



*Town of Caroline*

# EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK

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*Town of Caroline*

# EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK

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# Town of Caroline Employee Handbook

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## **100 INTRODUCTION**

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### **101 *Welcome Message***

We would like to welcome you and congratulate you on your appointment to a position with the Town of Caroline. As a part of our team, you take on an extremely important role, that of serving the members of our community. Together, our mission is to provide cost-effective services that conform to the highest standards of quality.

This Employee Handbook is designed to familiarize you with your employment and to help ensure government compliance, foster positive employee relationships, and contribute to the overall success of the Town in delivering services to the public effectively and efficiently.

Please keep in mind that this is only an overview of the Town's policies and procedures, employee benefits, and the Civil Service System. Specific questions concerning employment matters should be addressed to your Department Head.

We trust that you will find service with the Town of Caroline rewarding both personally and professionally.

### **102 *A Message for Our Union***

This Employee Handbook has been developed by the Town of Caroline to assist you in getting acquainted with your employment with the Town. A cooperative labor-management relationship not only lends to a positive work environment but also helps ensure fair treatment in the workplace.

For union members, the collective bargaining agreement governs the terms and conditions of employment. You are encouraged to obtain a copy of your collective bargaining agreement from your union representative. Where that Agreement and this Handbook conflict, the Agreement controls. However, in certain instances where the Handbook covers an issue that is not the subject of bargaining, this Handbook controls. We have made every effort to acknowledge these situations. If you have any questions, you should contact your Department Head or union representative.

We hope that your career with the Town of Caroline will be an enjoyable experience.

### **103 *Our Heritage***

For over two hundred years, the Town of Caroline has served its residents with the values of people, progress and pride foremost in mind. Although the community has changed from an economy based largely on farming to one in which residents are predominately engaged in service industries, the rural character of our community still persists today. The nature of this rural character is best represented by good neighbors, high ethical standards and rugged individualism.

Employees of the Town of Caroline have always demonstrated these qualities to the benefit of the community. This document presents guidelines designed to preserve that tradition.

## 104 **Definitions**

**Town of Caroline** – For purposes of this Employee Handbook, the Town of Caroline may be referred to as the “Town”.

**Town Board** – For purposes of this Employee Handbook, “Town Board” will mean the Town Board of the Town of Caroline.

**Elected Official** – For the purposes of this Employee Handbook, “Elected Official” will mean and refer to any of the following elected officials of the Town of Caroline:

- ☐ Town Supervisor
- ☐ Town Board Members
- ☐ Town Justices
- ☐ Town Clerk/Tax Collector
- ☐ Superintendent of Highways

**Town Supervisor** – For purposes of this Employee Handbook, “Town Supervisor” will mean the Town Supervisor of the Town of Caroline. When referenced in this Employee Handbook, Town Supervisor shall also mean an individual acting with the Town Supervisor’s properly designated authority.

**Department Head** – For purposes of this Employee Handbook, “Department Head” will mean the person in charge of any department, agency, bureau, unit, or subdivision of the Town of Caroline. This definition will be applicable in the event such person is serving in an acting, temporary, or provisional status in the position of Department Head. This term shall also include the Town Supervisor, where an individual otherwise designated as Department Head or any other individual must report to the Town Supervisor.

**Supervisor** – For purposes of this Employee Handbook, “supervisor” will mean the individual so designated by the Department Head to direct and inspect the performance of employees.

**Employee** – For the purposes of this Employee Handbook, “employee” will mean a person employed by the Town, including, but not limited to, an appointed official, an appointed member of a board or commission, Department Head, managerial employee, confidential employee, supervisory employee, provisional employee, probationary employee, temporary employee, seasonal employee, trainee, or student intern, but not an independent contractor.

**Civil Service Law** – For purposes of this Employee Handbook, “Civil Service Law” shall mean the New York State Civil Service Law and shall include the *Tompkins County Civil Service Rules*.

## 105 *The Purpose of this Employee Handbook*

**Statement of Purpose** – The purpose of this Employee Handbook is to communicate the Town's personnel policies and practices to all employees and Elected Officials. It is extremely important that each employee understand the policies that relate to rules, regulations, procedures, practices, work standards, employment classifications, compensation, and benefits. **This Employee Handbook is not a contract of employment, express or implied, and should not be construed as such.** That is, employment can be terminated at any time at the will of either the employer or the employee, subject only to such procedural requirements as may be specified pursuant to New York State Civil Service Law, Town Law, collective bargaining agreement, or any other applicable law, rule, or regulation. The provisions and policies contained in this Employee Handbook are intended to supersede any and all prior manuals, guidelines or related policies issued by the Town of Caroline.

Unless otherwise required by law, the provisions of this Employee Handbook are for Town use only and do not apply in any criminal or civil proceeding. The Employee Handbook provisions shall not be construed as a creation of higher legal standard of safety or care. Notwithstanding the above, a violation of a Handbook provision may form the basis for administrative action by the Town and any subsequent judicial or administrative proceeding.

**Previous Employee Handbook and/or Personnel Policies** – Unless otherwise specified, this Employee Handbook supersedes and replaces any previous employee handbook and/or personnel policies issued by the Town concerning all policies contained herein.

**Collective Bargaining Agreements** – In the event an expressed and explicit provision set forth in a collective bargaining agreement between the Town of Caroline and an employee organization as defined by the Public Employees' Fair Employment Act (Taylor Law) should conflict with an employee benefit, personnel policy, personnel procedure, or other provision set forth in this Employee Handbook, the expressed and explicit provision of the collective bargaining agreement will control. Otherwise, unless expressly excluded herein, this Employee Handbook will be applicable to all employees.

**Questions** – Any questions regarding any topic covered in this Employee Handbook should be directed to the appropriate Department Head.

## 106 *Changes or Modifications*

**Rights of the Town Board** – The Town Board reserves the right to interpret, change, modify or eliminate any provision contained in this Employee Handbook.

