

# **TOWN OF VOLUNTOWN**

## **EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK**

Dear Valued Employee,

The Town of Voluntown believes that each employee contributes to the success and growth of our community, and we look forward to your continued service. For new employees - We are pleased with your decision to join our team.

This Employee Handbook contains general information on our policies, practices, and benefits. Please read it carefully. If you have any questions regarding this handbook, please discuss them with your Supervisor. We are committed to providing a productive, respectful, and safe working environment.

We look forward to working with all of you!

Sincerely,

Tracey Hanson,  
First Selectman

This Employee Handbook is approved for distribution to all hourly, appointed, and elected employees of the Town of Voluntown.

Approved by the Board of Selectmen 01/14/2025, updated on 9/11/2025.

Tracey L. Hanson, First Selectman

Robert James Thevenet, Selectman

Mark Oulton, Selectman

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## **I. Handbook Disclaimer**

The contents of this Handbook serve only as guidelines and supersede any prior handbook. Neither this Handbook, nor any other policy or practice creates an employment contract, or implied or expressed promise of continued employment with the Town of Voluntown.

This Handbook may provide a summary of employee health benefits, however actual coverage will be determined by the express terms of the benefit plan documents. If there are any conflicts between the handbook or summaries provided and the plan documents, the plan documents will prevail. The Town of Voluntown reserves the right to amend, interpret, modify, or terminate any of its employee benefits programs without prior notice to the extent allowed by law.

The Town of Voluntown also has the right, with or without notice in an individual case or generally, to change any of the policies in this Handbook, or any of its guidelines, policies, practices, working conditions or benefits at any time. No one is authorized to provide any employee with an employment contract or special arrangement concerning terms or conditions of employment unless the contract or arrangement is in writing and signed by the First Selectman, or his or her designee, and the employee.

Change at the Town of Voluntown is inevitable. Therefore, we expressly reserve the right to interpret, modify, suspend, cancel, or dispute, with or without notice, all or any part of our policies, procedures, and benefits at any time with or without prior notice. Changes will be effective on the dates determined by the Town of Voluntown, and after those new effective dates, all superseded policies will be null and void.

No individual Supervisor has the authority to alter the foregoing. Any employee who is unclear on any policy or procedure should consult their Supervisor, or the First Selectman or his or her designee.

## **II. Employment-at-Will**

It is the purpose of this Handbook to promote efficient and effective relationships between the Town of Voluntown, Connecticut, and its employees, in order that efficient and progressive public service shall be rendered to the citizens of Voluntown. We believe that it takes hard work, integrity and commitment to create and maintain a strong employment relationship. The provision of this Handbook apply to all employees unless a Collective Bargaining Agreement supersedes any particular provisions of this document.

It's important for you to understand that this Handbook is not a contract of employment between you and the Town of Voluntown, and that the Town of Voluntown does not promise or guarantee employment for any fixed period or a set salary for any particular period. The policies and procedures in this document do not promise you:

How long you will be employed;

What position you will have;

What hours you will work;

What salary you will be paid;

Particular working conditions;

What procedures will be used in discipline or termination cases.

The Town of Voluntown retains the sole right to change the Town's organizational structure, compensation system, work hours and schedules, job content, benefits, location, policies, procedures and other terms and conditions of employment.

As this Employee Handbook does not create or constitute an express or implied contract of employment between the Town of Voluntown and any of its present or future employees, the provisions of this Handbook may be revoked or modified at any time by the Town of Voluntown, in its absolute discretion. Employment with the Town of Voluntown is subject to termination at will by either the Town of Voluntown or the employee at any time, for any reason, with or without cause, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the First Selectman and the employee. The Town of Voluntown expressly disclaims any express or implied covenants

Moreover, this Handbook is only a summary, compiled for the convenience of the Town's employees and so is not intended to cover all topics or circumstances. Where there are differences between the provisions contained in this Handbook and the provisions of documents contained in the Town of Voluntown's files (such as insurance policies, pension plans, collective bargaining agreements, etc.) the latter provisions shall prevail. If you have a question or an issue about work conditions, please discuss with your Supervisor. We encourage our employees to let us know what we can do to build and enrich our Town.

### **III. Management Responsibilities**

- To provide a safe workplace.
- To safeguard public resources.
- To provide a working environment that promotes respect for all individuals.
- To recognize performance and achievement by employees.
- To treat all employees in a fair and consistent manner.
- To ensure conformity with all applicable laws, rules and regulations which govern Town business and acceptable personnel practices.
- To communicate policies and procedures to all employees in a clear and timely manner.
- To provide an atmosphere of openness and receptivity to employees' suggestions for improving the quality of work.

### **IV. Management Rights**

The Town of Voluntown shall have the sole right, responsibility and prerogative as to the management of the affairs of the Town and direction of the working force, including but not limited to the following:

- To determine the care, maintenance, and operation of equipment and property used for, and on behalf of, the purposes of the Town.
- To establish or continue policies, practices and procedures for the conduct of Town business and, from time to time, to change or abolish such policies, practices or procedures.
- To establish or discontinue processes or operations or to establish or discontinue their performance by employees.
- To select and to determine the number and types of employees required to perform the Town's operations.

- To employ, transfer, promote, or demote employees, or to layoff, terminate, or otherwise relieve employees from duty for lack of work or other legitimate reasons when it shall be in the best interest of the Town.
- To prescribe and enforce rules and regulations for the maintenance of discipline and for the performance of work in accordance with the requirements of the Town provided such rules and regulations are made known to the employees affected by them.

## **V. Employee Responsibilities**

- To respect the rights, responsibilities and authority of others.
- To strive for excellence on the job.
- To deal with fellow employees and the public in a helpful and courteous manner that reflects credit upon the public service mission of the Town of Voluntown.
- To adhere to the policies and procedures of the Town.
- To maintain high standards of personal integrity and ethical conduct.
- To discharge job duties and responsibilities in a conscientious and professional manner.
- To contribute to a congenial workplace in which all employees are respected and encouraged to perform their best work.
- To promote on-the-job safety.

## **VI. Internal Communications**

Effective and ongoing communication within the Town of Voluntown is essential. As such, the organization maintains systems through which important information can be shared among employees.

Bulletin boards are posted in designated areas of the workplace to display important information and announcements. In addition, the Town of Voluntown uses email to facilitate communication and share documents. For information on appropriate email and internet usage, employees may refer to the Computer, Email and Internet Usage policy in this Manual. To avoid confusion, employees should not post on, or remove any material from, the bulletin boards.

## **VII. Equal Employment Opportunity**

The Town of Voluntown is an Equal Opportunity Employer. Employment opportunities in the Town of Voluntown are based upon one's qualifications and capabilities to perform the essential functions of a particular job. All employment opportunities are provided without regard to:

- Race
- Color
- Religion
- Sex (including pregnancy, sexual harassment, or transgender status)
- Workplace hazards to reproductive systems
- National origin or Ancestry

- Age
- Veteran status
- Physical disability
- Past or present history of mental disability
- Learning disability or intellectual disability
- Genetic information
- Sexual orientation or gender identity or expression
- Marital status or civil union status
- Homelessness status
- Lawful activity outside the workplace during non-work hours, such as the use of tobacco products
- Any other characteristic protected by law

The Equal Employment Opportunity Policy governs all aspects of employment including, but not limited to, recruitment, hiring, selection, job assignment, promotions, transfers, compensation, discipline, termination, layoff, access to benefits and training, and all other conditions and privileges of employment.

The Town of Voluntown will provide reasonable accommodation as necessary and where required by law so long as the accommodation does not pose an undue hardship to business operations. The Town of Voluntown will accommodate the sincerely held religious beliefs of its employees to the extent the accommodation does not pose an undue hardship to business. If you would like to request an accommodation, or have any questions about your rights and responsibilities, please contact the First Selectman, or his or her designee. This policy is not intended to afford employees with any greater protections than those which exist under federal, state or local law.

The Town of Voluntown strongly urges the reporting of instances of discrimination and harassment and prohibits retaliation against any individual who reports discrimination, harassment, or participates in an investigation of such report. The Town of Voluntown will take appropriate disciplinary action, up to and including immediate termination, against any employee who violates this policy.

## **VIII. Outside Employment**

Employees may hold outside jobs as long as the employee meets the performance standards of their position with the Town of Voluntown. All outside employment should be shared with the First Selectman to ensure there is no conflict of interest.

Unless an alternate work schedule has been approved by the Town of Voluntown, employees will be subject to scheduling demands, regardless of any existing outside work commitments. This includes availability for overtime when necessary.

