



Town of Bluffton

An Equal Opportunity Employer

EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK



bluffton
HEART OF THE LOWCOUNTRY™

Town of Bluffton Employee Handbook



ALL EMPLOYEES OF THE TOWN ARE EMPLOYED AT-WILL AND MAY QUIT OR BE TERMINATED AT ANY TIME AND FOR ANY OR NO REASON. NOTHING IN ANY OF THE TOWN'S RULES, POLICIES, HANDBOOKS, PROCEDURES OR OTHER DOCUMENTS RELATING TO EMPLOYMENT CREATES ANY EXPRESS OR IMPLIED CONTRACT OF EMPLOYMENT. THIS HANDBOOK REPLACES ANY PREVIOUSLY ISSUED POLICIES, WRITTEN OR ORAL, GOVERNING EMPLOYMENT. NO PAST PRACTICES OR PROCEDURES, WHETHER WRITTEN OR ORAL, FORM ANY EXPRESS OR IMPLIED AGREEMENT TO CONTINUE SUCH PRACTICES OR PROCEDURES. NO PROMISES OR ASSURANCES, WHETHER WRITTEN OR ORAL, THAT ARE CONTRARY TO OR INCONSISTENT WITH THE LIMITATIONS SET FORTH IN THIS PARAGRAPH CREATE ANY CONTRACT OF EMPLOYMENT UNLESS: 1) THE TERMS ARE PUT IN WRITING; 2) THE DOCUMENT IS LABELED "CONTRACT"; 3) THE DOCUMENT STATES THE TERM OF EMPLOYMENT; AND 4) THE DOCUMENT IS SIGNED BY THE TOWN / MANAGER OR APPROVED BY VOTE OF COUNCIL.

Adopted June 1, 2008

Updated May 26, 2015

Updated June 11, 2019

Updated July 14, 2020

Updated January 12, 2021

Town of Bluffton, South Carolina

DISCLAIMER

ALL EMPLOYEES OF THE TOWN ARE EMPLOYED AT-WILL AND MAY QUIT OR BE TERMINATED AT ANY TIME AND FOR ANY OR NO REASON. NOTHING IN ANY OF THE TOWN'S RULES, POLICIES, HANDBOOKS, PROCEDURES OR OTHER DOCUMENTS RELATING TO EMPLOYMENT CREATES ANY EXPRESS OR IMPLIED CONTRACT OF EMPLOYMENT. THIS HANDBOOK REPLACES ANY PREVIOUSLY ISSUED POLICIES, WRITTEN OR ORAL, GOVERNING EMPLOYMENT. NO PAST PRACTICES OR PROCEDURES, WHETHER WRITTEN OR ORAL, FORM ANY EXPRESS OR IMPLIED AGREEMENT TO CONTINUE SUCH PRACTICES OR PROCEDURES. NO PROMISES OR ASSURANCES, WHETHER WRITTEN OR ORAL, THAT ARE CONTRARY TO OR INCONSISTENT WITH THE LIMITATIONS SET FORTH IN THIS PARAGRAPH CREATE ANY CONTRACT OF EMPLOYMENT UNLESS: 1) THE TERMS ARE PUT IN WRITING; 2) THE DOCUMENT IS LABELED "CONTRACT"; 3) THE DOCUMENT STATES THE TERM OF EMPLOYMENT; AND 4) THE DOCUMENT IS SIGNED BY THE TOWN MANAGER OR APPROVED BY VOTE OF COUNCIL.

I acknowledge receipt of the Town's personnel handbook and understand that it is not a contract of employment. I understand this handbook replaces all previous handbooks, policies, and practices.

[Signature]

Date

[Printed Name]

[Witness / Position]

Date

For employees in the Bluffton police department, the Bluffton Police department standard operating procedures (SOP's) serve as an addendum to this handbook.

EMPLOYEE COPY

Town of Bluffton, South Carolina

DISCLAIMER

ALL EMPLOYEES OF THE TOWN ARE EMPLOYED AT-WILL AND MAY QUIT OR BE TERMINATED AT ANY TIME AND FOR ANY OR NO REASON. NOTHING IN ANY OF THE TOWN'S RULES, POLICIES, HANDBOOKS, PROCEDURES OR OTHER DOCUMENTS RELATING TO EMPLOYMENT CREATES ANY EXPRESS OR IMPLIED CONTRACT OF EMPLOYMENT. THIS HANDBOOK REPLACES ANY PREVIOUSLY ISSUED POLICIES, WRITTEN OR ORAL, GOVERNING EMPLOYMENT. NO PAST PRACTICES OR PROCEDURES, WHETHER WRITTEN OR ORAL, FORM ANY EXPRESS OR IMPLIED AGREEMENT TO CONTINUE SUCH PRACTICES OR PROCEDURES. NO PROMISES OR ASSURANCES, WHETHER WRITTEN OR ORAL, THAT ARE CONTRARY TO OR INCONSISTENT WITH THE LIMITATIONS SET FORTH IN THIS PARAGRAPH CREATE ANY CONTRACT OF EMPLOYMENT UNLESS: 1) THE TERMS ARE PUT IN WRITING; 2) THE DOCUMENT IS LABELED "CONTRACT"; 3) THE DOCUMENT STATES THE TERM OF EMPLOYMENT; AND 4) THE DOCUMENT IS SIGNED BY THE TOWN MANAGER OR APPROVED BY VOTE OF COUNCIL.

I acknowledge receipt of the Town's personnel handbook and understand that it is not a contract of employment. I understand this handbook replaces all previous handbooks, policies, and practices.

[Signature]

Date

[Printed Name]

[Witness / Position]

Date

For employees in the Bluffton police department, the Bluffton Police department standard operating procedures (SOP's) serve as an addendum to this handbook.

HUMAN RESOURCES COPY

Table of Contents

TABLE OF CONTENTS	I
TOWN OF BLUFFTON HISTORY	2
TOWN OF BLUFFTON ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE	3
TOWN OF BLUFFTON MISSION STATEMENT	4
TOWN OF BLUFFTON VISION STATEMENT	4
BLUFFTON'S COVENANT.....	5
1.0. EMPLOYMENT POLICIES.....	7
1.1 Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Policy.	7
1.2 Anti-Harassment Policy.	7
1.3 Fraternalization Policy.	7
1.4 Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).	8
1.5 Hiring / Recruiting.	9
1.6 Nepotism / Employment of Relatives.	10
1.7 Probationary Period.	10
1.8 Employee Performance.	10
1.9 Telecommuting Policy	11
1.10 Promotions and Transfers.	14
1.11 Secondary Outside Employment.....	15
1.12 General Office Safety Guidelines.	16
1.13 Injury While on Duty.	17
1.14 Fire & Disaster Plan.....	17
1.15 Employee ID Cards.....	17
2.0. EMPLOYEE CONDUCT.	19
2.1 Core Beliefs.	19
2.2 Ethics Guidelines.	19
2.3 Business Entertaining.....	20
2.4 Daily Schedule & Attendance.....	20
2.5 Hours of Work.	21
2.6 Punctuality and Attendance.	22
2.7 Tobacco Free Workplace.	23
2.8 Employee Substance Abuse Policy.....	24
2.9 Computer and Internet Policy.	24
2.10 Security Awareness Training and Testing	25
2.11 Social Media Policy.	25
2.12 Electronic Mail Records Retention.	25

2.13	Cellular Phone Usage Policy.	25
2.14	Mail.	26
2.15	Town Vehicle Usage.	26
2.16	Traveling on Business.	28
2.17	Employee Dress Code.	31
2.18	Press Releases.	32
2.19	Workplace Violence.	33
2.20	Emergency Situation Protocol.	33
2.21	Concealed Weapons.	34
2.22	Facility Security.	34
2.23	Town of Bluffton Property.	36
2.24	Audio Tape/Video Recording.	36
2.25	Solicitation.	36
2.26	Sanitary Work Space.	37
2.27	Employee Behavior and Expectations.	37
2.28	Filing a Grievance.	40
2.29	Protocol for Handling Employee Issues.	40
3.0	EMERGENCY AND PANDEMIC POLICIES.	42
3.1	Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA)	42
3.2	COVID-19 Travel Advisory Notice.	43
3.3	Pandemic Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)- COVID-19.	43
3.4	Temporary Telecommuting Policy.	44
3.5	Emergency Management Training Policy.	47
3.6	Special Pay Provisions Policy.	47
4.0.	PAYROLL.	53
4.1	Exempt Employees.	53
4.2	Non-Exempt Employees.	53
4.3	Full Time Employee.	53
4.4	Part Time Employee.	53
4.5	Temporary Employee.	53
4.6	Overtime/Compensatory Time.	53
4.7	Payment of Wages.	53
4.8	Special Pay Provisions.	54
5.0.	EMPLOYEE BENEFITS.	56
5.1	Health, Dental & Life Insurance.	56
5.2	Flexible Spending Accounts.	56
5.3	Pension Plans.	56
5.4	Disability.	57
5.5	Supplemental Long-Term Disability (SLTD).	57
5.6	Workers' Compensation.	57
5.7	Employee Assistance Program (EAP).	57

5.8	Educational Assistance.	57
5.9	Educational Bonus Policy.	59
5.10	Wellness Programs.....	60
5.11	Discretionary Awards.	60
5.12	Recognition Programs.....	61
6.0	TIME AWAY FROM WORK.....	63
6.1	Paid Time Off (PTO).	63
6.2	Required Time Off and Limitations.....	63
6.3	Cash Payment of PTO and Maximum Accrual.....	64
6.4	Holiday Pay.....	64
6.5	Personal Day.....	65
6.6	Jury Duty.....	65
6.7	Administrative Leave.....	65
6.8	Voluntary Time-Off Without Pay.....	66
6.9	Corporate Social Responsibility Program.....	66
6.10	Leaves of Absence - Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA).	68
6.11	Military Leave.....	70
6.12	Physical Disability and Personal Leave.....	70
7.0	LEAVING EMPLOYMENT.	73
7.1	Termination.....	73
7.2	Return to Service – Town of Bluffton Retiree Re-Employment Program.....	74
8.0	ABOUT THIS HANDBOOK.....	78
8.1	Amendments to the Handbook.....	78

Lisa Sulka
Mayor

Larry Toomer
Mayor Pro Tempore

Marc Orlando
Town Manager



Council Members
Dan Wood
Fred Hamilton
Harry Lutz

Kimberly Chapman
Town Clerk

Welcome!

Our community shares a deep pride in our town and it is an honor to work with such an engaged citizenry. We look forward to your contributions as a part of the staff entrusted to serve Bluffton. As one of the fastest-growing municipalities in Beaufort County and the Southeast, Bluffton provides a dynamic work culture as we manage our local government's services, issues and operations.

Bluffton's Mayor, Town Council members and staff are results-driven, and customer-service oriented with a commitment to excellence. This collective work ethic is what ensures we accomplish the mission of the Town of Bluffton, which is, "We take care of our citizens, the Town and each other by continuously making our community and organization better."

As Town Manager, it's my privilege to ensure you have the resources to perform your job at the highest level possible. One of these resources includes this Employee Handbook. This Handbook is not a contract; however, it is a reference guide which provides basic employment policies and benefits associated with being a Town of Bluffton employee.

You are encouraged to become familiar with the contents of this Employee Handbook. If you have questions regarding any policy contained in it, please seek clarification from your supervisor, department director, Human Resources or me.

Once again, welcome to the Staff of the Town of Bluffton!

Sincerely,

Marc Orlando,
Town Manager, ICMA- CM

Theodore D. Washington Municipal Building
20 Bridge Street P.O. Box 386 Bluffton, South Carolina 29910
Telephone (843) 706-4500 Fax (843) 757-6720
www.townofbluffton.sc.gov

Town of Bluffton History

Located in the center of Beaufort County, South Carolina, Bluffton is known as the “Heart of the Lowcountry.” Bluffton offers a strategic location for residents, businesses and guests. Bluffton is also central to other Lowcountry towns and Southeastern attractions such as Hilton Head Island, Beaufort City, Charleston, Savannah, Georgia and Jacksonville, Florida.

Incorporated in 1852, Bluffton was a one-square mile river town. The Town earned its name because of its original one-square mile jurisdiction resided on a bluff above the May River. Bluffton’s “heart” is its May River and it has always been the town’s centerpiece. The river is why area plantation owners and their families first came to Bluffton in the early 1800s. They built summer homes on “The Bluff” to escape the hot, unhealthy conditions of the low-lying rice and cotton plantations. Bluffton’s high ground and cool river breezes from the May River provided that relief. The May River also provided families easy-access to other waterways. What is now known as the Calhoun Street Dock was once a rest stop for boat travelers between Savannah, Beaufort and Charleston.

Bluffton’s coastal way of life has earned it the title of one of “the last true coastal village of the South.” Besides living, working and playing among the Lowcountry’s natural resources, Bluffton residents pride themselves in their sense of community and their non-conforming ways. Often described as “eclectic,” the town is full of artists, art galleries, festivals and parades. Bluffton residents have also been known as a rebellious community. That reputation began in its roots – literally. Bluffton became a hotbed of the separatist movement in 1844. Robert Barnwell Rhett, a South Carolina congressman, spoke to a group of about 500 residents under a big Oak Tree in Bluffton to protest federal taxes and discuss other issues affecting the South. This meeting gave birth to the Secession movement which led South Carolina to be the first state to leave the Union in 1860. That tree still exists today in Bluffton.

The Civil War had a devastating effect on Bluffton as two-thirds of the town was destroyed by fire during the Union’s Bluffton Expedition on June 4, 1863. Those who remained were destitute and it took many years for Bluffton to economically reestablish itself.

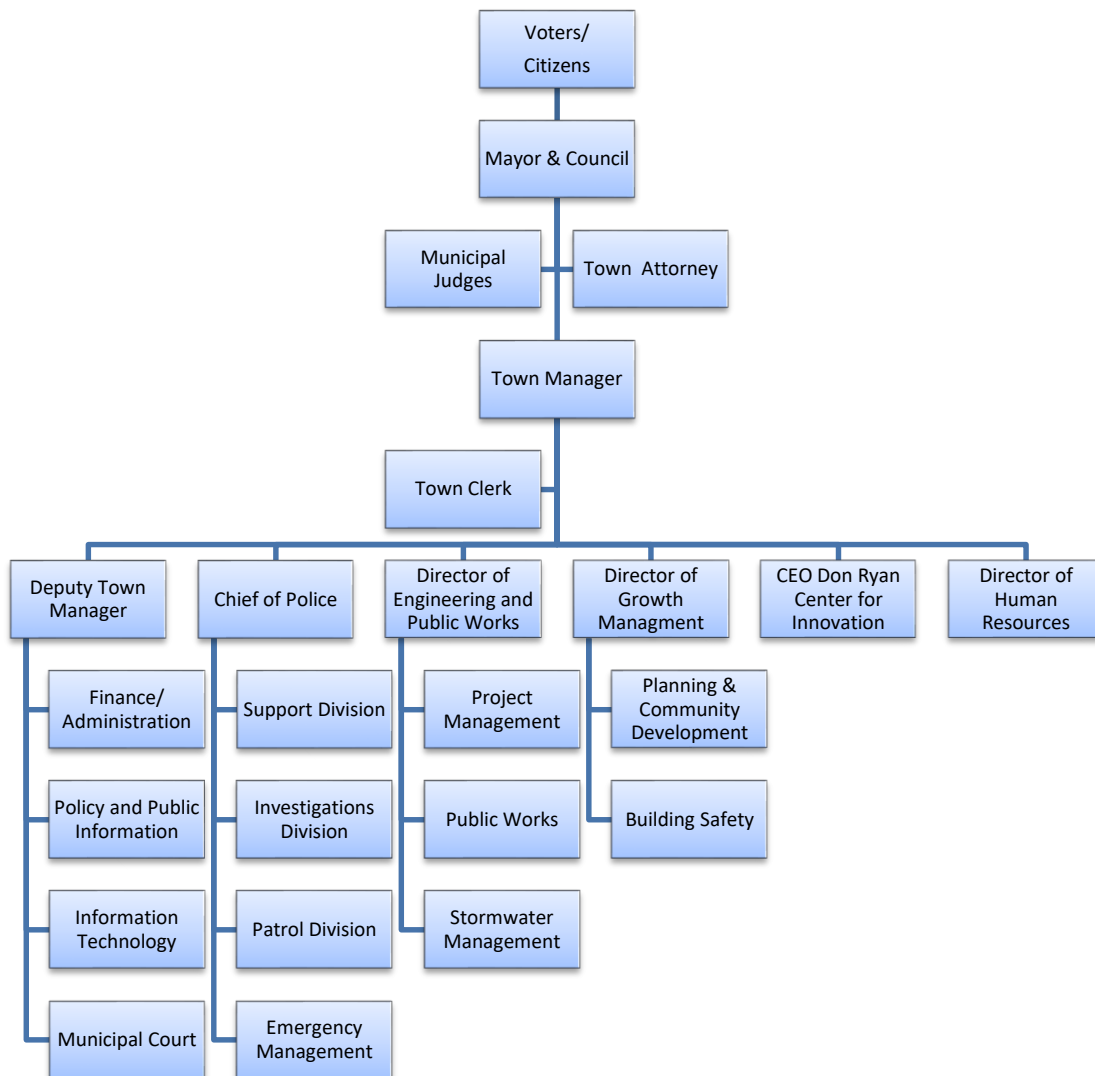
Preserving history and the town’s remaining buildings from the Antebellum/Reconstruction Era has resulted in a surge of tourism and numerous local, regional and national accolades.

While time marches on, the reasons why people come to Bluffton haven’t changed much since its early days. People are relocating to Bluffton for its beauty, culture and high quality of life. The Historic District is still the hub of businesses, shopping and community gatherings. The May River is where people still go to fish, oyster and shrimp. It is a town known as the place to get the Lowcountry’s best seafood. Tourists and residents come to Bluffton to see oystermen harvest May River oysters the old-fashioned way, using their hands, gloves and small boats called bateaus. These oysters are brought to the historic Bluffton Oyster Company where employees, many who have worked there for generations, hand shuck the oysters. The Bluffton Oyster Company is the last hand-shucking factory in the state.

One of the secrets to Bluffton’s population surge and success is preserving the town’s uniqueness as it honors its past. Most towns only have one building, or site or one family’s story to carry on the stories of its former years. Wars, especially the Civil War, Mother Nature’s destruction or the desire to build anew have destroyed the history of most American cities. Bluffton is different. Its Historic District is comprised of numerous historic buildings, homes, sites and landmarks. Town leaders know that its uniqueness is what separates it from other municipalities and they continually invest in the Historic District.

While Bluffton still operates in similar ways, the town, itself, has dramatically changed. In the last few decades, Bluffton’s land mass and population has skyrocketed. Since 1998, Bluffton has exploded from about 750 residents and a jurisdiction of one-square mile (i.e. the Historic District). In 2019, Bluffton is 54 square miles due to multiple annexations and has more than 20,000 residents. Bluffton is the fastest growing municipality in South Carolina and is consistently winning honors, awards and accolades for its high quality of life, low crime rate, progressive economic development initiatives and innovative urban planning.

Town of Bluffton Organizational Structure



Town of Bluffton Mission Statement

We take care of our citizens, the Town and each other by continuously making our community and organization better.

The Town organization is committed to:

- Providing excellent services by continuously looking for improvements in services using best practices.
- Providing award winning fiscal management services to our citizens.
- Providing exceptional customer service that is focused on solutions and meeting the needs of our citizens.
- Providing meaningful public engagement opportunities for our community.
- Providing a work environment committed to teamwork, communication, transparency, ethical behavior and progressive compensation to help employees reach their full potential.
- Providing and using performance measures to determine if our services are getting the intended results.

Town of Bluffton Vision Statement

Bluffton, the Heart of the Lowcountry, a town that appreciates the past, focuses on today and is planning together for a great future.

Bluffton is a welcoming and inclusive community, committed to retaining its historic nature, livable neighborhoods, active lifestyle and respect for the May River. We are committed to work together to create a great community now and one that is also sustainable for the generations to come.

PRINCIPLES

1. Respect

2. Effectiveness

3. Continuous Improvement

4. Leadership

5. Service

6. Trust

VALUES

We respect our citizens and strive to protect their dignity, freedom and privacy.

We provide services in a cost-effective manner.

We strive to continuously improve by seeking feedback from our citizens, and by improving our services through training and professional development.

We believe we must be a pace-setting municipality in our country and in our state.

We maintain an attitude and a commitment of going “above and beyond” in serving our citizens.

We develop and foster a climate of trust and sincerity.

Bluffton's Covenant

As citizens of Bluffton, we hold the following to be true:

- *That social, cultural and economic diversity and inclusiveness are the essence of our community;*
- *That we bear responsibility for the stewardship of nature's blessings entrusted to us in Bluffton and along the May River;*
- *That freedom and civic duty work hand-in-hand to create a culture of individuality and a sense of community;*
- *That our natural, physical and cultural history is worthy of our protection as trustees in order for us to embrace our future.*

Acknowledging these truths, we aspire to the following goals:

- *To build upon our historic foundation a future that celebrates diversity, nurtures neighborliness and ensures a future of opportunity for generations to come;*
- *To enhance the natural beauty and the quality of the May River and its watershed;*
- *To protect the architectural heritage of Old Town Bluffton;*
- *To enhance the canopy of trees and natural landscape throughout Bluffton;*
- *To engage the creative human spirit and the arts within Bluffton;*
- *To protect and enhance the oyster, shrimping and fishing opportunities of the May River;*
- *To provide housing opportunities for all citizens that are decent, affordable, and Bluffton beautiful;*
- *To nurture respect for each citizen.*

SECTION I.