**Governmental Actions** – This Employee Handbook is subject to alteration by resolutions of the Town Board, changes in Town and/or departmental rules, or changes in federal, state or local statutes, rules, or regulations. (This is not meant to be a comprehensive list).

**Statutes, Laws and Ordinances** – In the event a federal or state statute or a Town Law or ordinance should conflict with any provision contained in this Employee Handbook, then such statute, law or ordinance will prevail.



## **200 EMPLOYEE CLASSIFICATIONS**

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For purposes of this Employee Handbook, the following terms shall be defined as indicated. The definition provided for each of these terms applies only within the context of this Employee Handbook.

### **201 *Full-Time Employees***

For purposes of this Employee Handbook, the term “full-time employee” will mean an employee who is regularly scheduled to work a minimum of thirty hours per week. Full-time employees shall be classified as Class A Employees (see Section 805 Medical Insurance)

### **202 *Part-Time Employees***

For purposes of this Employee Handbook, the term “part-time employee” will mean an employee who is scheduled on a regular and on-going basis to work less than thirty hours per week. Part-time employees working twenty or more hours per week shall be classified as Class B Employees; employees working less than twenty hours per week shall be classified as Class C Employees (Section 805 Medical Insurance).

### **203 *Temporary Employees***

For purposes of this Employee Handbook, the term “temporary employee” will mean an employee who is employed on an interim or sporadic basis, or who is employed to work on a special, emergency, or on-call basis for a specified period, consistent with the Civil Service Law as applicable.

### **204 *Seasonal Employees***

For purposes of this Employee Handbook, the term “seasonal employee” will mean an employee who is employed to work for a given season.

### **205 *FLSA Non-Covered Employees***

For purposes of this Employee Handbook, “FLSA non-covered employee” will mean an employee not covered under the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA).

### **206 *FLSA Exempt Employees***

For purposes of this Employee Handbook, “FLSA exempt employee” will mean a covered employee who qualifies for an exemption from the minimum wage and overtime provisions of the Fair Labor Standards Act.

### **207 *FLSA Non-Exempt Employees***

For purposes of this Employee Handbook, the term “FLSA non-exempt employee” will mean a covered employee who is subject to the minimum wage and overtime provisions of the Fair Labor Standards Act.

## 300 THE CIVIL SERVICE SYSTEM

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The following is intended as a guide. The Civil Service Law and the *Tompkins County Civil Service Rules* shall govern regarding the jurisdictional classification of positions and the appointment and promotion of personnel.

### 301 *The Unclassified and Classified Services*

**Unclassified Service** – In accordance with Civil Service Law and for purposes of this Employee Handbook, the term “Unclassified Service” will include all individuals who are Elected Officials and/or members of boards or commissions, as specified in Appendix D of the *Tompkins County Civil Service Rules*.

**Classified Service** – In accordance with Civil Service Law and for purposes of this Employee Handbook, the term “Classified Service” as defined by the Civil Service Law and the *Tompkins County Civil Service Rules* will include all Town employees who are subject to the *Tompkins County Civil Service Rules*. The Classified Service is divided into four jurisdictional classes:

- ☐ **Exempt** – those positions, other than unskilled labor positions, for which competitive or non-competitive examinations or other qualification requirements are not practicable (Civil Service Law, Section 41), as specified in Appendix A of the *Tompkins County Civil Service Rules*;
- ☐ **Competitive** – those positions for which it is practicable to determine merit and fitness by competitive examination;
- ☐ **Non-Competitive** – those positions not in the exempt class or the labor class for which it is not practicable to determine merit and fitness by competitive examination, but rather by a review of training and experience, as specified in Appendix B of the *Tompkins County Civil Service Rules*;
- ☐ **Labor** – unskilled labor positions, except those positions which can be examined for competitively, as specified in Appendix C of the *Tompkins County Civil Service Rules*.

### 302 *Civil Service Appointments*

**Competitive Class** – In accordance with Civil Service Law, the following types of appointments may be made to positions in the Competitive Class:

- ☐ **Permanent** – an appointment to a vacant, unencumbered position in the Competitive Class from among the top three candidates, willing to accept appointment, on an eligible list established as a result of examination, following successful completion of a probationary term;
- ☐ **Provisional** – an appointment to a vacant position in the Competitive Class when there is not an appropriate eligible list. A provisional appointee must take an examination whenever it is scheduled. Thereafter, a permanent appointment may only be made from among the top three candidates, willing to accept appointment, on an eligible list resulting

from the examination, followed by the successful completion of a probationary term. Provisional employees who do not pass or are not reachable on the eligible list must be removed within sixty days of the date of establishment of the eligible list; or

□ **Temporary** – an appointment to a position in the Competitive Class for reasons including, but not limited to: emergency work projects; planned termination of the position after a limited time; to replace an employee who is on a leave of absence; to fill a position funded through a temporary grant; or to fill a position vacated by the promotion of another employee until the employee who has been promoted receives permanent status.

### **303    *Examinations and Promotions***

**Examinations** – In accordance with Civil Service Law, in the event there is a vacancy in a new or existing position in the Competitive Class which the Town intends to maintain, the Town will fill the vacancy by selection from the eligible list certified by the Tompkins County Personnel Department of persons who have taken the appropriate Civil Service examination. The Tompkins County Personnel Department will test and rank each candidate according to the individual's performance on the examination. In accordance with Civil Service Law Section 61, the Town will select one of the top three candidates on an eligible list, who are willing to accept appointment, to fill the position.

**Promotions** – The Town will offer opportunities for advancement for those employees who qualify. In the event the position is in the Competitive Class, a qualified employee must normally take a promotional examination and the above “one of three” will apply. An employee who wants to be promoted should become knowledgeable about the employee's present position and be aware of higher level positions for which the employee may be qualified.

### **304    *Veterans Credits***

**Summary** – An employee who is a veteran as defined by the Civil Service Law may be eligible to apply for veteran's credits on a Civil Service examination. An employee who is a veteran should contact the Tompkins County Personnel Department for details concerning these credits.