The Town of Voluntown property, office space, equipment, materials, resources, and any other confidential information may not be used for any purposes relating to outside employment.

## **IX. Personnel Records & Privacy Information**

Employees are permitted to access “personal records/information” only as necessary and with prior authorization. If given authorization to access personal information for job-related purposes, employees must do so in accordance with the Town of Voluntown’s policies and procedures.

“Personal information” means information capable of being associated with a particular individual through one or more identifiers including, but not limited to, a Social Security number, a driver’s license number, a state identification card number, an account number, a credit or debit card number, a passport number, an alien registration number or a health insurance identification number. Personal information does not include publicly available information that is lawfully made available to the general public from federal, state, or local government records or widely distributed media.

Accessing and using such information without prior authorization by the Town of Voluntown or in violation of the Town of Voluntown’s policies and procedures may result in discipline up to and including termination of employment.

If you come into contact with Social Security numbers or other sensitive personal information without authorization from the Town of Voluntown, or under circumstances outside of your job duties, you may not disclose the information further and must contact your Supervisor immediately. All related information must be turned over to your Supervisor including all copies of the information in whatever form.

Employees may access their own personnel records with 24 business hours’ notice to the Finance Director or First Selectman. Employees may make a copy of their personnel records but may not take the documents out of the designated location for review. Personnel records are public information under the Freedom of Information Act and may be accessed by the public or media. When requested, the Town will remove all personal information listed above and will notify the employee of the completion of the request. Employees cannot prevent access to the public personnel records.

## **X. Personnel Data Changes**

It is the responsibility of each employee to promptly notify their Supervisor of any changes in personnel data. Such changes may affect the eligibility for benefits, the amount you pay for benefit premiums, and your receipt of important information.

If any of the following have changed or will change in the coming future, contact your Supervisor as soon as possible:

- Legal name
- Mailing address
- Telephone number(s)
- Change of beneficiary
- Exemptions on your tax forms
- Emergency contact(s)

- Training certificates
- Professional licenses

## **XI. Immigration Law Compliance**

The Town of Voluntown is committed to employing only United States citizens and aliens who are authorized to work in the United States.

In compliance with the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986, as amended, each employee, as a condition of employment, must complete the Employment Eligibility Verification Form I-9 and present documentation establishing identity and employment eligibility. Former employees who are rehired must also complete the form if they have not completed an I-9 with the Town of Voluntown within the past three years, or if their previous I-9 is no longer retained or valid.

The Town of Voluntown may participate in the federal government's electronic employment verification system known as "E-Verify". Pursuant to E-Verify, the Town of Voluntown provides the Social Security Administration, and if necessary, the Department of Homeland Security with information from each new employee's Form I-9 to confirm work authorization.

## **XII. Employee Classifications**

For the purposes of salary administration, eligibility for overtime payments, and employee benefits, the Town of Voluntown classifies employees as either exempt or non-exempt. Non-exempt employees are entitled to overtime pay in accordance with federal and state overtime provisions. Exempt employees are exempt from federal and state overtime laws and, but for a few narrow exemptions are generally paid a fixed amount of pay for each work week in which work is performed.

If you change positions during your employment with the Town of Voluntown, or if your job responsibilities change, you will be informed by the First Selectman of any change in your exemption status.

In addition to your designation of either non-exempt or exempt, you will also belong to one of the following employment categories:

Union Regular Full-Time: A union regular full-time employee is an employee who is a member of a Town employee union. Union regular full-time employees are regularly scheduled to work forty (40) hours per week and are eligible for Town of Voluntown benefits based on the union contract.

Union Regular Part-Time: A union regular part-time employee is an employee who is a member of a Town employee union. Union regular part-time employees are regularly scheduled to work less than forty (40) hours per week. Union regular part-time employees are eligible for Town of Voluntown benefits based on the union contract.

Non-Union Regular Full-Time: A non-union regular full-time employee is an employee who is regularly scheduled to work at least thirty (30) hours per week. Non-union regular full-time employees are eligible for Town of Voluntown benefits subject to the terms, conditions, and limitations of each benefit program.

Non-Union Regular Part-Time: A non-union regular part-time employee is an employee that is regularly scheduled to work less than thirty (30) hours per week. Non-union regular part-time employees are eligible for some Town of Voluntown benefit programs subject to the terms, conditions and limitations of each benefit program as found in this employee manual.

Per Diem: A per diem employee is an employee who works as is needed. Per diem employees do not have a regular schedule. The per diem employee has the right to terminate the employment at any time for any or no reason, with or without cause and with or without notice. The Town of Voluntown has the right to terminate employment at any time for any or no reason, with or without cause and without notice. Per diem employees are not eligible for Town of Voluntown benefits.

Temporary: A temporary employee is an employee hired for a specific period of time or the completion of a specific project. The job assignment, work schedule, and duration of the position will be determined on an individual basis. Normally a temporary position will not exceed six (6) months in duration, unless specifically extended in a written agreement. Temporary employees generally are not eligible for Town of Voluntown benefits.

## **XIII. Working & Pay Policies**

### **A. Employee Work Hours**

Supervisors will advise employees of their scheduled shift, including starting and ending times. The needs of the Town of Voluntown may necessitate a variation in your starting and ending times, as well as in the total of hours you may be scheduled to work each day and each week.

Current Town Hall hours are open to the public M, W, Th from 9am- 4pm and Tuesday from 9am-4pm and 5-7pm. While full-time employees in the Town Hall are M, W, Th from 8am-4pm and Tuesday from 8am-7pm. The Town Hall is closed on Fridays. Part-time employees in Town Hall are scheduled based on the responsibilities and needs of public services. The Library is open various hours Monday - Saturday. Employees of the Library work various part-time hours.

### **B. Overtime**

Overtime will be paid to non-exempt employees who work in excess of forty (40) hours in a seven (7) day work cycle. Overtime will be paid at the rate of one and one-half times the employee's regular hourly rate of pay.

The Town reserves the right to require overtime work and employees may not refuse overtime assignments. Failure to work scheduled overtime or overtime worked without prior authorization from the First Selectman may result in disciplinary action up to, and including, termination of employment.

Further overtime rules may be required of the Public Works Department based on the Union contract.

### **C. Pay Deductions**

The law requires that the Town make certain deductions from every employee's compensation. Among these are applicable federal, state and local income taxes. The Town also must deduct

Social Security taxes on each employee's earnings up to a specified limit that is called the Social Security "wage base." The Town matches the amount of Social Security taxes paid by each employee.

The Town offers programs and benefits beyond those required by law. Eligible employees may voluntarily authorize, in writing, deductions from their paychecks to cover the costs of participation in these programs.

If you have questions concerning why deductions were made from your paycheck, or how they were calculated, the Finance Director can assist in having your questions answered.

Whenever court-ordered deductions are to be taken from your paycheck, you will be notified. According to the Federal Wage Garnishment Act, seven (7) or more garnishments in a calendar year may be cause for dismissal.

#### **D. Pay Periods**

All employees are paid bi-weekly on Wednesday. Each paycheck will include earnings for all work performed through the previous two weeks.

Employees are encouraged to have pay directly deposited into their bank accounts. To do so, they must provide advance written authorization to the Town. Employees will receive an itemized statement of wages when the Town makes direct deposits.

#### **E. Time Keeping**

We want to make sure that you are paid correctly. You will be given Timecards/Time Keeping Application on which to record your work time. It is your responsibility to keep your Timecards/Time Keeping App secure. Should you lose your Timecards/Time Keeping Application, please report it immediately to the Finance Director. The Time and Attendance Policy below must be adhered to.

Federal and State labor laws require that you maintain an accurate record of your working hours. You will do this using your Timecards/Time Keeping Application.

1. Record on your own Timecards/Time Keeping Application (and only yours) the days worked, and the hours worked.
2. No one is allowed to fill in another employee's Timecards/Time Keeping Application without the authorization of the First Selectman.
3. If there is a problem with your timekeeping, contact the Finance Director to correct the error immediately.
4. No one is to work overtime without authorization.

Working Off the Clock. Hourly employees must record all time worked. No one is permitted to work unless the work time is recorded on their time and attendance record. There is no such thing as working "off the clock."

If you falsify time records for yourself or another employee, continually forget or lose your Time Sheet or work "off the clock," you may be subject to disciplinary action up to, and including, termination.

