STATE OF LOUISIANA
PARISH OF WASHINGTON

WASHINGTON PARISH COUNCIL

ORDINANCE No. 19-661

Introduced on December 16, 2019
Introduced by Chairman Chris Workman
Public hearing held on January 2, 2020

ORDINANCE AMENDING AND RESTATING THE WASHINGTON PARISH
GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES’ HANDBOOK, REVISED AND RESTATED, 2020

WHEREAS, the Washington Parish Government Employees’ Handbook, Revised 2009, was
adopted by Ordinance No. 09-483 and amended by Ordinance No. 17-619.

BE IT ORDAINED, that the Washington Parish Government Employees’ Handbook is
amended and restated.

BE IT FURTHER ORDAINED, as authorized by Section 2-12(C) of the Washington Parish
Home Rule Charter, that upon final approval, this ordinance shall be published in summary by
identification of title and sections.

BE IT FURTHER ORDAINED, that this ordinance shall become effective on the date signed
by the Washington Parish President.

The above and foregoing having been submitted to a vote, the vote thereupon
resulted as follows:

YEAS: (6) Workman, Lewis, McMasters, Fornea Anthony and Talley
NAYS: (0)
ABSENT: (1) Fussell

The ordinance was declared adopted on the 9th day of January 2, 2020.

WASHINGTON PARISH COUNCIL

By, ____________________________
Chris Workman, Chairman

WASHINGTON PARISH GOVERNMENT

By: ____________________________
Richard N. Thomas, Jr., President
CERTIFICATION

I, SARAH COOK, CLERK TO THE WASHINGTON PARISH COUNCIL, do hereby certify that this is a true and correct copy of the Ordinance adopted by the Washington Parish Council, in regular session convened on the 9th day of January, 2020, at which meeting a quorum was present.

GIVEN UNDER MY OFFICIAL SIGNATURE AND SEAL OF OFFICE, this 9th day of January, 2020, Franklinton, Louisiana.

[Signature]

Clerk

Washington Parish Council

Ordinance 19-661

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1.0 Welcome

1.1 Welcome

Welcome! You have just joined an organization dedicated to serving the public. We hope that employment with Washington Parish Government will be rewarding and challenging experience. We take pride in our employees as well as in the services we provide to our community.

Please take the time now to read this handbook carefully. Sign the acknowledgment at the end to show that you have read, understand, and will abide by the contents of this handbook, which sets the basic rules and guidelines concerning employment with Washington Parish Government. This handbook supersedes any previously issued handbooks or policy statements dealing with the subjects discussed herein. The Parish reserves the right to interpret, modify, or supplement the provisions of this handbook at any time. This handbook nor any other communication by an administrative representative or other, whether oral or written, is intended in any way to create a contract of employment. Please understand that an employee handbook cannot address every situation in the workplace.

The Washington Parish Personnel Handbook (hereinafter referred to as "handbook") is adopted by Ordinance 19-661, on January 9, 2020, pursuant to the terms of the Home Rule Charter, specifically Section 4-10(0), by Washington Parish Government (hereinafter referred to as the "Parish") to further the following goals:

1. To provide a uniform system of personnel administration;
2. To ensure that recruitment, selection, placement, promotion, retention and separation of employees are based upon the employee’s qualifications and fitness and meets federal and state requirements;
3. To assist the Parish President and directors in the development of sound management practices and procedures, and to make effective use of human resources.
4. Acknowledging this is an exception to the “just cause” provision of Section 3-09A (2) of the Home Rule Charter, affirming the “at will” nature of employment, in accordance with Louisiana law.
5. To promote communication between administration and staff;
6. To ensure, protect, and clarify the responsibilities of employees;
7. To establish and maintain a safe working environment; and
8. To reinforce employee values which relate to a constant sense of public service, the pursuit of excellence, a positive response to change, and respect for all individuals.

If there are any questions about the information presented in this handbook, please contact the Human Resource (HR) office or Personnel Director.

The policies in this handbook shall apply solely to the employees of the Parish and are not intended to apply to other entities or agencies whose payroll is processed by the Parish but whose employees do not stand in an employer/employee relationship with the Parish (i.e. 22nd JDC District Attorney, Judicial District Court, Registrar of Voters, etc.).

It shall be the responsibility of every employee to know and be familiar with the provisions of this handbook.
1.2 At-Will Employment

The State of Louisiana is considered an “at will state” so the Parish operates on an “at-will” basis. This means an employee may be terminated at any time, with or without notice and with or without cause. Likewise, the parish respects the employee’s right to leave employment at any time, with or without notice and with or without cause.

Nothing in this employee handbook or any other Parish document should be interpreted as creating a contract, guaranteed or continued employment, a right to termination only “for cause,” or of any other guarantee of continued benefits or employment. The at will employment status of an employee of the Parish may be modified only in a written employment agreement with that employee which is signed by the Parish President. Only the Parish President has the authority to make promises or negotiate any guaranteed or continued employment, any such promises are only effective if placed in writing and signed by the Parish President.

2.0 Introductory Language and Policies

2.1 Ethics Code

The Parish conducts business honestly and ethically wherever operations are maintained. We strive to improve the quality of our services, operations and will maintain a reputation for honesty, fairness, respect, responsibility, integrity, trust, and sound government. All employees are expected to adhere to ethical standards for public servants. Care must be exercised to avoid impropriety. The Code of Government Ethics can be accessed from the Louisiana Board of Ethics Website at www.ethics.la.gov/.

- Human Resources Officer is responsible for ensuring that all employees and council members have taken the required State Ethics Training by December 31, annually; compiles proper documentation and manages any required reporting to the state of this compliance.

Violation of the Code of Ethics can result in discipline, up to and including termination of employment. The degree of discipline imposed may be influenced by the existence of voluntary disclosure of any ethical violation and whether the violator cooperated in any subsequent investigation.
2.2 Mission Statement

Our mission is to serve the Public. Employees' of the Parish are part of a team that puts community needs before our own. The motto of the Parish is "How Can we Assist You".

2.3 Organization

For a complete breakdown of the Parish's organization structure, see Personnel Director.

2.4 Revisions to Handbook

This handbook is intended to keep employees informed of the terms and conditions of employment, including Parish policies and procedures. The handbook is not a contract. The Parish reserves the right to repeal, modify or amend this handbook as it determines necessary, any changes will be made and adopted through an ordinance presented at a Parish Council meeting. Whenever facts and circumstances exist which would require an immediate addition, deletion, or revision to these Policies, the Parish President is authorized to establish such modification, the effective date will occur upon the declaration of such to all affected employees; the term shall be for no more than sixty (60) days from said effective date. The modification will be made permanent through the adoption of an ordinance by the Parish Council within sixty (60) days of implementation. When changes are made to policies and guidelines contained herein, they will be communicated to employees in a timely fashion, typically in a written supplement to the handbook, memorandum to employees, or in a posting on Parish bulletin boards.
3.0 Hiring and Orientation Policies

3.1 EEO Statement and Harassment Policy

Equal Opportunity Statement

The Parish is committed to the principles of equal employment. We are committed to complying with all federal, state, and local laws providing equal employment opportunities, and all other employment laws and regulations. It is our intent to maintain a work environment that is free of harassment, discrimination, or retaliation because of age, race, color, national origin, ancestry, religion, sex, pregnancy (including childbirth, lactation, and related medical conditions), physical or mental disability, genetic information (including testing and characteristics), sickle cell trait, veteran status, uniformed service member status, or any other status protected by federal, state, or local laws. The Parish is dedicated to the fulfillment of this policy regarding all aspects of employment, including but not limited to recruiting, hiring, placement, transfer, training, promotion, rates of pay, and other compensation, termination, and all other terms, conditions, and privileges of employment.

The Parish Human Resource office will conduct a prompt and thorough investigation of all allegations of discrimination, harassment, retaliation, or any violation of the Equal Employment Opportunity Policy in a confidential manner. Appropriate corrective action will be taken, if and where warranted. Retaliation is prohibited against employees who provide information about, complain about, or assist in the investigation of any complaint of discrimination or violation of the Equal Employment Opportunity Policy. All employees are responsible for upholding this policy. Employees may discuss questions regarding equal employment opportunity with their supervisors or any other designated member of Parish Government.

The goals and objectives of the Equal Employment Opportunity Policy are to:

1. Ensure fair treatment and non-discrimination in hiring and employment.
2. Provide compliance with state and federal equal opportunity requirements and regulations.
3. Provide a basis for encouraging those who do business with the Parish to practice equal employment opportunity.

Program Responsibility

Unless otherwise designated by the Parish President, the Human Resource office shall serve as the Equal Employment Opportunity Officer (EEO Officer) to oversee Equal Employment Opportunity Policies and Programs. The EEO Officer shall be the focal point for Parish's equal opportunity efforts and shall advise and assist staff and administrative personnel in all matters regarding implementation of and compliance with the Equal Employment Opportunity Policy and be responsible for the successful execution of the program, utilizing the assistance of appropriate state and community agencies. Employees' should contact the EEO Officer if they have any questions or concerns.

Affirmative Action

As a recipient of federal funding, the Parish complies with Executive Order 11246 and other Executive Orders related to hiring practices of federal contractors. A copy of the Affirmative Action Plan is available for inspection upon request.
Policy against Workplace Harassment

The Parish has a strict policy against all types of workplace harassment, including sexual harassment and other forms of workplace harassment based upon an individual’s age, race, color, national origin, ancestry, religion, sex, pregnancy (including childbirth, lactation, and related medical conditions), physical or mental disability, genetic information (including testing and characteristics), sickle cell trait, veteran status, uniformed service member status, or any other status protected by federal, state, or local laws. All forms of harassment of, or by, employees, vendors, visitors, customers, and clients are strictly prohibited and will not be tolerated.

Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment is defined as unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature when (1) submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly as a term or condition of an individual’s employment; (2) submission to, or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as the basis for employment decisions affecting such individual; or (3) such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual’s work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment.

While it is not possible to identify every act that constitutes or may constitute sexual harassment, the following are some examples of sexual harassment:

- Unwelcome requests for sexual favors;
- Lewd or derogatory jokes/comments;
- Comments regarding sexual behavior or the body of another;
- Sexual innuendo and other vocal activity such as catcalls or whistles;
- Obscene letters, notes, emails, invitations, photographs, cartoons, articles, or other written or pictorial materials of a sexual nature;
- Repeated requests for dates after being informed that interest is unwelcome;
- Retaliating against another for refusing a sexual advance or reporting an incident of possible sexual harassment to supervisors and/or Human Resource Office;
- Offering or providing favors or employment benefits such as promotions, favorable evaluations, favorable assigned duties or shifts, etc., in exchange for sexual favors; and;
- Any unwanted physical touching or assaults or blocking or impeding movements.

Other Harassment

Other workplace harassment is verbal or physical conduct that insults or shows hostility or aversion towards an individual because of the individual’s age, race, color, national origin, ancestry, religion, sex, pregnancy (including childbirth, lactation, and related medical conditions), physical or mental disability, genetic information (including testing and characteristics), sickle cell trait, veteran status, uniformed service member status, or any other status protected by federal, state, or local laws.