## 400 EMPLOYMENT MATTERS

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### 401 *Oath of Office*

**Requirement** – Each Public Officer as defined in the Public Officers Law must take the Oath of Office before the County or Town Clerk, in accordance with Town Law Section 25 and Public Officers Law Section 10, which must be administered prior to commencing the duties of the office. Each official who is re-elected or re-appointed to a subsequent term must take the Oath of Office for each term.

Upon original appointment or upon a new appointment following an interruption of continuous service, each employee (other than an employee in the labor class) must take an oath or alternate affirmation as set forth in Civil Service Law Section 62.

**Filing of Oath** – The Oath of Office is filed in the Town Clerk's Office within thirty calendar days of the Public Officer's commencement of the term of office, or upon an employee's appointment.

**Failure to Complete Oath of Office** – New York State Town Law stipulates that failure to take the Oath of Office within 30 days of the beginning of the term results in disqualification of a newly elected official from that position.

### 402 *Procedure for Filling Vacancies*

**Statement of Compliance** – The Town of Caroline complies with all applicable federal, state and local laws, rules, and regulations throughout the employee selection process, including, but not limited to, the Public Officers Law, Town Law, Civil Service Law, Title VII, Human Rights Law, and the Americans with Disabilities Act, and is an Equal Opportunity employer.

**Notification of Vacancies** – In the event there is a vacancy in a new or existing position which the Town intends to maintain, the vacancy must be advertised and posted, at locations designated at the Town's Organizational Meeting each year, and qualified individuals interviewed. The Town reserves the right to fill a position either internally or with an external candidate.

**Employment Applications** – The Town relies upon the accuracy of information contained in the employment application, as well as the accuracy of other data presented throughout the hiring process. Any misrepresentations, falsifications, or material omissions in any of this information or data may result in the Town's exclusion of the individual from further consideration for employment or disqualification if the conduct is discovered after employment commences.

**Employment Reference and Background Checks** – To ensure that individuals who join the Town are well qualified and have a strong potential to be productive and successful, it is the policy of the Town to check the employment references of final applicants. Applicants will be required to complete a hold harmless statement in order for the Town to conduct appropriate background checks.

**Pre-Employment Physicals / Drug Screening** – When appropriate in accordance with the requirements of a particular position, the Town may require that an applicant undergo a medical examination (after receiving a conditional offer of employment) to determine fitness for duty. In doing so, the Town will comply with the provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act (see Section 802 of this handbook.) Additionally, all final applicants for a position that requires a commercial driver's license must consent to be tested for the presence of a controlled substance as a pre-qualifying condition to employment.

#### **403 Probationary Period**

Except as otherwise provided in a collective bargaining agreement, the following Civil Service probationary provisions shall apply.

**Purpose of Probationary Period** – The probationary period is for an employee to become familiar with the specific duties and responsibilities of the employee's new position. The probationary period also provides the Department Head with an opportunity to evaluate the employee's job performance and potential for development in the position.

**Length of Probationary Period (Competitive Class)** – Except as otherwise provided in the *Tompkins County Civil Service Rules*, an employee appointed from an open-competitive list must serve a probationary period of not less than eight weeks nor more than fifty-two weeks. Reinstatements, as defined in Civil Service Law and *Tompkins County Civil Service Rules*, are also subject to a probationary period of eight to fifty-two weeks, while transfers, as defined in Civil Service Law and *Tompkins County Civil Service Rules*, are subject to a probationary period of eight to twenty-six weeks. The length of the probationary period may be extended in accordance with the *Tompkins County Civil Service Rules*.

**Length of Probationary Period (Other Classes)** – Except as otherwise provided in the *Tompkins County Civil Service Rules*, an employee's original appointment to a position in the exempt, non-competitive, or labor class shall be for a probationary period of not less than eight nor more than fifty-two weeks. The length of the probationary period may be extended in accordance with the *Tompkins County Civil Service Rules*.

**Successful Completion of Probationary Period** – The employee's appointment will become permanent upon the retention of the employee after completion of the maximum period of service required. **Except as otherwise provided by law or a collective bargaining agreement, completion of the probationary period does not necessarily confer rights or privileges in the position.**

**Employment Status During Probationary Period** – During the probationary period (at any time after the completion of the minimum probationary period and before completion of the maximum probationary period), an employee will be subject to demotion, suspension, or discharge at the Town's sole discretion. If the performance or conduct of an employee serving a probationary period who has been promoted or transferred from a permanent appointment (as defined by civil service regulations) is not satisfactory, the employee shall be returned to the employee's former permanent position prior to the end of the probationary period.

#### **404    *Performance Appraisal***

Except as otherwise provided by a collective bargaining agreement, the following shall be the procedure for conducting employee performance appraisals.

**Statement of Purpose** – The purpose of a performance appraisal is to evaluate employee performance. The performance appraisal will take into consideration criteria that properly reflect the employee's performance including, but not limited to, the employee's work quality, job knowledge, initiative, attendance, teamwork, conduct, and communication skills. Except as otherwise governed by a collective bargaining agreement, the employee's performance appraisal may be considered in determining a pay increase and/or as a factor in promotion or disciplinary action.

**Frequency** – An employee will be formally evaluated at least once each year on a date determined by the employee's Department Head. Informal evaluations will occur on an as needed basis throughout the performance cycle.

**Appraisal Meeting** – The evaluator will meet with the employee to review the employee's performance appraisal report.

**Deficiencies** – Should deficiencies be recorded in the performance of the employee, the employee will receive written recommendations for improvement.

**Employee Comments** – An employee's written comments, if any, will be included with the performance appraisal report.

#### **405    *New Employee Orientation***

**Procedure** – The purpose of the new employee orientation is to welcome new employees and to familiarize them with the Town and their job. The orientation process generally consists of, but is not limited to, a tour of the employee's assigned worksite, distribution and review of this employee handbook, and enrollment in benefit plans, if applicable. In addition, the employee's Department Head is responsible for introducing the employee to co-workers, scheduling on-the-job training, and reviewing the job description and performance requirements of the position.

