otherwise necessary for the restoration of vital services.

All essential employees must be designated and made aware of their assignments prior to an emergency. A list of essential employees shall be provided to the Emergency Management Coordinator and the Human Resources Director. Essential employees are those who are required to stay or report to their assigned areas performing necessary tasks during the emergency, or those who are required to return to work after an immediate threat is over. The list for each department shall be updated annually. Such personnel may include police officers, firefighters, Emergency Management staff, Streets, Parks, Golf Course, Building and Code Enforcement, and a limited number of support department personnel (Payroll, Purchasing, and Information Systems). In the event an unpredictable situation occurs, City of Freeport reserves the right to require employees to be designated on an *ad hoc* basis as essential personnel. In

CITY OF FREEPORT – PERSONNEL POLICY HANDBOOK

these rare cases, the department Director will make every effort to give as much notice as possible to the affected employees.

Non-Essential Employee Leave and Pay: Regular full-time, exempt and non-exempt and regular part-time employees with nonessential job duties will be granted administrative leave (EXC-Excused) for the duration of the emergency closing. Nonessential employees will be compensated at their regular hourly rate of pay for hours the employees would have worked but for the emergency closing. Temporary employees are not paid administrative leave.

Any employee who is off work or scheduled to be off on sick leave, sick pool, vacation, bereavement leave, workers' compensation, FMLA, or disciplinary leave shall have their leave recorded as such. Should an emergency closure occur when the employee is scheduled to return from leave, the employee will be granted administrative leave (EXC-Excused) for that day and thereafter for the duration of the emergency closure.

When the emergency closure ends, all employees are expected to report to work as scheduled. Excused pay for employees will end on the day the city reopens for business. Employees that do not return to work at the end of the city closure must use their own vacation hours and/or comp hours. Sick hours cannot be used unless a doctor's excuse can be provided for all days the employee was absent from work from the time when the city reopens for business. If the employee does not have any paid leave available, the employee will not be compensated and leave without pay (LWOP) hours will be recorded for those days.

When the emergency closure ends and the City has opened for business to the public, employees still working the emergency event will be paid according to the non-closure emergency policy. Premium overtime hours earned (DDO) during the closure will not count towards hours worked for the purpose of earning comp time or overtime wages.

Supervisor's Responsibility

Supervisors must assist in the consistent and fair application and implementation of this policy.

Supervisors must develop and maintain the list of essential employees within their department. Supervisors are responsible for certain essential functions with the help of employees whose job function have been designated as essential in an emergency.

Supervisors must stay up to date of the situation at hand by staying in contact with their Department Director and by monitoring the City of Freeport public notices through news and social media.

Supervisors must remain in contact with their employees regarding assignments and return to duty information.

Supervisors must track, approve and submit all employees' time worked and not worked during the emergency closure, on the appropriate timesheet, to the Human Resources Payroll department.

Supervisors must document and recommend disciplinary action resulting from any violations of this policy.

Employee's Responsibility

Employees designated by their department director as essential personnel are required to report to and/or remain in the City on the job or at a designated location during an emergency and are subject to being utilized as needed directed by the department director during a City closing.

Employees designated by their department director as non-essential personnel are required to remain in contact with their supervisor regarding assignments and return to duty information. Non-essential employees may be deemed essential if more staff is needed during the closure to assist in the preservation and restoration of essential public services required for the health, safety and quality of life within the City. During the closure, it is possible that non-essential personnel will be needed after the immediate crisis is over for reestablishment of city operations and preparing the office to a pre-disaster state. Employees called into work during this time will be paid according to the emergency closure policy.

Employees are responsible for recording accurate time of work performed during the emergency closure. Employees must ensure correct project/job codes are being used for their assignments. After the workweek is complete, employees are responsible for turning in a true and correct signed timesheet to their supervisor for approval.

The City reserves the right to amend, change, or delete this policy at any time, with or without prior notice. Furthermore, this policy does not grant a right or benefit to any employee, either expressed or implied, that in any way alters the "at will" basis of employment that is intended by the City.

12.05 Emergency Event Leave Policy [Updated 04-07-2020]

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance and instruction to employees on how to manage time away from work if a leave of absence is needed during a declared emergency event.

Background

In the event of a wide scale emergency, and when authorized by the City Manager or an authorized designee, the City of Freeport must balance a variety of objectives when determining how best to ensure the continuity of operations and reduce the impact on the workplace. In the event an emergency rises to the level that results in school dismissals, child care program closures, quarantine, and the like, it will permit an employee appropriate time away from work to provide care for their children, themselves and/or other immediate family members in a manner that allows for the continuity of the required City operations and service delivery.