Again, while it is not possible to list all the circumstances that may constitute other forms of workplace harassment, the following are some examples of conduct that may constitute workplace harassment:
• Discriminatory Harassment:
  ➢ Racial Harassment: Racial slurs, insults, jokes, and degrading comments
  ➢ Gender Harassment: Gender-based harassment is discriminatory behavior toward a person on their gender
  ➢ Religious Harassment: Intolerance towards religious holidays, traditions, and customs
  ➢ Disability-Based Harassment: personal disability, acquainted with a disable person, and use of disable services
  ➢ Sexual Orientation-Based Harassment: Sexual orientation is different from those around them
  ➢ Age-Based Harassment: Attempts to push the individual into early retirement
• Personal Harassment: Personal humiliation, ostracizing behavior, and intimidation tactics;
• Physical Harassment: Direct threats, physical attacks, threatening behavior, and destroying personal property;
• Psychological Harassment: Isolating person presence, belittling person ideas, and spreading rumor;
• Cyberbullying Harassment: Posting derogatory things on social media;
• Retaliation Harassment: Exacting revenge on someone who reported a violation to policies;
• Verbal Harassment: Threatening, yelling, insulting or cursing an employee publicly or privately;
• Use of disparaging or abusive words or phrases, slurs, negative stereotyping, or threatening, intimidating, or hostile acts that relate to the above protected categories;
• Written or graphic material that insults, stereotypes, or shows aversion or hostility towards an individual or group because of one of the above protected categories and that is placed on walls, bulletin boards, email, voicemail, or elsewhere on our premises, or circulated in the workplace; and
• Display of symbols, slogans, or items that is associated with hate or intolerance towards any select group.

Reporting Discrimination and Harassment

If an employee feels like they witnessed or have been subjected to any form of discrimination or harassment, they should immediately notify the Human Resource office or Personnel Director at 985-839-7825.

The Parish prohibits retaliation against employees who, based on a reasonable belief, provide information about, complain, or assist in the investigation of any complaint of harassment or discrimination.

We will promptly and thoroughly investigate any claim and take appropriate action where we find a claim has merit. To the extent possible, we will retain the confidentiality of those who report suspected or alleged violations of the harassment policy.

Discipline for violation of this policy may include, but is not limited to, reprimand, suspension, demotion, transfer, and termination. If the Parish determines that harassment or discrimination occurred, corrective action will be taken to effectively end the harassment. As necessary, the Human Resource Office may monitor any incident of harassment or discrimination to assure the inappropriate behavior has stopped. In all cases, the Parish will follow up as necessary to ensure that
no individual is retaliated against for making a complaint or cooperating with an investigation.

3.2 Disability Accommodation

The Parish complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the Pregnancy Discrimination Act, and all applicable state and local fair employment practices laws and is committed to providing equal employment opportunities to qualified individuals with disabilities, including disabilities related to pregnancy, childbirth, and related conditions. Consistent with this commitment, the Parish will provide reasonable accommodation to otherwise qualified individuals where appropriate to allow the individual to perform the essential functions of the job, unless doing so would create an undue hardship on the government.

If an employee requires an accommodation because of a disability, it is the employees' responsibility to notify their supervisor. Employee may be asked to include relevant information such as:

- A description of the proposed accommodation.
- Reason employee needs an accommodation.
- How the accommodation will help employee perform the essential functions of the job.

After receiving a request for an accommodation, the Human Resource office will engage in an interactive dialogue with the employee to determine the precise limitations of the disability and explore potential reasonable accommodations that could overcome those limitations. Where appropriate, we may need the employee's permission to obtain additional information from employees' medical provider. All medical information received by the Parish in connection with a request for accommodation will be treated as confidential.

Employees are encouraged to suggest specific reasonable accommodations they believe would allow them to perform their job. However, the Parish is not required to make the specific accommodation requested by the employee and may provide an alternative accommodation, to the extent any reasonable accommodation can be made without imposing an undue hardship on the Parish.

3.3 Religious Accommodation

The Parish is dedicated to treating the religious diversity of all our employees equally and with respect. Employees may request an accommodation when their religious beliefs cause a deviation from Parish government's dress code, schedule, basic job duties, or other aspects of employment. The Parish will consider the request but reserves the right to offer its own accommodation to the extent permitted by law. Some, but not all, of the factors that the Parish will consider are cost, the effect that an accommodation will have on current established policies and the burden on operations, including other employees, when determining a reasonable accommodation. At no time will the parish ever question the validity of a person's belief.

Religious accommodation request forms are available through the Human Resource office.

3.4 Appointed Position

The Parish President is responsible for the appointment of administrative positions as outlined in Article IV, Section 4-01 General Provisions, defined in the Home Rule Charter. These appointments are to include Sections: 4-03 Director of Finance, 4-04 Director of Public Works, and 4-05 Personnel Director. All appointments are subject to council approval and shall serve at the pleasure of the President.
3.5 Posting of Openings

The Parish desires to promote qualified employees from within where it believes that is possible, consistent with the need to assure that all positions are staffed by highly competent individuals. New job openings generally will be posted in the local newspaper, as well as on the Parish website site and Parish Social Media page. Applicants must meet employment standards/qualifications required by the position in the posted advertisement. All applicants will be required to pass a physical and drug screening prior to beginning work for the Parish.

3.6 Conflicts of Interest

The Parish is concerned with conflicts of interest that create actual or potential job-related concerns, especially in the areas of confidentiality, customer relations, safety, security, and morale. Any actual or potential conflict of interest between an employee and a supplier, distributor, or contractor, must be disclosed by the employee to Human Resource Office. If an actual or potential conflict of interest is determined to exist, the Parish will take such steps as it deems necessary to reduce or eliminate this conflict.

3.7 Employment of Relatives and Friends

The Parish will not employ friends or relatives in circumstances where actual or potential conflicts may arise which could compromise supervision, safety, confidentiality, security, and morale within the Parish. It is the employee’s obligation to inform the Parish of any such potential conflicts, so that we can determine how best to respond to the situation. The Personnel Director shall administer the duties and responsibilities in hiring as stipulated in LA R.S. 42:1101-1169, “Code of Governmental Ethics”.

3.8 Job Descriptions

The Parish attempts to maintain a job description for each position. If an employee does not have a copy of their current job description, they should request one from their supervisor. Job descriptions prepared by the Parish serve as an outline only. Due to the needs of the government, employee may be required to perform job duties not within their written job description. Furthermore, the Parish may have to revise, add to, or delete from specific job duties according to the Parish needs. On occasion, the Parish may need to revise job descriptions with or without notice to the employee. Job descriptions and specifications are maintained by the Human Resource Office for all regular full-time and regular part-time positions. An employee’s job description shall be maintained as part of his/her personnel file. The job description shall include job title, pay range, qualifications, example of duties, physical requirements, special certification, revision date, and any other relevant information which may be required.

Employees with questions regarding their job description, or scope of their duties, please speak with an immediate supervisor or Human Resource office.

3.9 New Employees and Introductory Periods

The first 180 days (6 Months) of employment is considered an introductory period. During this period, the employee will become familiar with Parish operations and job responsibilities, while the Parish will have the opportunity to monitor the employee’s quality and value of performance, making any necessary adjustments in the job description or responsibilities. The introductory period with the Parish can be shortened or lengthened as deemed appropriate by the Administration, Human Resources and/or Personnel Director. Completion of this introductory period does not imply guaranteed or continued employment. Decisions occurring during or after this period should not be construed to change the nature of the “at-will” employment relationship.
3.10 Training Program

In most cases, and for most departments, employee training is done on an individual basis by the supervisor. Even if an employee has had previous experience in their specified functions, it is necessary for them to learn our specific procedures, as well as the responsibilities of the specific position. If an employee ever feels additional training is necessary, please consult an immediate supervisor.

3.11 Employment Authorization Verification

New hires are required to complete Section 1 of federal Form I-9 no later than the first day of employment but not before accepting job offer. New hires must present acceptable documents authorized by the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, proving identity and employment authorization, prior to starting employment with the Parish. Employees that are currently employed and have not complied with this requirement or if their status has changed, shall inform their supervisor. Employees authorized to work in this country for a limited period, will be required to submit proof of renewed employment eligibility prior to expiration of that period to remain employed by the Parish.

3.12 Personnel Records

The Human Resource Office shall be responsible for establishing and maintaining an official personnel file for each employee. Supervisors shall be responsible for forwarding documents for inclusion in the personnel files of those employees assigned to their respective department. A representative of the Human Resource Office shall be present whenever an employee reviews his/her file. Only the Human Resource Office may remove an item from a personnel file with notification to the respective supervisor. Any review of an employee’s file shall be scheduled by the subject employee with the Human Resources Office. The purpose of any such review shall be to examine the contents of the file for accuracy and completeness. Information to be included in the employee’s personnel file shall include but not be limited to:

1. Permanent Documents (documents retained in an employee’s file throughout his/her employment):
   a. Employee application.
   b. Position description and specification information.
   c. Job performance ratings and evaluations.
   d. Letters of appreciation, commendation, or disciplinary action.
   e. Training information.
   f. Personnel action forms.
   g. Any document required by law to be kept in the personnel file.

2. Temporary Documents (documents which have limited retention of three (3) calendar years or less):
   a. Administrative correspondence relating to leave/vacation requests.
   b. All other administrative documents of limited informational life span.

The Human Resource Office shall treat as confidential, unless otherwise required by law, all employee information except when requested to verify information relating to position title and status (e.g. regular full-time, etc.), current salary, and date or period of employment. Otherwise, information contained in the personnel file shall not be released without the written permission of the subject employee. Employee records shall be maintained during the tenure of the employee and as required by law thereafter. Medical records and form I-9 information shall be kept separate from personnel files.

4.0 Wage and Hour Policies
4.1 Introduction

Each new employee shall be hired at an hourly rate/salary which is not less than the minimum wage. An employee’s pay depends on a wide range of factors, including pay scale for job hired, individual efforts (merit raises), special training brought to the job or received while on the job such as Commercial Driver's License (CDL), or job-related specialized certificates. Any questions regarding compensation, including matters such as paid vacation, sick time, overtime, benefits, or paycheck deductions, should be addressed to immediate supervisor, payroll accountant, Human Resource office or Personnel Director.

4.2 Work Hours

All full-time employees will work 40 hours per week unless absent due to approved leave. It is the employees' responsibility to meet the assigned hours and supervisors to ensure employees are meeting these hours. The normal hours of operation may be adjusted by the Parish President due to holidays, emergency situations or any other deviation authorized by the Home Rule Charter. If time and circumstances permit any deviation from the normal hours, those changes will be posted on the Parish's official website. The normal work week will be Monday – Sunday.

Each full-time employee's duty schedule (unless otherwise noted) will not include a duty-free lunch period. Supervisors shall ensure adequate staff is available to meet the needs of the public during normal operating hours. Time away from the office or assigned duty location exceeding 20 minutes requires supervisors' approval and employee to extend workday or use accrued annual leave accordingly.

Administration Office Staff

The normal hours of operation, unless otherwise noted, for the Parish government administration office will be from 8:00 am - 4:00 pm, Monday – Friday.

Transportation Department Staff

The duties of the Transportation Department mandate a high level of flexibility, authorization will be given to the appropriate personnel to ensure efficient completion of those duties. The normal duty hours will be 7:00 am - 3:00 pm, Monday - Friday.