#### **406    *Corrective Action and Discipline***

**Policy Statement** – It is the policy of the Town of Caroline that certain rules and regulations regarding employee behavior are necessary for the benefit and safety of all employees, the efficient operation of the Town, and the delivery of services to residents of the Town. Any conduct that interferes with operations (concern about subjectivity) will not be tolerated. Each employee must conduct oneself in a positive manner so as to promote the best interests of the Town. Corrective action is necessary when an employee has demonstrated performance deficiencies, or has violated a policy, rule, regulation, or procedure. Corrective action may include counseling or initiating formal disciplinary action against an employee.

**Communication** – Open and candid communications with all employees is an important aspect of the Town of Caroline's on-going employee relations. When a rule, policy, or procedure is violated, the employee's Department Head, or other designated supervisor, will review the specific nature of the violation with the employee. The employee's input is extremely important to ensure that all of the facts have been considered.

**Counseling** – Counseling employees, as opposed to initiating formal disciplinary action, may be the appropriate first step in addressing performance deficiencies or misconduct. The purpose of counseling is to inform the employee of such deficiencies or misconduct, discourage its recurrence, and inform the employee of the consequences if the behavior is repeated. When performance deficiencies are the issue, the performance standards of the job should be reviewed, along with specific examples of how the employee is not meeting those standards. Where appropriate, goals for improvement may be established, along with a time frame for achieving them. The counseling will be documented in writing and the employee will be required to acknowledge receipt by signing the memorandum. Any employee who fails to follow a supervisor's directive to sign the counseling memorandum to acknowledge receipt will be subject to disciplinary action.

**Discipline** – The purpose of disciplinary action is to impose penalties for performance deficiencies or misconduct. In **normal circumstances**, the Town endorses a policy of progressive discipline which includes, but may not be limited to, documented verbal reprimand, letters of reprimand, suspension without pay, or termination of employment, depending on the circumstances. The Town retains the right to discipline employees without engaging in progressive discipline or prior counseling if the situation so warrants and retains the right to discipline employees in any manner it sees fit.

**Investigations** – Where appropriate, an investigation will be conducted by the proper supervisor or other designated individual(s) in order to gather all pertinent information and to ensure that all the facts are considered. The investigation may include, among other things, interviews with the employee and any witnesses or other involved parties, and review of documents and materials. Employees who are participants in an investigation are not allowed to disclose the content or particulars of the investigation unless otherwise authorized. All employees who are called upon to participate in an investigation are required to fully cooperate in the process and respond truthfully to all questions posed. Failure to do so will subject the employee to appropriate corrective action. The Town reserves the right to suspend an employee while an investigation is conducted.

During the investigation process, a union employee who appears to be a potential subject of disciplinary action may undergo questioning. Such employee will have the right to representation by the employee's certified or recognized employee organization under Civil Service Law Article 14, and will be given advanced notice of such right. In the event the employee requests representation, the employee will be allowed a reasonable period of time to obtain such representation. In the event the employee is unable to obtain such representation within a reasonable period of time, the employer will have the right to then question the employee.

**Procedures** – Employees covered by **Civil Service Law Section 75** shall be disciplined in accordance with the procedures contained therein. (Refer to Section 406 of this Employee Handbook). An employee who is a member of the Teamsters Local 317 Highway Unit should refer to the collective bargaining agreement on the subject of the disciplinary procedure,

wherein the negotiated procedure is the only method of resolving challenges to disciplinary action and wholly replaces the provisions of Civil Service Law Sections 75 and 76.

**Prohibited Conduct** – Any employee who, after investigation, is found to have committed any of the actions listed below will be subject to corrective action, up to and including termination of employment. This list is illustrative only and does not limit the Town's right to impose discipline in other appropriate cases.

- ☐ Willful violation of Town's rules, policies, and procedures.
- ☐ Harassing (including sexual harassment), intimidating, coercing, threatening, assaulting, or creating a hostile environment against another employee, Elected Official, resident of the Town, supplier, visitor, or any other person, whether on or off Town premises.
- ☐ Engaging in any action that is in violation of the Town's Workplace Violence Prevention Policy.
- ☐ Possession of any weapon or dangerous instrument (including knives with over a three inch blade, firearms, and explosives) on Town property or in Town vehicles, except for those employees who are required as a condition of employment to bear a weapon.
- ☐ Possession, use, distribution/sale, or being under the influence of alcohol or controlled substances during hours of work or while on Town property or in Town vehicles.
- ☐ Willful or deliberate abuse, destruction, defacement, or misuse of Town property or the property of another employee, Elected Official, resident of the Town, supplier, visitor, or any other person.
- ☐ Theft or unauthorized possession, use, or removal of Town property or the property of another employee, Elected Official, resident of the Town, supplier, visitor, or any other person.
- ☐ Falsification or alteration of any records or reports including but not limited to employment applications, time records, work records, medical reports, absence reports, work-related injury reports, and claims for benefits provided by the Town.
- ☐ Preparation or manipulation of another employee's time record.
- ☐ Acts of sabotage, including the work of another employee.
- ☐ Making false statements about another employee, Elected Official, resident of the Town, supplier, visitor, or any other person. This includes knowingly making false accusations against another individual as to allegations of discrimination, sexual harassment or other harassment which is in violation of Town policy or applicable law.
- ☐ Insubordination or willful refusal to comply with the lawful order or instruction of a supervisor or Department Head.
- ☐ Improper performance of job duties or repeated failure to perform assigned duties and responsibilities.
- ☐ Violation and/or disregard of safety rules or safety practices, including failure to wear assigned safety clothing or equipment, in such a way that jeopardizes the safety of the



employee, another employee, Elected Official, resident of the Town, supplier, visitor, or any other person.