EMPLOYMENT POLICIES

This section discusses some standard policies related to your employment such as the Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Policy, the Anti-Harassment Policy, Sexual Harassment Policy, the Town's Fraternization Policy. The Town's Hiring Policy is also covered, which includes the Nepotism/Employment of Relatives Policy. It also provides information on the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Reasonable Accommodation.

1.0. EMPLOYMENT POLICIES.

1.1 Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Policy.

The Town provides equal opportunity to all applicants for employment and administers hiring, conditions and privileges of employment, compensation, training, promotions, transfer and discipline without discrimination because of race, color, religion, gender, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, genetic information, age or national origin. The Town also prohibits retaliation against employees who have reported discrimination. Any employee who believes that he has been discriminated against in violation of this policy should report the matter to Human Resources, the employee's immediate supervisor or any manager in the employee's chain of command.

1.2 Anti-Harassment Policy.

Various laws and regulations generally prohibit employment decisions from being made on the basis of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, age, genetic information, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, or similar distinctions. In addition, it is our desire to provide a working environment in which employees are free from discomfort or pressure resulting from jokes, ridicule, slurs, threats, and harassment either relating to such distinctions or simply resulting from a lack of consideration for a fellow human being.

The Town does not tolerate harassment of any kind and forbids retaliation against anyone who has reported harassment in good faith.

Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment warrants special mention. Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other physical, verbal, or visual conduct based on sex constitute sexual harassment when:

- a) Submission to the conduct is an explicit or implicit term or condition of employment; or
- b) Submission to or rejection of the conduct is used as the basis for an employment decision; or
- c) The conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment.

Sexual harassment may include explicit sexual propositions, sexual innuendos, suggestive comments, sexually oriented kidding or teasing, practical jokes, jokes about gender-specific traits, foul or obscene language or gestures, displays of foul or obscene printed or visual material, put-downs or condescending or derisive comments or terms based on gender, and physical conduct, such as patting, pinching, or brushing against another person. Although most commonly, the perpetrator of such conduct is male, and the victim is female, this policy prohibits such conduct regardless of the gender of the perpetrator or victim.

Disputes sometimes arise as to whether conduct was "welcome" or "unwelcome." Conduct that would violate this policy if it were unwelcome violates the policy if anyone complains of it. However, not all conduct, which is prohibited by this policy, constitutes a violation of the law.

1.3 Fraternization Policy.

The purpose of the Town's Fraternization Policy is to uphold appropriate boundaries between personal and business relationships, which includes the requirement to report participation of such relationships, including those with vendors and other business associates.

Except as otherwise stated below, Town employees may date, develop friendships and relationships both inside and outside of the workplace as long as the relationships do not negatively have an impact on work.

Any relationship that interferes with the Town's business including, but not limited to, the culture of

teamwork, the harmonious work environment or the productivity of employees, will generally be addressed by applying the progressive discipline policy up to and including employee termination.

Adverse workplace behavior or behavior that affects the workplace that arises because of personal relationships will not be tolerated.

The exception to this policy relates to the conduct of managers and supervisors employed by the Town. Employees working in a managerial and/or supervisory role are prohibited from engaging in personal relationships (i.e. dating, etc.) with employees who report to them, whether directly or indirectly. Such conduct may be perceived as favoritism and/or misuse of authority and will not be tolerated.

1.4 Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

The Town of Bluffton is committed to equal opportunity in all aspects of employment for qualified individuals with a disability. In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and State law, and consistent with the Town's policy on Productive Work Environment, it is the policy of the Town to provide reasonable accommodations in employment to qualified individuals with disabilities unless the accommodation would impose an undue hardship on the operations of the Town's business or would change the essential functions of the position. Retaliation against an individual with a disability for utilizing this policy is prohibited. This guideline governs all aspects of employment including selection, job assignment, compensation, discipline, employment, termination, and access to benefits and training.

Definitions:

Disability. The term "disability" means, with respect to an individual –

- a) A physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities of such individual;
- b) A record of such an impairment;
- c) Being regarded as having such an impairment; or
- d) An impairment that is episodic or in remission if it substantially limits a major life activity when it is active.

Major Life Activities.

- a) ***In general*** – major life activities include, but are not limited to, caring for oneself, performing manual tasks, seeing, hearing, eating, sleeping, walking, standing, lifting, bending, speaking, breathing, learning, reading, concentrating, thinking, communicating, and working.
- b) ***Major Bodily functions*** – a major life activity also includes the operation of a major bodily function, including but not limited to, functions of the immune system, normal cell growth, digestive, bowel, bladder, neurological, brain, respiratory, circulatory, endocrine, and reproductive functions.

Substantially Limiting. An impairment is limiting if it prohibits or significantly restricts an individual's ability to perform a major life activity as compared to the ability of the average person in the general population to perform the same activity. The determination of whether an impairment substantially limits a major life activity depends on the nature and severity of the impairment, the duration or expected duration of the impairment, and the permanent or long-term impact of the impairment.

Has a Record of an Impairment. An individual has a record of an impairment if that individual has a history of, or has been classified as having, a mental or physical impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities.

Regarded as Having Such an Impairment. An individual meets the requirements of being regarded as having such an impairment if the individual establishes that he or she has been

subjected to an action prohibited under this Act because of an actual or perceived physical or mental impairment whether or not the impairment substantially limits or is perceived to substantially limit a major life activity.

Qualified Individual with a Disability. An employee or applicant for employment who, with or without a reasonable accommodation can perform the essential functions of the position.

Reasonable Accommodation. A modification or adjustment to a position, an employment practice, or the work environment that makes it possible for a qualified individual with a disability to perform the essential functions of the position.

Reasonable accommodations may include, but are not limited to:

- a) Making existing facilities readily accessible to and usable by persons with disabilities;
- b) Job restructuring, modifying work schedules, reassignment to a vacant position; or
- c) Acquiring or modifying equipment or devices, adjusting or modifying examinations, training materials, or policies, and providing qualified readers or interpreters.

The Town is not obligated to and will not provide personal use items needed in accomplishing daily activities (i.e. eyeglasses, hearing aids, prosthetic limbs, or a wheelchair.)

Essential Job Function. The fundamental duties of the position or the primary reasons the position exists.

- a) The Town does not have to eliminate an essential function from the position, nor does it have to lower quality or performance standards to make an accommodation, as long as those standards are applied uniformly to employees with or without a disability.
- b) The Town does not have to create a new position to accommodate an employee.

Marginal Job Function. A job function that would be considered a secondary non-critical job task.

Although important and necessary to the position, a marginal job function could be reassigned to others and/or performed a lesser percentage of time as occasional essential functions.

Undue Hardship. An accommodation or action requiring significant difficulty or expense when considered in light of factors such as the Town's financial resources. Undue hardship also refers to an accommodation that is unduly extensive, substantial, or disruptive, or one that would fundamentally alter the nature of the position.

Accommodation is a two-way street, and employees are expected to notify Human Resources or other appropriate Town staff if they need an accommodation. Any Supervisor or Department Head receiving a request for an accommodation should report it to Human Resources so that an appropriate resolution can be determined.

Normally, the disclosure of a disability or request for accommodation will result in an interactive process between the Town and the employee to determine what, if any, reasonable accommodation might best enable the employee to perform the essential functions of his/her job. What accommodation, if any, will be determined on a case-by-case basis. If it is not possible to accommodate an employee in his/her current position, then the Town may resort to determining if there are other positions available and to be filled for which the employee can perform the essential functions of the job, with or without accommodation.

1.5 Hiring / Recruiting.

The Town endeavors to hire the most suitable candidate for open positions and encourages current employees to apply for positions for which they are qualified. The Town may also solicit and consider applications from external applicants. Decisions to fill an open position are made by the Department

Director or Chief of Police and approved by the Town Manager. All new positions require prior approval by the Town Manager.

1.6 Nepotism / Employment of Relatives.

People in the same immediate family may not be employed or continue to be employed if one directly or indirectly supervises another or interacts with another in the handling of money or compensation. For purposes of this policy, immediate family is defined as spouse, parent, child, grandparent, grandchild, brother or sister, parent-in-law, grandparent-in-law, brother-in-law and sister-in-law, son-in-law, or daughter-in-law. The immediate family is also considered to include stepparents, stepchildren, stepbrothers and stepsisters when the employee and the step-relative have lived together regularly in the same household. Unrelated employees residing together or otherwise engaged in a close personal relationship (such as domestic partner, co-habitant or significant other) are treated as being within the immediate family of each other for the purposes of this nepotism policy.

If employees become related by marriage and create a situation prohibited by this policy, one of the employees may be asked to give up his/her position. If the employees cannot choose which of them it will be, the employee having the lower budgeted annual compensation may be removed. The removed employee may be considered for other positions within the Town for which he/she is qualified.

Situations not specifically addressed in this policy that, in the Town's opinion, create a conflict of interest or give the appearance of a conflict of interest, will be handled at the Town's discretion. Exceptions to this policy may be made with Town Manager Approval.

1.7 Probationary Period.

The probationary period is intended to give new employees the opportunity to demonstrate their ability to achieve a satisfactory level of performance and to determine whether the new position meets their expectations. The Town uses this period to evaluate the employee's capabilities, work habits, and overall performance.

New employees work on a probationary basis for the first six months after their date of hire. This period is not a guarantee of employment for six months. For the Police Department, all employees will work on a probationary period of one year that will be inclusive of their hire date to one year after they have graduated from the South Carolina Criminal Justice Academy (SCCJA). If the Town determines that the designated probationary period does not allow sufficient time to thoroughly evaluate the employee's performance, the probationary period may be extended, or the employment relationship may end.

Upon satisfactory completion of the probationary period as evidenced by a performance evaluation, employees are assigned to a "regular" employment classification.

During the probationary period, new employees are eligible for several Town-provided benefits and benefits required by law. After becoming a "regular" employee, the individual will become eligible for additional Town-provided benefits subject to the terms and conditions of each benefit plan. Participation and eligibility for benefit plans will be handled in accordance with the respective guidelines of each benefit offered.

Former Town employees rehired following a break in service may be required to satisfy a new probationary period, as determined by the Town Manager.

1.8 Employee Performance.

Performance appraisals will be conducted with each employee. Employees will be evaluated and will be given feedback concerning their job performance. Performance appraisals may be used in decisions concerning pay, promotions, discipline, transfers, training, employee development, and continuation of employment. However, no employee has a right to a pay increase because of a good evaluation.

Appraisal Periods. Initial Probationary Period for employees is 6 months following employment date. All other regular employees will be reviewed annually. Employee promotions or transfers will also have a 6-month probationary period. Employees at the Police Department who are promoted will have 12-month probationary period. Appraisals will also be conducted when an employee's performance falls below expectations.

If a performance appraisal has been completed within one month of the above occasions, a new appraisal does not need to be completed. Between scheduled appraisals, Supervisors should discuss with employees on an informal basis any performance issues that require attention. Supervisors should keep records of any significant incidents and provide a copy of the documentation to Human Resources.

Appraisal Procedures. The chain of command applies to the process as outlined below:

- Supervisors evaluate each employee;
- Final evaluations are reviewed by Department Directors or Chief of Police;
- Town Manager evaluates all Department Directors and approves all performance evaluations.
 - a) Supervisors should prepare a written appraisal of each employee's job performance. The appraisal should include the Supervisor's comments and recommendations, and performance goals for the next evaluation period.
 - b) Department Heads/Chief of Police should review each Supervisor's written evaluation for each employee to help assure that the evaluation has been completed properly in as fair and objective a manner as possible.
 - c) After the written evaluation has been reviewed and approved by the Town Manager, the Supervisor and employee should meet to discuss the evaluation, assess the employee's strengths and weaknesses in a constructive manner, and set objectives and goals for the coming period. The employee should be given the opportunity to examine the evaluation and make written comments about any aspect of it. The employee and Supervisor then should sign and date the evaluation and forward it to Human Resources for review and inclusion in the employee's personnel file.

The procedures discussed in this policy are only guidelines. The Town may, in its sole discretion, modify or revoke them in whole or in part at any time. Therefore, these procedures are not a promise or contract, express or implied, and the Town retains the right to determine whether and how they will be applied, depending on the circumstances.

1.9 Telecommuting Policy

Overview

The Town of Bluffton ("the Town") considers that telecommuting can be a viable alternative work arrangement in cases where the individual and their job are suited to such an arrangement. Telecommuting may allow an employee to work at home, on the road, or in a satellite location for all or a portion of their regular workweek. Telecommuting is a work alternative that may be appropriate for some employees and some jobs. It is not an entitlement; it is not a Town-wide benefit; and it in no way changes the terms and conditions of employment with the Town.

Telecommuting is also an option in instances where business cannot be conducted at Town Hall or at the employee's normal workstation or office location. This can be due to a number of reasons to include, but not limited to temporary construction activity, emergency and/or health conditions which preclude the ability to enter the workplace (please reference the Town of Bluffton's Declared Emergency [Temporary Telecommuting Policy](#)).

Telecommuting Procedure:

1. Either an employee or a supervisor can suggest telecommuting as a possible work arrangement.
2. Telecommuting can be informal, such as working from home for a short-term project or on the road during business travel; or formal, as outlined below. All informal telecommuting arrangements are made on a case-by-case basis, focusing first on the business needs of the Town.
3. Any employee may be eligible for telecommuting consideration with Town Manager approval.
4. Eligible positions will be recommended by the Department Head, reviewed by Human Resources, approved by the Town Manager and will be based upon functional role and business needs. A [Telecommuting Agreement](#) must be completed prior to implementing a telecommuting schedule.
5. Any approved telecommuting arrangement may be discontinued, at will, at any time by either the telecommuter or the Town.
6. The approval of employee's telecommuting request does not mean that another employee who later may fill the same position will be authorized to telecommute. Also, a telecommuting employee who changes positions or whose responsibilities change may be subject to review and possible cancellation of previous telework arrangements.
7. Prior to telecommuting, employee is required to attend on-line security training.
8. Telecommuters must be available by phone or other electronic communication during the agreed upon telecommuting hours of work.
9. Supervisors should remind staff to take breaks and not work excessively in front of the screen. Teleworking is about achieving an expected level of productivity.
10. The employee and supervisor will agree on the number of days of telecommuting allowed each week, the work schedule the employee will customarily maintain, and the manner and frequency of communication. The employee agrees to be accessible by phone or modem during the agreed upon work schedule.
11. Telecommuters who are hourly employees or non-exempt, will record all hours worked in the same manner as if they were working on Town Premises. Accrual of overtime or compensatory time will be administered under the same provisions as if the work were performed at the regular work location. Overtime work must have prior Supervisor approval.
12. Telecommuters who are salaried or exempt do not ordinarily complete a timecard at their regular place of work. However, when telecommuting, they will keep a record of actual time worked at the alternate work location for the purposes of demonstrating accountability to their agreed upon work schedule.

13. Before entering into any telecommuting arrangement, the employee and supervisor will evaluate the suitability of such an arrangement paying particular attention to the following areas:
 - a. Job Responsibilities - the employee and supervisor will discuss the job responsibilities and determine if the job is appropriate or suitable for a successful telecommuting arrangement.
 - b. Employee Suitability - the employee and supervisor will assess the needs and work habits of the employee, compared to traits customarily recognized as appropriate for successful telecommuters.
 - c. Equipment needs, work-space design considerations and scheduling issues.
 - d. Tax and other legal implications for the business use of the employee's home based on IRS and state and local government restrictions. Responsibility for fulfilling all obligations in this area rests solely with the employee.
14. The supervisor and employee will establish a routine communication schedule to monitor assigned work projects and tasks. Evaluation of telecommuter performance will be consistent in both content and frequency with that received by employees working at the office.
15. Telecommuting is NOT designed to be a replacement for appropriate childcare. Although an individual employee's schedule may be modified to accommodate childcare needs, the focus of the arrangement must remain on job performance and meeting business demands. Prospective telecommuters are encouraged to discuss expectations of telecommuting with family prior to entering into a telecommuting agreement.
16. Employees entering into a telecommuting agreement may be required to forfeit use of a personal on-site office or workstation in favor of a shared arrangement to maximize Town office space needs.
17. The availability of telecommuting as a flexible work arrangement for employees of the Town can be discontinued at any time at the discretion of the Town. Every effort will be made to provide 30 days' notice of such a change to accommodate commuting, childcare and other problems that may arise from such a change. There may be instances however, where no notice or less notice is possible.

Equipment

1. The Town will determine, with information supplied by the employee and the supervisor, the appropriate equipment needs (including software, modems, phone and data lines, facsimile equipment or software, photocopiers, etc.) and who (the Town or the employee) will supply the equipment for telecommuting for each telecommuting arrangement on a case-by-case basis. The Town's Information Technology Department will serve as a resource in this matter. Equipment supplied by the Town will be maintained by the Town. Equipment supplied by the employee, if deemed appropriate by the Town, will be maintained by the employee. The Town accepts no responsibility for damage or repairs to employee-owned equipment. The Town reserves the right to make determinations as to appropriate equipment, subject to change at any time. Equipment supplied by the Town is to be used for business only. The telecommuter shall sign an inventory of all office property and agrees to take appropriate action to protect the items from damage or theft. Employees are responsible for the proper care and return of all Town property and

equipment assigned to their possession. Unless other arrangements are made upon termination of employment, all Town property will be returned to the Town no later than the final day of employment.

2. After equipment has been delivered, a designated representative of the Town may visit the employee's off-site workplace to inspect for possible work hazards and to suggest modifications. Repeat inspections may occur on an as-needed basis. Injuries sustained by a telecommuting employee who is working at home are not normally covered by the Town's worker's compensation policy. If a telecommuting employee is convinced that an injury which he/she has sustained at home was directly related to performance of his/her duties for the Town, he/she is responsible for notifying the Town of such injuries in accordance with the Town's worker's compensation procedures applicable to all other employees. The telecommuting employee is solely liable for any injuries sustained by visitors to his/her office workplace.
3. The Town will supply the employee with appropriate office supplies (pens, paper, etc.) to be charged against the employee's department budget for successful completion of job responsibilities. With Supervisor approval, the Town will also reimburse the employee for all other business-related expenses such as phone calls, shipping costs, etc. that may reasonably be incurred while performing job responsibilities.
4. Consistent with the Town's expectations of information asset security for employees working at the office full-time, telecommuting employees will be expected to ensure the protection of proprietary Town and customer information accessible from their off-site workplace. Steps include, but are not limited to, use of the locked file cabinets and desks, regular password maintenance, locking your computer when stepping away from the workstation, and all other steps appropriate for the job and the environment.
5. The telecommuting employee will establish an environment appropriate for work purposes. The Town will not be responsible for costs associated with set-up of employee's off-site workplace such as remodeling, furniture or lighting, nor for repairs nor modifications to the off-site office space, nor for increased utility costs. Employees will be offered appropriate assistance in setting up a workstation designed for safe, comfortable work.

Amendment of Policy

This policy may be cancelled, suspended, or amended at any time by the Town Manager.

1.10 Promotions and Transfers.

The Town of Bluffton may look first within its own ranks prior to filling a position from the outside. However, the Town reserves the right to consider external candidates before making an employment decision.

All employees are encouraged to seek advancement opportunities and to obtain promotion and career guidance from their Supervisor, Department Head, or Human Resources. To be considered for an open position, an employee must have successfully completed their first 6 months of probationary employment, have a satisfactory performance record and have no disciplinary actions during this same period. With Town Manager approval, some of the time of this 6-month period can be waived if the early transfer is necessary to meet operational needs. Generally, this will happen primarily with departmental internal transfers. Employee's eligibility for promotion will be determined by the requirements of the new job. If eligible, the employee must submit a Town of Bluffton Employment Application, cover letter and resume to Human Resources.

Job openings and promotions for which management solicits candidates from within the Town normally will be posted on the Town's website and communicated through email. However, as it considers appropriate, management may fill job openings or make promotions without posting notices.

When job openings or promotion opportunities are posted:

- a) Supervisors and Department Heads may initiate the procedure within the same time and propose employees for the position. The Department Head should forward a written recommendation for promotion of an individual to Human Resources, which must be approved by the Town Manager;
- b) If no recommendation for promotion is provided, interested employees may apply to Human Resources prior to the deadline specified in the posting, if one has been set;
- c) With approval, Human Resources may solicit outside candidates during or after the posting period, if one has been set.

A newly promoted employee is on probation in their new position for six months. A promotion probation period allows an employee to demonstrate that they are well suited for the promotion.

If the department head concludes at any time during the probationary period the newly promoted employee is not suited for the position, the employee will be removed from that position. If there is a vacancy in the employee's former position and it has yet to be filled, they may return to that former position. If there is no such vacancy, the employee may be considered for the filling of other vacancies for which they are qualified. If no other position is found for the employee, they may be placed on a personal leave of absence or terminated. This action does not prohibit an employee from applying for future vacancies with the Town.

1.11 Secondary Outside Employment.

- a) No employee may engage in paid outside regular or temporary employment, whether full-time or part-time, without first using the Request for Approval of Secondary Employment Form to obtain the acknowledgement of their Manager/Supervisor, and the approval of the employee's Department head and the Town Manager. An employee who plans to engage in self-employed activities must also provide a copy of their Bluffton business license or a statement confirming that no work will be conducted in the Town of Bluffton. A new Secondary Employment Authorization Form must be completed each time employment changes. Authorization may be withdrawn at any time if, in the opinion of the Town, the secondary employment violates any part of this policy. A form does not need to be completed in the case of volunteer work when it is conducted during an employee's regular business hours (please see [Corporate Social Responsibility Program](#)).
- b) Employees must not engage in any private business or activity during work time. Further, employees may not receive any income or material gain from individuals outside the Town for materials produced or services rendered while performing their jobs for the Town.
- c) Employees must not use Town facilities or resources (i.e. phone, fax, copier, printer, computer, office supplies, etc.) to engage in private employment activities.
- d) An employee may not engage in or accept private employment or render any service for private interest when, in the Town's opinion, such employment or service is determined to be incompatible with, creates a conflict of interest with, or gives the appearance of a conflict of interest with the employee's Town duties. If, in the Town's opinion, approved outside employment interferes with job duties or the ability to meet Town requirements, the employee may be required to modify the outside employment.
- e) Note also that employees of the Town may be subject to call-in during periods of outside employment and will be expected to report for Town duty.