The Transportation Manager, with approval of the Parish President or Department of Public Works Director, may deviate from the normal duty hours to meet requirements of current project(s), weather and/or seasonal considerations. This may include, but is not limited to, a compressed work schedule or alternate duty hours. It is the responsibility of the immediate supervisor to ensure each employee is present and informed of any work schedule deviations. The Parish President may delegate this approval authority to the Transportation Manager.

Landfill Staff

Parish employees work a compressed schedule of 4/10 (4 days, 10 hours) at the Choctaw Road Landfill to get 40 hours per week. The Landfill supervisor may alter normal workday hours depending on staffing and other considerations. The hours of operation for the landfill follow the guidelines stipulated in the LDEQ (Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality) permit.
Other Staff

Office of Emergency Preparedness normal work schedule is 7:00 am - 3:00 pm, Monday-Friday.
Washington Parish Permit Office normal work schedule is 7:00 am - 4:00 pm staggered, Monday-Friday.
Health Units normal work schedule is 8:00 am – 4:30 pm, Monday – Friday, with a 30-minute duty-free lunch.

Hours for part-time and certain employees may vary from the normal office hours noted above due to the nature of their duties and shall be determined by the supervisor.

An employee is expected to provide his/her supervisor with a notice of anticipated and/or unavoidable tardiness as early as possible. Failure to do so shall be construed as an unexcused absence and the time missed shall not be paid. If approved by the supervisor, tardiness may be made up during the payroll period in which it occurs. Notification by another employee or other person is not considered proper procedure except in an emergency whereby the employee is physically unable to make the notification.

Daily attendance records shall be maintained by each department including date and time absent and reason for absence. Attendance shall be a consideration in determining promotions, reassignment, satisfactory completion of an introductory period and continued employment. Frequent tardiness or other attendance irregularities shall be cause for disciplinary action up to and including termination.

4.3 Pay Period

At the Parish, the standard pay period is bi-weekly, or monthly for all employees. Hourly rate and salary workers are processed every two weeks (bi-weekly) with disbursements on Thursday following the end of a two-week period. If a pay date falls on a holiday, disbursements will be on the preceding workday. An employee who is paid monthly will receive disbursement on the last day of the month however, deviations due to holidays/weekends may occur.

Employees should review their payroll summary sheet for accuracy. If an issue is discovered, report it to payroll office immediately.

4.4 Paycheck Deductions

The Parish is required by law to withhold certain deductions from employees pay. This includes federal and state income tax, Parochial Retirement Contributions (regular full-time employees scheduled to work 28 or more hours per week/under age of 55 must participate in PERS), Federal Insurance Contributions Act (FICA) contributions (Social Security and Medicare), and any other deductions required under law or by court order, such as for wage garnishments. The amount of tax deductions will depend on earnings and the number of exemptions claimed on the federal Form W-4 and applicable state withholding form. Employees may also authorize voluntary deductions for insurance premiums, other retirement plans, or other services. Deductions must be authorized by the employee and detailed on the payroll summary sheet.

The Parish will not make deductions to employees' pay that is prohibited by federal, state, or local law. Questions regarding payroll deductions, should be directed to the payroll office. Employees will be reimbursed in full for any isolated, inadvertent, or improper deductions, as defined by law. If an error is found, employees will receive an immediate adjustment, which will be paid no later than employees' next regular payday.
4.5 Direct Deposit

The Parish has adopted a mandatory direct deposit policy. Direct deposit information must be submitted to the payroll or Human Resource office prior to the first day of work.

4.6 Non-exempt and Exempt

Non-exempt employees are employees who, because of the type of duties performed, the usual level of decision-making authority, and the method of compensation, are subject to all Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) provisions including the payment of overtime. Non-exempt employees are normally required to account for hours and fractional hours worked. Non-exempt employees must be compensated for all hours worked overtime (over 40 in a work week) at the premium (time-and-one-half) rate of pay.

Exempt employees are employees who, because of their positional duties and responsibilities and level of decision-making authority, are 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 their exempt position.

4.7 Tracking Time

The Parish is required by applicable federal, state, and local laws to maintain accurate records of hours worked by certain employees. To ensure that the Parish has complete and accurate time records and that employees are paid for all hours worked, non-exempt employees are required to record all working time using Parish timecards/sheets. Exempt employees are also required to track days or time worked using time sheets/timekeeper application. Employees must accurately record all time to ensure they are paid for all hours worked and must follow established Parish procedures for recording their hours worked. Time must be recorded as follows:

Time sheets/timecards are to be turned in to their supervisor or appropriate department by close of business on the final working day of the pay period, unless otherwise notified by payroll office. If an employee is required to clock in, they should clock in no more than five minutes ahead of their start time and clock out no later than five minutes after their quitting time.

Falsifying time entries is strictly prohibited. Falsifying time entries includes working "off the clock," and failure to use appropriate leave while off work. If an employee falsifies their own time records, or the time records of co-workers, or if an employee works off the clock, they will be subject to discipline up to and including termination. Knowledge of any employee or supervisor who falsifies their time entries or encourages or requires an employee to falsify their time entries or work off the clock should be reported immediately to a supervisor or the Human Resource office.

4.8 Travel Time Pay

Some non-exempt positions within Washington Parish Government require travel. The Parish pays non-exempt employees for travel time in accordance with federal and state law. For purposes of this policy, the regular workday is the employee department’s regular hours of operation. Exempt employees generally are not entitled to additional compensation for travel time. Employees are encouraged to obtain a copy of the Louisiana State Employees Guide to Travel Regulations. Located at http://www.doa.la.gov/pages/osp/Travel/Index.aspx.
Home to Work Travel

An employee who travels from home before the regular workday and returns to his or her home at the end of the workday is engaged in ordinary home to work travel, which is not work time.

Travel Away from Home Community

Travel that keeps an employee away from home overnight is travel away from home. Travel away from home is clearly work time when it cuts across the employee’s workday. The time is not only hours worked on regular working days during normal working hours but also during corresponding hours on nonworking days.

4.9 Weekend Call out – “On-Call” Pay

Department of Public Works (DPW) employees are on a quarterly rotating schedule for emergency weekend callouts. The method of compensation when workers are called out is as follows:

1. Employee on schedule for call out is expected to take home a fully equipped parish government truck and cell phone, if needed.
2. A checklist will be completed, attesting to the readiness of the vehicle and equipment contained therein.
3. Employee is expected to respond to the incident site within 1 hour.
4. Employee will receive 3 hours of compensation at his/her rate of pay, as a minimum, for their “on-call” weekend, however, if employee neglects to answer a call, he/she will not receive this compensation and may be subject to further disciplinary actions.
5. Employee will receive hour for hour pay for any actual incidents of call out during this weekend. He/she will be expected to complete a Washington Parish Government “Weekend Call Out Incident Form”, documenting time the call is received until the incident has been completely resolved, location of incident, other employees called to assist, equipment utilized and any additional relevant information.
6. If the employee has exceeded 40 working hours the week of his/her callout, their pay will be calculated for the hours “on-call” and worked at the employees overtime rate, in accordance with the Federal Labor Standards Act.
7. If an employee “exchanges” on-call duty with another employee, the immediate supervisor must approve, and the Washington Parish Sheriff’s Office dispatch must be notified. The original employee on-call is not relieved of the on-call duty in a case where the employee agreeing to trade fails to respond to a call out incident.
8. DPW supervisors and foreman are on call 24/7, are provided a Parish vehicle to take home for quick response and a parish cell phone and radio for adequate communication. They are compensated for the actual time called out at their standard hourly rate unless their hours worked for the week exceed 40, in which case they receive overtime pay.

4.10 Overtime

Non-exempt employees may qualify for overtime pay. All overtime must be approved in advance and in writing by the employee’s supervisor.

Supervisors shall arrange the work schedules of their sections to accomplish the required work within the standard workday. Certain employees shall be required to work overtime hours in emergencies. When overtime is required of a Parish employee and it is refused, or if, employees work unauthorized overtime, disciplinary actions will be taken, up to and including discharge.

Unless otherwise required by state law, overtime pay of one and one-half times their regular rate of pay is paid for any hours worked more than 40 hours in a workweek (Monday- Sunday). Holidays, vacation days and sick leave days do not count as time worked for computing overtime. Exception to this policy is made when a
holiday falls within a pay period in which a disaster occurs (State of Emergency declared by Parish President) employees may receive overtime pay for hours worked in excess of 40 hours in which the 40 hours include paid holiday hours, as approved by the Parish President.

4.11 Disaster Situation Overtime Policy

All employees are subject to being called into work for emergency situations within the Parish. In the case of an emergency such as a hurricane, tornado, flash flood, or other natural disaster expected to impact our parish, employees should ensure the safety of their family and property, then contact their immediate supervisor for a plan of action and work schedule.

In the event of an Emergency Declaration by the Parish President or his designated authority, Parish employees compensated on an annual salary basis shall be converted to an hourly rate equal to their annual salary divided by 2080 hours. At that time, the Parish policy regarding regular pay, overtime pay, and payday schedules shall apply. This policy shall apply to personnel directly involved in the emergency operation and recovery of the Parish concerning the disaster and shall continue until the emergency declaration is rescinded.

Road crews working continuously for 24 hours shall be compensated for hours worked; however, shifts will be utilized when possible to allow workers to rest.

Nurses and clerical health unit personnel required to work a Red Cross shelter will also be compensated 24 hours if they were at the shelter throughout the period, without the opportunity to leave.

Other workers supporting the emergency operations center will only be compensated for a maximum of 20 hours in a 24-hour period.

When a Parish Holiday occurs during an Emergency Declaration period, employees required to work the holiday, in the best interest of the public, shall be paid holiday pay plus time worked in accordance with the Parish’s standard overtime pay policy, or granted compensatory time off as soon as thereafter practical.

4.12 Attendance Policy

Employees of the Parish are required to report to their assigned locations promptly at the beginning of their workday, ready to perform job specific duties. Should a situation arise prohibiting timely arrival or daily attendance, notification to the immediate supervisor should be given at the earliest, reasonable time, however, no later than 15 minutes prior to the beginning of the workday. Documentation of reason for tardiness or absence may be required as permitted by applicable law. Failure to inform supervisor of absence or tardiness may result in disciplinary action in a progression of severity, example: verbal, written, time off without pay, termination. The Parish reserves the right to apply unused vacation, sick or other paid leave to unauthorized absences.

Planned leave notification shall be given to the supervisor as soon as known, but no less than 5 days prior to requested time off. Failure to provide appropriate notification could result in leave being denied.

4.13 Job Abandonment

If an employee fails to show up for work or call in with an acceptable reason for the absence for a period of three consecutive days, he or she will be considered to have abandoned his or her job and voluntarily resigned from the Parish Position held.
4.14 Business/Travel Expenses Reimbursement

Washington Parish Government follows the guideline prescribed by the Louisiana State Employees Travel Regulations.

The purpose of this policy is to define employee travel rules and the authority for incurring and approving travel expenses. Travel expenses are the reasonable and necessary expenses incurred by employees when traveling on approved Parish business trips. Parish travel is limited to business activities for which other means of communication is inadequate and for which prior approval of the employee’s supervisor has been received.