- ☐ Committing any violation of the law either on or off duty or on or off the work site that compromises or adversely effects the employee's fitness or ability to perform assigned job duties.
- ☐ Unauthorized expenditure of Town funds.
- ☐ Illegal gambling while on duty.
- ☐ Willful work slow-down, work stoppage, or interfering with or restricting the performance of another employee or in any other way interfering with Town operations.
- ☐ Careless or negligent use or operation of equipment, including vehicles and machinery.
- ☐ Unauthorized absences or failure to give proper notice of an absence or tardiness.
- ☐ Excessive tardiness and/or absences except those absences covered by state and/or federal statutes.
- ☐ Leaving work area without permission, as defined by the Department Head.
- ☐ Failure to adhere to the personal appearance/dress code policy.
- ☐ Sleeping on the job, unless authorized by a Department Head or supervisor.
- ☐ Personal activity during paid work time without the express permission of the Department Head.
- ☐ Use of personal listening devices (e.g. iPods/MP3 players, etc., with headphones / earbuds) during paid work time without the expressed permission of the Department Head. (Note: use of such devices is permitted during meal breaks and authorized rest breaks.)
- ☐ Disruptive, loud, or boisterous behavior or horseplay in the workplace.
- ☐ Abusive language in the workplace, including racial slurs and epithets.
- ☐ Posting, removing, or defacing of notices, signs, or other written material without prior approval.

This list is not intended to be comprehensive and does not limit the Town's right to impose discipline in other appropriate cases.

## 407 **Civil Service Law Section 75**

**Summary** – New York State Civil Service Law Section 75 establishes disciplinary procedures for covered employees. Section 75 affords a covered employee the opportunity for a hearing when charges of incompetence or misconduct have been made against the employee by the Town.

**Union Employees** – An employee who is a member of the Teamsters Local 317 Highway Unit should refer to the collective bargaining agreement on the subject of the disciplinary procedure, wherein the negotiated procedure is the only method of resolving challenges to disciplinary action and wholly replaces the provisions of Civil Service Law Sections 75 and 76.

**Covered Employees** – In accordance with Civil Service Law, the following employees are generally covered under Section 75:

- ☐ A newly hired employee who has not completed the minimum probationary period as specified in the *Tompkins County Civil Service Rules*;
- ☐ An employee holding a position by permanent appointment in the **Competitive Class** of the classified Civil Service;
- ☐ An employee holding a position in the **Non-Competitive** or **Labor Class** other than a position designated in the *Tompkins County Civil Service Rules* as confidential or requiring the performance of functions influencing policy, who since the employee's last entry into service has completed at least five years of continuous service in the Non-Competitive or Labor Class in a position or positions not so designated in the rules as confidential or requiring the performance of functions influencing policy;
- ☐ An employee holding a position by permanent appointment or employment in the Exempt, Competitive, Non-Competitive, or Labor Class who is a qualified veteran as defined by the Civil Service Law, or exempt volunteer firefighter, as defined by the General Municipal Law, except when such an employee holds the position of private secretary, cashier, or deputy of any official or department. Specifically, the employee must have been honorably discharged or released under honorable circumstances from the armed forces of the United States having served therein as such member in time of war as defined in Section 85 of the New York State Civil Service Law, or the employee must be an exempt volunteer firefighter as defined in the General Municipal Law.

**Disciplinary Procedure** – Except as otherwise provided by a collective bargaining agreement, the following disciplinary procedure shall apply to employees covered by Civil Service Law Section 75:

- ☐ **Notice of Discipline** – An employee subject to discipline will be provided with a written Notice of Discipline (NOD) which will contain all charges and specifications.
- ☐ **Employee Answer** – The employee will have eight calendar days to respond to the charges. The employee's response must be in writing.

- ☐ **Disciplinary Hearing** – Unless there is a stipulation of settlement between the Town and the employee, the employee is afforded the right to a hearing in accordance with provisions established by Civil Service Law Section 75. The hearing upon such charges shall be held by the officer or body having the power to remove the person against whom such charges are preferred, or by a deputy or other person designated by such officer or body in writing for that purpose. The Appointing Authority will designate a hearing officer in accordance with Civil Service Law Section 75. The designation must be in writing. The hearing officer will set the time and place for the hearing. The hearing officer will make a record of the hearing which will be submitted to the Appointing Authority, with the hearing officer's recommendations, for review and decision.

**Right to Representation** – The employee may have representation by counsel or by a representative of a recognized or certified employee organization at the hearing and may summon witnesses on the employee's behalf.

**Suspension Without Pay Pending Determination of Charges** – Pending the hearing and determination of charges, the employee may be suspended without pay for a period not to exceed thirty calendar days.

**Penalties** – In the event the employee is found to be guilty of the charges, the penalty may consist of one of the following:

- ☐ Reprimand;
- ☐ Fine not to exceed one-hundred dollars which will be deducted from the employee's pay;
- ☐ Suspension without pay not to exceed two months;
- ☐ Demotion in grade and title; or
- ☐ Termination from Town employment.

**Finding of Not-Guilty** – In the event the employee is found to be not guilty of all charges and specifications, the employee will be restored to the employee's position with full pay for the period of suspension less the amount of any unemployment insurance benefits that the employee may have received during such period.

**Limitations** – Notwithstanding any other provision of law, no removal or disciplinary proceeding will be commenced more than eighteen months after the occurrence of the alleged incompetence or misconduct complained of and described in the charges. Such limitation will not apply where the incompetence or misconduct complained of and described in the charges would, if proved in a court of appropriate jurisdiction, constitute a crime.

**Filing Requirements** – In the event the employee is found to be guilty, a copy of the charges, the employee's written answer, a transcript of the hearing, and the determination will be filed in the office of the department in which the employee is employed. A copy will also be filed with the Tompkins County Personnel Department.

## 408 **Code of Ethics**

**Policy Statement** – Pursuant to the provisions of Section 806 of the General Municipal Law, the Town Board of Caroline recognizes that there are rules of ethical conduct for Elected Officials and employees which must be observed if a high degree of moral conduct is to be obtained and public confidence is to be maintained in our unit of local government. It is the purpose of this code to promulgate these rules of ethical conduct for the officers and employees of the Town of Caroline. These rules shall serve as a guide for official conduct of the officers and employees of the Town of Caroline. The rules of ethical conduct of the Code of Ethics as adopted, shall not conflict with, but shall be in addition to prohibition of Article 18 of the General Municipal Law or any other general or special law pertaining to ethical conduct and interest in contracts of municipal officers and employees.