#### **F. Meal & Break Periods**

Employees are entitled to a thirty (30) minute meal period if scheduled for 7 1/2 or more consecutive hours of work. The meal period will be scheduled after the first two (2) hours of work and before the last two (2) hours of work. For non-exempt employees, the meal period is unpaid. Non-exempt employees must record the beginning and ending of the meal period using the Town of Voluntown's timekeeping system.

Non-exempt employees must be fully relieved of their job responsibilities and are not permitted to work during unpaid meal periods. If for any reason a non-exempt employee does not take the meal period they are provided, the employee must notify their Supervisor immediately.

#### **G. Break Time for Nursing Mothers**

The Town of Voluntown accommodates employees who wish to express breast milk during the workday by providing reasonable break time to do so. The Town of Voluntown will prove a designated room, other than a bathroom, that is shielded from view, free from intrusion from co-workers and the public and is in compliance with other applicable laws for this purpose.

### **XIV. Emergency Closing**

At times, emergencies such as severe weather or power outages can disrupt Town operations. In extreme cases, these circumstances may require the closing of a work facility.

The Town of Voluntown will follow the guidance of the Office of the Governor and the Connecticut Department of Emergency Management and Homeland Security regarding an early release/delayed opening/full day closing for non-essential employees. However, the First Selectman will make the final determination to close Town work facilities.

Supervisors are responsible for determining which, if any, of their employees will be required to work in the event of the closure of the Town of Voluntown offices. All others will be designated as non-essential for the purpose of this policy.

If it is determined that Town facilities are open, employees are expected to report to work at their regularly scheduled time. Non-essential employees who are absent, late for work, or leave early during regular hours, delayed opening hours, or early closing hours must charge such absence to personal time, vacation time, sick time, or leave without pay.

If it is determined that Town facilities are closed, employees who are scheduled to work will be paid as a normal workday. If an employee was previously scheduled for a day off during a partial or full-day closing, they will not be compensated for this time.

### **XV. Security**

The purpose of the Town of Voluntown security policy is to protect the Town's assets and to maintain a safe working environment for all employees.

#### **A. Facility Access**

Town employees may be issued a key to access a Town of Voluntown facility. Employees who are issued keys are responsible for their safekeeping. All lost or stolen keys must be reported to your Supervisor as soon as possible.

Upon separation from the Town of Voluntown, and at any other time upon the Town's request, all keys must be returned to your Supervisor.

#### **B. Closing Procedures**

The last employee, or a designated employee, who leaves the office or facility at the end of the business day assumes the responsibility to ensure that: all doors are securely locked, thermostats are set to an appropriate setting, and all appliances and lights are turned off with the exception of the lights normally left on for security purposes.

Employees are not permitted in Town facilities after hours without prior authorization from the First Selectman.

### **XVI. Workplace Safety**

The Town of Voluntown is committed to providing a clean, safe, and healthful work environment for its employees. Maintaining a safe work environment, however, requires the continuous cooperation of all employees. The Town and all employees must comply with all occupational safety and health standards and regulations established by the Occupational Safety and Health Act and state and local regulations. In addition, all employees are expected to obey safety rules and exercise caution and common sense in all work activities.

#### **A. Complaint and Reporting Procedure**

- Employees should immediately report any unsafe conditions to their Supervisor without fear of reprisal. In the case of an accident that results in injury, regardless of how seemingly insignificant the injury may appear, employees must notify their Supervisor.
- Employees who violate safety standards, cause hazardous or dangerous situations, or fail to report, or where appropriate, remedy such situations may be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment.

#### **B. Retaliation Prohibited**

- The Town of Voluntown expressly prohibits retaliation against anyone who reports unsafe working conditions or work-related accidents, injuries, or illnesses. Any form of retaliation for reporting sexual harassment and other policies is expressly prohibited and will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

#### **C. Hazard Communication**

- The Federal "right to know" regulation, known as the Hazard Communication Standard, or HCS, is intended to give employees access to certain information

about the physical and health hazards of chemical substances produced, imported, or used in the workplace. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration's rule applies to employers in all industries. The hazard communication standard gives workers the right of access to information about hazardous substances to which they are or may be exposed; it does not require employers to control exposure.

- In an effort to ensure the safety of its employees, the Town has developed, implemented, and maintains a comprehensive, written hazard communication program that describes how the HCS will be implemented. The program includes cover containers, labeling and other warnings, material safety data sheets (form communicating information on the identity of a chemical hazard, its manufacturer, its safety and health hazards, and precautions for use), and employee training. Also included is a list of hazardous chemicals in each work area. Under the Town of Voluntown's hazard communication program, information is available about the chemicals in the Town Garage and in the utility closet, located in the Town Hall. There are two sources of information about the products: the label on the product itself and, for the office supplies, an information notice known as the Material Safety Data Sheet that the manufacturer sent to the Town when the product was ordered.

## **XVII. Workers Compensation**

The purpose of the workers' compensation law is to provide financial assistance to you if you are injured on the job. On-the-job injuries are covered by Workers' Compensation Insurance. How much you will be paid, for how long, and when benefits become payable may vary. The Workers' Compensation Commission and Workers' Compensation Insurance Third Party Provider will decide what is covered or not covered. While absent from work on Workers' Compensation, the employee will not continue to accumulate sick leave and vacation time. This insurance becomes effective on your first day of work and protects you if you are injured on the job. To be sure to protect yourself under this insurance, REPORT ALL INJURIES, HOWEVER SLIGHT, TO YOUR SUPERVISOR IMMEDIATELY.

Neither the Town nor the insurance carrier will be liable for the payment of workers' compensation benefits for injuries that occur during an employee's voluntary participation in any off-duty recreational, social, or athletic activity sponsored by the Town, or during an employee's employment by another Employer.

Light duty options may be available to employees who have been injured on the job. Contact the First Selectman for options of light duty jobs that may be available.

## **XVIII. Travel Expenses and Professional Development Expenses**

An employee requested by the Town to use his or her personal automobile to perform official Town business will be reimbursed at the standard mileage rate as annually set by the Internal Revenue Service. The employee should promptly request reimbursement on the forms supplied by the Town. Employees using their own vehicle must have the appropriate minimum State vehicle insurance for their personal vehicle.

Employees required to attend training courses to maintain their certifications or to take training courses to acquire certification must get permission from the First Selectman then submit requests for reimbursement to the First Selectman for approval. Approval will depend on the budgeted funds available and priorities of the Town.

Employees who receive permission to attend a conference for professional development will be paid for their time travelling to the conference and for the full working day. If the conference includes an overnight stay, then employees will be paid for a full working day but not the evenings which are usually social in nature. Employees attending overnight conferences will also be reimbursed for mileage, hotel, reasonable meal costs with prior approval within budgeted amounts.

## **XIX. Employee Benefits & Leave Policies**

### **A. Health Insurance**

The Town of Voluntown's health insurance benefits are intended to protect you and your family from financial loss resulting from hospital, surgical, or other health related expenses.

Non-union regular full-time employees and union employees per union contract are eligible for medical, dental, and vision insurance under an individual or family plan.

Regular full-time employees, who choose not to take health insurance, shall receive an annual \$1,500-\$3,000 stipend in lieu of medical insurance paid in June of the fiscal year, similar to Union contract. Union employees receive a stipend based on the union contract.

Eligible employees shall contribute to the cost of medical coverage on a percentage basis that is subject to change annually. Consult with the Finance Director on the current percentage.

Actual coverage is determined by the express terms of the insurance plan documents. We encourage employees to carefully review the plan's Summary Plan Description (SPD) materials that are provided separately from this Handbook.

If there are any conflicts between the Handbook and the insurance plan documents, the plan documents will prevail. The Town of Voluntown reserves the right to amend, interpret, modify, or terminate any of its employee benefits programs without prior notice to the extent allowed by law.

For details on the specific health insurance plans offered through the Town of Voluntown, as well as copies of the plan documents, contact the Plan Administrator.

The Town of Voluntown Plan Administrator is:

Julie Zelinsky/Finance Director  
860-591-8660  
[jzelinsky@voluntown.gov](mailto:jzelinsky@voluntown.gov)

## **B. Health Insurance Continuation – COBRA**

The Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act (COBRA) is a federal law that requires most employers sponsoring group health plans to offer a temporary continuation of group health coverage when coverage would otherwise be lost due to certain specific events.

Through COBRA, employees and their qualified beneficiaries have the right to continue group health insurance coverage after a “qualifying event”. The following are qualifying events:

- Resignation or termination of the employee
- Death of the covered employee
- A reduction in the employee’s hours
- For spouses and eligible dependents, the employee’s entitlement to Medicare
- Divorce or legal separation of the covered employee and spouse
- A dependent child no longer meeting eligibility requirements under the group health plan

Under COBRA, the employee or beneficiary pays the full cost of health insurance coverage at the Town of Voluntown’s group rates plus an administration fee.