1.12 General Office Safety Guidelines.

Thinking and working safely can prevent most accidents. You can become aware of the most common hazards in the office environment. Employees are responsible for maintaining their work areas in a clean and orderly fashion. To fulfill this responsibility, each employee should, at a minimum, do the following:

- a) Place coats, boots, umbrellas, and other items of clothing out of the way so that work stations are not unnecessarily cluttered.
- b) Take time to reach out and hold on to the chair as you sit down.
- c) Keep floors and walkways clear of electrical, telephone and computer cables, boxes, etc. They are tripping hazards.
- d) Close one drawer in a filing cabinet before opening another. This prevents the file cabinet from tipping.
- e) Close the drawer in your desk before getting up.
- f) Close file drawers before walking away from the file cabinet. This prevents the danger of people walking into an open file drawer or desk drawer.
- g) Store supplies inside cabinets, not on top of them. Store heavy items in lower drawers or on low shelves.
- h) Watch out for slippery surfaces. Spilled drinks or water from umbrellas are typical hazards and need to be cleaned up/or identified immediately.
- i) Look where you are going. Do not block your view by carrying loads higher than eye level.
- j) Do not read while walking. It does not save enough time to justify the risk.
- k) Walk, do not run. Please slow down.
- l) Do not climb on chairs, desks or boxes. Use a stepladder instead.
- m) Hold onto handrails when using stairways.
- n) Do not lift boxes and items that are too heavy for your own personal strength; ask for assistance.
- o) Do not overload wall sockets and extension cords.
- p) Do not touch electrical switches, sockets, plugs, etc. with wet hands.
- q) Watch for unsafe conditions such as defective equipment, burned out lights, loose steps, torn carpet, etc. and report them to your supervisor immediately.
- r) Prior to the end of the workday, clean and store all tools and equipment and properly secure any items, papers, or information of value.
- s) Supervisors are responsible for having their employees maintain their work areas according to the requirements of this policy. Supervisors should:
 - Monitor the facilities and equipment and issue maintenance requests where appropriate;
 - Arrange for the removal of any items from the workplace that are not needed for the flow of business or the enhancement of employee comfort;
 - Report to the Facilities Supervisor any existing or potential workplace hazards and safety

violations; and

- Ensure the proper disposal of all trash, waste, and scrap; recycling as appropriate.
- t) The Town will attempt to maintain the temperature, lighting, and noise level of its facilities at a level that is comfortable for employees and also appropriate for the nature of its operations. Employees should inform their Supervisor of any concerns about working conditions.
- u) In the event of an injury, the steps for Worker's Compensation should be followed.

1.13 Injury While on Duty.

The Town of Bluffton endeavors to maintain a safe working environment. However, if an employee is injured while on duty and the incident is properly reported they will be compensated for time off due to the injury in accordance with the Workers Compensation Law.

All accidents must be reported immediately to a supervisor and to Compendium Services within 24 hours. Supervisors must fill out the Workers Compensation Checklist and Documents and send to Human Resources as soon as possible. Compendium Services will fill out the First Report of Injury Report and refer that employee to a health care provider.

Injuries may be reviewed as to the cause and whether corrective measures are needed. Employees who incur time loss may be counseled and disciplinary action may be taken if carelessness and negligence caused the injury.

Time lost because of injury while on duty will be counted when computing length of service for PTO purposes.

1.14 Fire & Disaster Plan.

In case of fire or disaster, all employees should depart through the nearest and safest exit. It is the responsibility of all employees to ensure that they know the nearest exit in any/all of their work facilities.

In case of a disaster, it is the employee's duty and responsibility to report to the Town of Bluffton and to their work or safe area unless instructed otherwise. Under no circumstances will an employee go to the scene of the disaster unless so instructed by a Town of Bluffton authority.

1.15 Employee ID Cards.

Within the first week of hire date, employees will be issued a Town of Bluffton ID card, Security Badge or a Fob. These items are property of the Town, and it is the responsibility of all employees to ensure these are not misused in any way. If any of these items are lost, stolen or broken, a replacement cost of \$5.00 may be charged per incident to the employee if misplaced more than once.

A lost or stolen security access card or Fob must be reported to the Information Technology (IT) Department immediately so that it can be deactivated.

Each employee will be allowed one replacement ID card without charge.

SECTION II.

EMPLOYEE CONDUCT

This section reviews the Town's Guidelines for topics such as Conflict of Interest, Gifts and Gratuities, and Business Entertaining. It reviews Daily Schedules and Attendance, Tardiness, Tobacco Use, the Town Dress Code, and Emergency Situation Protocol. It also briefly introduces Town Policies such as Computer Usage, Social Media, and the Drug Free Work Place Policy, which are all attached. Employee Behavior and Expectations is covered along with the Town of Bluffton Code of Conduct.

2.0. EMPLOYEE CONDUCT.

2.1 Core Beliefs.

The Town expects employees to conduct themselves in a courteous and professional manner. Some conduct is unacceptable and may result in discipline up to and including discharge. Please refer to [Employee Behavior and Expectations](#), [Employee Discipline](#) and [The Town of Bluffton's Code of Conduct](#) for more details.

Our Core Beliefs:

The Town of Bluffton's core beliefs are as follows – Mayor and Council, managers and employees take pride in serving our customers:

- a) Our customers provide the primary source of the Town's income and each employee's job security. To promote excellent relations with our customers, all employees must represent the Town in a positive manner and make customers feel appreciated when dealing with the organization.
- b) Employees with customer contact are expected to know the Town's services and to learn what customers want and need.
- c) Employees are encouraged to report recurring customer-related problems to their supervisor.
- d) Employees should be prepared to pay careful attention to customer complaints and deal with them in a helpful, professional manner. If a controversy arises, the employee should explain the Town policy respectfully and clearly. Customers who become unreasonable, abusive, or harassing should be referred to the employee's Supervisor if the employee cannot resolve the problem (Please see [Emergency Situation Protocol](#)).
- e) Employees should be polite and thoughtful when responding to customers. A positive contact with a customer can enhance goodwill, while a negative experience can destroy a valuable relationship. The following telephone procedures should be observed at all times:
 - i. Use a pleasant tone of voice, give the name of the department, and identify yourself;
 - ii. If the person with whom the caller wishes to speak is on another line, ask if the caller wants to be placed on hold;
 - iii. If a caller has been placed on hold, carefully monitor the time and offer to have the call returned if the person called is not available within a reasonable period;
 - iv. When a caller leaves a name, number, or message, make sure it is recorded correctly and given promptly to the appropriate individual.

2.2 Ethics Guidelines.

Conflict of Interest

Town employees are covered by state ethics laws that prohibit public employees from using their position with the Town for their own personal gain or to benefit a family member or business associate. State law also prohibits employees from making governmental decisions on matters in which they, their family or business associates have an economic interest. Employees must notify their supervisors in writing of any matter in which they, their family or business associates have an economic interest and in which they must act on behalf of the Town. The supervisor must send the notification to the Town Manager for review. If the Town Manager determines a potential conflict or appearance of conflict of interest exists, the matter will be reassigned to another employee.

Gifts and Gratuities

No employee may directly or indirectly solicit, accept or receive a gift under circumstances in which it could be inferred that the gift was intended to influence the employee in the performance of his/her official duties or was intended as a reward for an official act on their part.

A gift is defined as any benefit, favor, service, privilege, or thing of value that could be interpreted as influencing an employee's impartiality.

A gift includes, but is not limited, to meals, trips, money, loans, rewards, merchandise, foodstuffs, tickets to sporting or cultural events, entertainment, and personal services or work provided by Town suppliers or contractors.

The objective of the above information is not to prohibit the acceptance of items of nominal value that are distributed generally to all employees.

2.3 Business Entertaining.

It is the policy of the Town to authorize certain employees to engage in business entertaining on behalf of the Town and to pay for or reimburse these expenses according to the guidelines below.

- a) Employees may entertain business associates on behalf of the Town only if they have been authorized to do so by their Supervisor. Authorization should define the general circumstances and expense limits of the approved forms of entertainment. The Town strongly encourages staff to patronize Town of Bluffton businesses when entertaining business associates.
- b) Employee entertainment expenses will be paid or reimbursed if they are reasonable, are directly related to or associated with the Town's business and are properly approved by the Supervisor. Employees who incur entertainment expenses which do not meet these standards will be personally responsible for them.
- c) To be approved by the Supervisor, employee entertainment expenses must be submitted and documented on the appropriate finance form (Visa DI Receipt Form, Visa RQ Receipt Form, or Check Request Form). The finance form should contain a detailed itemization of the expenses incurred and a statement of the date, place, and business reason for the entertainment, as well as the names of those present and their business relationships to the Town. Entertainment reimbursement claims must be accounted for separately from any other expense reimbursement claims. Vouchers must be accompanied by receipts.
- d) The Town will not reimburse employees for alcohol expenses. Any employees engaged in functions which involve alcohol are expected to be aware of the dangers arising from the consumption of alcohol and to exercise moderation and good judgment at all times.

2.4 Daily Schedule & Attendance.

With the exception of the Bluffton Police Department, regular office hours are 8 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Monday through Thursday and from 8:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. on Friday. These hours may be changed according to business necessity as determined by the Town Manager.

Tardiness: Tardiness will be dealt with by supervisors.

Absences: The Town is under no obligation to pay for work hours (non-exempt) when an employee is not present for their assigned workday.

Employees absent from their regular work day must advise their supervisor before the start of their scheduled reporting time.

When absent, employees are to provide supervisors with daily status on their return to work.

A doctor's note is required for a return to work when an unplanned absence due to illness is three or more consecutive days.

An unauthorized or unexplained absence of three consecutive workdays may be treated as resignation without notice.

Weekend & Holiday Duty: Duty assignments will be rotated in an as fair and as equitable manner as possible consistent with the Town's needs in Departments where weekend and holiday coverage is necessary.

Police Department: Police Officers must follow policies outlined in the *Police Department Standard Operating Procedure Handbook*.

Flextime: Flextime is a variable work schedule, in contrast to traditional work arrangements requiring employees to work a standard 8:00 am to 5:30 pm day. Under flextime, there is typically a core period of the day when employees are expected to be at work (for example, between 10 am and 4pm), while the rest of the working day is flextime, in which employees can choose when they work, subject to achieving total daily, weekly or monthly hours in the region of what the employer expects, and subject to the necessary work being done. All flextime scheduling must have department head approval. It is the responsibility of department heads to be aware of the work schedule of all employees within their department.

2.5 Hours of Work.

It is the policy of the Town of Bluffton to establish the time and duration of working hours as required by workload and production flow, customer service needs, and any applicable laws.

- a) The normal full-time workweek consists of 39 hours and runs Thursday to Wednesday. The normal workday, with the exception of Friday, will consist of eight and a half hours of work with an hour unpaid meal period. Friday's workday consists of 5 hours of work with no break period. Brief rest or coffee breaks are considered as time worked.
- b) The schedule of hours for employees will be determined by each Department Head, Supervisor or designee. The Department Head will inform employees of their daily schedule of hours of work, including meal periods and rest or coffee breaks, and of any changes that are considered necessary or desirable by the Town.
- c) Department Heads, at their discretion and within their budget, may schedule overtime or extra shifts. Supervisors will assign overtime as needed. Non-exempt employees are not permitted to work overtime without the prior approval of their supervisor or Department Head. For the purposes of overtime compensation, only hours worked in excess of 40 during a workweek will be counted. Sworn non-exempt law enforcement officers are paid overtime after 86 hours worked in a 14-day work period.
- d) Department Heads, at their discretion, may allow non-exempt employees to make-up lost time during a given workweek. However, make-up time will not be allowed if the lost time is the result of conditions the employee could control, if there is no work the employee is qualified to do, or if adequate supervision is not available.
- e) Employees may be asked from time to time to work non-standard work hours in support of objectives and tasks consistent with the Town of Bluffton's Vision and Mission statements.

The following points should be noted regarding work time and time off:

- a) Non-exempt employees are not permitted to begin work before their normal starting time or to continue working after their normal quitting time without their Supervisor's prior approval;
- b) All employees are required to take scheduled lunch or meal breaks;

- c) Non-exempt Absence Reports should be checked and signed by the Supervisor involved. Time not worked for which an employee is entitled to be paid (personal day or paid time off) should be recorded by the employee on the Absence Report. Any authorized overtime should be recorded by the employee on the non-exempt time sheet form approved by the Supervisor and must be submitted to Finance prior to the end of the pay period;
- d) Absences are not considered as hours worked for overtime pay purposes.
- e) Part-time employees must complete a supervisor approved time sheet;
- f) Non-exempt employees are required to complete an Absence Report Form showing all hours absent from work. Exempt employees are required to complete an Absence Report Form for half, partial and full days absent from work. Absence Reports should cover the pay period and be submitted Friday by noon.
- g) Exempt employees are not required to fill out hourly time records but must account for absences. In addition, exempt employees will not receive overtime compensation or compensatory time off, except in [Special Pay Provision](#) cases. However, exempt employees who have worked far in excess of the normal schedule may be permitted by the Town Manager or his/her designee to take some time off without drawing on paid leave balances

2.6 Punctuality and Attendance.

It is the policy of the Town to require employees to report for work punctually and to work all scheduled hours and any required overtime. Excessive tardiness and poor attendance disrupt work flow and customer service and will not be tolerated.

- a) Supervisors notify employees of their starting time, ending time, and coordinate break period times. Employees are expected to be engaged in carrying out their duties during all scheduled work time and should be ready to begin working at their scheduled starting time.
- b) Employees must notify their supervisor as far in advance as possible whenever they are unable to report for work, know they will be late, or must leave early. The Town's Absence Report Form must be completed by the employee and approved by the employee's supervisor. If the supervisor is unavailable, notification should be made to the next in the employee's chain of command. In the event the absence exceeds 3 consecutive work days and is medically related, a doctor's excuse authorizing your return to work is required.
- c) Employees will be compensated during authorized absences in accordance with the policies contained in the Town's Employee Handbook. Non-exempt employees will not receive compensation for time missed because of tardiness or early departure if the time missed exceeds seven (7) minutes after starting time or before quitting time. Failure to notify the Town properly of any absence may result in loss of compensation during the absence.
- d) Non-exempt employees who are delayed in reporting for work more than 30 minutes and who have not notified their supervisor of their expected tardiness may be suspended for the balance of the day without pay.
- e) Employees that report for work in a condition considered not fit for work, whether for illness or any other reason, will not be allowed to work as determined by the Department Head and Supervisor. An Absence Report must be submitted with necessary documentation to substantiate absence (i.e. doctor's excuse).
- f) Employees generally are expected to report for work during inclement weather conditions if the Town does not declare an emergency closing. Non-exempt employees who are unable to report because of weather conditions will be allowed to use paid-time off or given unpaid leave at the Town's discretion. Non-exempt employees who are late because of weather conditions will be

given a chance to make up their missed time, within the same workweek, if work schedules and conditions permit with their supervisor's permission.

- g) Generally, non-exempt employees will not be permitted to work before or after scheduled starting or quitting times for the purpose of making up time lost because of tardiness, unauthorized absence, authorized absence, or any other reason if the result will be that the employee works more than 39 hours during the workweek for staff employees and 86 hours for police officers in a 14-day workweek.
- h) Unexcused Absences: Employees must report to their supervisor after being late or absent, give an explanation of the circumstances surrounding their tardiness or absence, and, when applicable, certify that they are fit to return to work. The supervisor should record the information in the employee's file.
- i) Employees must obtain permission from their supervisor in order to leave the Town premises during working hours; this excludes their meal period. In addition, employees who are away from the premises for business reasons are required to inform their supervisors of their whereabouts during working hours.
- j) All employees must notify someone within their immediate surroundings when they leave for a meal period to ensure proper coverage of their job duties during their absence.
- k) An absence is considered to be unauthorized if the employee has not followed proper notification procedures or the absence has not been properly approved.
- l) Employees who are absent from work for three consecutive days without giving proper notice to the Town will be considered as having voluntarily quit. At that time, the Town will formally note the termination and advise the employee of the action by certified mail to the employee's last known address.

2.7 Tobacco Free Workplace.

The Town of Bluffton is committed to promoting a healthy work environment for its employees, customers, contractors and visitors. As part of this commitment, the Town's work environment includes a tobacco-free entity. As required by the Town of Bluffton Ordinance 2008-21, Section 18-160 and motivated by our desire to provide a healthy work environment for our employees, the following tobacco-free policy has been adopted and shall apply to all Town of Bluffton employees.

Policy: It is the policy of the Town of Bluffton to prohibit smoking and the use of any tobacco products. "Tobacco and smoking products" include all tobacco-derived or containing products, including but not limited to cigarettes (i.e. clove, bidis, kreteks), electronic cigarettes, cigars and cigarillos, pipes, water pipes, smokeless tobacco products or substitutions (spit and spitless, chew, pouches, snuff) or any other device intended to simulate smoked tobacco. This does not apply to nicotine replacement therapy, which is designed to assist tobacco users to quit tobacco.

The Tobacco-Free Workplace policy applies to all areas of buildings occupied by Town employees; all Town-sponsored off-site conferences and meetings; all vehicles owned or leased by the Town; all visitors (customers and vendors) to Town premises; all contractors and consultants and/or their employees working on Town premises; all temporary employees and interns.

- a) The use of tobacco and smoking products are prohibited while on duty and within the Town controlled properties.
- b) The use of tobacco and smoking products are prohibited in/on Town-owned operated or leased vehicles and equipment.
- c) The use of tobacco and smoking products is prohibited during paid working hours.

- d) The Town strongly discourages the use of tobacco and smoking products on properties adjacent to Town's properties or Town-controlled areas.

Appropriate signage will be placed at the entrances to the building advising employees and visitors that the Town of Bluffton maintains a tobacco-free environment. This policy relates to all facilities and vehicles at all times, including before and after normal working hours.

For employees that use tobacco there will be a monthly \$40 Tobacco Use Premium, if any dependents covered under the employee's plan uses tobacco, there will be a \$60 Tobacco Use Premium. Every employee completes this form upon hire. If it is found that the employee has been smoking or has started smoking and not notified PEBA by completing a new form, they will be subject to penalties determined by PEBA.

Assistance to Tobacco Using Staff

The Town of Bluffton encourages all smoking employees using tobacco to quit. Professional assistance including smoking cessation advice and information is available for staff who desire to quit using tobacco. As a part of the State Health Plan, PEBA Perks offers a free Tobacco Cessation Program that is for subscribers, their covered spouses and covered dependent children age 13 or older. For further information, please contact Human Resources.

2.8 Employee Substance Abuse Policy.

It is well-recognized that substance abuse has a harmful effect on public health and safety, on the welfare of employees, on morale, and on productivity. Furthermore, it is the policy of the Town to comply with the state and federal Drug Free Workplace Acts, to comply with applicable federal regulations, to establish and maintain alcohol and drug-free workplaces, and to prohibit the unauthorized or unlawful manufacture, distribution, dispensation, possession, and the use of controlled substances on or off the job.

For these reasons, the Town adopts the Drug Free Workplace Policy (Please refer to [ATTACHMENT A](#)).

2.9 Computer and Internet Policy.

The Town of Bluffton is committed to protecting its employees, partners, and the Town of Bluffton itself from illegal or damaging actions by individuals conducted either knowingly or unknowingly.

This policy applies to all departments, contracted entities, and other individuals or groups that use Town of Bluffton equipment. Any of these arms of the Town of Bluffton may develop more specific information technology policies for application within the department, but none may write more lenient policies.

Network-related systems, including but not limited to computer equipment, printers, software, operating systems, storage media, e-mail and phone systems, are the property of the Town of Bluffton. These systems are to be used for business purposes in serving the interests of the Town of Bluffton and of our clients and citizens in the course of routine operations.

Effective security is a team effort involving the participation and support of every Town of Bluffton employee and all other persons affiliated with the Town who deal with information and/or information systems.

Employees have no expectation of privacy in any personal data or items stored in or transmitted on the Town's systems and networks.

Please refer to [ATTACHMENT B](#) for the Town of Bluffton Computer and Internet Acceptable Use Policy.

2.10 Security Awareness Training and Testing

This policy specifies the Town of Bluffton internal information security awareness and training program to inform and assess all staff regarding their information security obligations.

The Town of Bluffton is aware of how susceptible our digital information is to attacks. In order to protect information assets, all users must be informed about relevant, current information security matters, and motivated to fulfill their information security obligations.

This policy applies throughout the organization as part of the corporate governance framework. It applies regardless of whether staff use computer systems and networks, since all staff are expected to protect all forms of information assets including computer data, written materials/paperwork, and intangible forms of knowledge and experience. This policy also applies to third party employees working for the organization whether they are explicitly bound (e.g., by contractual terms and conditions) or implicitly bound (e.g., by generally held standards of ethics and acceptable behavior) to comply with our information security policies.

In general, this policy applies to all Town of Bluffton Network Users, including Town Council members and contractors, with access to Town of Bluffton systems, networks, Town of Bluffton information, nonpublic personal information, personally identifiable information, and/or customer data.