Definitions

- **FMLA (Family Medical Leave Act)** – As authorized by Personnel Policy Handbook, a leave designation that applies to qualified employees experiencing serious health conditions themselves or by their immediate family members and which runs concurrently with other types of leave, such as sick leave, vacation leave, short-term disability, and worker’s compensation, as well as leave without pay.
- **Leave of Absence** – As authorized by Personnel Policy Handbook, a leave designation that applies to situations not covered by FMLA and which runs concurrently with other types of leave, such as sick leave, vacation leave, short-term disability, and worker’s compensation, as well as leave without pay.
- **Telecommuting** – an arrangement in which an employee regularly performs work at an alternative work site for a specified portion of the work week. Occasional work off-site, including work while traveling on City of Freeport business, does not constitute telecommuting.

Scope

This policy will take immediate effect whenever an emergency declaration is executed by the Mayor. This policy will remain in effect until the City determines that the circumstances causing the emergency declaration have been resolved. No part of this policy will be effective to the extent it conflicts with State or Federal law.

Procedures & Responsibilities

If an emergency is declared by the Mayor, employees may be forced to evacuate from their worksite and perform work from home, while others may need to take sick leave to recuperate from illness or assist with caring for immediate family members. It is important that all employees understand the various pay and leave flexibilities that may be utilized during an emergency crisis and to enable employees to stay home either for their safety or when ill, to care for an ill family member and/or dependent, or their children’s schools or childcare programs close, or dismiss as a result of the emergency. Employees required to stay home to take care of a child where the school or day care has closed, but there is no illness, will not qualify for the use of sick leave accruals under the current policy.

Therefore, in the event of an emergency, the City reserves the right to adjust its leave policies, as well as may allow eligible employees to realize an appropriate negative sick leave balance.

CITY OF FREEPORT – PERSONNEL POLICY HANDBOOK

Before an employee shall be allowed to enter into a negative sick leave balance they shall have exhausted all other applicable accrual balances such as vacation, and compensatory time. Eligible employees will be permitted to accrue up to 80 hours of negative sick leave in the event a local emergency is declared by the City Manager or authorized designee. In addition to the first 80 hours, First Responders may be permitted to accrue up to 80 hours of additional negative sick leave. To be eligible, the employee must be a full-time employee, exempt or non-exempt, who work a minimum of forty (40) hours per week on a regular basis and have exhausted all other accrued leave balances. This negative sick leave balance will be considered a salary advance and require the employee to reimburse the City either through future accruals or cash payment.

If the leave qualifies as FMLA-protected leave, the City will require the employee to use paid sick leave, vacation leave, and other accruals pursuant to the FMLA policy in the Employee Policy Manual.

If State or Federal mandates or laws amend or expand FMLA-protected leave or leave provisions for employees, the City will comply accordingly.

If an employee's employment is terminated prior to satisfying the negative sick accrual, a deduction shall be made from the employee's final check to the extent allowed by law to cover the value remaining that was advanced to the employee or the employee shall make a cash payment to the City for the balance remaining.

During an emergency, the City may suspend return to work and fitness for duty policies that require a doctor's note or certification from a health care provider before employees may return to work.

In the event of a wide scale emergency or pandemic, where the employee is not ill, the employee may not take leave, or refuse to work, simply to avoid possible exposure to a causative agent in the workplace. Employees who may have a disability that creates an increased risk associated with the emergency are encouraged to notify HR in order to seek an accommodation under The City's disability policy.

Any employee who fails to follow the requirements of this policy and/or falsifies any information or documentation related to their own or another's potentially life-threatening, contagious illness will be subject to disciplinary action in accordance with City policy up to and including termination.

If the need arises, employees who hold positions that are suitable for telecommuting may enter into a Telecommuting Work Arrangement approved by the City Manager.

Accountability

Employees who are found to be in violation of any part of this policy may be subject to disciplinary action as outlined in the Personnel Policy Handbook.

Enforcement

Human Resources will be responsible for the enforcement of this policy.

CHAPTER

THIRTEEN

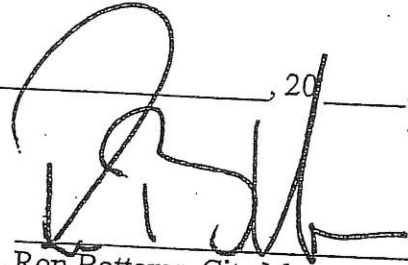
SEVERABILITY CLAUSE

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

SEVERABILITY CLAUSE

In the event any section or provision of these personnel policies is found to be unconstitutional, void, or inoperative by the final judgment of a court of competent jurisdiction, such defective provision, if any, is hereby declared to be severable from the remaining sections and provisions of those policies, and such remaining sections or provisions shall remain in full force and effect.