### **Notification Requirements**

The employee or family member has the responsibility to inform the Plan Administrator of a divorce, legal separation, or a child losing dependent status. The employee or a family member has sixty (60) days after the qualifying event to provide such notice unless a longer period is permitted under the rules of the plan. The Town of Voluntown has the responsibility to notify the Plan Administrator of the employee’s death, termination of employment, or reduction in hours.

Once the notification has been made to the Plan Administrator, the Plan Administrator will inform the employee of the right to continue coverage. The Town of Voluntown is required to provide coverage that is identical to the coverage provided under the plan to similarly situated employees or family members for the term provided by law and conditioned upon the payment of premiums.

### **Period of Coverage**

Continuation of coverage is extended from the date of the qualifying event for a period of 18 to 36 months. The length of time for which continuation coverage is made available (i.e., the “maximum period” of continuation coverage) depends on the type of qualifying event that gave rise to the employee’s COBRA rights.

An employee’s continuation of coverage may cut short for any of the following reasons:

- The Town of Voluntown no longer provides group health coverage to any of its employees
- The premium for the employee’s continuation of coverage is not paid in full on a timely basis
- The employee becomes covered under another group health plan that does not contain any exclusion or limitation with respect to any pre-existing condition
- The employee becomes entitled to Medicare

This policy provides a summary of health insurance continuation benefits. Actual coverage is determined by the express terms of the plan documents. We encourage employees to review the plan's Summary Plan Description (SPD) materials carefully.

If there are any conflicts between the Handbook and the insurance plan documents, the plan documents will prevail. The Town of Voluntown reserves the right to amend, interpret, modify, or terminate any of its employee benefits programs without prior notice to the extent allowed by law.

For details on the specific health insurance plans offered through the Town of Voluntown, as well as copies of the plan documents, contact the Plan Administrator.

### **C. Additional Benefits**

Additional benefits are an important facet of your employment with the Town of Voluntown. Additional benefits that the Town of Voluntown offers include, but are not limited to:

#### **Regular Non-Union Full-Time Employees**

- Life insurance at no cost to employees will be provided
- Employees can carry over up to 100 days (700 hours) to use for illness or short-term disability.
- Health Insurance, dental insurance, vision insurance, holiday pay, sick leave pay, vacation pay, etc. as defined below

#### **Regular Non-Union Part-time Employees**

- Employees can carry over up to the appropriate percentage of hours (based on % listed under sick leave in Subsection G, below) to use for illness or short-term disability.
- Prorated holiday pay, sick leave and vacation pay are available.
- AFLAC additional benefits are available at the employees' expense and will be deducted from the employees' pay if requested by the employee.
- Employees will receive a stipend to cover unusual occurrences such as funeral leave, personal leave, additional vacation leave in an effort to maintain part-time employment.

Regular Union Employees will participate based on their union contract.

Employees may also be able to purchase additional protection at preferred rates, above and beyond what is covered in any plan.

Employees eligible to enroll for additional benefits are union employees per union contract and non-union regular full-time employees. Eligible employees can enroll after 3 months of continuous service.

Upon attaining eligibility for additional benefit coverage, employees will be asked to designate a beneficiary. You may request a change in beneficiary at any time.

This policy provides a summary of the benefits which may be provided at the Town of Voluntown's discretion. Actual coverage is determined by the express terms of the plan

documents. We encourage you to review the plan's Summary Plan Description (SPD) materials carefully.

If there are any conflicts between this Handbook and the plan documents, the plan documents will prevail. The Town of Voluntown reserves the right to amend, interpret, modify, or terminate any of its employee benefits programs without prior notice to the extent allowed by law.

For details on the specific life insurance plan offered through the Town of Voluntown, as well as copies of the plan documents, contact the Plan Administrator.

The Town of Voluntown Plan Administrator is:

Julie Zelinsky/Finance Director  
860-591-8660  
jzelinsky@voluntown.gov

#### **D. Deferred Compensation Plan – 457 (Retirement Plan)**

All employees may contribute to the 457 Plan in accordance with IRS regulations. If an employee chooses NOT to participate in the 457 Plan, an opt-out form must be signed and turned into the Finance Director.

Regular Non- Union Full Time employees will receive 11% of their salary contributed by the Town each year without a required contribution by the employee.

Regular Non-Union Part-Time employees who were hired before November 2021 will receive up to 5.5% of their salary contributed by the Town each year. No match required currently.

Regular Union employees will participate based upon the union contract.

#### **E. Holidays**

The Town of Voluntown observes the following paid holidays for non-union regular full-time and non-union regular part-time employees. Union employee holidays and holiday policy are listed in the union contract.

- New Year's Day
- Martin Luther King Day
- President's Day
- Good Friday
- Memorial Day
- Juneteenth
- Independence Day
- Labor Day
- Columbus Day
- Veteran's Day
- Thanksgiving Day
- Day After Thanksgiving Day
- Christmas Day
- Day after Christmas

Any holiday which occurs on a Saturday will be observed on the proceeding Thursday. Any holiday which occurs on a Sunday will be observed on the following Monday.

The Town Hall will be closed on all Town observed holidays.

Due to the nature of our business, the Town of Voluntown may require employees to work on a holiday. Non-exempt employees required to work holidays will be paid time and one-half of the pay rate for hours worked. Union employees will be paid per the union contract.

Holiday pay is calculated based on the employee's straight time pay rate (as of the day of the holiday), times the number of hours the employee would have otherwise worked on that day.

For non-exempt employees to be eligible for holiday pay, the holiday must fall on an employee's regularly scheduled workday. Example: If an employee is scheduled to work Tuesdays and Thursdays, and the holiday falls on a Monday, the employee does not receive holiday pay.

For exempt employees, if a holiday falls on a Friday and they do not work because the Town Hall is closed, that holiday will become a floater holiday to be used at the discretion of the employee's Supervisor or First Selectman.

A holiday occurring when an employee is on vacation or sick leave shall be counted as a holiday and not charged as a vacation or sick day.

Employees requesting to take time off from work for any religious or ethnic holiday not considered a Town paid holiday, may utilize personal leave time, accrued vacation time, or may take the day off without pay.

## **F. Vacation**

The following guidelines for vacations are observed by the Town of Voluntown for all non-union regular full-time employees, and non-union regular part-time employees. All union employees must follow the union contract for vacation guidelines.

Vacation with pay shall be granted to all non-union regular full-time employees and non-union regular part-time employees who have completed the probationary period.

An individual employee's vacation time is based on the hours per week of the individual's work schedule and is defined in the employee's offer letter.

In each fiscal year a non-union regular full-time employee who works 35 hours per week shall receive vacation leave with pay based on the following schedule. Non-Union regular part time employee will receive a prorated amount based on their average hours worked per week.

<b><u>Length of Service</u></b>	<b><u>Entitlement</u></b>
Year One - Four	Three (3) weeks
Year Five - Nine	Four (4) weeks
Year 10 and up	Five (5) weeks

Vacation time off is paid at the employee's base rate. It does not include overtime or any special forms of compensation such as incentives, bonuses or shift differentials.

A holiday occurring when an employee is on vacation shall be counted as a holiday and not charged as a vacation day.

To take vacation leave time, an employee should request the vacation leave as soon as possible, but no later than four weeks in advance to have seniority impact on the request. Employees not selecting their vacation by the deadline will relinquish their right of seniority in selecting their vacation.

All requests for time off must be approved in advance, in writing, by the employee's Supervisor. Requests will be reviewed and either granted or denied based on several factors, including the operational and staffing requirements of the Town and the employee's seniority.

Vacation time that is not used during a fiscal year may be carried over. An employee must request carryover of vacation to their Supervisor in writing to carry over unused vacation days. Vacation days that have been approved to carry over, must be used before October 1<sup>st</sup> of the following fiscal year.

### **Vacation Payout Upon Separation**

Upon separation from employment, any **unused accrued vacation time** will be **paid out** to **non-union regular full-time employees** at their current base pay rate, provided the employee has completed their probationary period.

**Non-union regular part-time employees** are **not eligible for payout** of unused vacation time upon separation. Any unused vacation time will be forfeited unless otherwise required by applicable law.

### **G. Sick Leave**

The following guidelines for sick leave are observed by the Town of Voluntown for all non-union regular full-time employees and non-union regular part-time employees. All union employees must follow the union contract for sick leave guidelines.