The Town of Bluffton Information Technology (IT) department requires that each employee upon hire and, at a minimum annually thereafter, successfully complete Introduction to Security Awareness for New Town Employees. Certain staff may be required to complete additional training modules depending on their specific job requirements upon hire and at least quarterly. Staff will be given a reasonable amount time (generally 14 days) to complete each course so as to not disrupt business operations.

Please refer to [ATTACHMENT C](#) for the Town of Bluffton Security Awareness Training and Testing Policy.

2.11 Social Media Policy.

Town of Bluffton departments may utilize social media and social network sites to further enhance communications with various stakeholder organizations in support of Town goals and objectives. Town officials, Town committees, and staff have the ability to publish articles, facilitate discussions and communicate information through various media related to conducting Town business. Social media facilitates further discussion of Town issues, operations and services by providing members of the public the opportunity to participate in many ways using the Internet.

Add value to the Town of Bluffton through your interaction. Provide worthwhile information and perspective.

For these reasons, the Town adopts their Social Media Policy (Please refer to [ATTACHMENT D](#))

2.12 Electronic Mail Records Retention.

The purpose of this policy is to guide Town staff to appropriately and effectively use electronic mail or email. Email communication is an integral part of the Town of Bluffton's business and with technology rapidly changing; this policy does not address every situation. The purpose of the Town's policy is to set forth general principles for the use of email. (Please refer to [ATTACHMENT E](#) for the Town of Bluffton Electronic Mail Records Retention and Destruction Policy).

2.13 Cellular Phone Usage Policy.

Town Issued Cell Phone Usage

The Town of Bluffton may issue cell phones to employees whose jobs require them to be accessible for work-related matters or to make work related calls while away from their designated place of work.

- a) Cell phones and cell phone accessories issued by the Town are Town property. Employees must comply with Town requests to make their Town-issued cell phones available for any reason, including upgrades, replacement, or inspection. The Town will issue an itemized list of equipment given to each employee upon issuance of a cell phone. The employee is required to sign acceptance of the items. Employees who leave our employment for any reason must turn in their Town-issued cell phones and all cell phone accessories to include cables, cases, chargers and any other items purchased by the Town in good working order, normal wear and tear excepted. The cost of these items is considered an advance of wages that may be deducted from the employee's final paychecks.
- b) Employees are not permitted to use their cell phones (hand-held or hands-free devices) while driving Town-owned vehicles or their own vehicles on Town time. See [Distracted Driving](#).

Personal Use of Town-Issued Cell Phones:

Town-issued cell phones are to be used only for business purposes. Although occasional, brief personal phone calls using a Town-issued phone are permitted, personal use that exceeds this standard is prohibited. What is reasonable will be determined by the Town. The best way to avoid violating this policy is to avoid personal use of the phone. Employees are expected to stay within the limits of their respective phone plans.

Security of Town-Issued Phones:

Employees are responsible for the security of Town-issued cell phones and the information stored on them. Always keep your cell phone with you when traveling; never leave it in your car or hotel room. If your Town-issued cell phone is lost or stolen, notify the Technology Director immediately. Never store confidential Town information on a cell phone.

When using a cell phone, remember that your conversations are not necessarily private. Those around you can hear your conversation. To protect the confidentiality of Town information (and avoid annoying others), please make cell phone calls in a private place.

Cell phone transmissions may be intercepted. For this reason, employees should not conduct highly sensitive or confidential conversations by cell phone. If you have questions about what types of conversations are appropriate for a cell phone and which are not, please ask your Supervisor. Please know that all cell phone data (text messages, call history, etc.) are subject to FOIA (Freedom of Information Act).

Safety Issues for Cellular Phone Use

Employees are expected to refrain from using their phone while driving. Safety must come before all other concerns. The Town expects employees to use common sense and good judgment when using a cell phone at work, home, public areas and operating a vehicle.

Employees who are charged with traffic violations resulting from the use of a cell phone while driving will be solely responsible for all liabilities that result from such actions.

2.14 Mail.

The Town of Bluffton cannot be responsible for distributing any personal mail to an employee or to the post office.

2.15 Town Vehicle Usage.

It is the policy of the Town to provide vehicles for business use, to allow employees to drive on Town

business, and to reimburse employees for business use of personal vehicles according to the guidelines below.

- a) Town of Bluffton employees whose jobs require driving are required to take and pass an on-line defensive driving course offered through the National Safety Council. This benefit is no cost to the employee. Successful completion of the course is required as a condition of employment and must be done within three months of the employee's hire date.
- b) Employees may not drive vehicles for Town business without the prior approval of their Supervisor.
- c) Employees whose jobs require regular driving for business as a condition of employment must be able to meet the driver approval standards of this policy. In addition, employees holding those jobs must inform their Supervisors of any changes that may affect their ability to meet the standards of this policy. For example, employees who lose their licenses must report this to their Supervisors.
- d) Town vehicles will be assigned to those departments that have demonstrated a continuing need for them. Assignment will be made by the Town Manager. Additional vehicles are maintained in a motor pool for use as needed.
- e) Employees who need transportation during their normal work may be assigned a Town vehicle for their use. All other employees needing transportation for Town business may use vehicles assigned to their department or those drawn from the motor pool. As a last alternative, when no Town vehicles are available, employees may use their own vehicles for business purposes, but only with the prior approval of their Supervisor. Employees will be compensated at a rate per mile as determined by the Director of Finance but in no case more than the current IRS rate.

Mandatory Rules:

- a) Seat belts must be used when operating a Town vehicle.
- b) All traffic rules and regulations must be strictly obeyed.
- c) Any and all issues, concerns and problems found while operating a Town vehicle must be reported immediately to the department head in writing.
- d) Defensive driving must be emphasized when operating a Town vehicle.
- e) The operator is responsible for assuring the vehicle is operationally safe.
- f) Unsafe vehicles are not to be used. An unsafe vehicle must be repaired prior to usage.
- g) Town vehicles must be kept clean at all times.
- h) Never leave keys in an unattended vehicle.
- i) When operating a Town vehicle, employees must follow "the rules of the road" and use extra caution during inclement weather.
- j) Employees must pull over to a safe place before using cellular phones.

NOTE: Town of Bluffton Police will follow *Department's Standard Operating Procedures*.

Distracted Driving

It is the policy of the Town of Bluffton that any employee who operates a vehicle or machinery while performing work for the Town of Bluffton not be distracted by poor driving behaviors.

The Town of Bluffton has a vital interest in maintaining a safe, healthy and efficient working environment for its employees. Driving distracted, while on-the-job, is a serious safety and health risk,

not only to the driver, but to other occupants in the vehicle and other vehicles on the road.

Distracted driving occurs when a driver is delayed in recognizing a potential hazard because of something inside or outside the vehicle diverting the driver's attention away from the road. Such behaviors include, but are not limited to:

- Reading while driving
- Use of hands-free devices
- Use of hand-held devices
- Texting
- All other uses of wireless electronic devices
- Personal grooming
- Viewing maps for directions

Accident Reporting Procedures:

- Employee will immediately report accident / injury to supervisor.
- Supervisor will ensure that Law Enforcement Agency having jurisdiction has been contacted.
- An accident report must be filed by Law Enforcement Agency and provided to the Supervisor, who will then submit to the Fleet Manager.
- In accordance with the Drug Free Workplace Policy, the Supervisor will notify HR for Drug Testing. A refusal to get drug tested can result in disciplinary action up to and including termination.
- HR will coordinate Drug Test for Employee.
- Supervisor must make a report to Workers Comp/Compendium for First Report of Injury.

Use overall good judgment in the assessment of the need for safety, security and personal well-being.

* Please refer to the [Drug Free Workplace Policy](#) or contact Human Resources with any questions.

2.16 Traveling on Business.

All forms referenced in the policy below are located within the Travel folder under Finance Forms

It is the policy of the Town that business travel must be approved in advance and should be engaged in and reimbursed according to the guidelines below. This policy is established in accordance with applicable Internal Revenue Service (IRS) guidelines.

- a) Each Department Head is responsible for ensuring that employees review this policy and understands its intent and requirements prior to departure on their first business trip. Absent extraordinary circumstances, all travel should be undertaken in an economical and efficient manner.
- b) Department Heads must approve any employee travel in advance. (See [Travel Advance Request Form](#).) Travel must be in connection with the official business of the Town. Town funds will only be expended on conventions, conferences, project-related meetings, workshops, or seminars (hereinafter collectively referred to as "meetings") when:
 - i. The main purpose of the meeting is in connection with the official business of the Town and directly relates to the performance, duties and responsibilities of the Town employee;
 - ii. The meeting provides a direct educational benefit supporting the work and public purpose of the Town;
 - iii. The essential duties and responsibilities of the person seeking to attend the meeting are

- compatible with the objectives of the particular meeting, and
- iv. Attendance for the meeting is approved prior to submitting a requisition, departure and/or incurring expenses.
- c) Mileage reimbursement
- i. It is the policy of the Town to reimburse mileage to any employee using their personal vehicle for business travel at the rate specified by the Internal Revenue Service each year. For the current mileage rate log on to <https://www.irs.gov/tax-professionals/standard-mileage-rates> or a lesser amount as declared by the Town Manager. The Town will also provide reimbursement for any tolls and parking charges.
 - ii. Those employees who receive a monthly car allowance are not entitled to additional mileage reimbursement for local business travel. However, trips that exceed 100 miles one way may be reimbursed only for the amount that exceeds 100 miles.
 - iii. Business travel will be measured from Town Hall or other Town of Bluffton Office building where the employee typically operates from to the business destination, regardless of the employee's starting point, (i.e. home residence.)
- d) Under normal circumstances, employees should make all travel arrangements for transportation and lodging. Those employees traveling on business for more than one day must reserve a Town vehicle by receiving approval from their Department Head.
- e) The Town may issue guidelines specifying or restricting travel booking requirements. Under normal circumstances, employees should use the most appropriate form of transportation available, book the least expensive fares, and stay in and eat at reasonably priced establishments. Employees must adhere to the per diem schedule for the city which they are traveling. Log onto <http://www.gsa.gov/travel/plan-book/per-diem-rates> for the current rates or refer to the Town's Public Drive.
- f) Employees should provide their Supervisor with a copy of their itinerary before leaving on business travel, itineraries should also be included with all reimbursement and purchasing card reconciliations.
- g) Employee expenses for approved travel will be paid or reimbursed when properly documented by the employee and approved by the Supervisor. Examples of expenses normally paid or reimbursed include transportation, meals, and lodging. Alcoholic beverages cannot be included for reimbursement. Employees who know or anticipate that they will have a special request for travel expense reimbursement should ask for approval from their Supervisor before incurring the expense. Any travel expenses considered unreasonable under the circumstances will not be paid or reimbursed and are the employee's personal responsibility.
- h) Travel Advances: Employees may obtain a cash advance for approved business travel by submitting a written request to the Finance Department (see the Travel Advance Request Form attached or click on the Public drive, under Finance Forms, then Travel, then Travel Advance Request.) Employees whose jobs are designated as requiring extensive travel may be issued Town purchasing cards for payment of business expenses. Advances may be made for 100% of the meal expenses. Travelers requesting an advance of funds shall indicate the amount needed on the Travel Advance Request form, have it approved by their immediate Supervisor, and forward it to the Finance Department for final approval allowing for seven (7) days to process. Under extenuating circumstances, the Finance Department may approve an immediate processing of payment. Cash advances and Town credit and purchasing cards are Town property, and their use must be properly documented and approved.
- i) Meal Reimbursement: Employees required to travel on Town business may charge to the Town,

or be reimbursed for, the cost of meals during their travel. In addition, employees may charge or be reimbursed for meals associated with approved business entertaining or with the approved activities of civic and professional organizations. The purpose of the entertainment and list of participants must also be noted.

- j) Employees participating in an approved business conference during meal periods are eligible for meal reimbursement if a meal is not included in the cost of the business conference.
- k) Employees eligible for meal reimbursement must present a Travel Expense Report Form with receipts. Meal expenses must be reasonable and should follow the per diem schedule, www.gsa.gov/travel/plan-book/per-diem-rates?contentType=GSA_BASIC&contentId=17943
- l) The eligible employee's Supervisor must approve all meal expense documentation with the appropriate finance form ([Purchasing Card Receipt Form](#), [Visa DI Form](#), [Visa RQ Form](#), or [Check Request Form](#)) and send it to the Finance Department for processing and payment.
- m) Rental Car: The use of a rental car is permitted only when it is in the interest of the Town to do so. Ask for a government rate or take the lowest rate available. Personal use days if added to the employees approved travel schedule will not be reimbursed by the Town. Airport shuttles, taxis and other methods of public transportation are encouraged when they provide a more economical alternative for the Town.
 - i. Insurance should not be purchased from the car rental agency since employees are already covered under workers' compensation insurance and the insurance reserve.
 - ii. For less than three (3) employees traveling together, the Town will reimburse for the cost of a compact car. Upgrades to mid-size are permissible if three (3) or more employees travel together.
 - iii. If rental cars are retained over a weekend, such expenses are personal except when used to travel on a weekend to another location on Town business or if it would be cheaper for the employee to retain the vehicle over a weekend by paying a weekly rate rather than a daily rental rate.
 - iv. The employee should make sure the tank is full when picking up the car. The car should also be returned with a full tank of gas.
- n) Travel to and from Airport Terminals: Travel to and from airport terminals will be by the least costly method available consistent with business requirements (e.g., airport bus or limousine, taxi, air commuter, or personal automobile [including parking or storage fees]). On trips of more than one day's duration, long-term parking must be used and receipts must be attached to the expense report. (See [Travel Expense Report Form \(Automated\)](#) or [Travel Expense Report Form \(Handwritten\)](#)).
- o) Baggage Expenses: Charges imposed by a carrier on personal luggage will be reimbursed by the Town. Personal luggage that exceeds weight or other established limitations will be borne by the employee unless the Supervisor who authorized the trip approves a particular exception. The Town will pay any charges for business materials that an employee is specifically authorized to carry in or as part of the employee's personal luggage.
- p) Room Expenses: Employees are expected to use sound business judgment in selecting accommodations. In many cases, a government rate is available and employees should request this rate when registering at the hotel. If late arrival is guaranteed and the reservation must be cancelled, the cancellation must be made within the time required. The Town will not pay for no-shows with the exception of illness or extraordinary circumstances beyond the control of the employee (documentation must be provided.)

- i. All charges shown on the expense report form should be itemized to show hotel charges, meals, telephone charges, etc. In-room movies and use of mini-bars are considered personal expenses and therefore, not reimbursable.
- q) Other Expenses: The Town provides a maximum of \$10.00 a day for miscellaneous out-of-pocket expenses. As an example valet tips, baggage handling or room service tips.
- r) Combined Business and Personal Travel: The Town will pay for the cost of the business segment, and the employee will pay for the difference between that and the total. If the total is equal to or less than the business segment, there are no additional charges.
- s) Guest on a Trip: If an employee chooses to take a guest on an approved business trip, the additional expense incurred is personal. The Town will reimburse expenses to the extent that it would have cost for the employee alone.
- t) Airline Clubs: Fees for membership in airline clubs are considered personal expense and, therefore, not reimbursable.
- u) Registration Fees: To receive reimbursement of registration fees not paid prior to the trip, the registration receipt must be supported by a copy of the program or agenda of the meeting itemizing registration fees, meals (if any), and lodging included in the registration fee.
- v) Expenses Paid by Other Agencies: Meetings for which the traveler will be reimbursed by another agency, organization, or institution are excluded from these provisions.
- w) Reporting Travel Expenses: A travel expense report should be filed within five (5) working days after completion of a trip (see [Travel Expense Report Form \(Automated\)](#) or [Travel Expense Report Form \(Handwritten\)](#)). Any travel advances and/or Town-paid expenses should be noted on this report. The employee shall submit the travel expense report and all necessary receipts to the Finance Department for reimbursement once it has been approved by their immediate Supervisor.
- x) Job Applicant Travel Expenses: Job applicants selected for interviews may be reimbursed for mileage and subsistence expenses in accordance with this policy. In the event lodging and/or air travel is involved, the Town will determine all necessary arrangements for the applicant according to this policy.
- y) Approvals and Review: Expenses incurred as the result of business travel requires the approval of the Department Director. Implicit in the approval is that the approver has personally reviewed the details of the expense report. Final review, prior to reimbursement, is the responsibility of the Finance Department.
- z) For policies and procedures governing reimbursement for business entertaining while traveling. (See [Business Entertaining](#).)
- aa) Time spent by non-exempt employees (those covered by the minimum wage and overtime requirements of the Fair Labor Standards Act) traveling away from home on Town business during normal working hours is considered hours worked for pay purposes. (See [Hours of Work](#).)
- bb) Employees traveling on Town business are representatives of the Town and are expected to maintain a high level of professionalism and to follow all of the Town's policies and rules. (See [Employee Behavior and Expectations](#).)

2.17 Employee Dress Code.

The Town of Bluffton approves business casual attire for employees, while recognizing that we interface daily with the public for whom we work.

When attending, presenting or representing the Town of Bluffton at public meetings and Town Council meetings, your attire is expected to be professional.

The Town's dress code encourages employees to use their best judgment when choosing their appropriate work attire. Department Heads may use discretion about enforcing dress code in their department that may differ from this policy.

Professional appearance is an important factor in building the confidence of others, and Town employees should take pride in their appearance. The following are guidelines for choosing your work attire.

All Town Employees

This is not an all-inclusive list; the Town reserves the right, on a case-by-case basis, to use its discretion when deciding appropriate workplace dress. Exceptions may be made for staff with outside work duties.

Tops: Long and short-sleeved shirts, polo/golf shirts, blouses, and sweaters are appropriate.

Bottoms: Slacks, capris, skirts, dress jeans, are appropriate. Dress jeans are commonly referred to as jeans with five (5) pockets, but not limited to this description. They are not limited to the color blue; they should be free from noticeable stains and not have visible holes and/or well-worn spots; the bottom pant leg is hemmed and not frayed, and they should not have any type of large logo.

Banned are t-shirts with brand labels, slogans, or "messages," torn or dirty clothing, shorts (except for outside work), jogging or workout clothing, flip flops, strapless, spaghetti straps or halter tops and miniskirts.

Clothing must fit properly. Extremely tight-fitting clothing is not acceptable. Oversized clothing and "sagging" and/or "low-riding" clothing is not acceptable. The pants or skirts should not be tight, and skirts should be no shorter than the top of the knee.

It is inappropriate to expose midriffs, belly buttons and anything that may be thought to be too revealing for the workplace.

At its discretion, the Town of Bluffton may allow employees to dress in a more casual fashion than is normally required. On these occasions, employees are still expected to present a neat appearance and are not permitted to wear ripped or disheveled clothing, athletic wear, or similarly inappropriate clothing.

Personal Appearance:

- Hair should be clean, combed, and neatly trimmed or arranged. Shaggy, unkempt hair is not permissible regardless of length.
- Sideburns, moustaches, and beards should be neatly trimmed.

Jewelry/Tattoos:

Piercings visible to the public may not be worn while working (other than appropriate earrings in the ear lobe). Inappropriate tattoos should not be visible in the workplace.

The appropriateness of these items will be determined by the Department Head, with a final determination by the Town Manager.

Employees with Town Uniforms

Designated departments and individuals are required to wear Town-provided uniforms. Department heads are accountable for requiring their employees to wear proper Town-provided uniforms, including proper safety eyewear and footwear.

2.18 Press Releases.

It is the policy of the Town to cooperate with the news media and to release newsworthy information.

The only persons authorized to release information are the Public Information Officer, Community Relations Manager, the Town Manager or designee.

2.19 Workplace Violence.

It is unacceptable for any employee to use any threatening act, remark or gesture in the workplace. There is no excuse for violence or threats of violence by anyone at any level at, or associated with, the Town of Bluffton. The Town of Bluffton is committed to maintaining a workplace that is free from violence or threat of violence. All incidents and threats will be thoroughly investigated.

- a) Violence in the workplace is defined as an implied, suggested, actual physical act or gesture that threatens the safety of an employee and/or client.
- b) All employees have the right to expect a place of employment that is free from behavior that can be considered harassing, abusive, disorderly, or disruptive. Any violent behavior or behavior that creates a climate of violence, hostility or intimidation will not be tolerated, regardless of origin.
- c) This policy includes, but is not limited to, the following behaviors and situations:
 - i. Violent or threatening physical contact (including fights, pushing, and physical intimidation.);
 - ii. Direct or indirect threats, including “joking” threats;
 - iii. Threatening, abusive or harassing telephone calls;
 - iv. Possession of a weapon on Town property;
 - v. Destructive or sabotaging actions against the Town or employees’ personal property.
 - vi. Stalking;
 - vii. Violation of a restraining order;
 - viii. Threatening acts or abusive language that leads to tension within the work environment.
- d) Any person who makes threats, exhibits threatening behavior, or engages in violent acts on Town of Bluffton property shall be removed from the premises as quickly as safety permits, and shall remain off Town premises pending the outcome of an investigation. No existing Town of Bluffton policy, practice or procedure should be interpreted to prohibit decisions designed to prevent a threat from being carried out, a violent act from occurring or a life-threatening situation from developing.

Any employee can report concerns to his or her immediate Supervisor, Human Resources, or any member of management.

2.20 Emergency Situation Protocol.

The Town of Bluffton is committed to maintaining a workplace that is free from violence, threats of violence and concerns for personal safety from the public toward employees in any of our job sites. We want our employees to feel safe and understand their responsibility and actions during and following such a situation where there may be a threat to safety.