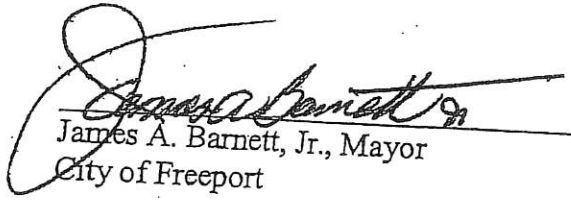
Issued this _____ day of _____, 20__



Ron Bottoms, City Manager
City of Freeport

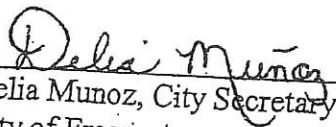
Approved by the City Council of the City of Freeport, Texas, this 4th day of

August, 2003.



James A. Barnett, Jr., Mayor
City of Freeport

ATTEST:


Delia Munoz, City Secretary
City of Freeport

APPENDIX

APPENDIX A

**FIRE/EMS DEPARTMENT AND
53 HOUR FIRE/EMS EMPLOYEES**

A5.19 Use of City Owned Vehicles

For the purposes of section 5.19, City employee shall include reserves, volunteers, and other members associated with the department who may operate a city owned vehicle from time to time for operational purposes. In addition, Section 5.19 does not preclude the operation of a city owned vehicle by mutual aid agencies during an emergency or when assistance in moving or shuttling a city owned vehicle is operationally necessary.

A5.22 Use of Telephone/Cellular Phones

In order to maintain direct communication with medical control, the emergency department physician, or poison control; personal communication devices may be allowed while on duty, at the discretion of the Fire Chief.

A8.02 Vacation

53 hour Fire/EMS employees will accumulate vacation at the rate of 53 hours per week and will acquire a week of vacation equivalent to that of a 40 hour employee, according to the following schedule:

<u>Years of Employment</u>	<u>Weeks per Year</u>	<u>Hours per Year</u>	
0 to 4	2	106.08	ppd 4.08
5 to 14	3	159.12	ppd 6.12
15 and Above	4	212.16	ppd 8.16

The annual carry over for 53 hour Fire/EMS employees shall be 159 hours . See attached chart.

A8.03 Holidays

The Fire/EMS Department shall observe a holiday on Patriot Day (September 11) in accordance with the Local Government Code. Patriot Day shall replace the Birthday holiday, for a total of 13.5 holidays, and shall not result in an additional holiday.

Holiday hours for 53 hour employees shall be calculated at a rate of 12 hours per holiday for a total of 162 hours per year. Holiday hours will be awarded at 6.23 hours per pay period and will not roll over from year to year. See attached chart.

CITY OF FREEPORT – PERSONNEL POLICY HANDBOOK

A 53 hour employee that works on a regularly scheduled holiday will be paid their overtime rate for the hours worked on that holiday, up to 12 hours. New Years Eve holiday is only up to 6 hours. The overtime rate shall apply to the shift working 7:00 am to 7:00 pm on any specific city observed holiday

A8.05 Sick Leave

For the purposes of Section 8.05, the city accrual of 15 days per year shall be considered 3 weeks, the maximum accrual of 720 hours shall be considered 18 weeks, and the maximum final payment of 80 hours shall be considered 2 weeks.

The sick leave accrual for 53 hour employees shall be 3 weeks per year, or 159 hours. Credit shall accumulate at the rate of 6.12 hours for each bi-weekly pay period. The maximum accumulation of sick leave shall be 18 weeks, or 954 hours.

A8.09 Bereavement Leave

For the purposes of Section 8.09, up to 53 hours of leave with pay may be granted to a 53 hour employee for bereavement leave.

A12.03 Department Policies

Based on the unique nature of the 24 hour shift and 53 hour work week of the Fire/EMS Department; the administration of hours, leave, and payroll accounting may be modified to accommodate the operational needs of the Department, at the discretion of the Fire Chief with the approval of the City Manager.

INDEX

INDEX

TOPIC	SECTION	REVISED DATE	PAGE
-A-			
Alcohol/Drug Abuse	5.13		5-6
Americans with Disabilities Act	3.02		3-1
Application Process	3.03	02/20/2024	3-1
Attendance	8.01		8-1
Appendix A	Appendix		A-1
-B-			
Bereavement Leave	8.09		8-5
-C-			
Cellular Phone Use	5.22		5-16
Certification Pay	9.17	09/08/2020	9-7
City Equipment	5.20		5-16
Computer Passwords	5.25	10/17/2022	5-22
Conditions and Amendments	1.02		1-1
Confidential Information	5.10		5-5
Conflict of Interest	5.04		5-2
-D-			
Department Policies	12.03		12-1
Disciplinary Action	6.03		6-3
Disciplinary in General	6.01		6-1
Disciplinary Reasons	6.02		6-1
Drug Testing/Physical Examinations	3.05		3-3
-E-			
Education	9.16	06/03/2019	9-6
Eligibility for Rehire	3.06		3-3
Emergency Closing Operations	12.04		12-1
Emergency Event Leave Policy	12.05	04/07/2020	12-5
Employee Evaluations	3.11		3-5
Employment At Will	1.04		1-2
Employment Definitions	3.10		3-5
Employment of Minors	3.09		3-4
Equal Employment Opportunity	3.01		3-1