The Town of Voluntown provides sick leave to employees for the following reasons:

- Personal illness or injury, except when arising solely out of or in the course of employment by an employer other than the Town
- When the employee is required to undergo medical, optical, or dental treatment
- When the illness of a member of the employee's immediate family requires the employee's personal attendance

An employee's Supervisor may request a doctor's verification of an illness to substantiate an illness in an event the illness extends longer than five (5) days or in the event habitual use is indicated

Non-union regular full-time employees will receive 14 days of sick leave each year or 98 hours (7 hours x 14 days).

Non-union regular full-time employees and non-union regular part-time employees shall elect to receive full compensation for each unused sick day up to a maximum of five (5) days. If compensation is selected, it shall be paid to the employee on or about July 1 of each year. The

remaining nine (9) days per year shall accumulate in the employee's bank if they are not used in the year earned.

Non-union regular part-time employees will receive, and equivalent amount of sick leave based on their hours per week (see below) Unused sick leave will be accumulated in the employee's bank if they are not used in the year earned.

Employees' accumulated sick leave can be used for short-term disability as needed and as approved. Full time sick leave accumulation will be maxed at 100 days or 700 hours.

Part-time employees will receive a prorated number of hours of sick leave based on a percentage of full-time employee hours, which is equal to 98 hours.

33 hours per week will receive 94% or 92 hours

31 hours per week will receive 88% or 86 hours

29 hours per week will receive 83% or 81 hours

27 hours per week will receive 77% or 75 hours

25 hours per week will receive 71% or 70 hours

23 hours per week will receive 65% or 64 hours

21 hours per week will receive 60% or 59 hours

19 hours per week will receive 54% or 53 hours

17 hours per week will receive 49% or 48 hours

15 hours per week will receive 43% or 42 hours

13 hours per week will receive 37% or 36 hours

11 hours per week will receive 31% or 30 hours

10 hours per week will receive 28% or 27 hours

#### **Permitted Uses of Sick Leave:**

- Employees may use accrued sick leave for their **own physical or mental health care**, including preventive or diagnostic care; to care for a **family member** (as broadly defined by Connecticut law); for **school or business closures due to public health emergencies**; and for needs arising from **domestic violence or sexual assault**.

#### **Documentation & Replacement:**

- The Town **will not require** medical documentation or require employees to find coverage to take sick leave.

## **H. Funeral Leave**

Funeral leave will be provided for Non-union regular full-time employees. In the event of death in an employee's or employee's spouse's immediate family, any full-time employee shall be granted up to five (5) working days (35 hours) of leave without loss of pay. For the purposes of this section, immediate family is defined as: spouse, mother, father, brother, sister, daughter, son, mother-in-law, father-in-law. Three (3) working days (21 hours) with pay shall be allowed for the death of grandparent, grandchild, brother-in-law, sister-in-law, son-in-law and daughter-in-law, stepmother, stepfather or stepchild. One (1) working day (7 hours) with pay for aunt, uncle. If more time is needed, personal or vacation time may be taken.

Hours for Non-Union Part-Time employees will be at the same % as listed under the Sick Leave.

## **I. Military Leave**

The Employer will comply with the provisions of the Uniform Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act of 1994.

The Town of Voluntown grants employees unpaid time off for service training and other obligations in the uniformed services in accordance with the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA) and any other applicable state, or federal, law.

All employees requesting time off for military service must provide advance notice to their immediate Supervisor, unless military necessity prevents such notice, or it is otherwise impracticable. Continuation of health insurance benefits is available during military leave subject to the terms and conditions of the group health plan and applicable law.

Employees are eligible for reemployment for up to five years from the day their military leave began. The period an individual must apply for reemployment or report back to work after military service is based on time spent on military duty and on applicable law. For reinstatement guidelines contact the Town of Voluntown's benefits administrator.

Employees who qualify for reemployment will return to work at a pay level and status equal to that which they would have attained had they not taken military leave. They will be treated as though they were continuously employed for the purpose of determining benefits based on length of service.

The Town of Voluntown complies with all rights and protections under all applicable state laws granting time off for service, training, and other obligations in the uniformed services. This includes, but is not limited to benefits entitlement and continuation, notice and recertification requirements and reemployment application requirements.

Questions regarding this policy should be directed to the Town of Voluntown's benefit administrator.

## **J. Jury Duty**

The Town of Voluntown encourages employees to fulfill their civic responsibilities when called upon to serve as a juror. Employees must provide their immediate Supervisor with a copy of their jury summons as soon as possible so that the Supervisor may make arrangements to accommodate their absence. Either the Town of Voluntown or the employee may request an

excuse from jury duty if it is determined that the employee's absence would create serious operation difficulties.

If a regular full-time employee reports for jury duty and/or serves on a jury, the employee will be granted paid time off for the first 5 days of service or part thereof. Jury duty pay will be calculated on the employee's base pay rate times and the number of hours the employee would otherwise have worked on the day of absence. The employer shall make up the difference between the pay received for jury duty and the employee's regular pay, if any.

If a regular part-time employee reports for jury duty and/or serves on a jury, he or she will be granted unpaid time off to serve, however, part time employees may opt to use accrued paid time off for this purpose.

An employee who has served seven hours of jury duty in any one day will not be required to report to work on that day.

Employees should consult with the Town of Voluntown benefits administrator on eligibility for compensation under this policy.

#### **K. Family Leave**

Employees who work over 24 hours a week per year (1250 hours per year) fall under the federal Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993 (29 USC §2601). This law requires certain employers to grant unpaid leave of absence to qualified workers in case of birth or adoption of a child, or serious health condition of a child, spouse, parent, or the employee. Leave can be paid if the employee has sick leave or vacation leave on the books. Employees can leave one week of sick leave and one week of vacation on the books for future needs if they desire. Leave is up to 12 weeks in a year starting when the employee starts their family leave. Leave can also be intermittent as appropriate. All requests for family leave must be submitted to the First Selectman and Finance Director with medical proof.

#### **L. Personal Days**

Non-union regular full-time employees will receive 24 hours of personal time a year. The Tax Collector and the Tax Assessor are grandfathered into receiving 17 hours of personal time. New part time employees hired after September 2019 do not receive personal time.

## **XX. Personnel Policies & Rules/Regulations**

#### **A. Attendance & Punctuality**

The success of this Town depends on your good attendance. Absenteeism detracts from our high quality of service and causes an unfair burden for those employees who must fill in for absent employees. Most people will be late or sick at one time or another, but when short-term absences become frequent, they often signal personal or job-related problems.

Whatever the reasons for absenteeism and lateness, share them with your Supervisor. Once your Supervisor knows the reasons, perhaps he or she can help you decide on the best way to correct the problem.

If you are absent for three (3) consecutive days without notifying the Town, it is assumed that you have voluntarily abandoned your position with the Town, and you will be removed from the payroll.

The following are excused absences:

- Absences because of illness, (verified by a doctor's note identifying the illness and need for absence of over 3 days). Employees must call within one hour of the start time each day to let their Supervisor know they are sick, unless the Supervisor waives the requirement after the first day due to the length of the anticipated illness.
- Absence approved by the First Selectman in advance.
- Absence because of death in the immediate family.
- Absence or delayed arrival because of extreme weather conditions.
- Absence or delayed arrival because of a bona fide personal emergency as determined by the First Selectman.
- Absence because of a work-related injury.

The absence of an employee from work, including an absence for a single day, or portion of a day, that is not authorized, shall be deemed as absent without leave. Any absence without leave, or repeated lateness, is cause for disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

#### **B. Care of Equipment**

Equipment, electronic devices and vehicles essential in accomplishing job duties are expensive and may be difficult to replace. When using Town property, employees are expected to exercise care, perform required maintenance and follow all operating instructions, safety standards, and guidelines.

Please notify your Supervisor if any equipment, machines, tools or vehicles appear to be damaged, defective or in need of repair. Prompt reporting of damage, defects and the need for repairs could prevent deterioration of equipment and possible injury to employees or others. Your Supervisor can answer any questions about your responsibility for maintenance and care of equipment, electronic devices or vehicles used on the job.

The improper, careless, negligent, destructive, or unsafe use or operation of equipment, electronic devices, office space or vehicles, as well as excessive or avoidable traffic and parking violations, can result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

#### **C. Smoking or Vaping**

Due to the harmful effects and discomforts which smoking produces in the workplace, and out of concern for the well-being of our employees, no smoking or vaping is allowed at any time in the Town Hall or within twenty-five feet of the building or any other Town Buildings or in Town vehicles.