If an employee feels threatened, experiences or witnesses violence or has an immediate concern about a member of the public or a fellow employee in any situation, then that employee should call 911 as soon as practical and possible.

Situations like this could be times when a member of the public or a co-worker enters a Town of Bluffton workspace or you overhear a co-worker say something that might be of an immediate concern to your or

someone else's safety. This situation could also occur outside of the workplace when conducting Town duties. Every situation cannot be addressed but generally, the employee witnessing such a scene of feeling threatened or in danger should:

- a) Call 911 as soon as practical and possible (note: do not worry about who should call; keep in mind multiple calls to 911 are never a problem).
- b) Make notes as soon as possible about what you saw, who was present, what was said and date/time of incident.
- c) The Senior Staff member at the work site should gather statements about the situation from everyone present regarding the situation.
- d) The Senior Staff member, or designee, at the work site should send an e-mail as soon as possible and practical to their Department Head, Police Chief and Town Manager explaining what happened. The Subject line for this should be "911 on ____ (date) at ____ (location)" [If the situation occurs at Town Hall where the Town Manager works, then the Town Manager may designate HR or someone else to gather the documentation and make a record the incident].
- e) The Police Chief will ensure that the employee, division and/or department experiencing the threat receives follow-up and communication following the 911 call.
- f) HR will follow up to organize utilizing EAP for individual or group meetings as necessary.

Reminders:

- a) Your Safety is ALWAYS most important.
- b) Should a member of the public ask about whether a particular employee is in or not, you should never disclose that he/she is on vacation; but rather state "I'm not sure if he/she is in right now, but if you'll give me your name and number, I'll make sure they know you stopped by."
- c) All calls made to 911 should be calls that require immediate police assistance, they would be considered IN PROGRESS or JUST OCCURRED. All other calls that do not require immediate police assistance should be made into a non-emergency number into Beaufort County Communications such as 843-524-2777. However, if there is ever a question in your mind whether you need immediate assistance then you should call 911.

Note: this protocol should be reviewed by each Division Manager with all staff at least once every six months.

2.21 Concealed Weapons.

It is the policy of the Town of Bluffton that employees, excluding police officers, may not, at any time possess or use any weapon, while on any property owned, leased, operated or controlled by the Town, or in a Town vehicle, or at Town work sites. Weapons include, but are not limited to, guns, knives (any size) or swords, explosives, and any chemical whose purpose is to cause harm to another person.

- a) Regardless of whether an employee possesses a concealed weapons permit or is allowed by law to possess a weapon, weapons are prohibited on any Town property or in any location in which the employee represents the Town for business purposes.
- b) Possession of a weapon is authorized for Town of Bluffton Police Officers.

2.22 Facility Security.

It is the policy of the Town to make reasonable efforts to provide for the security of its property, its employees, and authorized visitors to its premises.

- a) The Town's Director of Engineering or their designee, oversees the Town's facility security policies and procedures.

Facilities' responsibilities include:

- i. Recommending, implementing, enforcing, and auditing all security procedures;
 - ii. Evaluating, installing, maintaining, and operating all security devices and systems;
 - iii. Communicating with and maintaining relationships with the Bluffton Police Department (BPD);
 - iv. Developing systems to issue and control employee identification devices and keys and to identify and control the Town's physical assets;
 - v. Monitoring all solicitations and controlling access by nonemployees to Town premises;
 - vi. Contacting the BPD to investigate theft, vandalism and disturbances occurring on Town premises or involving Town property; and
 - vii. Communicating facility security procedures to employees and training employees with respect to their security responsibilities.
- b) Employees may be issued keys or fobs for their work area and identification badges that are to be in their possession while on Town property.
 - c) New employees will be issued written instructions on security system operations and receive a demonstration during orientation.
 - d) Customers, suppliers, and guests must identify themselves to the receptionist at each location. Special contractors working on Town property will be issued a Town identification badge for entering the building while they are working within our buildings.
 - e) Other than authorized law enforcement, all employees, customers, suppliers, and guests are prohibited from possessing firearms or other weapons on Town property or in Town vehicles.
 - f) Employees may be searched, questioned, and subject to surveillance whenever the Town believes this is necessary to maintain security. All personal property brought onto the Town's premises, such as vehicles, packages, briefcases, backpacks, purses, bags, and wallets, are subject to inspection. In addition, the Town may inspect the contents of lockers, storage areas, file cabinets, desks, and work stations at any time and may remove all Town property and other items that are in violation of Town rules and policies. (See [Personal Property](#).)
 - g) Employees may enter or remain on the Town's premises outside their normal working hours only when authorized to do so by their supervisor.
 - h) Employees are expected to exercise reasonable care for their own protection and that of their personal property while on the Town premises and while away from the premises on business. The Town assumes no responsibility for loss, damage, or theft of personal property. (See [Personal Property](#).)
 - i) Employees are expected to ensure that work areas and facilities are locked and secured (alarm set) before departing when being the last one to leave per office protocol.
 - j) Employees that discover or witness accidents, disturbances, hazards, vandalism, or any illegal activity on Town premises should follow these steps:
 - i. Call 911 if the situation is life threatening or an illegal activity is in progress;
 - ii. Notify the Public Works Manager or a representative. An incident report, statement, photos, or other documentation may be required. Facilities staff will follow up with

appropriate staff and agencies. Corrective actions will be coordinated by the Public Works Division;

- iii. Notify immediate Supervisor. Copies of all submitted documentation will be provided to the reporting employee;
- iv. Be available for follow up questions and activity, if necessary.
- k) Employees should submit a work request through their desktop shortcut to: [Public Works Ticket Link](#) for facility related security, safety or potentials hazards that are not immediate threats. Urgent matters should be addressed to the Director of Engineering.
- l) Supervisors should refer to the Town's Contact List or department telephone protocol if one is established for matters that occur after hours and/or on weekends or holidays.

Employees are expected to know and comply with the Town's security procedures and should report any violations or potential problems to the Director of Engineering. Violations of Town security rules or procedures will result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination. In addition, illegal acts committed by employees will be reported to law enforcement authorities.

2.23 Town of Bluffton Property.

- Proper care and usage of equipment is imperative at all times;
- Waste, destruction, improper usage or theft is prohibited.
- No Town of Bluffton property will be removed from the premises without specific prior approval of a supervisor. Removing property or equipment without authorization may result in disciplinary action.
- Employees are responsible for the proper care and return of all Town property and equipment assigned to their possession.

Personal Property

When personal property of an employee is brought into the workplace the Town of Bluffton will not be responsible for any maintenance or repair. Any private property or equipment used by employees at the Town facilities must receive advance approval by the department head. Employees have no expectation of privacy or security of personal items brought or stored on Town premises.

Lost and Found Items

Articles found in or on the Town of Bluffton property should be turned over to the employee's department director or Chief of Police immediately;

2.24 Audio Tape/Video Recording.

Employees are prohibited from audio or video recording other employees or Town officials unless the employee/official to be taped/recorded has given his/her express permission or unless authorized by the Town Manager, the Chief of Police, or an outside law enforcement agency.

2.25 Solicitation.

No employee may engage in or allow solicitation for any cause, distribution of literature, or sale or receipt of services in any working area of the Town of Bluffton during working time.

An employee who is not on working time, such as a lunch period or break, may not solicit another employee who is on working time.

In special cases, with prior approval by the Town Manager, certain types of solicitation for community funds or community projects may be conducted.

2.26 Sanitary Work Space.

It is important that the Town of Bluffton set the example for cleanliness and healthful sanitation. Each employee is asked to assume the responsibility for seeing that papers, rags, bottles, or any other refuse is properly disposed.

2.27 Employee Behavior and Expectations.

a) Disciplinary Action

As is the case with all organizations, instances arise when an employee must be disciplined. Under normal circumstances, the Town endorses a policy of progressive discipline in which it attempts to provide employees with notice of deficiencies and an opportunity to improve. It does, however retain the right to administer discipline in any manner it sees fit. The discipline imposed may range from an oral or a written warning to suspension to demotion to discharge. The Town may impose some other form of discipline, as well. The discipline imposed in any particular situation is at the sole discretion of the Town and nothing in any of the Town's policies or by virtue of any past practice of the Town requires the Town to follow any particular course of discipline. Supervisors and department heads must submit terminations to the Town Manager for review.

- i. Employees must sign counseling memoranda, policy statements, performance evaluations and other similar documents. The employee's signature does not necessarily indicate agreement with the contents of the document, only that he/she has been notified of the contents of the document.
- ii. If the employee refuses to sign the document, he/she is considered to have resigned. At its sole option, the Town may suspend the employee without pay and, if he/she does not sign the form by 5:30 p.m. at the close of business the next scheduled work day, unless another time has been determined, he/she will be presumed to have resigned.

b) Code of Conduct

The following is a list of offenses that will reflect against your Performance Review and promotion opportunities and may require disciplinary actions up to and including termination. This list is not inclusive of all behaviors that may potentially result in disciplinary action. The disciplinary action that is appropriate for any particular misconduct is at the sole discretion of the Town. The Town reserves the right to discipline employees for any reason. Failure of management to discipline an employee shall not constitute a waiver of the Town's future right to discipline its employees. At the time of disciplinary action, an employee's Supervisor will inform him/her of the conduct that is the basis for the action.

Employees Shall:

1. Be courteous and professional in their dealings with the public.
2. Adhere to the Town of Bluffton Mission Statement.
3. Be punctual in reporting for duty at the time and place designated by their supervisor.
4. Be committed to one's work and loyalty to the Town of Bluffton.
5. Act impartially and not give preferential treatment to any private organization or individual.
6. Protect and conserve Town property and not use it for other than Town authorized activities.
7. Satisfy in good faith their obligations as citizens, including all just financial obligations such as child support or other court ordered payments.
8. Adhere to all State and Federal employment laws.

9. Avoid political activity and campaigning.
10. Immediately report a work-related accident to your supervisor.
11. Immediately report personal injury or property damage to your supervisor.
12. Report for duty, and for all assignments, at the time and place required and be prepared and equipped to perform job duties or assignments.
13. Notify management of a suspended or revoked driver's license (especially those employees that operate a Town Vehicle), or if you receive a citation for a moving violation while in a Town vehicle, or if you are convicted of a moving violation whether in a Town or personal vehicle.
14. Remain awake on-duty. If unable to do so, they are required to notify a supervisor who will determine the proper course of action.
15. Avoid any actions creating the appearance that they are violating the law or the ethical standards promulgated pursuant to this policy.
16. Maintain their financial obligations to their creditors to prevent collection agencies from contacting the Town. Financial difficulties stemming from unforeseen medical expenses or personal disaster shall not be cause for discipline, provided that a good faith effort to settle all accounts is being undertaken.
17. Adhere to Town of Bluffton policies, procedures, or protocols as described in the Employee Handbook, Departmental Standard Operation Procedures, or as communicated by management from time-to-time.

Employees Shall Not:

1. Violate the Town's EEO Policies prohibiting against any employee based on race, age, color, creed, sex, religion, or national origin; and any other status protected by applicable local, state, or federal nondiscrimination laws, harassment of any employee, which may include slurs, provocative conduct or offensive jokes or stories; or other acts that make the working environment unpleasant for fellow workers.
2. Employees shall not engage in harassment of any kind (i.e. sexual, racial, etc.) toward fellow employees, customers, or others.
3. Use abusive, violent, profane or insulting language or gestures and will attempt to remain calm, regardless of provocation.
4. Violate safety rules, neglect, or engage in unsafe practices.
5. Leave a post, assignment or their shift without having been properly relieved. Employees shall notify their supervisor as soon as possible if an emergency arises and they must vacate their assignment.
6. Fail to provide information or falsify Town records or provide falsified records to the Town for any purpose.
7. Be neglectful or careless.
8. Mishandle customer payments or deposits, cash on hand, receipts or financial records.
9. Misuse Town Intellectual Property, specifically including confidential and proprietary information about the Town's business activities, plans, or employees which is not publicly known or disclosed by the Town.

10. Use unauthorized absences or excessive tardiness as defined by Department Head.
11. Display an inability, unwillingness or failure to perform the duties assigned in a satisfactory manner or refuse to carry out instructions.
12. Use physical violence, threats of physical violence or assault or other behavior that would cause other Town employees to be concerned for their personal safety.
13. Carry weapons in the workplace unless specifically authorized by the Town.
14. Lie to any supervisor or other member of management, or any other form of dishonesty.
15. Hold financial interests that conflict with their job duties.
16. Divulge confidential information or allow the improper use of such information to further any private interest.
17. Use public office for private gain.
18. Engage in outside employment or activities, that conflict with official Town business and responsibilities. (See [Secondary or Outside Employment](#))
19. Employees must disclose waste, fraud, abuse, and corruption to appropriate Town authorities.
20. Show lack of good judgement.
21. Interfere with the work of others.
22. Threaten, coerce, or intimidate fellow employees.
23. Show insubordination, including disrespect for authority, or other conduct, which tends to undermine authority.
24. Publicly criticize instructions or orders they have received. Should an employee take exception to an order or policy, it should be taken to the next highest-ranking supervisor for resolution.
25. Be disrespectful either through gestures or defamatory statements.
26. Publicly criticize the Town, its policies or other employees by talking, writing, or expressing in any other manner, where such talking, writing or other expression is defamatory, or obscene, or unlawful or tends to impair the operation of the Town. The Town considers the internet and other written and electronic media as public domain.
27. Steal, misappropriate or destroy Town property or equipment or the property or equipment of other employees or customers.

Moral Turpitude:

1. Employees of the Town in safety sensitive positions (safety sensitive positions include individuals whose position requires them to hold a Commercial Driver's License (CDL) and Sworn Law Enforcement Officers) are subject to random drug testing. Any employee found with illegal substances in their system or on their person (not in conjunction with their assignment) will be terminated for cause.
2. An employee with a conviction of or plea of guilty or no contest to a charge of theft, violation of drug laws, sexual misconduct, offense involving moral turpitude, or offense which affects the Town's reputation, or which reasonably could create concern on the part of students, parents, fellow employees, or the community may be terminated for cause.
3. Any employee convicted of a felony will be terminated for cause. If an employee is charged with a felony and an investigation reveal by a preponderance of the evidence that the

employee committed the act, they may be terminated for cause.

4. Any employee convicted of a misdemeanor will be subject to disciplinary action with the possibility of termination for cause. If an employee is charged with a misdemeanor and an investigation reveal by a preponderance of evidence that the employee committed the act they may be terminated for cause.

2.28 Filing a Grievance.

- a) The Town of Bluffton adopts a grievance procedure in accordance with the "County and Municipal Employees Grievance Procedure Act," Section 8-17-110, et seq., Code of Laws of South Carolina, 1976.
- b) Nothing in this grievance procedure creates a property interest in employment or a contract of employment, nor does this procedure limit the authority of the Town Manager under Section 5-13-90, Code of Laws of South Carolina, 1976, as amended to remove any employee when necessary for the good of the Town.
- c) The Town will attempt to settle any employee grievance as expeditiously as possible. Should the grieving party fail to observe the time limits set out in this Section, their grievance shall be considered abandoned. Any grievance not answered by the Town within the prescribed time limits shall automatically advance to the next higher step.

Please refer to [Attachment F](#) for the Town of Bluffton Grievance Procedure.

2.29 Protocol for Handling Employee Issues.

Employees should follow chain of command when reporting a problem or requiring an issue to be resolved.

Employees should follow the Grievance Procedure when they have a complaint if they feel they have been treated in violation of the Town policies with regard to any matter pertaining to his/her employment by the Town.

The expectation is that employee problems should be resolved at the employee/supervisor level; however, if the problem is with their supervisor, the employee does have the ability to go to their next-level-supervisor in the chain of command.

When a supervisor is made aware of an employee problem, they have a duty to act and should solve it to the best of their ability and document the solution through their chain of command. Once the problem is resolved, the solution should be documented through their chain of command with a copy in the personnel file of all parties involved.

If the problem is not able to be resolved at this point, then the employee's supervisor should reach out to their manager up to and including the Department Director or Police Chief. Once the problem is resolved, the solution should be documented through their chain of command with a copy in the personnel file of all parties involved.

If the problem is not able to be resolved at the level of Department Director or Police Chief, then the Town Manager should be made aware of the unresolved conflict for resolution and/or legal input.

When Legal advice is required, the Town Manager, or his/her designee, will communicate with the Town Attorney.

Human Resources is available at any time to provide consulting to the Supervisor, Department Head or Police Chief at any time in this process.

As with any written communications, all employees are to be cautious with information put in writing and in text messages and be mindful of the Freedom of Information Act.

SECTION III. EMERGENCY & PANDEMIC POLICIES

3.0 Emergency and Pandemic Policies

3.1 The American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA)

The Act which was signed into law on March 11, 2021 extends the Families First Corona Virus Act (FFCRA) that expired on December 31, 2020. ARPA provides for continued reimbursement of employers voluntarily providing COVID-19-related leaves from April 1, 2021 through September 30, 2021. It also expands the qualified paid sick leave reasons to include leave provided to an employee who is obtaining a COVID-19 immunization, recovering from a condition related to COVID-19 immunization or seeking or awaiting the results of a COVID-19 test or diagnosis either because the employee was exposed, or the employer required the test or diagnosis. Employers will be able to provide an additional ten days of COVID-19-related sick leave to employees beginning on April 1, 2021.

For COVID-19 related reasons, employees receive up to 80 hours of paid sick leave and expanded paid child care leave when employees' children's schools are closed or child care providers are unavailable.

Paid Leave Entitlements

The ARPA resets the amount of emergency paid sick leave under the FFCRA starting April 1, 2021. Generally, employers covered under the Act must provide employees: Up to two weeks (80 hours, or a part-time employee's two-week equivalent) of paid sick leave based on the higher of their regular rate of pay, or the applicable state or Federal minimum wage, paid at:

- 100% for qualifying reasons #1-3 below, up to \$511 daily and \$5,110 total;
- 2/3 for qualifying reasons #4 and 6 below, up to \$200 daily and \$2,000 total; and
- Up to 12 weeks of paid sick leave and expanded family and medical leave paid at 2/3 for qualifying reason #5 below for up to \$200 daily and \$12,000 total.

A part-time employee is eligible for leave for the number of hours that the employee is normally scheduled to work over that period.

Eligible Employees:

In general, employees of private sector employers with fewer than 500 employees, and certain public sector employers, are eligible for up to two weeks of fully or partially paid sick leave for COVID-19 related reasons (see below).

The American Rescue Plan also changes the entitlement to emergency Family & Medical Leave Act pay. Previously, the first two weeks of emergency FMLA were unpaid. Under the American Rescue Plan, all 12 weeks of emergency FMLA can be paid. Moreover, the emergency FMLA benefits have been expanded to include all of the reasons an employee can take emergency paid sick leave. Under the original version of the FFCRA, emergency FMLA was only available for school or childcare issues.

Qualifying Reasons for Leave Related to COVID-19

An employee is entitled to take leave related to COVID-19 if the employee is unable to work, including unable to telework, because the employee:

1. Is subject to a Federal, State, or local quarantine or isolation order related to COVID-19;
2. Has been advised by a health care provider to self-quarantine related to COVID-19;

3. Is experiencing COVID-19 symptoms and is seeking a medical diagnosis;
4. Is caring for an individual subject to an order described in (1) or self-quarantine as described in (2);
5. Is caring for his or her child whose school or place of care is closed (or child care provider is unavailable) due to COVID-19 related reasons; or
6. Is experiencing any other substantially-similar condition specified by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services;
7. Is obtaining a COVID-19 vaccination;
8. Is suffering or recovering from side effects related to the COVID-19 vaccination; or
9. Is seeking or waiting the results of a COVID-19 test if the employee has either been exposed to COVID-19 or the employer has requested the COVID-19 test.

ARPA clarifies that employers cannot discriminate in granting paid sick leave or emergency FMLA to a certain class of employee. This means that if an employer offers paid leave under the FFCRA, it must be offered to all employees, including newly hired employees and part-time employees. Employers are free, however, to choose to offer paid sick leave but choose not to offer paid emergency FMLA.

Enforcement

The U.S. Department of Labor's Wage and Hour Division (WHD) has the authority to investigate and enforce compliance with the FFCRA. Employers may not discharge, discipline, or otherwise discriminate against any employee who lawfully takes paid sick leave or expanded family and medical leave under the FFCRA, files a complaint, or institutes a proceeding under or related to this Act. Employers in violation of the provisions of the FFCRA will be subject to penalties and enforcement by WHD. 5. is caring for his or her child whose school or place of care is closed (or child care provider is unavailable) due to COVID-19 related reasons; or 6. is experiencing any other substantially-similar condition specified by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

3.2 COVID-19 Travel Advisory Notice

Employees will continue to be required to comply with all governmental regulations regarding travel. Employees are strongly encouraged to consider COVID's impact when deciding to travel and should be aware of regulations and restrictions in and around their intended destinations.

3.3 Pandemic Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)- COVID-19

Overview

In June 2020, Town Council passed an emergency ordinance requiring all people to wear face coverings when entering any building in Town that is open to the public. This emergency ordinance was enacted because of rising COVID-19 infection rates in our area and in response to recommendations from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention.

The emergency ordinance ended on April 14, 2021 and this policy has been reviewed and revised to address changes that affect the public entering Town facilities and our staff returning to and working at Town facilities.

This policy directive is designed to ensure that employees are continuing to adhere CDC guidelines, respect fellow co-workers, and act in a responsible manner to continue to limit the risk of infection in the workplace and to maximize staff's collective ability to serve the public.

This policy supersedes any and all previous policies by the same title or relating to the same subject matter.