Travel Expenses

Travel expenses including, but not limited to meals, lodging, car rental, airline tickets, bus, parking, internet services, etc. will be administered in accordance with the State of Louisiana Division of Administration’s travel policy found at the above referenced website. Additional information may also be obtained from the Parish’s Comptroller at 985-839-7825.

Reimbursement

Employees traveling on official business will provide themselves with adequate funds for all routine travel expenses not covered by a Parish government credit card or direct payment to vendor by Parish check. Upon completion of travel, employees may submit for reimbursement of traveling expenses limited to those expenses reasonable and necessary, incurred in the performance of a public purpose, authorized by law to be performed by the agency and must be within the limitations as established in the State of Louisiana Travel Regulations. Employees are to report approved travel expenses on the Parish Travel Reimbursement Form and must include a description of the expense, its business purpose, date, place, participants, meeting agenda and verification of attendance. Proper documentation of expenditures must be attached, such as receipts or invoices. Meal receipts must be itemized and cannot include alcohol or items for non-employees. In the absence of meal receipts, the state per diem will be allowed. All forms of documentation must be signed or initialed by employee and immediate supervisor, when applicable.

Personal Vehicles

Employees using their personal vehicle for government business must maintain insurance coverage as required by law and possess a valid driver’s license. Travel between the employee’s domicile and work is not considered to be business/government travel and will not be reimbursed. Employees are not authorized to use personal vehicles for government travel without prior authorization. Reimbursement is allowed from the employee’s official work site to area of travel based on most direct route. Employees will be reimbursed for vehicle use at the rate set by the State of Louisiana on an annual basis which may be found at the State’s Division of Administration’s website: http://www.doa.la.gov/pages/osp/Travel/Index.aspx)
5.0 Performance, Discipline, Layoff, and Termination

5.1 Performance Improvement

The Parish periodically reviews employees' work performance. The performance improvement process will take place on at least on annual basis, or as Parish needs dictate. Employees may specifically request that their supervisor assists them in developing a performance improvement plan at any time.

The performance improvement process is a means for increasing the quality and value of work performance. Initiative, effort, attitude, job knowledge, and other factors will be addressed. Understand that a positive job performance review does not guarantee a pay raise or continued employment. Pay raises and promotions are based on numerous factors, only one of which is job performance.

5.2 Promotions

In an effort to match an employee with a suitable position and to meet needs of the Parish, employees may be transferred from a current job. It is the Parish’s practice to promote from within the organization when the most qualified candidate is available. Promotions are made on an equal opportunity basis according to employees possessing the needed skills, education, experience, and other qualifications that are required for the job.

All employees promoted into new job positions will undergo a 90-day introductory period as described in the New Employees and Introductory Periods section. Unlike new hires, however, such employees will continue to receive Parish Government benefits for which they are eligible.

5.3 Pay Raises

The Finance department will monitor cost of living indexes (CPI) and market fluctuations for job classifications to reduce or eliminate imbalances between classes of positions within the Parish. Based on these studies, the Parish’s financial health and other factors, efforts will be made to give pay raises consistent with individual job performance, and the consumer price index. The Parish may also make individual pay raises based on merit or due to a change of job position. The Director of Finance/Personnel shall be responsible for any salary/wage adjustments with approval of the Parish President. The Parish President shall establish an effective date of increase at his discretion. The Finance committee of the Council may recommend government wide increases, based on the CPI, periodically.

5.4 Transfer

The Parish may transfer employees from one position to another, as required by operational or seasonal needs of the Parish, or upon request by an employee and administrative approval. Transfers lasting more than 90 days may be considered final, and, when appropriate, an adjustment to the employees pay consistent with the pay scale for the new position.

5.5 Workforce Reductions (Layoffs)

If necessary, based upon the needs of the Parish, reduction in force (RIF) may be implemented. We acknowledge that RIFs can be a trying experience for administration and employees alike, and the Parish will make its best effort to make sound business decisions while acknowledging the needs of its workforce.
5.6 Disciplinary Process

Violation of the Parish’s policies or procedures may result in disciplinary action including demotion, transfer, leave without pay, or termination of employment. The Parish encourages a system of progressive discipline depending on the type of prohibited conduct. However, the Parish is not required to engage in progressive discipline and may discipline or terminate an employee if he or she violates the rules of conduct, or where the quality or value of the employee’s work fails to meet expectations at any time. Again, any attempt at progressive discipline does not imply that their employment is anything other than on an "at will" basis.

In appropriate circumstances, supervisors will provide the employee first with a verbal warning, then with one or more written warnings, and if the conduct is not sufficiently altered, eventual demotion, transfer, suspension (leave without pay), or termination of employment. Supervisors will make every effort to allow an employee to respond to any disciplinary action taken. Understand that while the Parish is concerned with consistent enforcement of our policies, we are not obligated to follow any disciplinary or grievance procedure and, furthermore, depending on the circumstances, employees may be disciplined or terminated without any warning or procedure. If progressive discipline results in termination, employees’ have the right to appeal the decision. See Section 9 of the personnel handbook.

Steps of Progressive Disciplinary Action:

- Verbal Warning
- One or more written warnings
- Demotion and/or Transfer
- Suspension (Leave without pay)
- Termination of Employment

5.7 Standards of Conduct

The Parish wishes to create a work environment that promotes job satisfaction, respect, responsibility, integrity, and value for all our employees, community and customers. We all share in the responsibility of improving the quality of our work environment. By accepting a position with the Parish, the employee agrees to follow our rules.

While it is impossible to list everything that could be considered misconduct in the workplace, what is outlined is a list of common-sense infractions that could result in discipline, up to and including immediate termination of employment.

The severity of the action will determine the starting point of disciplinary action.

This policy is not intended to limit our right to discipline or discharge employees for any reason permitted by law.

Examples of inappropriate conduct include:

- Violation of the policies and procedures set forth in this handbook.
- Possessing, using, distributing, selling, or negotiating the sale of illegal drugs or other controlled substances.
- Being under the influence of alcohol during working hours on Parish property (including in
Parish vehicles), or in Parish Offices.

- Inaccurately, reporting individual hours worked or hours of supervised employees.
- Knowingly providing inaccurate, incomplete, or misleading information when speaking of the Parish or in the preparation of any employment-related documents including, but not limited to, job applications, personnel files, employment review documents, intra-Parish Government communications, or expense records.
- Taking or destroying Parish property.
- Possession of potentially hazardous or dangerous property (where not permitted) such as firearms, weapons, chemicals, etc., without prior authorization.
- Fighting with, or harassment of (as defined in our EEO policy section 3.1), any fellow employee, vendor, or customer.
- Refusal or failure to follow directions or to perform a requested or required job task.
- Refusal to follow safety rules and procedures set forth by the President, Directors, Supervisor and Foreman.
- Excessive tardiness or absences.
- Smoking in non-designated area.
- Working unauthorized overtime.
- Solicitation of fellow employees on Parish Government premises during working.
- Failure to dress according to Parish Government policy.
- Use of obscene or harassing (as defined by our EEO policy section 3.1) language in the workplace.
- Engaging in outside employment that interferes with employees' ability to perform their job at Parish Government.
- Gambling on Parish Government premises.
- Lending keys or keycards to Parish Government Property to unauthorized persons.
- Involvement in criminal activity on or off Parish Government Property.

Nothing in this policy is intended to limit employees' rights under the National Labor Relations Act, or to modify the at-will employment status where at-will is not prohibited by state law.

5.8 Criminal Activity/Arrests

Involvement in criminal activity, whether on or off Parish property, while on duty hours or not, may result in disciplinary action including suspension without pay or termination of employment. Disciplinary action depends upon a review of all factors involved, including whether the employee's action was work-related, the nature of the act, or circumstances which adversely affect attendance or performance. Disciplinary action is not dependent upon the disposition of any case in court.

Employees are expected to be on the job, ready to work, when scheduled. Inability to report to work as scheduled because of an arrest may lead to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment, for violation of attendance policy or job abandonment.

Any disciplinary action taken will be based on information reasonably available. This information may come from witnesses, law enforcement, or any other source reasonably determined to be viewed as credible.

5.9 Problem-Solving Procedure

We strive to provide a comfortable, productive, legal, and ethical work environment. To this end,
the Parish wants our employees to bring any problems, concerns, or grievances concerning the workplace to the attention of a supervisor and, if necessary, to Human Resources or upper level management.

To help manage conflict resolution we have instituted the following problem-solving procedure:

If inappropriate conduct or activity on the part of a Parish supervisor, employee, vendor, or any other citizen or entity related to the Parish is witnessed, those concerns should be brought to the attention of a supervisor or appropriate Director at a time and place that will allow the matter to be described. Most problems can be resolved informally through dialogue between an employee and their immediate supervisor. If an employee has discussed a matter with their supervisor previously and is not satisfied with the response or resolution; or if the employee believes the supervisor is the source of the problem; those concerns should be conveyed to the Human Resource office or Personnel Director. Please indicate what the problem is, persons involved in the problem, efforts made to resolve the problem, and any suggestion of a solution.

5.10 Outside Employment

Outside employment which creates a conflict of interest or affects the quality or value of an employees work performance or availability to the Parish is prohibited. The Parish recognizes that employees may seek additional employment during off hours, but expects, in these cases, that any outside employment will not affect job performance, work hours, or scheduling, or otherwise affect the employee's ability to effectively perform his or her duties. Any conflicts should be reported to your supervisor. Failure to adhere to this policy may result in discipline up to and including termination.

5.11 Exit Interview

Employees may be asked to participate in an exit interview when leaving Parish employment. The purpose of the exit interview is to provide management with greater insight into employees' decision to leave employment; identify any trends requiring attention or opportunities for improvement; and to assist the Parish in developing effective recruitment and retention strategies. Employees' cooperation in the exit interview process is appreciated.

5.12 Post-Employment Reference Policy

The Parish’s policy is to confirm dates of employment and job title only. The Parish would need written authorization to confirm compensation. Please forward any requests for employment verification to Human Resource office or payroll accountant.

If a former employee is requested to provide a prospective employer with additional information by way of reference, the employee must sign a form that holds the Parish and the prospective employer harmless from any claims related to any information provided in response to that reference. Please contact Human Resources for the release form.

6.0 General Policies

6.1 Driving Record

Employees required to operate a motor vehicle as part of their employment duties must maintain a
valid driver’s license and acceptable driving record. It is the employee’s responsibility to provide a copy of their current driver’s license, and if applicable, include all special endorsements and physical. Any changes in employees’ driving record, including, but not limited to, driving infractions, must be reported to the Parish immediately.

6.2 Use of Parish Government Vehicles

Parish vehicles are to be used for Parish government business only, personal or outside use is strictly prohibited.

Drivers of Parish vehicles are to immediately report all infractions or violations while driving a Parish vehicle and all restrictions, suspensions, or revocations against their driver’s license to their Supervisor or Personnel Director immediately. When a Parish vehicle cannot be operated safely or has been damaged, notify a supervisor immediately. The driver of a Parish vehicle is responsible for the vehicle while in his or her charge and must not permit unauthorized persons to drive it. The driver is responsible for the daily maintenance of the vehicle; it is to remain clean and uncluttered. No person shall operate a motor vehicle while under the influence of alcohol or a chemical substance or other substance that can impair judgment. Multiple moving violations that appear on the annual state department of motor vehicle check will result in suspension of rights to drive the Parish vehicle or drive a personal vehicle while conducting Parish business. Suspension of rights will continue until one year has passed with no infractions. If there are persistent and ongoing problems with driving infractions, and driving a vehicle is a part of successful execution of job responsibilities, termination of employment is possible. (Only employees or individual working with /on official Parish business or projects are authorized to be passengers in Parish own vehicles, unless otherwise approved by Parish President).