**Definitions** – For the purpose of the Town of Caroline's Code of Ethics, the following terms shall have the meanings indicated:

□ **Municipal Officer or Employee** means an officer or employee of the Town of Caroline, whether paid or unpaid, including members of any administrative board, commission or other agency thereof. No person will be deemed to be a municipal officer or employee solely by reason of being a volunteer firefighter or civil defense volunteer, except a chief engineer or assistant chief engineer.

□ **Interest** means a pecuniary or material benefit accruing to an officer or employee, unless the context otherwise requires.

**Standards of Conduct** – Every officer or employee of the Town of Caroline shall be subject to and abide by the following standards of conduct:

- a. **Gifts** - An officer or employee shall not directly or indirectly, solicit any gift; or accept or receive any gift having a value of twenty-five dollars or more, whether in the form of money, services, loan, travel, entertainment, hospitality, thing or promise or any other form, under circumstances in which it could reasonably be inferred that such gift was intended to influence the officer or employee or could reasonably be expected to influence the officer or employee in the performance of official duties or was intended as a reward for any official action on the officer's or employee's part.
- b. **Confidential information** - An officer or employee shall not disclose confidential information acquired in the course of official duties or use such information to further personal interest.
- c. **Representation before one's own agency** - An individual shall not receive or enter into any agreement, express or implied, for compensation for services to be rendered in relation to any matter before any municipal agency of which the individual is an officer, member or employee, or of any municipal agency over which jurisdiction or the power to appoint any member, officer or employee, is held.
- d. **Representation before any agency for a contingent fee** - An officer or employee shall not receive or enter into any agreement, express or implied, for compensation for services to be rendered in relation to any matter before any agency of the municipality, whereby such compensation is to be dependent or contingent upon any action by such

agency with respect to such matter, provided that this provision shall not prohibit the fixing at any time of fees based upon the reasonable value of the services rendered.

- e. **Disclosure of interest in legislation** - To the extent that he or she knows thereof, a member of the Town Board and any officer or employee of the Town of Caroline, whether paid or unpaid, who participates in the discussion of or gives official opinion to the Town Board on any legislation before the Town Board shall publicly disclose on the official record the nature and extent of any direct or indirect financial or other private interest he or she has in such legislation.
- f. **Investments which conflict with official duties** - An officer or employee shall not invest or hold any investment, directly or indirectly in any financial, business, commercial, or other private transaction which creates a conflict with the officer's or employee's official duties.
- g. **Private employment** - An officer or employee shall not engage in, solicit, negotiate for or promise to accept private employment or render services for private interests when such employment or service creates a conflict with or impairs the proper discharge of official duties.
- h. **Future employment** - An officer or employee shall not, after the termination of service or employment with the Town, appear before any board or agency of the Town of Caroline in relation to any case, proceeding or application in which the officer or employee personally participated during the period of service or employment or which was under the officer's or employee's active consideration.
- i. Except in an authorized Executive Session or private meeting, an officer or employee shall not accuse any other officer or employee (does not include Elected Officials) of incompetence, insubordination or unfaithful job performance.
- j. **Avoidance of conflicts** - i. Each Elected Official, appointed official and Town employee is responsible for exercising due diligence in attempting to avoid actual or potential conflicts of interest when voting or taking other discretionary action regarding all matters with which he or she deals on behalf of the Town. ii. An Elected Official, appointed official or Town employee shall exercise particularly careful diligence in avoiding any actual or potential conflict of interest when voting or taking other discretionary action on any matter brought before the Town Board by any entity that employs an Elected Official, appointed official, or Town employee. In any such case, the involved Elected Official, appointed Official or Town employee should avoid taking any action that could reasonably be interpreted as benefiting his or her career advancement, salary or standing within the entity that employs him or her.
- k. **Recusal from voting or other discretionary act.** Whenever an Elected Official, appointed official or Town employee is called upon to vote on, advise on or otherwise take discretionary action on a matter before the Town Board, and either the performance or non-performance of such action would provide a significant and special pecuniary or material benefit to him/herself or his/her family or otherwise create any actual or potential conflict of interest, the official or employee shall immediately declare the nature of the conflict.

Nothing herein shall be deemed to bar or prevent the timely filing by a present or former municipal officer or employee of any claim, account, demand or suit against the Town of Caroline, or any agency thereof on behalf of himself or herself or any member of his or her family arising out of any personal injury or property damage or for any lawful benefit authorized or permitted by law.

**Penalties** - In addition to any penalty contained in any other provision of law, any person who shall knowingly and intentionally violate any of the provisions of this code may be fined, suspended or removed from office or employment, as the case may be, in the manner provided by law.

## **409    *Personnel Records***

**Policy Statement** – It is the policy of the Town to balance its need to obtain, use, and retain employment information with a concern for each employee's privacy. To this end, the Town will endeavor to maintain only that personnel information necessary for the conduct of the Town's business or required by federal, state, or local law. Personnel records will be maintained for current and past employees in order to document employment related decisions and comply with government record keeping and reporting requirements.

**Content** – The personnel records maintained by the Town include, but are not limited to, Employment Applications, Report of Personnel Change Forms; copies of job-required licenses and certificates, Federal and State Withholding Tax Forms, Retirement Enrollment/Waiver Forms, Health Insurance Enrollment/Waiver Forms, performance appraisals, grievance or dispute resolution notices, counseling memoranda, notices of discipline, and probationary reports.

**Location of Files** – All original personnel records for current employees will be kept in the Town Clerk's office or the Highway Superintendent's office, as appropriate to the employee's department, and will be maintained and controlled by the Town Clerk or Highway Superintendent, respectively.

**Immigration (I-9) Forms** – All Immigration (I-9) Forms will be kept in a separate file apart from the employee's personnel file.