Requirement for Face Covering

Employees wear a face covering when inside Town facilities and unable to socially distance at least 6 feet from others.

Employees are required to wear face coverings at all times when interacting with the public.

Signage will be placed at the entrance of Town facilities asking that face coverings be worn when entering and advising that if they are unable or unwilling to wear a face covering, that services may be rendered through other remote means.

Effective Dates of Policy

This policy is in effect immediately through the duration of the pandemic event, or unless otherwise amended or rescinded.

Accountability

Failure to adhere to this policy may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination or employment.

3.4 Temporary Telecommuting Policy

The Town of Bluffton re-opening to the public will end the Temporary Telecommuting Policy. This will remain in place should a future emergency require Temporary Telecommuting.

Overview

In response to a declared emergency, such as COVID-19, and based upon recommendations from the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control and the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, the Town of Bluffton is authorizing temporary telecommuting assignments to designated positions.

1.0 Eligible positions will be determined by the Department Head, reviewed by Human Resources, and approved by the Town Manager and will be based upon functional role and business needs.

2.0 Telecommuting is an alternative work arrangement in which work is performed at an alternate work location. Telecommuting is neither a benefit nor an entitlement and in no way changes the terms and conditions of employment. Telecommuting may be appropriate for some employees, supervisors and duties, but not necessarily viable for everyone. Telecommuting may be fixed and ongoing, working from an alternate location each week.

Telecommuting may require more frequent interaction and communication between the telecommuter and their supervisor since neither can rely on seeing each other in the workplace. Daily contact should occur to verify that the Telecommuter is actively working and to resolve any problems that may arise. After both parties are accustomed to the telecommuting arrangement, the Supervisor and Telecommuter may communicate at a level

consistent with employees working at the office or in a manner and frequency that seems appropriate for the job and the individuals involved.

Supervisors should remind staff to take breaks and not work excessively in front of the screen. Teleworking is about achieving an expected level of productivity.

- 3.0** When possible, telecommuting will be approved prior to the emergency event.
- 4.0** As referenced in 1.0, [Telecommuting Agreements](#) must be approved by the Town Manager and signed by the Employee prior to implementing.
- 5.0** Regular Full-Time or Part-Time employees are eligible to Telecommute. Other employees may also telecommute with Town Manager approval.
- 6.0** Telecommuters must be available by phone or other electronic communication during the agreed upon telecommuting hours of work.
- 7.0** Telecommuting agreements may be discontinued at any time at the sole discretion of the Town Manager.
- 8.0** Equipment and Alternate Work Environment. Equipment needs will be evaluated under standard policies and procedures, regardless of location. In the event standard policies and procedures do not address every need, the Department Director and Telecommuter will explore potential options and solutions. There may be times where the needed equipment presents an unbudgeted or duplicative cost or requires support that the Town cannot provide. If the Town cannot provide or support the equipment, the Telecommuter may choose to use their own equipment and be responsible for the purchase, modification, repair and maintenance of the equipment and software used for telecommuting. The Telecommuter shall only use property licensed software for Town business.

The telecommuter should ensure that they have the capabilities (i.e. internet and wifi connection) prior to starting to work remotely. They will need to ensure that they have VPN access and have the appropriate software on their computers. If the employee experiences any technical difficulties, they will put in a Help Desk Ticket as they would normally do for IT assistance. Furthermore, it will be the responsibility of the employee to have their passwords to sites and programs that they use regularly saved somewhere or with them physically.

The Telecommuter will establish an appropriate work environment for work purposes. The Town will not be responsible for costs associated with initial setup of the Telecommuters work environment, such as remodeling, furniture or lighting, nor for repairs or modifications to the environment.

Unless otherwise informed, the telecommuter will be reimbursed for their internet costs for the period of time worked remotely. Instructions will be provided by the Finance Department as to how the employees submit their invoices for reimbursement.

- 9.0** The Telecommuter shall be responsible to maintain any equipment issued to them.

- 10.0** The Telecommuter represents that the alternate workplace is a safe and healthful work environment including proper ergonomics. The Telecommuter shall act in a responsible manner to avoid injury. The Telecommuter understands that failure to take proper health and safety precautions in the alternate workplace may result in discontinuation of the Telecommuting Agreement.
- 11.0** The telecommuter will be responsible for all materials, that they are kept confidential and will not leave their computers on/unlocked in any open space.
- 12.0** Town of Bluffton policies and procedures remain in effect while telecommuting. All Telecommuters are expected to adhere to all applicable policies while working remotely.
- 13.0** Injuries sustained by the Employee while at their alternate work location, and in conjunction with his/her regular work duties are normally covered by workers' compensation. Telecommuting employees are responsible for notifying their supervisor and Human Resources of such injuries in the same manner as if the injury occurred at a work location on the Town's premises. The Town is not liable for any injuries sustained by family members or other visitors to a Telecommuter's alternate work location.
- 14.0** Consistent with the Town's expectations of information security and compliance with public record laws, the Telecommuter will ensure the security and protection of information accessible from their alternate work location. The Telecommuter will check with their supervisor when security matters are an issue. No confidential information (including administrator passwords) will be downloaded to any data storage device (including but not limited to hard drive, CD, DVD, or USB stick). Any information that is considered confidential or protected will not be removed from the regular office without the Department Director's specific express approval in writing.
- 15.0** The Town will provide appropriate office supplies and reimbursement for business related expenses that are reasonably incurred in accordance with job responsibilities and in compliance with the Town's business expense policy on the same basis as when working at the regular work location.
- 16.0** Telecommuters who are hourly or non-exempt, will be required to record all hours worked on a timesheet detailing the work completed and the time spent on each task. Accrual of overtime or compensatory time will be administered under the same provisions as if the work were performed at the regular work location. Overtime work must have prior Supervisor approval.
- 17.0** Telecommuters who are salaried or exempt do not ordinarily complete a timecard at their regular place of work. However, when telecommuting, they will keep a record of actual time worked at the alternate work location for the purposes of demonstrating accountability to their agreed upon work schedule and to document projects, assignments and tasks that they are working on. The timesheets should indicate the work completed and the hours spent on each task.
- 18.0** Leave used on a planned telecommute day will be administered under the same provisions as leave used from the regular work location.

- 19.0 Telecommuting is not designed to be a replacement for appropriate childcare. Although a Telecommuter's schedule may be modified to accommodate childcare needs, the focus of the arrangement must remain on job performance and meeting business demands.
- 20.0 The Telecommuter and the Supervisor mutually agree to adhere to and evaluate a daily work plan. The Supervisor will review the proposed work plan and approve, adjust or decline the proposal based on reasonable priorities.
- 21.0 The Telecommuter will complete a detailed timesheet indicating the work completed and the time worked on each task to their supervisor. The Supervisor shall verify the quality and quantity of work done in accordance with the established daily work plan (see 21.0). In the event the Telecommuter does not provide the required timesheets, and/or the Supervisor cannot verify the quality and quantity of work done, there may be disciplinary action up to and including termination, or the telecommuting agreement may be discontinued.

3.5 Emergency Management Training Policy

- 1.0 As part of emergency preparation, designated Town personnel, including all Department Directors, are required to take the appropriate National Incident Management System courses (NIMS) or any other prescribed/required/recommended courses from state or third party vendors for their position as directed by the Emergency Manager.
- 2.0 Failure to complete required training may be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination.

3.6 Special Pay Provisions Policy

Purpose: The purpose of this policy is to determine how employees are to be paid when Town offices are closed due to inclement weather or declared emergencies.

Policy: When inclement weather, confined emergency or other emergency situations require Town office closings and/or additional working hours by essential Town personnel, the Town Manager can declare the implementation of Special Pay Provisions. When Special Pay Provisions have been declared, special pay rules, as set forth in this policy, will take effect.

This policy describes special pay provisions applicable to non-exempt (hourly) and exempt (salaried) employees, whether performing their regular responsibilities or reassigned as a result of inclement weather, confined emergency or a declared emergency. See Table 1 for an overview of this policy.

All Town employees are considered to be essential to Town operations prior to, during and following declared emergencies until otherwise released by the Town Manager. Failure to check in when required or report when scheduled may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination. An employee communication from the Town Manager or designee will be provided to advise work schedules for essential staff.

It is not possible to anticipate every possible contingency. Additional measures may be taken, and based upon the severity of the event, the time parameters of this policy may be adjusted by the Town Manager or designee as needed to support actions in the best interest of public safety.

Definitions:

Essential Staff: all staff are considered essential until informed otherwise by their supervisor, or someone upwards in their chain of supervision and will be advised when to report for duty during times of inclement weather, natural disaster or any emergency situation.

Emergency Stand-By: this is the time when an employee is required to be at work during emergency conditions and must remain at or near an assigned emergency operations center or other facility as designated by the Town Emergency Operations Center Commander.

Work-Ready Status: this refers to employees not required to work during any emergency, but who should be able to report within 24-hours notification.

Short Term Emergency: Generally will be a period of time of not more than 4 days when work locations are closed due to inclement weather or a confined emergency.

Response and Recovery Period: this refers to the time period when an emergency situation is not resolved, and the Emergency Operations Center may still be in full or partial operation.

Temporary Supplemental Compensation: pay authorized at the sole discretion of the Town Manager for certain or all Employees who meet the following conditions: (i) the exposure to unusually hazardous working conditions is temporary; (ii) any exposure is likely to result in serious incapacitation, long period of time lost, or possible loss of life; (iii) exposure or accidents are likely to occur frequently in spite of reasonable safety precautions; and (iv) the unusually hazardous working conditions have not been considered in the determination of base pay for qualifying Employee(s).

Inclement Weather/Short-Term Emergency Situation:

The Town Manager may close one or more Town work locations due to inclement weather, confined emergency or other short-term emergency situation. During such closures, the following pay provisions will be in effect:

- a) Employees whose work locations close and the employee is unable to telecommute, will be considered to be on paid administrative leave and will receive their regular straight time earnings if scheduled to work during the hours of closure.
- b) Employees on approved leave for any reason will not receive administrative leave pay.
- c) Employees who are deemed essential and whose jobs require that they report are expected to report to work as instructed. These employees will be provided a PTO credit for their hours worked up to a maximum of 12 hours.
- d) When operations at or for the work location resume, employees are expected to return to work. Employees who are unable to return to work due to the emergency will have leave charged to their PTO accrual. Employees who do not return to work or report in may be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination.

Declared Emergencies:

- a) The provisions of a Declared Emergency become effective when all the following conditions are met:
 - i. The Mayor of the Town of Bluffton has declared that a State of Emergency exists in the Town; or a state of emergency for an area encompassing Bluffton has been declared by the Governor or other competent authority; and
 - ii. The Town has suspended normal Town operations and is operating under emergency conditions, as determined by the Town Manager; and
 - iii. The Town has activated its Emergency Operations Center and is operating under OpCon 1 (see OpCon Definitions in Table 2).
- b) Pay During first 120 hours (5 days) of Declared Emergency:
 - i. Non-exempt (hourly) essential employees required to work during this period are eligible to receive 1.5 times their regular rate of pay for all hours worked. This rate of pay is applicable even if they have taken PTO during the pay cycle.
 - ii. Exempt (salaried) essential employees required to work out of the EOC during this period are eligible to receive 1.5 times an hourly rate for hours worked, which is

determined by dividing the employee's weekly salary by the number of regularly scheduled work week hours.

- iii. Non-exempt and exempt employees who are required to work remotely and instructed not to report because of the declared emergency will receive their regular rate of pay for regularly scheduled work hours. Any Town building or alternate work location is subject to opening at any time as conditions allow. Employees should be reachable by phone or other means during normal work hours to receive communication updates or information. Employees are expected to work remotely and able to report within 24 hours unless otherwise specified by the Town Manager, or designee.
 - iv. All employees (exempt and non-exempt) will be required to complete a timesheet for the entire pay period when the emergency was declared. Timesheets and appropriate hours codes will be provided by Finance.
 - v. Emergency Stand-By
 - 1) An employee is considered to be on emergency stand-by when he/she is required to work during this period and must remain at or near an emergency operations center, other company facility, motel or some other assigned place. During the emergency stand-by time at a shelter-in-place designated location, he/she will receive pay at their regular rate of pay.
 - 2) Employees scheduled to work during a Declared Emergency are expected to be fit for duty during the duration of the event. Employees will be expected to rest when not on duty, but remain subject to immediate recall to remain alert, sober and competent to perform assigned duties. Employees who feel they are not able to perform assigned tasks due to a unique circumstance may request a waiver from duties and will receive no pay for these hours.
- c) Payroll Following First 120 hours (5 days) of Declared Emergency
- i. Non-exempt and exempt employees that are not able to work remotely and not assigned responsibilities during the first 120 hours of a declared emergency should expect to receive work assignments by the end of that period. If they remain unassigned at the end of the 120-hour period, administrative pay will cease until they are assigned responsibilities. These employees may use accrued PTO, personal day, or compensatory time (non-exempt employees) to receive compensation during this period.
 - ii. Non-exempt and exempt employees that have been instructed to work remotely will receive their regular pay consistent with the regulations applicable to their classification.
 - iii. Non-exempt employees who are required to report in and assigned work during the declared emergency will receive their regular pay and overtime consistent with the overtime regulations applicable to their classification.
 - iv. Exempt (salaried) employees who are required to report in and assigned work during the declared emergency will receive their regular pay. The Town Manager must authorize the continuation of any overtime compensation for exempt employees. Should such authorization be given, exempt employees are eligible to receive overtime pay equal to the hourly rate of pay calculated in *b).ii* above for all hours worked over 40 during the work week.
 - v. Overtime compensation payments to exempt employees may continue during the response and recovery period. The duration of such payments will vary by department and function as determined by the Town Manager, or designee. Once a department returns to normal work schedules, overtime for exempt employees will

cease.

- vi. All employees (exempt and non-exempt) will be required to complete a timesheet for the entire pay period when the emergency was declared. Timesheets and appropriate hours codes will be provided by Finance.
- d) Declared Pandemic Emergency:
During a Declared Emergency due to a Pandemic such as COVID-19 or the like, the Town Manager, in his/her sole discretion, may authorize Temporary Supplemental Compensation (in addition to or in lieu of Emergency Pay) for certain or all Employees who meet the following conditions: (i) the exposure to unusually hazardous working conditions is temporary; (ii) any exposure is likely to result in serious incapacitation, long period of time lost, or possible loss of life; (iii) exposure or accidents are likely to occur frequently in spite of reasonable safety precautions; and (iv) the unusually hazardous working conditions have not been considered in the determination of base pay for the qualifying Employee(s). Temporary Supplemental Compensation may be issued in the form of a weekly stipend, monthly stipend, an increase in base pay rate, and/or an increase in Emergency Pay.
- e) Deviation from Policy: The Town Manager reserves the right to consider unique pay situations as they arise throughout an Emergency Period and may make exceptions or supplement the provisions of this Policy as s/he deems necessary in his/her sole discretion. Instances not covered by this Policy shall be decided on a case-by-case basis by the Town Manager or appropriate designee.
- f) Elected Officials and Municipal Judges will be paid their regular compensation.
- g) Applicability of Approved Leave
 - i. During and following a declared emergency, scheduled leave may be canceled and employees on leave may be recalled.
 - ii. Employees on paid or unpaid leave who are not recalled to duty during or following an emergency are not subject to special pay provisions until such time as their leave ends and they return to duty.
 - iii. If an employee does not report to work or check in at the designated time and/or location during a declared emergency, the employee may be considered to have resigned from employment with the Town.
- h) Resuming Normal Operations
 - i. If an employee does not report for work when required or does not request and receive approval for time off, the employee may be considered to have resigned from employment with the Town.

Table 1

SPECIAL PAY PROVISIONS			
	Inclement Weather/Short Term ER Situation	Declared Emergency - First 120 Hours	Declared Emergency - Following 120 hours
Employees NOT REQUIRED to report in	Employees who work in locations that are closed will be paid Admin Leave during short term ER situation	Non-Exempt and Exempt employees scheduled to work but not required to come in will receive their regular rate of pay for their scheduled hours.	Non-exempt and exempt employees not assigned responsibilities may use PTO, or compensatory time or personal leave.

Employees REQUIRED to work remotely	Non-exempt and Exempt employees scheduled to work will be required to telecommute during normal business hours and will receive their regular rate of pay for regularly scheduled hours.	Non-exempt and Exempt employees scheduled to work will be required to telecommute during normal business hours and will receive their regular rate of pay for regularly scheduled hours.	Non-exempt and Exempt employees scheduled to work will be required to telecommute during normal business hours and will receive their regular rate of pay for regularly scheduled hours.
Employees REQUIRED to report in	Employee in positions where they are required to work will be paid for their time worked and will receive an hour of PTO for every hour worked up to a maximum of 12 hours.	Non-Exempt and Exempt employees required to work will be paid 1.5 times their hourly rate of pay or hourly equivalent rate of pay for all hours worked during the Declared Emergency	Non-exempt employees required to work will receive their regular pay and overtime consistent with the overtime regulations. Exempt employees required to work will be paid their regular rate of pay, unless such overtime is approved by the Town Manager.
Employees on LEAVE STATUS	Employees on approved leave would not get Admin Leave and will utilize their PTO, Personal Time or Comp Time as approved for leave.	Employees on approved leave will utilize their PTO, Personal Time or Comp Time as approved for leave until such time as their approved leave ends. The Town may cancel PTO in some circumstances if necessary.	Employees on approved leave will utilize their PTO, Personal Time or Comp Time as approved for leave until such time as their approved leave ends. The Town may cancel PTO in some circumstances if necessary.

Table 2

OpCon Operation Conditions

OpCon 3 - Maintain normal daily operations.

OpCon 2 – Enhanced Awareness. A disaster or emergency is likely to affect the state. Emergency operations plans are implemented. The State Emergency Operations Center is partially activated if necessary.

OpCon 1 – Full Alert. A disaster or emergency is imminent or occurring. The State Emergency Operations Center is fully activated. All state emergency response team personnel are activated or ready to deploy.

SECTION IV.

PAYROLL

INFORMATION

In addition to providing employee payment information, such as how pay is received and how often, this section defines the different employment statuses and the various special pay provisions that may occur.

4.0. PAYROLL.

4.1 Exempt Employees.

An exempt employee is an employee who, because of his/her positional duties, responsibilities and level of decision making authority, is exempt from the overtime provisions of the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA). Exempt employees are expected to work whatever hours are necessary to accomplish the goals and deliverables of the position. However, exempt employees are expected to work at least 39 hours per work week.

4.2 Non-Exempt Employees.

A non-exempt employee is an employee who, because of the type of duties performed, the usual level of decision-making authority, and the method of compensation, is entitled to overtime. Non-exempt employees must account for hours and fractional hours worked. Non-exempt employees are compensated for all hours worked and receive overtime or compensatory time for all hours worked over 40 in one work week. Non-exempt law enforcement officers receive overtime or compensatory time for all hours worked over 86 in a two-week work period.

4.3 Full Time Employee.

A regular full-time employee is one who is scheduled to work a minimum of 39 hours per week on a regular basis, has completed their probationary period, and whose employment is for no definite term. However, the Town does not guarantee any minimum number of hours of work per week. Regular full-time employees are generally eligible for benefits and will begin accruing Paid Time Off (PTO) upon beginning employment. PTO may be used during the initial probationary period. Regular full-time employees are required to participate in the appropriate South Carolina Retirement plan.

4.4 Part Time Employee.

A regular part-time employee is one who is hired to work fewer than 39 hours per week, but may be called upon to work more than their normally scheduled hours of work when workloads require, and whose employment is for no definite term. Regular part-time employees are generally eligible for limited benefits and will be required to participate in the South Carolina Retirement System (SCRS), if criteria meet SCRS requirements.

4.5 Temporary Employee.

A temporary employee is one who works for a defined period of time or until a project(s) is completed. Temporary employees do not receive benefits.

4.6 Overtime/Compensatory Time.

All non-exempt non-police employees receive overtime compensation or compensatory time off at a rate of 1½ hours for all hours worked over 40 in one work week. While the Town endeavors to give notice of overtime work requirements, overtime may be required without notice. All overtime work must be approved in advance.

Police officers receive overtime compensation or compensatory time off for hours worked above 86 each 14-day pay period. All overtime must be authorized in advance by the supervisor and noted on the employee's time card or time distribution sheet.

4.7 Payment of Wages.

All employees are paid by direct deposit to the bank or financial institution of their choice on Thursday every two weeks. If the regular payday occurs on a holiday, employees will be paid on the preceding working day before the regular payday.

Each payday employees will receive an email pay statement from the Finance Department.

Employees should examine their paychecks/pay stubs immediately to ensure they have been properly paid for all hours and that no improper deductions have been made. Any payment errors must be reported to the Finance Department within 5 business days of the pay date.

The Town deducts from employees' gross pay, taxes and withholding that are required by the taxing authorities. The Town may also deduct from employees' pay the employees' share of any premiums or plan contributions for insurance, retirement, and similar plans that are elected by the employee or mandated by law or plan rules. The Town may make other deductions as required by law or order of court. Additionally, employees can authorize deductions, in writing, for other purposes.

Cash, debts owed the Town, fringe benefits, or any other Town property not repaid or returned by him/her at the time of his/her termination are considered advances of wages the value of which may be deducted from the employee's final pay check(s).

The Town will continue to send pay stubs to employees on leave or no longer employed with the Town via personal email; if a personal email has not been provided, they will receive their pay stubs through the US Postal Service.

Payroll Deductions

The following deductions are made automatically:

- a) Federal income taxes;
- b) State income taxes;
- c) Social Security;
- d) Medicare;
- e) Employee benefits and retirement contributions;
- f) Deductions required by law or court order.
- g) Any additional deductions elected by employee.