#### **D. Drug and Alcohol Use**

It is the policy of the Town that the public and fellow employees have the absolute right to expect that persons employed by the Town will be free from the effects from drugs and alcohol. The Town, as the employer, has the right to expect its employees to report for work fit and able for duty, and not impaired by alcohol or drugs.

All employees are forbidden from consuming alcohol, marijuana (except of medical purposes approved by doctor's note) or using illegal drugs at any time during or just prior to the beginning

of the workday (including lunch breaks) or anywhere on the Town's premises or sites including site buildings, properties, vehicles and the employee's personal vehicle while engaged in Town business. In addition:

1. Employees are prohibited from selling, purchasing or delivering any illegal drug at any time and at any place.
2. The unlawful manufacture, distribution, dispensation, possession, or use of a controlled substance on Town premises or while conducting Town's business off the Town's premises is absolutely prohibited.
3. Off-the-job illegal drug activity or alcohol abuse that could adversely affect an employee's job performance or that could jeopardize the safety of other employees, the general public, Town equipment, or the Town's relations with the public will not be tolerated.

Prescription Drugs. Employees who use a prescription drug which causes adverse side effects (e.g., drowsiness or impaired reflexes or reaction time) must inform the First Selectman that they are taking such medication on the advice of a physician (employees do not need to list drug or health condition just side effects that may interfere with work). Employees are responsible for informing the First Selectman of the possible effects of the drug on performance and expected duration of use. If prescription drug use causes service or safety problems, the First Selectman may have to grant the employee sick leave. HIPPA rules will be followed to keep medical information private.

Drug Testing. Where the Town has reasonable suspicion to believe that a current employee (1) is under the influence of drugs, marijuana or alcohol, which at that time, adversely affected or could adversely affect the employee's job performance; (2) has abused prescribed drugs; or (3) has used illegal drugs, the Town may require the employee to submit to alcohol or drug testing and/or assess the employee's speech, coordination and ability to concentrate. The Town also may conduct drug tests for individuals seeking employment (prior to the date of their hire) or upon promotion to another position within the Town.

The Town requires that an employee notify the First Selectman within five (5) days after a conviction of any criminal drug statute for a violation occurring outside the workplace.

Employees with questions on this policy or issues related to drug or alcohol use in the workplace should raise their concerns with the First Selectman without fear of reprisal. All inquiries will be held in the strictest confidence.

Public Work CDL drivers will follow all DOT regulations regarding drug testing requirements.

#### **E. USE OF COMPUTERS, E-MAIL AND PHONE SYSTEMS**

1. Computers. Computers, computer files and software furnished to employees are the Town's property intended for business use. Employees should not use a password, access a confidential file or retrieve any stored confidential communication without authorization.

The Town purchases and licenses the use of various computer software for business purposes and does not own the copyright to this software or its related documentation. Unless authorized by the software developer, the Town does not have the right to reproduce such software for use on more than one computer.

Employees may only use software on local area networks or on multiple machines according to the software license agreement. The Town prohibits the illegal duplication of software and its related documentation.

2. E-Mail. Employees should be aware that e-mail is not private, and messages can be retrieved even after they are "deleted." Most e-mail systems instantly make backup copies of files, and copies may be easily retrieved by computer experts. The following are guidelines to follow when utilizing e-mail:
  - (a) The electronic mail system is not to be used in ways that are disruptive or offensive to others, or in ways that could be harmful to workplace morale.
  - (b) There shall be no display or transmission of sexually explicit images, messages, or cartoons, or any transmission or use of cartoons and/or e-mail communications containing ethnic slurs, racial epithets or anything that may be construed as harassment or disparagement of others based on their race, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, age, disability, or religious or political beliefs or to promote violence.
  - (c) The information systems in the Town are to be used for the business of the Town. The e-mail system should not be used to solicit or address others regarding commercial, religious, or political causes, or for any other solicitations that are not work-related.
  - (d) All e-mail messages are records of the Town under the Freedom of Information Act. The Town reserves the right to access and disclose all messages sent over its electronic mail system for any purpose.
  - (e) For reasons of privacy, employees should not attempt to gain access to another employee's personal file of e-mail messages without the latter's express permission. However, the Town reserves the right to enter an employee's e-mail files whenever there is a need to do so.
  - (f) Any violation of the Town's policy on e-mail use will result in appropriate disciplinary action, up to and including, discharge.
3. Internet Access. The Town may implement software and/or systems that can monitor and record all Internet usage. Security systems are capable of recording (for each and every user) each World Wide Web site visit, each chat, news group or E-Mail message, and each file transfer into and out of our internal networks. The Town reserves the right to review the use of internet sites at any time. Additionally, the Town may utilize independently supplied software and data to identify inappropriate or sexually explicit Internet sites. We may block access from within our networks to all such sites that we know of.
  - (a) We reserve the right to inspect any and all files stored in private areas of our network and/or an employee's personal computer in order to ensure compliance with policy.
  - (b) This Town's Internet facilities and computing resources must not be used knowingly to violate the laws and regulations of the United States or any other nation, or the laws and regulations of any state, town or province or other local jurisdiction in any material way.
  - (c) Any software or files downloaded via the Internet into the Town network and/or employee's personal computer become the property of the Town.

4. **Telephones.** It is important to keep our telephone lines free for customer calls. Although the occasional use of the Town's telephones for personal emergencies may be necessary, routine calls should be kept to a minimum and should be made during breaks and/or lunch periods from personal cellphones.

To ensure effective telephone communications, employees should always use an appropriate greeting and speak in a courteous and professional manner.

Depending on the position, an employee may be offered the option of having a work cell phone. Those who choose not to have the work cell phone, will receive a \$50 monthly stipend for their personal cell phone if required for the position.

## **F. SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY**

### **1. Purpose**

This policy establishes guidelines for the creation and use by the Town of Voluntown, its departments, boards, commissions, appointed and elected officials and employees, of the Town's social media sites for Work Related Purposes as a means of conveying Town information to its citizens.

The intended purpose behind establishing social media sites is to disseminate information from the Town, about the Town, to its citizens. The Town has an overriding interest and expectation in how it is represented on the Town's social media sites. Government agencies, officials and employees are held to a higher standard, and this applies to social media as it would in any other Town business. The Town recognizes that social media has a direct connection to freedom of speech. This policy is intended to respect the first amendment and to provide guidance for appropriate administration.

For purposes of this policy, "Social Media" is understood to be content, including but not limited to social networks, blogs, picture and video sharing, podcasts, recorded official meetings, wikis, wall postings, message boards and online forums, published on the internet or websites. Examples of Social Media sites include, but are not limited to, Facebook, Twitter (X), blogs, YouTube, LinkedIn, Instagram, and Flickr.

See Addendum for full Social Media Policy

## **G. Code of Conduct**

As public service workers, employees are expected to subscribe to the highest standards of personal conduct in performing their duties.

Listed below are some of the offenses that are serious enough to result in disciplinary action, up to and including discharge. It is not meant to be a complete list.

- Excessive/abusive absenteeism or tardiness; Failure to report an absence.
- Dishonesty, including falsification of an application for employment, time sheets or cards, or filing a harassment complaint in bad faith;
- Fighting, or behavior which is dangerous or disruptive to others;

- Stealing, misappropriating or intentionally damaging property belonging to the Town, or anyone else; theft or attempted theft of another's property; deliberate destruction of, or damage to, Town property;
- Unauthorized use of Town funds, equipment, vehicles or property;
- Insubordination, including any failure to comply with a work assignment or instructions given by any Supervisor;
- Using obscene, abusive, or threatening language;
- Harassment or intimidation of any other employee, contractor or member of the public; failure to immediately report harassment or intimidation of any other employee, contractor, or member of the public;
- Failure to cooperate with an internal investigation;
- Performance which does not meet the requirements of the position or other unsatisfactory performance.
- Falsification of Town records, including time sheets, employment applications and benefit applications;
- Failure to fully and truthfully disclose all facts related to workers' compensation and insurance claims;
- Insubordination;
- Immoral, indecent or unlawful conduct;
- Careless waste of materials or mishandling of supplies or equipment;
- Failure or refusal to comply with Town alcohol and drug policy;
- Carrying or possessing a weapon of any kind on Town property;
- Gambling or soliciting gambling on Town property;
- Smoking in prohibited areas;
- Sleeping on the job;
- Defacing walls, bulletin boards or other Town property;
- Horseplay, fighting or other disorderly conduct;
- Violation of safety regulations;
- Unauthorized disclosure, use or theft of the Town's confidential information;
- Use of abusive or threatening language;
- Signing or marking another employee's time sheet or allowing another to sign or mark yours;
- Creating hazardous or unsafe conditions;
- Failure to complete job assignment;
- Failure to produce quality work;
- Violation of any Town policy.