6.3 Access to Personnel and Medical Records Files

The Parish maintains personnel and medical file for every employee. Medical records will be kept in a separate folder. Every effort will be made to keep employees’ personnel and medical records confidential. Access is on a “need-to-know” basis only. This includes, but is not limited to, supervisors and others in management reviewing the file for possible promotion, transfer, layoff or termination.

If an employee wishes to review his or her personnel or medical file, they may do so after giving the Parish reasonable notice. Inspection must occur in the presence of a Parish representative. All requests by an outside party for information contained in employees’ personnel file will be directed to the Human Resource office or Personnel Director.

6.4 Employee Privacy and Right to Inspect

Parish property, including but not limited to, phones, computers, tablets, desks, workplace areas, vehicles, or machinery, remain under the control of the Parish and is subject to inspection at any time, without notice to the employee, and without the employee’s presence. Employees should have no expectation of privacy in any of these areas. We assume no responsibility for the loss of, or damage to, any employee’s property maintained on Parish premises including that kept in offices, desks and Parish owned vehicles.

6.5 Voicemail, Email, and Internet Policy

This Voicemail/Email/Internet Policy is intended to provide each employee of the Parish with the guidelines associated with the use of the Parish’s voicemail, email, or internet system. This policy
applies to all employees, and any others accessing and/or using the Parish’s system through onsite or remote terminals.

General Provisions

- The system, and all data transmitted or received through the system, are the exclusive property of the Parish. No individual should have any expectation of privacy in any communication over this system. Any individual permitted to have access to the Parish’s system will be given a voicemail, email and/or Internet access, and will have use of the system, consistent with this policy.
- The Parish reserves the right to monitor, intercept, and/or review all data transmitted, received, or downloaded over the system. Any individual who is given access to the system is hereby given notice that the Parish will exercise this right periodically, without prior notice and without the prior consent of the employee.

Any employee who violates the policies in this handbook will be subject to corrective action, up to and including termination of employment. If necessary, the Parish will also advise law enforcement officials of any illegal conduct.

6.6 Social Media Policy

The Parish recognizes the Internet provides unique opportunities to participate in interactive discussions and share information using a wide variety of social media. However, use of social media also presents certain risks and carries with it, certain responsibilities. To minimize risks to the Parish, employees are expected to follow our guidelines for appropriate use of social media. This policy applies to all employees who work for the Parish.

Guidelines

For purposes of this policy, social media includes all means of communicating or posting information or content of any sort on the Internet, including employees’ personal or someone else’s web log or blog, personal website, social networking, or a chat room, whether associated or affiliated with the Parish, as well as any other form of electronic communication.

The Parish’s principles, guidelines, and policies apply to online activities just as they apply to other areas of work. Ultimately, employees are solely responsible for what they communicate in social media. Employees may be personally responsible for any litigation that may arise should they make unlawful, defamatory, or slanderous statements against any citizen, supervisor, or employee of the Parish.

Know and Follow the Rules

Employees must ensure that their postings are consistent with these guidelines. Postings that include unlawful discriminatory remarks, harassment, and threats of violence or other unlawful conduct will not be tolerated and may subject employee to disciplinary action up to and including termination.

Be Respectful

The Parish cannot force or mandate respectful and courteous activity by employees on social media during nonworking time, however, be mindful of your position as a public servant and a representative of the Parish.
Examples of misconduct might include offensive or insulting posts meant to harm someone’s reputation or posts that could contribute to a hostile work environment based on race, sex, disability, age, national origin, religion, veteran status, or any other status or class protected by law or Parish policy.

**Maintain Accuracy and Confidentiality**

When posting information:

- Do not create a link from employee’s personal blog, website, or other social networking site to a Parish’s website that identifies an employee as speaking on behalf of the Parish.
- An employee should never identify themselves as a spokesperson for the Parish. If the Parish is a subject of the content that is being created, do not identify yourself as representative and or spokesperson on the Parish’s behalf. It should be clear that an employee’s posts on social media activity is on their own behalf.
- Respect copyright, trademark, third-party rights, and similar laws and use such protected information in compliance with applicable legal standards.

**Using Social Media at Work**

Do not use social media while on work time, unless it is work related as authorized by a supervisor or consistent with policies that cover Parish-owned equipment.

**Media Contacts**

If an employee is not authorized to speak on behalf of the Parish, they should not speak to the media on/or about Parish business. Direct all media inquiries to the Parish President’s office for official Parish responses.

**Retaliation and Employee Rights**

Retaliation or any other negative action is prohibited against an employee who, based on a reasonable belief, reports a possible deviation from this policy or cooperates in an investigation. Any employee who retaliates against another employee for reporting a possible deviation from this policy or for cooperating in an investigation will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

Nothing in this policy is designed to interfere with, restrain, or prevent employee communications regarding wages, hours, or other terms and conditions of employment, or to restrain employees in exercising any other right protected by law. Employees have the right to engage in or refrain from such activities.

**6.7 Employee Suggestions/Open Door Policy**

We welcome suggestions for continued improvement and welcome employees’ ideas for better ways to do the job, enhance services provided by the Parish to meet the public needs. Employees’ should discuss ideas with a supervisor or another member of the administrative team.

We also encourage each employee to offer any suggestions derived from seminars, trainings, or other outside sources of information believed to add value to the Parish.

Understand that any suggestions, innovations, inventions, or other matters created by an employee
on work time or with Parish tools or property are the property of the Parish.

6.8 Parish Bulletin Boards

The Parish maintains an official bulletin board located in the lobby of the Parish Government Administration Building for providing employees with its official notices, including wage and hour laws, changes in policies, and other employment-related notices. At times the Parish may also post information of general interest to the employees on the bulletin board. Please keep informed about this material by periodically reviewing the Parish bulletin board. Only authorized personnel can add and remove notices from the Parish bulletin board.

6.9 Personal Appearance

Employees personal appearance reflects on the reputation, integrity, and public image of the Parish. All employees are required to report to work neatly groomed and dressed. Employees are expected to maintain personal hygiene habits that are generally accepted in the community, including clean clothing, good grooming, personal hygiene, and appropriate attire for the workplace and the work being performed. This may include wearing Parish supplied uniforms or protective safety clothing and equipment, depending upon the job. Use common sense and good judgment in determining what to wear to work.

The Parish will make every effort to reasonably accommodate employees with disabilities or with religious beliefs that make it difficult for them to comply fully with the personal appearance policy. Employees with this concern should contact their supervisor for information regarding requesting a reasonable accommodation.

Failure to comply with the personal appearance standards may result in being sent home to groom or change clothes. Frequent violations may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

6.10 Telephone Use

Parish phones are principally for work-related communications. Unless there is an emergency, employees are required to limit long distance telephone calls to business purposes only. Employees should limit personal use of the telephone and their personal cell phone to brief communications during rest periods. Casual conversation with friends and relatives during working hours is strongly discouraged. Telephone use is subject to the Voicemail/Email/Internet Usage Policy.

6.11 Parish Provided Cell Phone Usage Policy

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance to supervisors and employees regarding the usage and eligibility for a Parish provided cell phone, and the appropriate use of the phone and plan.

An employee must have a legitimate Parish need for a Parish issued cell phone and the issuance of same to the employee must be requested by the Supervisor and approved by the Director of Finance. The typical reason for an employee to be issued a cell phone is the ability for supervisors and or administration to reach an employee immediately for job related events during the workday and in the event of an emergency after business hours.

When a cell phone has a flat rate airtime/data plan, the user is responsible for reimbursing the Parish should personal activities cause the plan threshold to be exceeded. The business office, with
concurrency of the employee, will determine the amount of personal use that caused the usage to exceed the plan and the employee will reimburse the Parish for that amount plus all applicable taxes. The use of a mobile device while operating a Parish vehicle and/or equipment is strictly prohibited while driving, unless the device is equipped or configured with a "hands-free" listening/speaking option, and the "hands-free" device is in fact utilized by the employee. This option must be approved by their supervisor. Other cell phone use such as texting, checking email, social media, etc. is strictly prohibited while operating Parish vehicles/equipment. The Parish owns and remains entitled to all mobile devices, including all passwords controlling access to them. Employees may not change those passwords except with permission.

6.12 Security

Every employee is responsible for helping to make this a secure work environment. Upon leaving work, where appropriate, employees should lock all desks, cabinets and doors protecting valuables and confidential items in their work area and report any lost or stolen keys, passes, or other similar devices to their supervisor immediately. We also request that an employee immediately advise their supervisor of any known or potential security risks and/or suspicious conduct of employees, visitors, or guests of the Parish. Safety and security are the responsibility of every employee and we rely on everyone to help keep our premises secure.

6.13 Computer Security and Copying of Software

Software programs purchased and provided by the Parish are to be used only for creating, researching, and processing Parish-related materials. By using the Parish's hardware, software, and networking systems employees assume personal responsibility for their use and agree to comply with this policy and other applicable policies, as well as city, state, and federal laws and regulations.

Employees and other users may not illegally duplicate any licensed software or related documentation. Unauthorized duplication of software may subject users and/or the Parish to both civil and criminal penalties under the United States Copyright Act. All software acquired and or downloaded to Parish computers must be purchased through the Parish IT technician.

6.14 Voting Rights

No employee shall be given or refused employment, suspended, or discharged because of his/her failure to vote in any primary or general election. Employees are encouraged to exercise their right to vote but must not become otherwise involved in partisan activity. This does not however, preclude an employee from expressing a personal political opinion. (ex. Wearing of political clothing, hats, buttons, stickers, etc. at work is prohibited.)

6.15 Third Party Disclosures

From time to time, the Parish may become involved in news stories or potential or actual legal proceedings of various kinds. When that happens, lawyers, former employees, newspapers, law enforcement agencies, and other outside persons may contact our employees to obtain information about the incident or the actual or potential lawsuit.

If an employee receives such a contact, they should not speak on behalf of the Parish and should refer any call requesting Parish's position to the Parish President's Office. If an employee has any questions about this policy or are not certain what to do when such a contact is made, please contact your supervisor.
6.16 Personal Data Changes

It is the employee’s obligation to provide the Parish with all current contact information, including current mailing address and telephone numbers (home and/or cell). Please inform the Parish Payroll office, immediately and in writing, any changes to marital, dependent, tax withholding, or other status changes affecting pay or deductions. Failure to do so may result in loss of benefits or delayed receipt of W-2 and other mailings.

7.0 Benefits

7.1 Regular Full-Time Employees

A regular full-time employee is an employee who has completed his or her introductory period and is regularly scheduled to work 28 - 40 hours per week. Unless stated otherwise, all the benefits provided to employees are for regular full-time employees only. This includes vacation (annual), and sick leave, holiday pay, retirement, group health, vision, dental, and life insurance coverage and other benefits provided.