INDEX

TOPIC	SECTION	REVISED DATE	PAGE
Ethics	5.02	02/19/2019	5-1
Exit Interview	11.04		11-1
-F-			
Family Medical Leave Act	8.06		8-3
Final Pay	11.05	04/15/2019	11-1
Financial Responsibility	12.01		12-1
Flexible Spending Accounts	9.12		9-6
-G-			
Gambling	5.14		5-7
Gift Acceptance	5.05	02/19/2019	5-3
Grievance Procedure	7.02		7-1
Grievance Right	7.01		7-1
Group Health	9.03		9-1
-H-			
Harassment	5.15		5-7
Hazard Reporting	10.04		10-2
Holidays	8.03	10/17/2022	8-2
Hurricane	12.02		12-1
-I-			
Incident/Claim Reporting	10.05		10-2
Inclement Weather	8.04		8-2
Injuries	10.03		10-1
Information Resources Acceptable Use	5.23	10/17/2022	5-16
-J-			
Judicial Leave	8.10		8-5
-K-			

INDEX

TOPIC	SECTION	REVISED DATE	PAGE
-L-			
Leave of Absence	8.08		8-4
Leave Donation	8.13		8-7
Long-term Disability	9.04	06/03/2019	9-1
Longevity Pay	9.10	09/08/2020	9-5
-M-			
Meals and Breaks	5.11		5-5
Mental Health Leave	8.12	10/01/2021	8-5
Military Leave	8.11		8-5
Misconduct	5.03		5-1
Motor Vehicle Safety	10.02		10-1
-N-			
Non-Discrimination	1.03		1-1
Nepotism	3.04		3-2
-O-			
Outside Interest	5.06	04/15/2019	5-3
Overtime/Compensatory Time	9.07	03/06/2023	9-3
-P-			
Pay Deductions	9.09		9-4
Paydays and Hours of Work	9.08	06/03/2019	9-4
Personal Appearance	5.01		5-1
Policy Handbook Purpose	1.01		1-1
Press Release	5.26		5-25
Probation Completion	4.03		4-1
Probation Length	4.02		4-1
Probation Purpose	4.01		4-1
Promotions	3.08		3-4
Public Office	5.07		5-3
-Q-			

INDEX

TOPIC	SECTION	REVISED DATE	PAGE
-R-			
Records Access	5.09		5-4
Reduction of Force	11.03		11-1
Remote Access Use	5.27		5-25
Removal During Probation	4.04		4-2
Resignation	11.01		11-1
Retaliation	5.16		5-10
Retirement	9.01		9-1
Role of City Manager	2.02		2-1
Role of Department Directors	2.03		2-1
Role of Mayor/Council	2.01		2-1
Role of Operation Personnel	2.04		2-1
-S-			
Safety in General	10.01		10-1
Searches	5.18		5-13
Sick Leave	8.05	04/15/2019	8-3
Social Media Usage Policy	5.24	04/20/2020	5-20
Social Security	9.02		9-1
Solicitation	5.08		5-4
Supplemental Insurance	9.13		9-6
Supplemental Retirement Plan	9.15		9-6
-T-			
Telephone Use	5.22		5-16
Termination	11.02		11-1
Tobacco Use	5.12		5-6
Transfers	3.07		3-4
Travel Reimbursement	9.14	09/08/2020	9-6
Tuition Reimbursement	9.11	06/03/2019	9-5
-U-			
Uniforms	9.06	08/30/2020	9-2
-V-			
Vacation	8.02	04/15/2019	8-1

INDEX

<u>TOPIC</u>	<u>SECTION</u>	<u>REVISED DATE</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
Vehicles City	5.19	02/21/2023	5-13
Vehicles Personal	5.21		5-16
Violence in the Workplace	5.17-A	05/18/2020	5-10
	-W-		
Weapons in the Workplace	5.17-B	05/18/2020	5-11
Worker’s Compensation	8.07		8-4
Worker’s Compensation Insurance	9.05		9-2
	-X-		
	-Y-		
	-Z-		