## **H. Sexual Harassment & Anti-Harassment Policy**

It is the policy of the Town to maintain a professional business environment and a workplace that is free from harassment and from any intimidation of a verbal or physical nature. The Town prohibits harassment of any employee, member of the public, visitor, vendor, or third-party contractor by an employee, member of the public, third party contractor, vendor or visitor on the basis of race, religion, creed, color, national origin, ancestry, citizenship, sex, military status, age, marital status, sexual orientation, disability or any other personal characteristic protected under applicable federal, state or local law.

Each employee has the right to work in an environment free of intimidation or harassment, and in this respect, the complete cooperation and support of all personnel is essential and expected. While it is not easy to define harassment, examples include verbal or physical conduct that demeans or shows hostility or aversion towards an individual and that (1) has the purpose or effect of creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment as defined by law; (2) has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work performance; or (3) otherwise adversely affects an individual's employment opportunities.

This policy covers all employees of the Town of Voluntown. It applies to conduct in the workplace, at Town functions and in all relationships with other employees.

"Sexual Harassment" is generally defined to include any unwelcome sexual advances or request for sexual favors or any conduct of a sexual nature between employees whether on or off of Town premises when (1) submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly 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 substantially interfering with an individual's work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile or offensive work environment.

The Town's sexual harassment policy prohibits sexual harassment of other employees, whether committed by Supervisory or non-Supervisory personnel. Specifically, no Supervisor shall threaten or insinuate, either explicitly or implicitly, that an employee's submission to or rejection of sexual advances will in any way influence any personnel decision regarding that employee's employment, wages, advancement, assigned duties or any other condition of employment. The definition of sexual harassment includes conduct directed by men toward women; conduct direct by men toward men, conduct directed by women toward men, and conduct directed by women toward women; or any conduct that is directed at a person regardless of biological gender or gender identity, expression or behavior.

Other sexually harassing conduct in the workplace that may create an offensive or hostile working environment, whether it is physical or verbal harassment committed by a Supervisor or non-Supervisor, is also prohibited. Conduct that may create an offensive or hostile working environment includes, without limitation, repeated offensive or unwelcome sexual flirtations, advances, and propositions; continual or repeated verbal abuse of a sexual nature; graphic verbal commentaries about an individual's body; sexually degrading words used to describe an individual; and the display of sexually suggestive objects or pictures. There may be times when a person is unaware that his/her behavior is personally offensive. An employee who is offended by another's behavior is encouraged to speak to that person and indicate that such behavior is unwelcome and inappropriate. If the behavior continues, it should be reported to a Supervisor, the Finance Director, or directly to the First Selectman or Board of Selectman.

Sexual harassment among employees will result in disciplinary action up to and including termination and may lead to personal legal and financial liability. Any employee who files a sexual harassment complaint in bad faith, or who fails or refuses to cooperate in an investigation of a complaint, shall also be subject to disciplinary action. Such complaints will be promptly investigated, and corrective action will be taken where the allegations are verified.

The Town prohibits any form of retaliation for reporting incidents of unlawful harassment, pursuing any such claim, or cooperating in the investigation of such reports. Any employee who feels he or she is being subjected to sexual harassment should immediately contact one of the persons below with whom the employee feels the most comfortable. Complaints may be made orally or in writing to:

1. The employee's immediate Supervisor or Department Head
2. The First Selectman
3. The Board of Selectmen

All employees will receive training concerning sexual harassment.

#### **I. Workplace Threats and Violence Policy**

The Town of Voluntown regards the safety and security of its employees as critical. There is a zero-tolerance policy towards any threats, threatening behavior, or acts of violence against employees, visitors, guests, or other individuals by employees on Town of Voluntown property or in relation to employment with the Town. Violations of this policy will lead to disciplinary action, which may include dismissal, arrest, and prosecution.

Any employee who threatens another employee (such as harassment, intimidation, displaying a weapon, etc.), or engages in violent acts on Town property shall be removed from the premises as quickly as safety permits, and shall remain off Town premises pending the outcome of an investigation. The Town will initiate an appropriate response. This response may include, but shall not be limited to, suspension and/or termination, reassignment of job duties, suspension or termination of employment, and/or criminal prosecution of the employee or employees involved.

All Town of Voluntown personnel are responsible for notifying the management representative designated below of any threats which they have witnessed, received, or have been told that another employee has witnessed or received. Even without an actual threat, personnel should also report any behavior they have witnessed which they regard as threatening or violent, when that behavior is job related or might be carried out on a Town-controlled site or is connected to employment with the Town. Employees are responsible for making this report regardless of the relationship between the employee or persons who initiated the threat or threatening behavior and the employee or persons who were threatened or were the focus of the threatening behavior. If the designated management representative is not available, personnel should report the threat to their Supervisor (or that individual's Supervisor if the threat is made by the Supervisor).

All individuals who apply for or obtain a protective or restraining order which lists Town locations as being protected areas, must provide to the designated management representative a copy of the petition and declarations used to seek the order, a copy of any temporary protective or

restraining order which is granted, and a copy of any protective or restraining order which is made permanent.

The Town of Voluntown understands the sensitivity of the information requested and has developed confidentiality procedures, which recognize and respect the privacy of the reporting employee(s).

The designated management representative is the First Selectman and Board of Selectman

#### **J. Discipline and Separation Policy**

Employees who have problems at work are encouraged to discuss them with their Supervisor, or the First Selectman. The Town of Voluntown has an open-door policy. No employee shall be discharged or otherwise disciplined without just cause such as not following policies and procedures as described in this Manual.

##### **Discipline**

Supervisors may take any one of the following disciplinary actions deemed to be appropriate and in the best interests of the Town, up to and including, termination with the approval of the First Selectman:

- Verbal Warnings may be issued for minor offenses that are not serious enough to warrant a permanent record being made in the employee's official personnel file.
- Letters of Warning may be issued to employees in those instances where the nature of the offense initially warrants a higher level of discipline than a verbal warning, or if an offense continues after a verbal warning. Such Letter will be made part of the employee's official personnel file.
- Suspensions Without Pay may be made when serious offenses warrant this action, or if an offense is continuing after a verbal warning, and a letter of warning.
- Recommendations to Terminate may be made to the First Selectman if the nature of the offense warrants termination.

It is understood that deviation from the above order for disciplinary actions may be warranted depending upon the totality of the circumstances, including the severity of the infraction, its pervasiveness and the employee's history of discipline.

Notwithstanding the foregoing, the discipline and/or discharge of an employee who is on probationary status shall not be a violation of the policy listed above.

Employees who are not meeting performance standards may receive a Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) document to assist them with their performance. This shall be used before any termination.

#### **K. Separation**

Exit Interviews - The Town will generally schedule exit interviews at the time of employment termination. The exit interview will afford an opportunity to discuss such issues as employee benefits, conversion privileges, or return of Town owned property. Suggestions, complaints and questions may also be voiced.

Payment at Separation - Employees who are discharged by the Town will have their wages paid in full not later than the next succeeding business day after the employee's last day of employment. Employees who retire or resign will have their wages paid in full not later than the next regular pay day.

Return of Property - Employees are responsible for all property, materials, or written information issued to them or in their possession or control. Employees must return all Town property immediately upon request or upon termination of employment.

Resignation - is a voluntary act initiated by the employee to terminate employment with the Town. The Town requests at least two (2) weeks written resignation notice from all employees to be in good standing. Prior to an employee's departure, an exit interview will be scheduled to discuss the reasons for resignation and the effect of the resignation on benefits.

Unemployment Compensation -The purpose of Connecticut's unemployment compensation law is to protect you and your family by providing financial assistance if you are out of work. How much you will be paid and for how long may vary according to current law and your particular situation.

To qualify for unemployment compensation, you must be out of work through no fault of your own (e.g. You were laid off) and actively looking for another job. If you were fired for cause or voluntarily quit, you may not be able to collect benefits. The Town pays the full cost of your unemployment compensation, and the government pays for the administrative cost.

## **L. Termination for Cause**

The First Selectman may remove any employee of the Town except as otherwise may be provided by union contract or statute. Such person shall first be given notice in writing of the First Selectman's intention and an opportunity to be heard personally, or by counsel at a hearing before the First Selectman.