**Medical Records** – All employee medical records will be kept in a separate file apart from the employee's personnel file in the Town Clerk's office or the Highway Superintendent's office, as appropriate to the employee's department, and will be maintained and controlled by the Town Clerk or the Highway Superintendent, respectively. ***For security purposes, these files will be locked at all times.***

**Substance Testing Records** – All employee substance testing records will be kept in a separate file apart from the employee's personnel file in the Highway Superintendent's office and will be maintained and controlled by the Highway Superintendent. ***For security purposes, these files will be locked at all times.***

**Change in Status** – An employee must immediately notify the Town Clerk or Highway Superintendent, as appropriate to the employee's department, of a change of name, address, telephone number, marital status, number and age of dependents, beneficiary designations, and individuals to notify in case of emergency.

**Review of Personnel Files** – Access to personnel files is limited. A current employee may review the contents of the employee's own personnel file by submitting a written request to the Town Clerk or Highway Superintendent, as appropriate to the employee's department, to be scheduled at a mutually convenient time. An authorized official must be present when the employee inspects the file. An employee may not copy, remove, or place any material in the employee's personnel file without the approval of the Town Clerk or Highway Superintendent, as appropriate.

## **410    *Separation from Employment***

**Notice of Resignation (Employees)** – An employee who intends to resign from employment must submit a written resignation to the employee's Department Head at least two weeks before the date of resignation is to be effective. All resignations shall be filed in the Town Clerk's Office.

**Notice of Resignation (Town Officers)** – A Town Officer (as defined by Public Officers Law) must resign by delivering a written notice to the Town Clerk. If no effective date is specified, the office becomes vacant immediately upon delivery of the notice to the Town Clerk. If a Town Officer wishes to resign at some future date, the Town Officer may specify a resignation date. However, if the resignation date is more than thirty days after delivery of the notice to the Town Clerk (ninety days for Justices), the resignation will become effective thirty days after such delivery (ninety days for Justices).

**Notice of Resignation (Town Clerk)** – The Town Clerk who intends to resign must submit a written resignation to the Secretary of State at least thirty calendar days before the date of resignation is to be effective.

**Exit Interviews** – Exit interviews are normally conducted by the Department Head. The exit interview provides an opportunity to discuss a number of items including employee benefits, COBRA eligibility, changing of computer passwords, and return of Town property. During the exit interview, employees are encouraged to give suggestions, concerns and constructive recommendations.

**Final Paycheck** – Employees receive their final paycheck on the next regularly scheduled payday. The final paycheck includes payment for accumulated vacation benefits, if applicable.

## 500 OPERATIONAL POLICIES

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### 501 *Departmental Hours*

**Normal Hours of Operation** – The normal hours of operation are established by the Town Board at the annual organizational meeting. An employee's Department Head will establish the employee's work schedule, which may differ from the normal hours of operation depending upon the particular needs and requirements of the department. The Town Board reserves the right to approve all employee work schedules, except where otherwise prohibited by applicable State or Town Law.

"Meal Breaks" paragraph of 2008 Employee Handbook integrated with Section 502 below

**Overtime** – A Department Head may require an employee to work additional hours beyond the employee's normal workday and workweek. An employee must receive prior approval from the employee's Department Head before working additional hours.

**Refusal to Work Additional Hours** – An employee who, after investigation, is found to have refused to work additional hours as directed will be subject to appropriate disciplinary action.

**Flex-Time** – An employee may begin and/or end a given workday at a time requested by the employee and approved by the Department Head. The employee's use of "flex-time" will be governed by the mutual needs and consent of the Department Head and the employee. The Town Supervisor and the Town Board reserve the right to approve all "flex-time" schedules.

**Union Employees** – The work schedules, meal breaks and paid holidays of employees covered by the Teamsters Local 317 Highway Unit collective bargaining unit agreement shall be governed by that agreement.

### 502 *Meal Breaks and Breaks for Nursing Mothers*

**Meal Breaks** – An employee who works more than six hours in a given day will receive an unpaid, duty-free meal break not to exceed thirty minutes.

**Scheduling of Meal Breaks** – Scheduling of meal breaks must be approved by the Department Head in accordance with the needs and requirements of the department. Meal breaks must normally be taken in the middle of the employee's workday. Unless otherwise directed by the Department Head, an employee may leave the work-site during the meal break.

**Observance of Meal Breaks** – In accordance with New York State regulations, an employee who works more than six hours in a given day is required to take the scheduled meal break. An employee is not allowed to work through the meal break to make up lost work time or to leave work early. In addition, the meal break may not be taken at the end of an employee's workday in order to leave work before the normal quitting time.



**Breaks for Nursing Mothers to Express Breast Milk** – Employees who are nursing mothers shall be allowed to use a reasonable break (generally between twenty to thirty minutes) in addition to the employee's meal and rest breaks to express milk for a nursing child. The Town will provide this break at least once every three hours if requested by the employee. This provision applies to nursing mothers for up to three years following childbirth. The Town will make a reasonable effort to provide a room or location other than the restroom or toilet stall, within walking distance to the employee's work space, or other location in close proximity to work so that nursing mothers can express in private. An employee wishing to avail herself of this break is required to give the Town advance notice, preferably prior to the employee's return to work following the birth of her child, to allow the Town an opportunity to establish a location and to schedule leave time for multiple employees, if needed.

**Union Employees** – An employee who is a member of a collective bargaining unit is not covered by the Meal and Rest Breaks provisions set forth above and should refer to the applicable collective bargaining agreement.

### **503    *Time Records***

**Procedures** – An employee who is required to complete a time record or punch a time card must comply with the following procedures:

- ☐ All time worked, including the beginning and ending time, must be recorded;
- ☐ All paid and unpaid leaves of absence must be recorded;
- ☐ Employees must complete their own time record or punch their own time card;
- ☐ The time record must be submitted to the Department Head at the time specified;
- ☐ The time record must be verified by the Department Head;

**Correction of Errors** – An employee must immediately bring errors in time records to the attention of the employee's Department Head who will investigate the matter and make and initial the correction once the error has been verified.