7.2 Regular Part-Time/ Temporary Employees

Any employee who works less than 28 hours per week is considered a regular part-time employee. Regular part-time employees are not eligible for Parish benefits unless specified otherwise in this handbook or in the benefit plan summaries.

Temporary employees are hired for a specific period (i.e. summer worker). The Parish reserves the right to extend the duration of temporary employment where necessary. Temporary employees are not eligible for employee benefits unless specified otherwise in this handbook or in the benefit plan summaries.

7.3 Benefit Package

The Parish may pay up to 100% of the premium (if appropriated in the operating budget) for health and life insurance coverage for its regular full-time employees, working 30 or more hours per week with an effective date as of the 1st day of the month following the completion of 30 days of employment. Employees have the option of dependent coverage at their own expense. Such health insurance coverage shall be governed by the terms of the health insurance plan.

All coverages and benefits available and payable under the Health Insurance Plan are further defined in the plan document. These details are available to employees upon hiring and at our annual open enrollment.

Below is a list of employer paid benefits for full time employees:

- Health/hospitalization insurance
- Dental insurance
- Vision insurance
- Term Life Insurance Policy
- Accidental Death & Dismemberment

Upon Retirement of an employee who has met the eligibility requirements of the Louisiana Parochial Retirement System, who is at least 62 years old, and has at least 25 years of service with Washington Parish Government,
the Parish will continue to provide hospitalization insurance on said employee with the cost paid by the parish until the employee becomes eligible for Medicare (currently, 65 years of age).

If an employee or a dependent become ineligible for benefits due to a change in work hours, a qualifying life event, or separation of service, employee shall have the right to continue their medical benefits under the Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act (COBRA), at the employees’ cost. Employees will be contacted within 60 days following termination of employment or qualifying life event regarding their COBRA coverage.

7.4 Pension Plan

All Parish employees who are under the age of 55 and, who work at least 28 hrs. a week shall become members of the Parochial Employees’ Retirement System of Louisiana (PERS). Newly hired employees over the age of 55 may elect to participate in the plan or may waive this right, however, this is a onetime election. PERS is a public defined benefit pension plan which provides retirement allowances and other benefits, operating pursuant to LSA-R. S. 11:1901 through 2025. The Parish and eligible employees contribute an actuarially determined percentage of eligible pay to the system. Please refer to documentation provided by PERS for further details regarding eligibility, contributions, benefits and other options.

7.5 Holiday

The Parish observes the following paid holidays each year:
New Years’ Day
Martin Luther King Jr. Day
President’s Day
Mardi Gras Day (Tuesday)
Good Friday
Memorial Day
Independence Day
Labor Day
Wednesday, Thursday and Friday of the Washington Parish Fair
Veterans Day
Thanksgiving Day and the day after
Christmas Day and one day, as designated by the Parish President
Employees Birthday (earned and taken in the birthday month)

Generally, when a holiday falls on a Saturday, it will be observed the preceding Friday, likewise, holidays falling on a Sunday will be observed the following Monday.

Employees who, for reasons in the best interest of the public, are required to work on a holiday, shall, receive holiday pay, in addition to pay for hours worked, at their regular rate of pay or overtime rate, in accordance with the Fair Labor Stands Act. In lieu of additional pay, employee may request compensatory time off at the same applicable rates.

For Parish employees to be paid for holidays as provided in this section, said employee shall be required to work the day before and the day after said holiday, or shall be on annual leave, sick leave,
or be properly excused from work by the appropriate authority.

7.6 Annual Leave (Vacation) Policy

"Annual leave" shall mean that paid leave which is awarded to a full-time regular employee scheduled to work (40 hrs./week) and used typically as vacation leave. The use of Annual Leave for rest and recreation is encouraged. It shall be the responsibility of the employee to request the use of Annual Leave at least five days prior to the requested leave period. Annual Leave must be approved prior to use by an immediate supervisor. When authorized and applicable, Annual Leave may be utilized in lieu of sick leave whenever the employee no longer has unused accumulated sick leave.

Annual Leave shall be awarded in accordance with the following schedule:

- **First year** - at the end of first 12 months of employment: 5 days/40 hours.
- **End of Second Year**, through the Seventh year of employment: 10 days/80 hours.
- **End of Eighth Year**, through the Fourteenth year of employment: 15 days/120 hours.
- **End of Fifteenth Year** and thereafter: 20 days/160 hours.

Employees’ date of hire anniversary date will be used to compute time earned initially and for step increases, otherwise accruals are as of January 1, of the year following service. No Annual Leave may be taken prior to the completion of one year of service, unless special written approval is given by the Parish President.

No annual leave shall accrue to a full-time employee for any bi-weekly pay period during which the employee is on suspension. If absent (LWOP) without approved leave for more than 10% of the working hours for the year, annual leave accrual will be prorated accordingly.

An employee may carryover up to 80 hours of accumulated annual leave at the end of a calendar year (December 31), however, any unused leave in excess of 80 hours remaining at year end will be forfeited without payment to the employee.

Termination of employment: An employee shall receive payment of any accrued unused annual leave at the time of voluntary or involuntary termination of employment with the Parish.

7.7 Sick Leave

"Sick Leave" is paid leave, which is accrued by full-time, regular employees, scheduled to work 40 hours per week and used typically when an employee is unable to perform his or her duties due to any of the following:

Personal illness, injury, or any type of physical or mental disability including on the job injuries up to the date workers compensation indemnity benefits commence. Serious illness or injury in the employee’s immediate family, such as defined under the Family and Medical Leave policy.

**Sick leave with pay is not a right but a privilege granted by the Parish.**

Sick leave accrues at the rate of one working day of leave for each full month of the employee’s service. Sick leave may be taken after the employee has completed one or more months of continuous service.

It shall be the responsibility of the employee to request the use of sick leave as soon as the
employee determines that he/she will be absent from his/her workplace or assignment, at a minimum of 30 minutes prior to the beginning of the workday. In the case of a known medical procedure or extended illness, employees should notify their immediate supervisor and the human resource office in advance, when possible, to schedule sick time off. There may be occasions, such as sudden illness, when employees cannot notify their supervisor in advance. In those situations, employees must inform their supervisor and Human Resources of the circumstance as soon as possible.

Employees absent from work due to illness three or more consecutive days or three or more days within a 30-day period will be required to provide certification from a qualified, licensed Doctor of Medicine attesting to illness or incapacity. If an employee is suspected of abusing the sick leave policy, certification of illness by a physician may be required for the employee to return to work.

No sick leave shall accrue to a full-time employee for any bi-weekly pay period during which the employee is on suspension or is absent (LWOP) without approved leave for more than the number of hours in the employee’s normal workday. A full-time employee on approved leave without pay for less than half the bi-weekly pay period would earn 100% of his/her accrual leave. A full-time employee on approved leave without pay for half the bi-weekly pay period would earn 50% of his/her accrual leave. A full-time employee on approved leave without pay for more than half the bi-weekly pay period would earn 0% of his/her accrual leave.

Sick leave may be accumulated up to a maximum of 480 hours (60 days). Hours exceeding 480 at year end (December 31) will be monetarily compensated to employees at their hourly rate of pay, prior to the end of the calendar year.

Termination of employment - Accrued sick leave will not be paid out to employees upon voluntary or involuntary termination of employment, however, any accumulated, unused and unpaid sick leave may be converted to additional retirement benefit credit upon application for normal retirement with PERS and as verified by the employer.

Retirement - Any employee who has served Washington Parish Government for 20 years or more, may be authorized to receive payment in the amount of accrued sick leave credited to that employee, calculated at their final hourly rate (salary divided by 2080 hours), not to exceed 576 hours (72 days).

Any employee voluntarily terminating their employment with the Parish, with a good work record, leaving their retirement balance with PERS, but is subsequently rehired by the Parish within 6 months of the termination date, will receive reinstatement of any accrued sick leave on the books at the time of termination. All future earning of sick/vacation leave will accrue as a new hire.

7.8 Compensatory Time/Leave

Policy Statement:

It is the policy of Washington Parish Government to allow employees to earn Compensatory Leave for approved time worked, performing official government business, above their normal scheduled work week. Compensatory leave is time earned in lieu of cash payment at straight-time or time and one-half as compensation for overtime worked.
Policy Procedures:

Procedure for Compensatory Leave

*Employees are encouraged to flex their time within the Bi-weekly pay period to avoid accruing compensatory leave*

Non-Exempt Employees:

Employees in positions that are designated as “Non-Exempt” employees who work over 40 hours in a work week will earn compensatory time at a rate of one and one-half hours for every overtime hour worked.

Exempt Employees:

Employees in positions that are designated as “Exempt” earn compensatory time at a rate of hour for hour, for any hours worked above their normal work schedule in a work week.

General Provision

No compensatory leave/overtime shall be worked by any Washington Parish Government employee without prior approval of his or her supervisor.

Any overtime worked will be reported on the timesheet in the pay period in which it was earned. Employees are responsible for timely submission of overtime hours worked. Written approval by an employee’s supervisor must accompany any request for earned compensatory time.

Annual and sick leave taken, whether with or without pay, shall not be counted as hours worked for purposes of determining overtime compensation for “non-exempt” employees.

Employees and their supervisors are to minimize the accumulation of compensatory leave. Supervisors must consider the need, budget considerations, and the ability of employees to use compensatory time.

Use of Compensatory Leave

Supervisors are to ensure that employee leave slips are marked with the appropriate leave category, according to the employee’s leave balance.

Disposition of Compensatory Leave

Upon separation or termination from the Washington Parish Government, unused compensatory leave earned by non-exempt employees shall be paid at the employee’s regular pay rate.

Upon separation or termination from Washington Parish Government, all unused compensatory leave earned by exempt employees shall be forfeited.
Compensatory hours earned by exempt employees in excess of 40 hours must be used within the pay period earned (flexed) or they are lost.

Compensatory hours earned by non-exempt employees in excess of 40 hours will be compensated in wages. Prior written approval for non-exempt employees must include notice that compensation will be in excess of 40 hours.
7.9 Family and Medical Leave (FMLA) Policy

Under the federal Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993 (FMLA), employees meeting the guidelines described below are eligible for up to 12 weeks of unpaid leave.

To qualify for FMLA leave, employee must:

1. Have been employed with the Parish for at least 12 months,
2. Worked at least 1,250 hours in the previous 12-month period; and
3. Be employed at a worksite that has 50 or more employees within a 75-mile radius.

Employee may take up to 12 weeks of unpaid FMLA leave in a rolling 12-month period for any of the following reasons:

• The birth of a child and to care for that child (leave must be completed within one year of the child's birth);
• The placement of a child with employee for adoption or foster care and to care for the newly placed child (leave must be completed within one year of the child's placement);
• To care for a spouse, child, or parent with a serious health condition;
• To care for their own serious health condition, which makes employee unable to perform any of the essential functions of their position; or
• A qualifying necessity of a spouse, child, or parent who is a military member on covered active duty or called to covered active duty status (or has been notified of an impending call or order to covered active duty).

Eligible employees are entitled to no more than 12 weeks of FMLA leave in any twelve-month period, as measured backward from the date the requested leave is to begin. If an employee is unable to return to work at the time his/her available FMLA is exhausted, that employee will be terminated unless a personal leave of absence is granted.

