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LEAVE OF ABSENCE

I. INTRODUCTION AND SCOPE

This regulation outlines the parameters for eligible employees to request a leave of absence lasting 30 days or longer. It applies to regular employees who have completed three (3) consecutive years of satisfactory employment prior to the date of the requested leave and who are regularly scheduled to work 20 or more hours per week. Bargaining unit employees shall refer to the leave of absence provisions listed in their collective labor agreement, if applicable.

II. ACCEPTABLE REASONS FOR LEAVE AND RESERVATIONS

Eligible employees may request a leave of absence without pay for the following reasons:

- A. Continuing education in a job-related field, or
- B. Professional development, or
- C. Community service, or
- D. Personal need not covered by the city's other leave policies.

The city reserves the right to deny leave requests as circumstances merit.

Operational and staffing needs shall be considered when evaluating a leave of absence request.

A leave of absence shall not be granted so the employee can engage in other employment.

III. APPROVAL PROCESS AND DURATION OF LEAVE

A leave of absence refers to leave lasting at least 30 calendar days but does not exceed six (6) months. As part of the request process employees obligated to disclose any apparent or actual conflict of interest created by the leave of absence in accordance with the city's Code of Ethics.

Employees requesting a leave of absence shall submit a Leave of Absence Request Form (see exhibit 3.15g) to their Department Director and Human Resources for consideration at least 45 calendar days in advance of the requested leave start date.

The request shall include the following facts:

1. reason for the leave,
2. proposed length of the leave,
3. why the leave is necessary,
4. disclose any apparent or actual conflict of interest created by the leave in accordance with the city's Code of Ethics, and
5. other relevant information helpful in determining if the leave should be granted.

After conferring with the employee's Department Director, Human Resources will provide the employee written notification whether their request was approved or denied.

IV. REQUIREMENTS PRIOR TO LEAVE

Prior to approval of a leave of absence, an employee shall exhaust all accrued vacation leave, compensatory time, and floating holidays. If the reason for the leave of absence is an allowable use of sick leave, then all sick leave shall also be exhausted.

Before an employee begins a leave of absence, the employee shall return all city owned badges, keys, P-cards, mobile devices, equipment, uniforms and/or property in their possession and shall pay in full any after-the-fact loan still owed to the city.

V. EMPLOYEE RESPONSIBILITIES DURING LEAVE

During a leave of absence, employees are responsible for both the employee and employer cost share of any insurance benefit the employee is enrolled in. Employees who allow insurance benefits to lapse may have those benefits reinstated upon their request and in accordance with those benefits' procedures.

During a leave of absence all paid leave accruals will be discontinued.

VI. RETURNING FROM LEAVE

Employees granted a leave of absence shall notify their Department Director and Human Resources in writing of their intent to return to work no later than 10 calendar days prior to the expiration of their leave. Employees who fail to report their intention to return to work or who fail to return from leave shall be considered to have voluntarily resigned their position.

Upon returning from leave, employees may or may not be placed in the position they held when their leave of absence began. If the Department Director and Human Resources determine that placing an employee in the same position is not in the city's best interest, the city may place the employee in a comparable

open position, if available, that they are qualified to perform, with or without a reasonable accommodation.

If the employee's previous position no longer exists or was eliminated due to a reorganization or reduction in staff, the city and employee will defer to the Layoff Policy and Regulation.

IV. EXHAUSTING PAID LEAVE

Prior to approval of a leave of absence, an employee shall exhaust all accrued vacation leave and compensatory time. If the reason for the leave of absence is an allowable use of sick leave, then all sick leave shall also be exhausted.

V. HEALTH INSURANCE BENEFITS

During a leave of absence lasting one full month or longer, employees are responsible for both the employee and employer cost share of any insurance benefit the employee is enrolled in. Employees who allow health insurance benefits to lapse may have those benefits reinstated upon their request and in accordance with those benefits' procedures.

VI. RETURNING FROM LEAVE

Employees granted a leave of absence lasting more than 30 days shall notify their Department Director and Human Resources in writing of their intent to return to work no later than 10 calendar days prior to the expiration of their leave. Employees failing to return from leave or failing to report their intention to return to work will be assumed to have resigned their positions.

Upon returning from leave employees will be placed in the position that they held prior to the leave. However, if the Department Director and Human Resources determine that placing the employee in that position is not in the city's best interest, the employee will be placed in a comparable position for which the employee is qualified. If the employee's previous position no longer exists or was eliminated due to a staff reduction, the city and employee will defer to the Layoff Policy and Regulation.