4.8 Special Pay Provisions.

Please refer to [Special Pay Provisions](#) under Section III Emergency and Pandemic Policies.

SECTION V.

EMPLOYEE BENEFITS

This section provides information pertaining to the benefits provided to employees including health insurance, dental and vision insurance, the South Carolina pension plans, Life Insurance, and Supplemental Life Insurance. The Town's tuition reimbursement program, and wellness program are also covered.

5.0. EMPLOYEE BENEFITS.

5.1 Health, Dental & Life Insurance.

The Town currently offers a competitive benefits package to serve as your foundation for good health, peace of mind, and financial security. Unless specifically noted, each benefit is available only to regular full-time employees. Certain benefits such as medical, dental and vision are available to employees who average 30 or more hours per week and Town Council members. The employee benefits program is subject to change as directed by the South Carolina State Board of Budget and Control, Legislative mandates, or Town needs, as such the Town is not responsible for any changes in or elimination of benefits or benefit plans. Employees will be notified of changes in the benefits program when updates occur.

Please see Human Resources for specific information on the Town's benefit plans or visit PEBA's website for the most current Insurance Benefits Guide (IBG) <https://www.peba.sc.gov/2020ibg.pdf>

Health and Dental Insurance

All regular full-time employees, employees who work 30 hours or more per week, and Town Council members are eligible to participate in the Town's health plan through the South Carolina Public Employee Benefit Authority (PEBA). If an employee elects to be covered, the cost for the coverage will be deducted from each paycheck. The Town covers the premiums for the employee portion of the State Health and the State Dental plans. The employee will be responsible for the cost of any additional dependent premiums selected.

5.2 Flexible Spending Accounts.

Flexible Spending Accounts are a tax-saving way to pay health care and dependent care expenses that you would typically pay out-of-pocket. Expenses such as deductibles, copayments, coinsurance, prescriptions, dental procedures and eyeglasses can quickly add up, and dependent care expenses can add up even more. The FSA's let you pay these expenses with pretax dollars.

Contributions are deducted from your pretax pay in equal amounts during the year. This means you save money, as contributions are not subject to Social Security tax, federal income tax or state income tax.

Medical Spending Accounts and Dependent Care Spending Account enrollments are only valid for one year and be re-enrolled during the Annual Open Enrollment Period in order to continue. Your account(s) will not automatically renew each year.

5.3 Pension Plans.

South Carolina Retirement System

All regular full-time and part-time employees and Town Council are required by law to join the South Carolina Retirement Systems. Seasonal and temporary employees have the option to opt out of the memberships.

The Town offers two plans for employees, the South Carolina Retirement System (SCRS) and the Police Officer Retirement System (PORS). Each employee/participant is required to contribute a certain percentage of their gross salary to the Retirement System. The actual contribution amounts are subject to change per legislation but will be provided upon hire date. The employee contributions are deducted on a pre-tax basis. Employee contributions earn interest.

More information on these programs can be found in the Retirement Handbook on PEBA's website <https://www.peba.sc.gov/resources.html>

5.4 Disability.

Eligible employees enrolled in the State Health Plan have basic long-term disability protection at no cost. The Basic Long-Term Disability Plan protects a part of your income if you become disabled. It includes: a 90-day benefit waiting period; a monthly benefit of 62.5 percent of your pre-disability earnings, reduced by deductible income; a maximum \$800 monthly benefit; and a maximum benefit period to age 65 if you become disabled before age 62. If you become disabled at age 62 or older, the maximum benefit period is based on your age at the time of disability.

5.5 Supplemental Long-Term Disability (SLTD).

This optional disability insurance plan provides more protection for you and your family. Supplemental long-term disability is a voluntary benefit for which the employee pays. This benefit provides: Competitive group rates; Survivors benefits for eligible dependents; coverage for injury, physical disease, mental disorder or pregnancy; a return-to-work incentive; SLTD conversion insurance; a cost-of-living adjustment; and lifetime security benefit. There are two options either a 90-day or 180-day benefit waiting period that includes: a monthly benefit of 65 percent of your pre-disability earnings, reduced by deductible income; a maximum \$8,000 monthly benefit; and a minimum \$100 monthly benefit. For more details visit PEBA's website <https://www.peba.sc.gov/longtermdisability.html>

5.6 Workers' Compensation.

Town employees are covered by workers' compensation for on-the-job injuries. Benefits are governed by state law and not set by the Town. Employees must report any on-the-job injury, regardless of severity, to their supervisor immediately. For more information, please see [Injury While on Duty](#).

5.7 Employee Assistance Program (EAP).

The EAP is a confidential counseling, assessment and referral program designed to help you manage your life. Just as health insurance is designed to address your physical wellbeing, your EAP is designed to address your emotional and mental health, as well as manage your work/life issues to achieve a healthy balance. EAP also provides legal and financial consultation services, as well as the WorkLife Benefit which provides assistance with elder care, childcare, adoption, education, and other worklife matters. All calls made to the EAP are kept private and confidential.

5.8 Educational Assistance.

The Town supports continuing education efforts made by Town employees through the reimbursement of tuition. The following rules apply:

Eligibility

- a) A qualifying employee must be full-time and active with a recent performance evaluation of satisfactory or better. Employees working as an intern, temporary, part-time or on a leave of absence are not eligible for educational assistance.
- b) A qualifying employee must have completed their probationary period.
- c) A qualifying employee must be performing at a satisfactory level or better and not be on a performance improvement plan due to disciplinary action. Employees who have been issued disciplinary action within 90-days of request for course approval and/or request for course reimbursement may not be eligible for tuition reimbursement approval or reimbursement.
- d) For courses to be eligible for reimbursement, the course work must be completed at an educational institution that has regional or other accreditation recognized by area educational institutions. In addition, the completed course work must receive recognized/transferrable credits

to include GED course work. Exceptions may be made to this policy for certain recognized certification programs when the Town identifies a need that can be met through a particular program.

- e) An employee who leaves Town employment will have to reimburse the Town for any educational reimbursements received during the previous 12 months unless waived by the Town Manager.

Policy

- a) Requests for educational assistance must be approved prior to enrollment. Written requests should be submitted to an employee's department head on the Education Approval & Reimbursement Form for review and recommendation.
- b) An Education Approval & Reimbursement Form for the current fiscal year should be used for each class. The employee's department head or designee will review that the employee is qualified for tuition reimbursement and meets the eligibility guidelines and may recommend approval for the request, based on funding availability.
- c) This form must be forwarded to Human Resources to verify available budgeted funds for approval.
- d) Normally, class attendance and completion of study assignments must be accomplished outside of the employee's regular working hours. Educational activities are not to interfere with the employee's work assignments unless authorized by Department Head. Unsatisfactory job performance may result in forfeiture of educational assistance.
- e) Funding is based on first-come, first-serve basis, limited to an amount each fiscal year determined by budget. This amount will be noted on the Education Approval & Reimbursement Form and this amount is per employee per fiscal year and is subject to budgetary constraints.
- f) At the completion of the approved course(s), the employee must submit the following items within 30 days:
 - i. Signed original approval form;
 - ii. Proof of completion with a grade of C or better on university/college letterhead or transcript showing the quarter/semester, course name and grade. If the class is Pass/Fail, proof of the Pass score is required on university/college letterhead or transcript showing the quarter/semester, course name and grade.
 - iii. Receipt or ledger statement showing the paid cost of the course which should include the College/university invoice or statement indicating fees charged and the amount paid (the invoice must contain the school's name and address. Copies of cancelled checks and/or credit card statements can be provided but must be attached to the invoice from the educational institution.
- g) An employee separated from Town employment during class enrollment periods will lose eligibility for reimbursement and may have to reimburse the Town for prior reimbursements from the previous 12 months unless approved by the Town Manager.
- h) Certain classes related to licensing and skill requirements may be taken on Town time and at the Town's expense. Department head must give prior approval to any class taken during work time and budgeted funds must be available.

5.9 Educational Bonus Policy.

The Town supports continuing education efforts made by Town employees through the reimbursement of tuition and training for certifications related to positions. Further, in our efforts to provide excellent levels of service to our citizens, the Town of Bluffton continuously strives to train and educate its employees and believes that the organization benefits from having a workforce that achieves certain academic attainment and certain specialized training and certifications.

It is the policy of the Town of Bluffton that all full-time regular employees of the Town of Bluffton may be eligible to receive a bonus provided they meet the eligibility requirements defined below and budgeted funds are available.

a) Eligibility

- i. All academic degrees must be awarded from an accredited college or university. Only those institutions accredited by the US Department of Education are recognized.
- ii. All certification programs must be from an organization or agency approved by the Department Head and used to further the skills and job knowledge for the employee.
- iii. It is the responsibility of the employee to request consideration of any educational bonus through his/her Department Head.
- iv. The respective Department Head will consider requests for educational bonus pay using the required payroll form and will make recommendation to the Town Manager along with justification and review by Finance Director.
- v. The Town Manager will have final approval or disapproval of all requests.
- vi. It is understood that application of any academic degree and certifications must be relevant and useful in the conduct of job duties and responsibilities.
- vii. An employee is not eligible if on probation or most recent performance evaluation is less than satisfactory.

b) Educational Bonus

- i. An Educational Bonus may be awarded as long as eligibility requirements are met, and budgeted funds are available.
- ii. An Educational Bonus amounts are shown below and may be paid for the following (amount to be grossed up for net amount paid to employee):

Associates Degree	\$250
Bachelor's Degree	\$500
Master's Degree	\$750
Certification	Amount varies as pre-determined by Department Head
- iii. The Educational Bonus amount will be reviewed every year by the Town Manager to plan for budgeted funds.
- iv. If an employee receives an Educational Bonus and leaves within one-year to work for another employer, the amount of the Bonus will be re-paid to the Town through payroll deduction on the employee's final pay.
- v. Funding of the Bonus is determined by budget.
- vi. Completion of a degree or a certification is not a guarantee that a Bonus will be paid.

- vii. For consideration of an Educational Bonus, an employee must submit:
Copy of transcript from accredited college or university showing completion of degree; for a certificate program, a copy of completion from the certifying agency or organization.
Memorandum to Department Head detailing degree or certificate earned and requesting consideration of Educational Bonus.
- viii. For approval of Educational Bonus, a Department Head will review information from employee and complete a Payroll Status Change Form noting appropriate bonus amount attaching copies of information from employee.
- ix. Department Head will have Finance Director review and request approval from Town Manager.
- x. Department Head will notify employee of approved Educational Bonus and submit through Payroll with a copy to Human Resources for training file.

5.10 Wellness Programs.

The Town encourages employee wellness and encourages them to take advantage of some of the incentives available to them through Public Employee Benefit Authority (PEBA).

- a) PEBA Perks provides a comprehensive range of activities, programs, services, and information designed to help State employees, retirees and their covered dependents enjoy a happier, healthier life. As a part of the employee insurance program, PEBA Perks focuses on disease prevention, early detection, disease management, and offers educational resources on diverse issues such as diabetes, tobacco cessation, weight management, stress management, and nutrition.

5.11 Discretionary Awards.

It is the policy of the Town to provide employee recognition and incentive awards to an employee or team upon Supervisor recommendation. This program is intended to reward staff employees whose achievements have resulted in a particular benefit to the Town of Bluffton. Awards are in the Town's discretion, and no employee is entitled to an award.

This policy applies to all employees of the Town.

- a) Upon supervisor recommendation, through memorandum or e-mail, an employee or team may be considered for recognition in the following areas:
 - i. Achieves excellence in a project or effort which falls outside normal job duties or requirements;
 - ii. Resolves a critical problem or addresses an exceptional opportunity;
 - iii. Exhibits an unusually high level of competence, imagination, persistence, or persuasion in achieving a goal or objective;
 - iv. Demonstrates an outstanding effort (above and beyond expectations) and leadership in support of team members; or
 - v. Receives special training certifications.
- b) Recognition may be given in the form of monetary or non-monetary awards.
 - i. Non-monetary recognition for excellence must be approved by the employee's Supervisor. Non-cash recognition awards, such as a plaque, cannot exceed a value of \$50.

- ii. Monetary awards may not exceed \$1,000 per individual, per award. Supervisors should consider the amount of time and effort involved with the accomplishment to determine an acceptable amount.
- iii. Monetary recognition is recommended utilizing the Payroll Status Change Notice Form and requires approvals from the employee's Department Head, Finance, Human Resources, with final approval from the Town Manager.

5.12 Recognition Programs.

In addition to saying "Thank You" and recognizing others for their performance and achievements, the Town has two recognition programs in place for employees to recognize their peers.

Star Awards

Employees recognize their fellow employees by presenting them with a star, which is obtained through HR. At the end of each month Human Resources draws a name from all the employees recognized that month and announces that month's Lucky Star.

The Lori McLain Award

Once a year employees nominate their fellow employees who have gone above and beyond and is someone who truly embodies the Town's [Mission](#) and [Vision](#) Statements. The Lori McLain Award Committee selects the winner who is recognized in front of his/her peers and presented with the Lori McLain Award.

SECTION VI.

TIME AWAY FROM WORK

This section reviews employee Paid Time Off (PTO), PTO accrual rates, Holiday Pay, Employee Personal Days, Jury Duty, and the Town's Corporate Social Responsibility Program.

6.0 TIME AWAY FROM WORK.

6.1 Paid Time Off (PTO).

It is the policy of the Town to grant Paid Time-Off (PTO) to full-time employees in accordance with the guidelines established below.

- a) Employee PTO accrual will start on the first day of employment. Holiday pay will also start on the first day of employment.
- b) PTO is a cumulative bank of time for sick days, vacation time, and bereavement leave.
- c) Full-time employees will accrue PTO according to the following schedule:

0-5 years employment: 5.20 hours / pay period

6-9 years employment: 6.80 hours / pay period

Over 9 years employment: 8.32 hours / pay period

NOTE: There are 26 pay periods per calendar year.

Exceptions to the published accrual schedule may be made by the Town Manager.

- d) PTO hours do not accrue while an employee is on any type of unpaid leave status (including workers' compensation, FMLA, active military duty, or leaves of absence).
- e) Employees may not take PTO until they actually accrue the time.
- f) Employees who think there is a discrepancy in the calculation of their PTO pay or eligibility may request a review of that calculation by the Finance Department. If possible, this request must be made within five business days of the pay date of the alleged discrepancy.
- g) PTO pay for full-time employees will consist of the employee's regular rate of pay for the PTO period and will be paid on the regularly scheduled payday.
- h) Employees should submit an Absence Report form to their supervisor with as much advanced notice as possible. Employees must submit requests for PTO for medical or dental appointments as far in advance as possible for scheduling purposes. Whenever possible, employees' request for specific periods of leave will be honored. However, consideration of workloads, work distribution, and other similar factors, which could result in severe work interruption, may necessitate changes to the request or denial of the request for leave. The supervisor is responsible for approving or denying all requests for leave.
- i) Unless otherwise approved by the Town Manager, accrued PTO will be issued to a terminating employee in their final payroll as long as an employee has provided a 2-week (Department Heads are required to provide 30 days' notice), and the employee has not been terminated for disciplinary reasons.
- j) The Town has the authority to determine whether or not employees terminated for disciplinary reasons are eligible to be paid for accrued PTO.

6.2 Required Time Off and Limitations.

Following the first anniversary of employment, full-time employees are required to take a minimum of 40 hours in PTO each year.

If the required 40 hours are not used, these 40 hours will be forfeited and will not be paid in cash. Taking fractions of days off is discouraged for less than half days.

6.3 Cash Payment of PTO and Maximum Accrual.

The maximum PTO accrual for any employee to bank or carry over is 720 hours (90 days).

Twice a calendar year, employees may have the option to cash-out PTO time as determined by budget and communicated by Finance. The following guidelines must be met in order to process a cash-out.

- a) PTO cash-outs may occur in December and June of each calendar year. Employees must follow the procedures established and provided by Finance.
- b) 40 hours is the maximum amount you can cash-out during eligible cash-out-month. A maximum of 80 hours may be cashed out during a twelve-month period.
- c) The remaining PTO balance must be 40 hours or greater after this cash-out.

6.4 Holiday Pay.

It is the policy of the Town to designate and observe certain days each year as holidays. Eligible employees will be given a day off with pay for each holiday observed, unless notified in advance.

- a) Full-time employees or employees who work 30 hours or more a week, are eligible to receive their regular rate of pay for each observed holiday, unless notified in advance. Part-time employees are eligible to receive holiday pay only for holidays on which they normally would be scheduled to work and only for their regularly scheduled number of hours, only if they are notified in advance. Temporary non-exempt and exempt employees and employees on leaves of absence or on layoff are not eligible to receive holiday pay.
- b) To receive holiday pay, an eligible employee must be at work or taking pre-authorized time off on the work days immediately preceding and immediately following the day on which the holiday is observed. If an employee is absent on one or both of these days because of an illness or injury, the Town may require verification of the reason for the absence before approving holiday pay.
- c) A holiday that occurs on a Saturday or Sunday generally will be observed by the Town on either the preceding Friday or following Monday, whichever day is observed by the federal government.
- d) The Town recognizes that some employees may wish to observe, as periods of worship or commemoration, certain days that are not included in the Town's regular holiday schedule. Accordingly, employees who would like to take a day off for those reasons may do so if it will not unduly disrupt the Town's business and if the employee's Supervisor approves. Employees may use paid time off balances or unpaid leave for these occasions.
- e) The Town may schedule work on an observed holiday as it considers necessary. Normally, work on an observed holiday will be paid as if the day were a regularly scheduled work day. Should this be necessary, employees will be given a "floating" holiday that may be taken, with the prior approval of their Supervisor, at another time during the year. Such floating holidays must be taken within six months or they will be forfeited.

The Town of Bluffton observes the following twelve (12) paid holidays:

New Year's Day	Labor Day
Martin Luther King Day	Veteran's Day
Good Friday	Thanksgiving
Memorial Day	Heritage Day (<i>Friday after Thanksgiving</i>)
Juneteenth Day	Christmas Eve
Independence Day (July 4 th)	Christmas Day

6.5 Personal Day.

A personal day is an increment of time according to your regular schedule (example: 8 ½ hour work day). This is in a separate bank from an employee's PTO accrual. A Personal Day must be taken in the full day increment and the hours do not carry over from year-to-year. A Personal Day must be taken before December 31st of each year.

6.6 Jury Duty.

Employees are encouraged to be good citizens.

When called upon to serve jury duty, the Town of Bluffton will pay up to two (2) weeks per calendar year regular pay for jury duty.

Employees called for jury duty are to submit a copy of the summons to the department head in advance so that adjustment in staffing and scheduling can be made. The summons should be attached to the Absence Report and the box "Other" be checked. Proper documentation from the court must be provided to department head upon return to work.

Employees on jury duty may be required to work all or any portion of a workday that they are not actually participating in jury duty. The employee is responsible for notifying the department head of any times when not required to be present for jury duty.

In the event that the court provides a daily stipend for serving on the jury, the employee will reimburse the Town for total amount received for jury service, less mileage which will be calculated at the Federal reimbursement rate. Copies of the check or payment from the court should be attached to the Absence Report and submitted to Finance for processing.

a) Court Appearance

- An Employee's court ordered subpoena for non-work reasons does not qualify for paid leave;
- PTO can be used for such occurrences;
- Employees must immediately notify their direct supervisor as to how long they expect to be away from their job.

6.7 Administrative Leave

Administrative leave is a temporary leave from a job assignment that may be with or without pay.

This may happen when an employee requests time off for personal reasons, when the Town closes early, when an investigation into the employee's conduct is pending, or for other reasons not related to medical conditions.

The amount of time for Administrative leave is determined by the Department Head and approved by the Town Manager. The Department Head may request approval for up to 60 days of Administrative Leave with or without pay from the Town Manager. At the end of the 60 days, the requesting Department Head must justify any continuance to the original request. The employee is to remain available daily between 8:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. and required to check in with their supervisor daily unless otherwise noted and may be subject to call backs.

Full-time employees may also be granted, on an individual basis, administrative leave with or without pay by their Department Manager for reasons that are not related to any medical condition

On a case-by-case basis, the Department Manager may grant as many as two seven-day periods of administrative leave without pay with the approval of the Town Manager for special circumstances when all paid leave is exhausted.

6.8 Voluntary Time-Off Without Pay.

The Town of Bluffton may allow employees to take up to ten (10) standard work day days of voluntary time off without pay during a fiscal year under the Voluntary Time Off Without Pay program.

- a) If the Town finds it necessary to mandate a furlough, pursuant to this policy, employees who have taken voluntary leave without pay within the calendar year may be able to substitute their voluntary leave without pay time in lieu of the furlough, under certain conditions pursuant to the Town Manager's decision.
- b) Employees must have pre-approval from their Director to take voluntary leave without pay. One's voluntary leave without pay should not interfere with the work schedules of other employees within the department, resulting in an additional workload to others.
- c) Voluntary leave without pay, for both exempt and non-exempt employees, must be taken in full-day increments. This leave should be scheduled in advance with the Supervisor's permission.
- d) This policy is available to employees in full-time positions only.
- e) If a holiday falls during the voluntary leave without pay time, the employee will not receive holiday pay.
- f) Paychecks will be reduced by the gross pay amount of leave hours as the leave is taken.
- g) Additional leave without pay may be approved over and above the 10 calendar days with the Supervisor's permission.
- h) The Town will be responsible for making the employer contributions for those employee benefits that require employer and employee contributions. The employee remains responsible for making their portion of contributions while on leave without pay. The employee may need to contact the Finance Department to make arrangements if the voluntary leave is for an extended period.
- i) If Voluntary Time-Off without Pay is taken over an entire pay period, no PTO will be accrued for that pay period.
- j) Employees must fill out the Town's Absence Report Form to request voluntary leave without pay and submit to their Director for approval.