Where medically necessary, leave taken due to the employee’s own serious health condition or to care for a covered relative with a serious health condition may be taken on an intermittent or reduced schedule basis.

Requested/Approved of Family Medical Leave

If the need for FMLA leave is foreseeable, the employee must provide the Parish with at least thirty (30) days’ notice. If unforeseeable, as much notice as practical should be given. Failure to provide required notice may result in denial or delay of the requested leave and/or termination of employment.

The Parish may require medical certification if leave is sought due to the employee’s own serious health condition or to care for a child, spouse, parent or covered service member with a serious health condition or a qualifying urgent need. Medical certification is also required to demonstrate that intermittent or reduced schedule leave is medically necessary due to the employee’s own serious health condition or the need for the employee to care for a covered relative with a serious health condition or a covered service member. In its discretion and at its own expense, the Parish may request that a second opinion be secured. A third opinion may be required in cases where the first and second opinions are contradictory. Subsequent medical re-certification may be required at reasonable intervals.
Employees on leave of absence must periodically report on their status and intent to return to work.

Inquiries to health care providers on behalf of the Parish should be made by the Human Resource officer.

The Parish will continue group medical coverage during an employee’s FMLA leave, provided the employee continues to pay his/her portion of the premium for any dependent coverage or voluntary policies, as if the employee had been continuously working during leave. Employees will need to contact Human Resource office or the Payroll department to arrange a payment schedule for their portion of these premiums. Under certain conditions, coverage may be terminated for failure to pay the required premiums.

If the qualifications of an FMLA request are met, employees will be required to use available paid sick and vacation leave concurrently with the FMLA leave. This means the employee will receive a paycheck using their accrued paid leave as reflected in their payroll record.

**Returning from FMLA Leave** – Employees returning from FMLA leave will be allowed to return to their same or equivalent position upon completion of the authorized leave, under the same condition as if the employee had been continuously employed during the FMLA leave.

The Parish will require any employee returning from medical leave of absence to obtain and present a current medical certification signed by a physician that the employee is able to resume work. Such certification must be provided prior to return to work. Employees who fail to report to work when released to do so by a health care provider, or who fail to accept an available position upon release from a health care provider, will be subject to termination.

**7.10 Personal Leave of Absence**

Personal leave of absence is defined as an unpaid approved absence from work for a specified period for medical, parental, military, or other approved reasons. If an employee finds that he/she must be out of work for more than three days, he/she should contact the Human Resource office to determine if a leave of absence may be necessary.

An employee may be granted a leave of absence without pay for up to six (6) months by the Parish President upon the recommendation of the Personnel Director for reason of personal or family illness, completing education, or special work which will permit the Parish to profit by the experience gained or the work performed.

While on leave, an employee must contact the Human Resources office at least every 30 days. Failure to contact HR upon request may result in voluntary termination of employment. Failure to return to work upon the expiration of the leave or refusing an offer of reinstatement for which the employee is qualified will also result in voluntary termination of employment.

For leave other than approved FMLA leave, the Parish will pay its portion of the cost of the employee's benefits including health, dental, life, and accidental death insurance only until end of the monthly billing cycle of the last month worked, at which time a COBRA notification will be issued and the employee may continue coverage at their own expense.
7.11 Pregnancy Leave

The Parish will provide employees with up to six weeks of unpaid leave (FMLA) for normal, healthy pregnancies and childbirth. The Parish may extend the leave period for a reasonable amount of time, not to exceed four months, when an employee is temporarily unable to return to work as a result of pregnancy, childbirth, or a related medical condition. If an extension is requested by an employee, it must be accompanied by recommendation of a Physician.

Employees who wish to take leave under this policy must provide reasonable notice of the date such leave will begin and the estimated duration of the leave.

While leave under this policy is unpaid, employees may choose to use accrued sick or vacation leave concurrently to receive compensation during this time off.

Leave taken under this policy will run concurrently with any other leave for which the employee is eligible, including leave under the federal Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA).

Upon request, the Parish will reasonably accommodate a pregnant employee who, upon the advice of her physician, requests to transfer to a less strenuous or hazardous position for the duration of her pregnancy.

The Parish will not tolerate any retaliation against any employee who requests or takes leave in accordance with this policy.

7.12 Leave Sharing

Washington Parish Government recognizes that employees may have a family medical emergency or be affected by a major disaster, resulting in a need for additional time off in excess of their available sick/personal time. To address this need, all eligible employees will be allowed to donate accrued paid sick or personal leave hours from their unused balance to their co-workers in need of additional paid time off, in accordance with the policy outlined below. This policy is strictly voluntary.

Eligibility

Employees must be employed with Parish Government for a minimum of 6 months or through the completion of employee’s introductory period to be eligible to donate and/or receive donated sick/personal time. Also, the employee’s previous year leave record does not indicate an abuse of the leave policy – i.e. not more than 40 hrs. of Leave Without Pay (LWOP) in a 12-month period, with an exception for excused sick leave.

Guidelines

Employees requesting to receive donated sick/personal time from their co-workers must have a situation that meets the following criteria:

1. Medical emergency, defined as a medical condition of the employee or an immediate family member that will require the prolonged/extended absence of the employee from duty and will result in a substantial loss of income to the employee due to the exhaustion of all paid leave available. An immediate family member is defined as a spouse, child or parent.

2. Major disaster, defined as a disaster declared by a Competent Authority of Federal, State or local government. An employee is adversely affected by a major disaster if the disaster has caused severe hardship to the employee or to a family member of the employee that requires the employee to be absent
from work.

Donation of Sick/Personal Time

- Donation of sick/personal time is strictly voluntary.
- Donated sick/personal time will go into a leave bank for use by eligible recipients.
- Recipient identity will not be disclosed to donating employees.
- The donation of sick/personal time is on an hourly basis, without regard to the dollar value of the donated or used leave.
- The minimum number sick/personal hours that an eligible employee may donate is 8 hours per calendar year; the maximum is 40 hours or no more than 50% of the employee’s current balance.
- Employees cannot borrow against future sick/personal time to donate.
- Employees will be given the opportunity to donate sick/personal time annually during open enrollment. The donated sick/personal time will be transferred from the donor to the leave pool on December 31. Employees terminating employment within the year, ineligible to receive payout or convert sick time for retirement purposes, may donate accrued balance to the bank.
- Employees who are currently on an approved leave of absence cannot donate sick/personal time.

Requesting Donated Sick/Personal Time

- Employees who would like to request donated sick/personal time are required to complete a Donation of Sick/Personal Time Request Form and submit it to human resources.
- Requests for donations of sick/personal time must be approved by employee’s immediate supervisor, Director of Personnel and Parish President.
- Recipient employee has available sick/personal time in his/her balance, this time will be used prior to any donated sick/personal time. Donated sick/personal time may only be used for time off related to an approved request.
- Employees who receive donated sick leave (FMLA) may receive no more than 480 hours (12 weeks) within a rolling 12-month period.
- Nothing in this policy will be construed to limit or extend the maximum allowable absence under the Family Medical Leave Act.
- The donated time will be earned as it is needed by employee until which time employee began earning their own leave.

*** This policy does not prohibit the donation of leave between employees. ***

7.13 Military Leave (USERRA)

The Parish complies with applicable federal and state law regarding military leave and re-employment rights. Unpaid military leave of absence will be granted to members of the uniformed services in accordance with the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act of 1994 (with amendments) and all applicable state law. Documentation of the need for the leave is required to be submitted to the Human Resource Office. An employee returning from military leave of absence will be reinstated to his or her previous or similar job in accordance with state and federal law. Employee must notify their supervisor of their intent to return to employment based on requirements of the law. For more information regarding status, compensation, benefits and reinstatement upon return from military leave, please contact the Human Resource Office.

7.14 Jury Duty Leave

The Parish encourages employees to fulfill their civic duty related to serving for jury duty. If employee is summoned for jury duty, notification should be given to their supervisor as soon as possible to
make scheduling arrangements. Employees will receive regular compensation for the time spent on jury duty. Any reimbursement received by employees less the mileage allowance shall be turned in to the Parish for collection. The Parish reserves the right to require employees to provide proof of jury duty service to the extent authorized by law.

7.15 Bereavement Leave

Bereavement leave is allotted to an employee when an immediate family member (mother, father, sister, brother, spouse, child, mother-in-law, father-in-law, grandparent, or grandchild) of the employee is taken by death. An employee shall request the use of bereavement leave as soon as possible. The amount of such leave with pay shall not exceed three (3) workdays per year and is typically used to arrange and/or attend funeral activities. Bereavement leave in excess of three (3) workdays shall be charged to the employee’s annual leave balance; and if such is not available, charged to the employee’s sick leave balance; and if not available be coded, as approved “Leave Without Pay”, when appropriate. The employee shall request bereavement leave from his/her supervisor. An employee who fails to return to work on the date and time set by the supervisor without receiving an appropriate extension may be subject to disciplinary action. The Parish may request documentation to support absences for bereavement leave.

7.16 Unpaid Leave (LWOP)

The types of unpaid leave are:

1. **Unauthorized Leave without Pay**: Leave which is allotted to an employee whenever the employee is without the benefit of some other leave and/or cannot provide a valid reason to the satisfaction of the supervisor for his/her (the employee’s) absence. The use by an employee of any amount of unauthorized leave without pay may result in disciplinary action.

2. **Leave without Pay**: Leave which is allotted to an employee whenever the employee is without the benefit of some other leave but has provided a valid reason to the satisfaction of the supervisor for his/her (the employee’s) absence and obtained approval for the leave.

3. **Administrative Leave**: Leave which is allotted to an employee whenever facts and circumstances exist whereby it is in the best interest of the Parish as determined by the supervisor that the employee be removed or absents himself/herself from the workplace or assignment. Use of administrative leave is rare and shall be reserved for an extraordinary situation, instance or incident (e.g., disciplinary investigation, criminal investigation, leave of absence, other extraordinary or emergency). It is the policy of the Parish that administrative leave be unpaid, however, the President, or designee, may authorize the payment for said leave whenever facts and circumstances justify such.

4. Unpaid time off may affect benefits provided by Parish Government, such sick leave, annual leave, retirement and employer paid health insurances.

7.17 Workers’ Compensation Insurance

Workers’ compensation is a no-fault system designed to provide benefits to all employees for work related injuries. Workers' compensation insurance coverage is paid for by the employer and governed by state law. The workers' compensation system provides for coverage of medical treatment and expenses, occupational disability leave, rehabilitation services, as well as indemnity payment for lost wages due to work related injuries. If an employee is injured on the job, regardless of the severity, he/she is to report the incident immediately to their supervisor. Consistent with applicable state law, failure to report an injury within a reasonable period could jeopardize their claim for benefits.

If injury is the result of an on-the-job accident, the employee’s supervisor must complete a detail
accident report. A post-accident drug screening may be required. Employees on workers’ compensation leave must remain in contact with their supervisor and the personnel director. Time off as a result of a Workers’ Compensation claim are not charged to employee leave balances, however, will run concurrent with FMLA. Employees will be required to submit a medical release form before they can return to work.

