



Consideration to approve the resolution in support of the Revised Town of Bluffton Employee Handbook

Presentation to Town Council
Stephen Steese, Town Manager
July 9, 2024



Background

Town Council approved adoption of the Town of Bluffton Employee Handbook on October 13, 2004. This provided for subsequent revisions to be approved by Resolution of Town Council. Revisions to the Handbook have been made in accordance with this procedure in 2006, 2008, 2015, 2019, 2021 and in 2023.



Background, cont'd.

- We are asking for Town Council to approve the resolution in support of the adoption of the revisions to the Town of Bluffton Employee Handbook.
- This is important to keep the Town of Bluffton in compliance with updated federal regulations and to support us in offering competitive and value-added programs for employees.



Updates being proposed/recommended to existing policies:

Town Vehicle Usage policy:

- Add annual DMV checks.
- Add language to clarify what take home vehicles can be used for and procedure for staff requesting one.

Holiday policy:

- Add in-lieu of holidays.
 - A day off given to an employee that is not scheduled to work on a paid holiday.
- Add President's Day to paid holiday schedule.
 - This is in line with the HR strategic plan of aligning our holidays with Beaufort County School District.

Harassment/Non-discrimination policy:

- Add important language.
 - EEOC released updated guidance to prevent harassment.
- Added reporting procedure which was previously not included.

Chain of Command policy:

- Amended language to clarify proper use of chain of command, proper reporting within our form of government, and reporting when any conflicts within chain of command arise.



New policies being proposed/recommended:

PTO Donation policy:

- Time will voluntarily be donated to a central bank.
- Employees will be asked to apply to use it.
- Time is to be used for medical emergency or personal serious injury to employee or immediate family member.
- Employees may request up to 12 weeks of donated leave.
- Time requests will be reviewed and approved by a 3-person committee made up of employees to be appointed by Town Manager.
- All medical information will remain confidential.
- Will not interfere with FMLA.
- Time cannot be donated directly to a specific employee.
- Can be used in conjunction with an on-duty injury (Workers Compensation).



New policies being proposed/recommended:

Paid Parental Leave:

- SC signed legislation into law May 13, 2024, allowing for Paid Parental Leave for state employees.
- Town of Bluffton modeled our leave policy after the State.
 - Six weeks of paid time given to:
 - Employees who have given birth.
 - Adopted a child and are the primary caregiver.
 - Two weeks of paid time given to:
 - Employees who have a spouse/partner that have given birth.
 - Adopted and are not the primary caregiver.
 - Taken custody of a foster child.
- At no time can two employees of the Town qualify to take 6 weeks of paid leave.
- City of Beaufort is proposing to implement this year / County already does it.

New policies being proposed/recommended:



- Bereavement Leave:
 - 4 days for immediate family member.
 - To include: employee's spouse, child/step-child, parent/step-parent, mother/father-in-law, daughter/son-in-law, sibling/step-sibling, an adult who stood in loco parentis.
 - 1 day for extended family member.
 - To include: brother/sister-in-law, aunt, uncle, grandparent, grandchild, spouse's grandparent.
 - 4 hours for fellow employee or retiree.



Next Steps

- Upon adoption of Resolution, provide an electronic copy of the updated policies in the Employee Handbook to all employees, conduct training sessions to answer questions and review the updated information.



Recommendations

- We are asking for Town Council to approve the resolution in support of the adoption of the revisions to the Town of Bluffton Employee Handbook.



Questions?

Motion:

“I move to [***Approve, Approve with Conditions, or Deny***] a resolution in support of the adoption of the revised Employee Handbook.”