6.9 Corporate Social Responsibility Program.

Purpose: To establish a Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Paid Time Off (PTO) Program for employees to support qualified charitable volunteer opportunities in the Bluffton community.

Policy: To set forth the terms, conditions, and processes regarding the Town of Bluffton's Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Paid Time Off (PTO).

The CSR PTO is designed to encourage The Town of Bluffton employees to undertake charitable acts within the local Bluffton community and provide eligible employees the opportunity to take up to 12 hours paid time off to volunteer in the community during their regular work schedule. A request for CSR PTO is reviewed by the Supervisor and approved by the Department Head. Designated paid holidays, regularly scheduled PTO and jury duties are not included in CSR PTO.

Responsibility: Each employee is responsible for understanding the details of the CSR Program. Employees are further responsible for completing the Request Form and Acknowledgement and Liability portion prior to the volunteer activity and attaching to their Absent Report form for time away. The Employee must also have an authorized person or Volunteer Coordinator at the charitable organization sign a Completion Form to verify the employee participated in the charitable activity to confirm attendance and volunteer time. The Completion Form must be turned in to Human Resources within 48

hours of the completed activity. Failure to submit the Completion Form may result in employee's time off counted against PTO hours or, if there is not PTO hours available, be time off without pay.

The Department Head (or designee) is responsible for understanding the details of the CSR program and for approving the CSR PTO for eligible employees.

Human Resources is responsible for ensuring the CSR Program supports the local Bluffton community, verifies the 501(c)(3) status of agency/organization, consults with management to ensure the appropriate implementation of the policy and obtaining completed Completion Forms to be attached to Absence Report form following volunteer time.

Eligibility

Employees. Employees meeting the following requirements are eligible for CSR PTO:

- a) Employed with the Town of Bluffton for 6 months or more and earn PTO.
- b) Temporary employees and Intern employees are not eligible for CSR PTO.
- c) Employees on any form of leave, suspension, probation, or have received disciplinary action during the previous 6 months are not eligible for CSR PTO.

Charities. Unless otherwise approved by the Town Manager, the charities must:

- a) Serve the local Bluffton communities in which the employee works and be designated as a 501(c) (3) organization.

Guidelines.

- a) Employee involvement with charitable organizations is encouraged regardless of eligibility for CSR PTO.
- b) CSR PTO will be scheduled consistent with the goals and Mission of the Town of Bluffton.
- c) "Day," as used throughout this policy, means the employee's standard work day.
- d) The Department Head and Supervisor shall have the right to specify the number of employees within the department who may be absent from work at any one time and may deny CSR PTO based on staffing and workload needs.
- e) Employees must sign the CSR Request Form and an Acknowledgement and Liability Form prior to each CSR volunteering activity.
- f) Employees must complete the CSR Completion Form and return it to Human Resources within 48 hours of the completed activity or time off may be charged to employee's PTO bank.
- g) No costs incurred during the volunteer day may be charged to the Town of Bluffton as an expense.
- h) Employees who take CSR PTO and (a) are found to have falsely documented their volunteer hours, or (b) worked for an organization other than an approved organization, or (c) otherwise misrepresented their actions or the nature of the work, will forfeit the equivalent hours of normal PTO and may face disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment.
- i) CSR PTO used will not be considered hours worked for purposes of calculating overtime.
- j) If the CSR PTO activity time is less than an entire regularly scheduled work day, it is up to the non-exempt employee to make arrangements with his/her supervisor to either use personal PTO for the remainder of the day or return to work. Exempt employees will need to coordinate with their supervisor if/when they return to work if their CSR time is less than their regularly scheduled work day.

- k) CSR PTO hours do not carry over from year to year and are not paid out at the time of departure from employment with the Town of Bluffton.

Procedures

Prior to volunteer time/event, the Employee completes the CSR Request Form and signed Authorization and Acknowledgement and Liability portion to their Supervisor for review. Upon approval by Supervisor and Department Head, the Request Form is forwarded to Human Resources to complete the Verification of Agency/Organization. Employee should submit a time off request for CSR PTO (up to 12 hours/year allowed for CSR PTO).

Upon completion of the volunteer activity, the employee must submit the CSR Completion Form and obtain the signature of the Volunteer Coordinator at the agency where the volunteer work was performed and submit it to Human Resources within 48 hours of activity completion.

Human Resources will provide the Completion Form and Request Form to Finance to attach to Absence Request Form.

6.10 Leaves of Absence - Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA).

(Applies Only to Employees Employed 12 Months or Longer and Who Have Worked 1250 Hours or More in the Preceding 12 Months, both Prior to Commencement of Leave.)

General: Employees who meet the length of service and hours worked requirement described above have rights under the Family and Medical Leave Act. As a general rule, employees must request leaves of absence under this law and policy, but in appropriate situations, employees may be placed on leave status without application.

a) Reason for Leave of Absence

- i. Medical and Family Leave. An eligible employee may be entitled to a leave of absence under this law and policy if a serious health condition, including disability resulting from an on-the-job injury, prevents the employee from being able to perform his/her job, if the employee's spouse, child or parent has a serious health condition and the employee must be absent from work in order to care for that relative, or to care for a natural child, adopted child, or formally placed foster child, provided that entitlement to leave to care for a child who is newly born or newly received in the employee's household shall end 12 months after a natural child is born or 12 months after an adopted or foster child is received in the employee's household.
- ii. Military Caregiver Leave. An eligible employee whose spouse, parent, child or next-of-kin is a covered service member or covered veteran of the Armed Forces of the United States may be entitled to leave of absence to care for the service member or veteran if he/she is, or was, injured while on covered active duty, including if he/she aggravates an existing injury.
- iii. Qualifying Military Exigency Leave. An eligible employee whose spouse, parent or child is a member of the regular Armed Forces of the United States and is on active duty or called to active duty on a foreign deployment, or who is a member of the National Guard or Reserves and is on or called to qualifying active duty in federal service may be entitled to a leave of absence due to one or more qualifying exigencies arising out of the active duty or call to active duty. Qualifying exigencies are: (1) Short-notice deployment (i.e., notice of 7 days or less); (2) Military events and related activities; (3) Childcare and school activities (regular or routine childcare by the employee does not count); (4) Financial and legal arrangements; (5) Counseling; (6) Rest and recuperation; (7) Post-deployment activities; (8) Parental

care (regular or routine parental care by the employee does not count); and (9) Additional activities not encompassed in the other categories, but agreed to by the employer and employee.

Proof of need for leave of absence may be required regardless of the type of leave taken.

b) Length of Leave

- i. Medical and Family Leave. An eligible employee may take the equivalent of a total of 12 work weeks of leave during any 12 consecutive months for his/her own serious health condition, that of a parent, spouse or child, or to care for a newly born or newly received child. Leave to care for a newly born or newly received child must be taken consecutively. Leave required because of the employee's own serious health condition or that of a spouse, child, or parent, may be taken intermittently or by means of a modified work schedule when necessary.
- ii. Military Caregiver Leave. Leave to care for an injured service member or covered veteran may be taken for up to 26 work weeks in a single 12-month period. Any leave taken by the employee for any other FMLA-qualifying reason will count against the 26 weeks of leave permitted to care for an injured service member.
- iii. Qualifying Military Exigency Leave. Leave taken because of a qualifying exigency is available for up to 12 work weeks in any 12 consecutive months. Leave taken because of a short notice deployment is limited 7 days from the date of notice and leave taken to be with the service member during periods of rest and recuperation are limited to 5 days per period of rest and recuperation. Leave taken to attend post-deployment activities must be taken within 90 days of the end of active duty service.

c) Coordination of Leave and Paid Time Off

An employee who must be absent due to his/her own serious health condition will be paid for time lost from work from PTO balance, if any. An employee who must be absent for any other FMLA-qualifying reason will be paid for time lost from work from accrued annual leave balances, if any. Leave taken under this policy counts towards the employee's 12 weeks of leave (or 26 weeks, where appropriate) regardless of whether all or part of the employee's leave is paid.

d) Effect of Leave on Accrual of Fringe Benefits

- i. Health benefit plan. Employees taking leave under this policy must continue to pay their portion of health benefit plan premiums on the same date that such portion of premiums would be deducted from the employee's wages.
- ii. Accrual of paid leave. Unpaid time lost from work due to leave granted under this policy is not considered time worked for the purpose of accrual of paid time off.

e) Employee Responsibility

Employees who request leave under this policy must give 30 days' advance notice or such lesser amount of notice as is possible in the particular circumstances. When the need for leave is unforeseeable, the employee must follow the normal procedure for reporting an absence. Employees may not engage in side employment or work for another employer without the express written permission of the Town Manager.

f) Termination of Leave of Absence

A leave of absence under this policy will end when the need for the leave of absence ends, or when the maximum leave described above has been taken, whichever occurs sooner.

g) Reinstatement

At or before the conclusion of the FMLA leave of absence the employee is entitled to reinstatement to his/her former position or to a position equivalent to his/her former position. The employee must demonstrate that he/she is fit for duty and must give reasonable notice of intent to return to work.

h) Extension of Leave without Benefits

An employee who is unable to perform the duties of his/her position due to his/her own disability and who has exhausted his/her entitlement to leave under the Family and Medical Leave Act by taking 12 consecutive weeks of leave may, at the discretion of the Town Manager, upon written application, be granted up to an additional 14 weeks of leave. This additional leave of absence does not entitle the employee to reinstatement or to payment of any portion of his/her health benefit plan premiums. If the employee is able to return to work prior to the exhaustion of his/her extended leave, he/she may be returned to his/her previous position if it is vacant and is to be filled, or to some other position of equal or lesser compensation for which he/she is qualified and where there is a vacancy to be filled. If the employee is not returned to active employment, he/she may be continued on extended leave of absence status until he/she is returned to active duty status or his/her extended leave of absence expires, whichever occurs sooner.

Employees who have exhausted their FMLA leave under other circumstances, but who continue to require leave which would qualify for FMLA leave if such leave had not been exhausted, may apply for an extended leave of absence for personal reasons. Such extended leaves are granted only at the discretion of the Town Manager.

i) Separation of Employment

An employee's employment may terminate if he does not return to full active employment status at the conclusion of his/her leave of absence or extended leave of absence. This does not affect the employee's ability to reapply for the position at a later time. Further, employees with circumstances that warrant special consideration should bring those circumstances to the attention of management.

j) Special Situations

- i. Spouses. When both a husband and a wife are employed, their combined right to a leave of absence because of the birth or placement of a child, or to care for a newly born or placed child or to care for a parent with a serious health condition is 12 weeks in a 12 month period, or 26 weeks in a single 12 month period to care for an injured service member or covered veteran.
- ii. Key Employees (salaried employee in highest paid 10% of all employees). Such employees may be denied reinstatement rights if reinstatement would cause substantial and grievous economic injury to operations.

k) Notice of Rights

Federal law requires that we provide you with the notice of your rights (Please refer to [Attachment G](#)).

6.11 Military Leave.

Employees are entitled to such leave of absence and reinstatement upon return from leave of absence for military service (including Reserve and National Guard duty) as may be provided by applicable state and federal law. The provisions of such laws change from time to time, and for that reason no effort is made to set forth the law in this policy. (Please refer to [Attachment I](#) for Your Rights Under the Uniformed Service Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA).

6.12 Physical Disability and Personal Leave.

An employee who does not qualify for Family and Medical Leave may be entitled to a leave of absence when unable to work because of personal illness, pregnancy, or injury on or off the job. Such an

employee may also apply for leave of absence for personal reasons. Leaves are granted only at the discretion of the Town Manager upon recommendation by the employee's department head.

Employees are requested to apply for leaves of absence as far in advance of need as is possible, but an employee may be placed on leave status without application when the circumstances warrant such action.

Physical disability leave begins on the first day of absence.

After the employee has exhausted his/her PTO, as a general rule, an employee on leave of absence is not entitled to wages, certain other voluntary benefits and does not accrue PTO. Certain exceptions may be established by law.

Employees desiring to return to work from an unpaid leave of absence must notify his/her department head and Human Resources in writing at least ten (10) days prior to their desired date of return. If the Town finds that the employee is fit to resume his/her duties, the employee may be placed in his/her former job if a vacancy exists which is to be filled. If no such vacancy exists, the employee may be placed in any job in which there is a vacancy which is to be filled and for which he is best suited. If no such vacancy exists at the time the employee desires to return to work, the employee's leave of absence may be continued. An employee who has not been reinstated within three (3) months following the commencement of a leave of absence is subject to termination but may request an extension. This action does not affect the employee's eligibility to be considered for hire as a new employee.

SECTION VII.

LEAVING EMPLOYMENT

This section discusses the end of an employee's employment with the Town of Bluffton. This includes the amount of notice that should be provided, equipment turn-in, and PTO payout. The Town of Bluffton's Retiree Re-Employment Program is also discussed.

7.0 LEAVING EMPLOYMENT.

7.1 Termination.

It is the policy of the Town to terminate employment because of an employee's resignation, discharge from employment related to performance related issues, retirement, the expiration of an employment contract, a reduction in the workforce, or death of an employee.

- a) Employees must provide written notice of their intent to resign to the Town Manager. Failure to give written notice may result in ineligibility for reemployment.
 - i. Department Heads should give 30 Days' notice;
 - ii. All other employees should give at least two weeks' notice.
- b) Employees who are absent from work for three consecutive days without being excused or giving proper notice will be considered as having voluntarily quit.
- c) Supervisors should send notices of resignation or recommendations for termination to the Director of Human Resources for review. This information should be accompanied by supporting documents, such as performance appraisals or disciplinary reports. All terminations must be approved by the Town Manager before any final action is taken.
- d) Human Resources will conduct an exit interview as close to the employee's last working day as possible.
- e) Terminating employees receive their final pay on the next pay date after the employee's last day of employment.
- f) Human Resources will meet with the exiting employee and collect all Town property in their possession, such as Town identification cards, keys, credit cards, tools, cell phones, and computers, and any other Town property. Human Resources will also inform employee of any owed balances/funds due on generator and/or computer loans. The Police Department is responsible for their own department employees. The value of items not returned is considered and advance of wages that may be deducted from the employee's final pay. Condition of the returned items must meet the expectations of the department head.

Employees who separate from employment with outstanding debts for equipment loss or unauthorized charges will be considered to have left employment on unsatisfactory terms and may be subject to legal action for recovery of the loss.

- g) Accrued PTO will be paid in the terminating employee's last paycheck or no later than the next pay period thereafter. Employees terminated for disciplinary reasons or who have not provided adequate notice of resignation, are not entitled to payment of accrued PTO.
- h) Terminating employees may be eligible for future employment if recommended by their Supervisor.
- i) Requests for employment references should be made in writing to Human Resources. Human Resources will provide position title, provide a verification of dates of employment, and salary with the Town.
- j) When an employee is terminated, resigns or otherwise leaves the employment of the Town of Bluffton, the employee will receive pay for the compensatory time (hourly employees only) not taken. The employee will be paid at his/her regular rate for compensatory hours.
- k) All terminating employees are asked to provide Payroll and Human Resources with their most current mailing and email address, and keep both departments updated if they move within the next 12 months.

7.2 Return to Service – Town of Bluffton Retiree Re-Employment Program.

The Town of Bluffton recognizes the value of employing experienced individuals who have a working knowledge of our organization, our working philosophy, and the character, skills and knowledge that benefit the organization.

The following retiree re-employment guidelines will serve to clarify the definition of a “retiree” for purposes of this policy, and to establish specific program guidelines. Questions regarding this program should be referred to Human Resources.

“Retiree” as defined for purposes of this policy is an individual who has retired from the SCRS or PORS retirement program and was employed for at least five (5) consecutive years with the Town of Bluffton immediately prior to retirement from the SCRS or PORS program. A re-hired Retiree must be terminated from employment and have at least a thirty (30) calendar day break in service prior to being re-hired.

Any exceptions to this program must be approved by the Town Manager.

Request for Employment Process

A retiring employee, who would like to submit a formal request to be considered for re-employment in accordance with this policy, will be asked to follow the Retiree Re-employment Application process listed below.

- a) At least forty-five days prior to the date of retirement from SCRS or PORS, the employee should schedule a meeting with the Human Resources Office for the purpose of (a) obtaining specific information and review of the program criteria, and (b) obtaining the Retiree Re-employment Application Request Form.
- b) At least thirty (30) days prior to the date of retirement from SCRS or PORS, the employee should schedule a formal meeting with his/her department head for the purpose of discussing and submitting the formal request to participate in the Retiree Re-Employment program.
- c) The department head will meet with the Human Resources Office for the purpose of reviewing the employee’s employment performance records.
- d) The department head will submit a recommendation to the Town Manager indicating approval or rejection of retiree’s request for re-employment. The department head will provide an explanation as to his/her recommendation.
- e) The Town Manager will review the retiree’s request and the department head’s recommendation. The Town Manager will make a final decision as to whether the request will be accepted or rejected. Each request will be considered on a case-by-case basis taking into consideration what is in the best interest of the Town’s organization.
- f) The Town Manager will send his/her decision in writing to the retiring employee generally at least ten (10) days prior to the employee’s last day of employment. Copies of the decision will be sent to the department head.

Important Notice

It is to be understood by all parties that at no time will the Town guarantee employment status to an employee retiring from the SCRS or PORS retirement program. Reemployment with the Town is entirely at the Town’s discretion and based on the needs of the Town.

Approved Returning Retiree

A retiring employee under SCRS or PORS who has been approved by the Town Manager for re-employment status in accordance with this policy, will be subject to the following:

On the last day of employment prior to reemployment the employee will return all uniforms, equipment and identification to his/her department, unless the Town Manager approves the employee retaining any such items. All official records will record an official termination date from the Town of Bluffton as indicative of employee's last day of employment.

Classification status: The returning employee may be reassigned to the previous job title at the time of termination, or to any position, at the sole discretion of management.

Pay Status: The returning employee may be reassigned to the starting pay of the grade/salary level or beyond entry level based on qualifications and experience in management's sole discretion. Any exception to the entry level will require a written request and justification by the Department Head and approval by the Town Manager. If the retiree is rehired into another position (a position not held at the time of retirement) the retiree will be placed in the appropriate pay range based on qualifications and experience as determined by Human Resources and approved by the Town Manager. Any exception to the entry-level will require a written request and justification from the Department Head and approval of the Town Manager.

Benefits & Annual Evaluation: The returning employee may retain the current level of annual leave accrual. A performance evaluation assessment will be established for the returning retiree. The returning retiree's annual evaluation will follow the Town's established Performance Evaluation Program. The department head with approval from the Town Manager, will determine annually if it is in the best interest of the Town whether or not to continue the employment status of the retiree. This does not guarantee employment for one-year periods, or for any particular time. Employment remains at-will.

- a) The employee will be paid out accrued PTO according to the Town's policy.
 - i. The employee will be paid out up to the first forty-five (45) days of "accrued" leave in accordance with the Retirement System benefit program. (For Town of Bluffton purposes this is PTO). For a detailed explanation of the Retirement System average final compensation calculation using the 45 days, see: <http://www.peba.sc.gov/rfaqs.html>
 - ii. All additional unused PTO will be paid out in the final paycheck or one lump sum payment.
- b) The Town will recognize the Retirement Systems break in service of thirty (30) consecutive calendar days before an eligible retiree may be re-employed by a participating agency. The retiree will be terminated for one full day and then must be available to return to work on the thirty-second (32nd) day following the day of termination.
- c) Subsequent to approval of the application for entry into the Retiree Re-employment Program, the retiree will not be eligible for promotion nor participation in a promotional assessment unless approved by the Town Manager.
- d) A retiree returning to work under this program will continue to be an "at will" employee and will be treated in the same manner as a probationary employee for grievance purposes.

The retiree will report to the Human Resources office on the first day of re-employment for the purpose of receiving information regarding pay and benefits, along with a new Town ID card. Immediately following, the employee will report to the assigned department for work. The department will re-issue, where applicable, uniforms and equipment. The department head and/or the employee's Supervisor will meet with the returning retiree within the first five (5) days of re-employment, or as soon as possible, for the purpose of reviewing the work conditions, performance review program, work expectations and other

items on the supervisor's checklist for new hires that apply.

Important: Return to work rules for SC Retirement System members changed January 2, 2013. In general, anyone who retires after January 2, 2013 and who retires prior to age 62 (SCRS) or 57 (PORS) is subject to an earnings limitation of \$10,000.00 per year. For more information, please visit PEBA's website (retirement.sc.gov), or call your PEBA Retirement customer service representative at 800-868-9002.

SECTION VII.

ABOUT THIS HANDBOOK

This section briefly discusses the handbook and potential revisions as well as giving credit to the photographer who took the cover photo.

8.0 About this Handbook.

Town of Bluffton Employee Handbook

Created on October 13, 2004

Adopted June 1, 2008

Updated November 10, 2015

Updated 06/11/2019

Updated on 7/14/2020

Updated on 1/12/2021

8.1 Amendments to the Handbook.

Amendments to the Handbook

Any section or provision of this handbook can be amended or changed by the Town Manager with or without notice.

We have made every effort to make this handbook as complete and as helpful to you as we can, but changes happening as quickly as they do, further revisions will undoubtedly be necessary.

Additional and/or updated information also can be found in the Human Resources for Staff folder.

If you need any clarification on any of the topics covered in this handbook, please do not hesitate to contact Human Resources.

Cover Photo

Cover photo courtesy of Scott Schroeder Photography.