7.18 Unemployment Compensation Insurance

Unemployment compensation insurance is paid for by Parish Government and provides temporary income for employees who have lost their job under certain circumstances. Their eligibility for unemployment compensation will, in part, be determined by the reasons for their separation from the Parish.

7.19 COBRA

The Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act (COBRA) provides the opportunity for eligible employees and their dependents to continue health insurance coverage, dental and vision at their cost, under the Parish Government health plan when a “qualifying event” could result in the loss of eligibility. Qualifying events include resignation, termination of employment, death of an employee, reduction in hours, a leave of absence, divorce or legal separation, eligibility for Medicare, or where a dependent child no longer meets eligibility requirements.

For an employee covered under a qualifying event, COBRA coverage can last for 18 months from the date coverage is elected, however, dependents can receive up to 36 months of coverage under certain circumstances.

Please contact Human Resource office to learn more about COBRA rights.

7.20 Retirement/ Termination

When employees leave employment with the Parish due to retirement, termination or resignation all property of the Parish must be returned, such as: equipment, uniforms, keys, phone, technology equipment, etc. The return of such equipment must precede issuance of the employee’s final paycheck.

8.0 Safety and Loss Prevention

8.1 General Safety Policy

It is Parish Governments responsibility to ensure a healthy and safe working environment for all employees. As Parish employees it is your responsibility to report all safety hazards and occupational illnesses or injuries to your supervisor as soon as reasonably possible and complete an occupational illness or injury form as needed. Failure to follow the Parish’s health and safety rules may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

8.2 Drug and Alcohol Policy

The Parish considers drug and alcohol abuse a serious matter that will not be tolerated. Therefore, it is the Parish’s policy that:

1. Employees may not report to work under the influence of alcohol, illegal drugs, or any controlled substance or prescription drug not medically authorized.

2. Employees may not possess or use alcohol, illegal drugs, or any controlled substance or
prescription drug not medically authorized while on Parish property or conducting Parish business.

The Parish also cautions against use of prescribed or over-the-counter medication, which can affect an employee’s ability to perform their job safely, or the use of prescribed or over-the-counter medication in a manner violating the recommended dosage or instructions from the doctor. Employee must have a valid prescription or recommendation for any medication used while working for the Parish and must inform their supervisor prior to working under the influence of a prescribed, recommended (Medical Marijuana) or over-the-counter medication that may affect their ability to perform their job safely. If the Parish determines that the prescribed, recommended, or over-the-counter medication does not pose a safety risk, employee will be allowed to work. Failure to comply with these guidelines may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

The Parish may assist its employees who seek treatment or rehabilitation for drug or alcohol dependency. Continued employment may be considered if the employee adequately addresses concerns regarding safety, health, production, communication, or other work-related matters. Employees may also be required to obtain a medical clearance and agree to random testing and a “one-strike” rule as a condition of continued employment.

8.3 Drug-Free Workplace

The Parish, in compliance with the federal Drug-Free Workplace Act of 1988, has adopted the following policy that must be adhered to as a condition of employment:

The Parish will not permit its employees to possess, consume or distribute drugs or alcohol within its workplace, or to report to work to perform their duties after having ingested drugs or alcohol. To do otherwise would risk the safety of our employees, our citizens and the communities in which our offices are located. The Federal Department of Transportation requires that the Parish have a drug testing program in place. The Parish has adopted a random quarterly drug and alcohol screening program. By accepting a position with the Parish and signing that all policies described in this handbook have been read and understood, consent has been given.

It is the policy of the Parish to maintain a safe, healthy and productive work environment for all of its employees; to produce quality work and service for the residents of Washington Parish in an efficient manner; to maintain the integrity of security of its facilities and property; and to perform all these functions in a fashion consistent with the interest and concerns of the communities in which our offices are located.

The Parish President or designee is responsible for implementing the above policy. Design of the testing program may differ depending on the nature of the hazards inherent in the Parish unit. All programs, however, will comply with the spirit of this policy to:

- Emphasize programs to assist employees who are substance users or alcohol abusers with the means of rehabilitating themselves.
- Safeguard the privacy of the employee and the confidentiality of test data.

It is the responsibility of the Parish President or designee to monitor drug and alcohol testing programs throughout the Parish to ensure conformance to this policy; ensuring that the program follows established guidelines that are in the best interest of the Parish and its employees. Washington Parish has adopted a program of mandatory drug testing prior to employment with the parish and random screening throughout time of employment.
8.4 Nonsmoking Policy

The Parish is concerned about the effect that smoking and second-hand smoke inhalation can have on its employees and clients. Parish Government follows LA Rev Stat 40:1263 state office building; smoking regulation; enforcement

1. Smoking in Parish Building, client areas, and restrooms is prohibited.

2. Smoking in any area proximate to building within twenty-five feet of an entrance to building is prohibited.

3. Smoking in any area within twenty-five feet of wheelchair ramp or other structure to building access by persons with disabilities is prohibited.

4. "Smoking" means the carrying of lighted cigar, cigarette, pipe or any lighted smoking equipment, in addition to the inhalation and exhalation of smoke by a person from any form of lighted tobacco.

8.5 Policy Against Violence

As the safety and security of our employees, vendors, contractors, and the public is of utmost importance, the Parish is committed to providing our employees and citizens an environment free from violence, intimidation, and other disruptive behavior.

Zero Tolerance Policy

The Parish has a zero-tolerance policy regarding workplace violence and will not tolerate acts or threats of violence, harassment, intimidation, and other disruptive behavior, either physical or verbal, that occurs in the workplace or other areas. This applies to supervisors, employees, and non-employees such as contractors, customers, and visitors.

Workplace violence can include oral or written statements, gestures, or expressions that communicate a direct or indirect threat of physical harm, damage to property, or any intentional behavior that may cause a person to feel threatened.

Prohibited Conduct

Prohibited conduct includes, but is not limited to:

- Physically injuring another person.
- Threatening to injure a person or damage property by any means, including verbal, written, direct, indirect, or electronic means.
- Taking any action to place a person in reasonable fear of imminent harm or offensive contact.
- Possessing, brandishing, or using a firearm on Parish owned property or while performing Parish business except as permitted by state law.
- Violating a restraining order, order of protection, injunction against harassment, or other court order.

Reporting Incidents of Violence

Employees should report to their immediate supervisor, or the Human Resource Office, in accordance with this policy, any behavior that compromises the Parish’s ability to maintain a safe
work environment. All reports will be investigated immediately and kept confidential, except where there is a legitimate need to know. Employees are expected to cooperate in any investigation of workplace violence.

Violations

Violating this policy may subject an employee to criminal charges as well as discipline up to and including immediate termination of employment.

Retaliation

Victims and witnesses of workplace violence will not be retaliated against in any manner. In addition, employee will not be subject to discipline for, based on a reasonable belief, reporting a threat, or for cooperating in an investigation.

If an employee initiates, participates, or is involved in retaliation, or obstructs an investigation into conduct prohibited by this policy, said employee will be subject to discipline, up to and including termination.

If an employee believes they have been wrongfully retaliated against, they should immediately report the matter to the Human Resource Office.

9.0 Grievance Procedures

The purpose of this guideline is to assure employees that their problems and complaints will be considered fairly, rapidly, and without reprisal. It is expected that the procedures set forth below will encourage employees to discuss with their supervisors, matters pertaining to the conditions of parish employment as they affect individual employees. In addition, free discussion between employees, and supervisors will lead to better understanding by both, of practices, policies, and procedures which affect employees. This will serve to identify and eliminate conditions which may cause misunderstandings and grievances.

The primary purpose of any grievance procedure is to determine what is right, rather than who is right. Therefore, grievances must be considered objectively and in an atmosphere of mutual assistance. This cannot be done if a spirit of conflict enters consideration of a grievance.

Supervisors and employees alike must recognize the true purpose of a grievance procedure is to help achieve the basic objective of parish government by promoting the well-being of the organization. It is the desire of the Parish to address grievances informally, and both supervisors and employees are expected to make every effort to resolve problems as they arise. However, it is recognized that there will be occasional grievances which will be resolved only after a formal appeal and review.

Accordingly, the following procedure is established to insure fair and impartial review.

- An employee shall first present their grievance to their immediate supervisor who shall make careful inquiry into the facts and circumstances of the complaint.
- The supervisor shall attempt to resolve the problem promptly and fairly.
- An employee who is dissatisfied with the decision of their immediate supervisor may present the grievance to the department head or Human Resource Office.
- An employee who is dissatisfied with the decision of their supervisor and the Human Resource officer may submit the grievance in writing to the Personnel Director.
• The Personnel Director shall make such investigations and conduct such hearings as it deems necessary and shall within fifteen (15) calendar days after the receipt of the employee's request for review, inform the employee in writing of findings and decision.

• An employee's grievance may be rejected if it is filed more than five (5) calendar days after the incident which caused the grievance, unless the Personnel Director finds extenuating circumstances exist.

• Regardless of permissible time limits established in this section (9.0), initial filing of grievances shall not be accepted by the Personnel Director after an employee has been separated from service unless the grievance pertains to such separation and is filed within five (5) calendar days after such separation.

10.0 Councilmen-Employee

No councilmen shall individually give an order or instruction to a Parish employee, or contractors under contract by the Parish on projects relating to the routine operations of the Parish.

Nothing herein shall be construed to prohibit a Councilman from communicating with supervisory employees of the parish, or contractor to inform them of complaints or problems.

No employee of the Parish shall execute any order or instruction from any Councilman individually or any unauthorized person. For the purpose of this provision, an "unauthorized person" shall mean anyone not within the chain of supervisory command as set forth by the Council and as implemented by the Parish President.

11.0 Closing Statement

Once again, I would like to welcome you as a new employee of Washington Parish Government. I hope the handbook provides you with guidance and an understanding of the Parish's mission, history, and structure as well as our current policies and guidelines. As the Parish President, I look forward to working together with you to create a successful, safe, productive, and pleasant work environment.

Richard N Thomas, Jr.
Washington Parish President
12.0 Acknowledgment of Receipt and Review

By signing below, I acknowledge that I have received a copy of the Washington Parish Government Employee Handbook and that I have read, understand, and agree to comply with the policies and procedures therein. I understand that the Parish has maximum discretion permitted by law to interpret, administer, change, modify, or delete the rules, regulations, procedures, and benefits contained in the handbook at any time. No statement or representation by a supervisor, or any other employee, whether oral or written, can supplement or modify this handbook. Changes can only be made if approved in writing by the Parish President with concurrence of Parish Council. I also understand that any delay or failure by the Parish to enforce any rule, regulation, or procedure contained in the handbook does not constitute a waiver on behalf of the Parish or effect the right of the Parish to enforce such rule, regulation, or procedure in the future.

I understand that neither this handbook nor any other communication by an administrative representative or other, whether oral or written, is intended in any way to create a contract of employment. I further understand that, unless I have a written employment agreement signed by an authorized Parish representative, I am employed "at-will" and this handbook does not modify my "at-will" employment status.

This handbook is not intended to preclude or dissuade employees from engaging in legally protected activities under the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA).

This handbook supersedes any previous handbook or policy statements, whether written or oral, issued by Washington Parish Government.

If I have any questions about the content or interpretation of this handbook, I will contact the Human Resource Office.

Date __________________________

Signature ____________________________________________

Print Name ___________________________________________