## **1. Addendum – Full Social Media Policy**

### **SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY**

#### **I. Purpose**

This policy establishes guidelines for the creation and use by the Town of Voluntown, its departments, boards, commissions, appointed and elected officials and employees, of the Town's social media sites for Work Related Purposes as a means of conveying Town information to its citizens.

The intended purpose behind establishing social media sites is to disseminate information from the Town, about the Town, to its citizens. The Town has an overriding interest and expectation in how it is represented on the Town's social media sites. Government agencies, officials and employees are held to a higher standard, and this applies to social media as it would in any other Town business. The Town recognizes social media has a direct connection to freedom of speech. This policy is intended to respect the first amendment and to provide guidance for appropriate administration.

For purposes of this policy, "Social Media" is understood to be content, including but not limited to social networks, blogs, picture and video sharing, recorded official meetings, podcasts, wikis, wall postings, message boards and online forums, published on the internet or

websites. Examples of Social Media sites include, but are not limited to, Facebook, Twitter (X), blogs, YouTube, LinkedIn, Instagram, and Flickr.

## **II. General Policy**

- A. The establishment and use by any Town department, division, appointed or elected official, or employee of Town Social Media sites are subject to approval by the Board of Selectmen or its designee as the Town's Information Technology Overseer. Town Social Media Sites shall be administered and monitored by individual department site administrators approved by the individual department heads with notification to the Town's IT Overseer and the First Selectman.
- B. Town Social Media sites shall make clear that they are maintained by the Town and that they follow the Town's Social Media Policy.
- C. Wherever possible, Town Social Media sites should link back to the official Town website or department webpages for forms, documents, online services and other information necessary to conduct business with the Town.
- D. The Town reserves the right to restrict or remove any content that is deemed in violation of this Social Media Policy or any applicable laws, rules, or policies. Any content removed based on this Social Media Policy will be e-mailed to the department Supervisor along with information about the section of the policy that was violated, time, date, and identity of the violator.
- E. The Social Media Policy must be displayed to users or made available by hyperlink at [www.voluntown.gov](http://www.voluntown.gov).
- F. The Town will utilize social media tools as consistently as possible, on a Townwide basis.
- G. The Town's website at [www.voluntown.gov](http://www.voluntown.gov) will remain the Town's primary internet presence. Any Town-related information should be posted here before being shared on social media.
- H. All Town Social Media pages shall adhere to applicable federal, state, and local laws, rules, regulations, and policies.
- I. Town Social Media Sites are subject to Connecticut public records and record retention laws, rules, regulations, and policies. Any content maintained in a Social Media format that is related to Town business, including a list of subscribers, posted communication, and communication submitted for posting, may be subject to public disclosure. The department site administrator will maintain records in accordance with Connecticut public records and record retention laws, rules, regulations, and policies.
- J. The Social Media Policy may be updated from time to time and amended at the discretion of the Board of Selectmen.

## **III. Content Policy**

- A. As a public entity the Town should abide by certain standards to serve all its constituents in a civil and unbiased manner.
- B. If there has been no content added within 90 days, or there is a lack of administration, the page will be removed, or item will be dated to provide context of when item was posted.
- C. Content posted by employees or elected or appointed officials, perceived as inappropriate shall not be permitted on Town Social Media sites and is subject to

removal and/or restriction by site administrators. Examples of inappropriate content are:

1. Content not related to the original topic or Town business
2. Random or unintelligible comments
3. Profane, obscene, offensive, violent, or pornographic content and/or language
4. Content that promotes, fosters, or perpetuates discrimination of any kind
5. Defamatory or personal attacks
6. Threats to any person or organization
7. Content in support of, or opposition to, any political campaigns or ballot items
8. Conduct in violation of any federal, state, or local law, rule, or regulation
9. Solicitation of commerce of any kind
10. Encouragement of illegal activity
11. Information that may compromise the safety or security of the public or public systems
12. Content that violates a legal ownership interest
13. Content that could be determined as hate speech
14. Content that is not public under the freedom of information
15. Any other content deemed inappropriate by the Town

#### Additional Content Policy

- D. Content posted by a member of the public on any Town Social Media site shall be the opinion of the commentator or poster only, and publication of content does not imply endorsement of, or agreement by, the Town, nor does such content necessarily reflect the opinions or policies of the Town. This should be posted so viewers know it is not a Town endorsed statement.
- E. The Town reserves the right to deny access to Town Social Media sites to any person who violates the Town's Social Media Policy at any time and without prior notice.
- F. Site administrators shall monitor Town Social Media sites for content requesting responses from the Town. Site administrators may direct such requests to the appropriate Town department for response.
- G. Site administrators shall monitor content posted on Town Social Media Sites for content in violation of this Social Media Policy.
- H. When a Town employee responds to a comment, in his/her Town capacity as a Town employee, the employee should do so in the name of the Town department and the employee shall not share personal information about himself or herself, or other Town employees except as required for Town business.
- I. Content posted to any Town Social Media site must comply with that site's terms and conditions, and the Town reserves the right to report any violation of those terms to the site administrator so that the site administrator may take appropriate and reasonable responsive action.
- J. Appointed and Elected Officials and Employees posting to Social Media sites shall conduct themselves at all times as representatives of the Town in accordance with all Town rules, regulations, and policies.

- K. If possible, the public should be limited to only responding to posts made by the Town and not create their own threads.
- L. Social Media administrators are not to debate or provide lengthy responses. Refer to the appropriate person to discuss.
- M. While employees may engage in any lawful activities through social media (including exercising any rights they may have to engage in protected concerted activity or freedom of speech), any employee who chooses to use social media should be aware of the following Town policies in this regard:
  - 1. Any conduct, which under the law, or Town Policy, is impermissible if expressed in any other form, is impermissible if expressed through social media.
  - 2. Appointed and Elected Officials and Employees are held responsible for their own content expressed through social media and will be expected to communicate in a professional and lawful manner at all times.
  - 3. The personal use of social media is not allowed during working time on Town computers.
  - 4. Appointed and Elected Officials and Employees who use social media shall not post any proprietary Town data, documents, or photographs, or any information which would violate any privacy laws applicable to the Town, regardless of whether the posting is done during working or non-working time. Any information that cannot be disclosed through a conversation, a memo or an email also cannot be disclosed through social media.
  - 5. Unless authorized in writing by their immediate Supervisor and/or the First Selectman such as when an Employee or Appointed or Elected Officials job or responsibility, Employees do not have permission to speak on behalf of the Town via social media.
  - 6. While communicating through social media, if an employee posts any content that has something to do with the work they perform for the Town or subjects associated with the business of the Town, employees must make clear that they are speaking for themselves and not on behalf of the Town by accompanying their posts with a disclaimer such as: "The postings on this site are my own and do not necessarily represent the Town's positions or opinions."

When an employee's use of any social media violates the law or any Town policies, including policies pertaining to employee misconduct or job performance, appropriate discipline up to and including termination of employment will be imposed, regardless of when the information was posted or sent and regardless of the tools or site used to post or send such information. Nothing in this policy, or any other Town policy, will be implemented or should be interpreted in any manner as to prohibit employees from engaging in any lawful activities through social media, including exercising any rights, they may have to engage in protected concerted activity or freedom of speech.

## **RECEIPT OF EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK**

Please sign the original form and return it to the Finance Director.

I have this day received a copy of the Town of Voluntown's (the "Town") Employee Handbook, and I understand that I am responsible for reading the personnel policies and practices described within it. I understand that this Handbook replaces any and all prior handbooks, policies and practices of the Town.

I agree to abide by the policies and procedures contained therein. I understand that the policies contained, and benefits described in this Employee Handbook may be added to, deleted or changed by the Town at any time. I understand that neither this Handbook, nor any other written or verbal communications by a Town representative are intended to, in any way, create a contract of employment.

If I have any questions regarding the content or interpretation of this Handbook, I will bring them to the attention of my Supervisor, the First Selectman or the Finance Director.

**I UNDERSTAND THAT MY EMPLOYMENT CAN BE TERMINATED WITH OR WITHOUT CAUSE, AND WITH OR WITHOUT NOTICE, AT EITHER MY OPTION, OR THE OPTION OF THE TOWN OF VOLUNTOWN.**

Only the Board of Selectmen has the authority to enter into an agreement for employment for any specified period of time.

**Please sign and return this form to the Finance Director.**

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EMPLOYEE'S NAME

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DATE

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EMPLOYEE'S SIGNATURE