**Falsification of Time Records** – An employee who, after investigation, is found to have falsified or altered a time record, or the time record of another employee, or completed a time record for another employee, will be subject to disciplinary action. In extenuating circumstances where an employee is not able to complete the employee's own time record, the Department Head may complete the time record on behalf of the employee.

## **504    *Expense Reimbursement***

**Policy Statement** – Upon proper authorization of the Town Board, an employee or Elected Official will be reimbursed for expenses associated with carrying out Town business, including, but not limited to, meals, lodging, mileage, parking, highway tolls, and training and membership fees. A voucher with all required documentation and corresponding receipts must be submitted within sixty days to the Town Clerk in order for the reimbursement to be processed. Meals, lodging, and incidental expenses will be reimbursed at the per diem rate established by the General Services Administration for that locality. Travel will be reimbursed at the current IRS mileage rate.

**Expense Approval** – Each employee is expected to exercise reasonable judgment when incurring charges that will be submitted for reimbursement. Prior approval from the Department Head or Town Board will be required for non-routine expenditures in excess of \$250. The Town Board reserves the right to reject reimbursement requests that are deemed unreasonable or inappropriate.

**Mileage** – An employee who is directed by the appropriate Department Head or supervisor to use the employee's own vehicle to conduct Town business will be reimbursed at the mileage rate established by the Town Board at the annual organizational meeting or the applicable collective bargaining agreement, as the case may be.

**Education and Training** – Upon proper authorization of the Town Board, an employee will be reimbursed for training courses that are directly related to the employee's present job. Employees must first seek approval from their Department Head before the request is presented to the Town Board.

**Required Membership Fees** – Upon proper authorization of the Town Board, an employee required to hold membership in a professional organization as part of the employee's job will be reimbursed for any required dues and/or fees.

**Association of Towns Meeting** – Upon proper authorization of the Town Board, an employee or Elected Official who attends the annual meeting conducted by the Association of Towns will be reimbursed for all reasonable expenses. Delegates to this meeting will be selected by the Town Board.

**Union Employees** – An employee who is a member of the Teamsters Local 317 Highway Unit is not covered by the Education and Training and Required Membership Fees provisions set forth above and should refer to the applicable collective bargaining agreement.

## **505    *Bonding***

**Insurance** – The Town will provide bonding insurance for an employee who is required to act in a fiduciary capacity.

## 506 **Vehicle Usage**

**Policy Statement** – All vehicles and related equipment of the Town of Caroline are owned and maintained for the purpose of conducting official business of the Town. Said vehicles and equipment may not be used for the personal use or private gain of any official or employee, nor for any other purpose which is not in the general public interest.

**Standards** – For the purpose of compliance with this policy, the following standards must be met at all times:

- ☐ Town vehicles and related equipment must remain under the general administrative jurisdiction and direction of the Department Head to which it is assigned.
- ☐ Town vehicles may be assigned to employees for specific purposes and tasks and may not be used for any unauthorized purpose nor to conduct personal, private, or non-Town related business.
- ☐ Town vehicles must always be operated in a safe and responsible manner and in compliance with all applicable motor vehicle and traffic laws in effect. Employees are responsible for any driving infractions or fines that result from their operation of Town vehicles, and must report them to their Department Head. The Town is responsible and will pay for any fines which would typically be levied against the owner of the vehicle.
- ☐ Any accident involving a Town vehicle, regardless of severity, must be reported immediately to the appropriate Department Head. The Department Head must file an accident report with the Town Supervisor's Office within twenty-four hours. Any claim against the Town for an accident shall be reported by an Incident Report submitted to the Town's insurer with key details (date, time, names of involved parties, location, and a written narrative of the incident), with photographs of damage and accident site, if pertinent. The accident will be immediately reported to the Town Supervisor and Insurer and personnel involved in accidents shall provide their testimony regarding the accident without assignment of responsibility.
- ☐ The use of a cell phone when driving on Town business must be compliant with all applicable laws and/or regulations.
- ☐ Town vehicles may not be used to transport persons who are not officials or employees of the Town of Caroline, nor material not related to the conduct of official Town business, without direct authorization by the appropriate Department Head or the Town Board.
- ☐ Town vehicles must always be maintained in a safe and secure condition when not in use, including being locked and/or under direct observation; and all keys maintained under controlled and authorized jurisdiction of the appropriate Department Head.
- ☐ No advertisements, signs, bumper stickers or other markings of a political or commercial nature may be displayed on Town vehicles at any time, except those of a limited community service nature which have been authorized by the Town Board.

## **507    *Driver's License / Insurance Requirements***

**Requirement** – An employee who is required to drive either a Town-owned vehicle or the employee's own personal vehicle to conduct business on behalf of the Town, must possess at the time of appointment, and must maintain throughout employment, a valid New York State driver's license. Proof of such license must be on file with the Town. If a personal vehicle is used to conduct business on behalf of the Town, the employee is responsible for ensuring liability insurance coverage meeting NYS requirements is appropriately maintained.

**Commercial Drivers** – An employee who operates a vehicle which requires a Commercial Driver's License (CDL) must maintain such license throughout employment. Proof of such license must be on file with the Town. In accordance with the federal Commercial Motor Vehicle Safety Act of 1986, a commercial driver must notify the Town within thirty days of a conviction of any traffic violation (except parking), no matter where or what type of vehicle the employee was driving.

**Loss of Driver's License** – An employee who is required to possess a driver's license or CDL license in order to perform certain job duties and responsibilities must immediately notify the appropriate Department Head in the event the license is suspended or revoked. The loss or suspension of the driver's license or CDL license may affect the employee's employment with the Town. The Town will utilize the NYS Department of Motor Vehicles' "License Event Notification Service" (LENS) to monitor activity that may negatively impact an employee's ability to maintain a required license.

**Insurability Standards** – It shall be solely the responsibility of a Town employee to meet or exceed all insurability standards, as established from time to time by the Town Board or the Town's insurance carrier, which are required for the use or operation of a Town vehicle. Any Town employee who has any of the following during the most recent three-year period will be deemed to have violated the insurability standard and will not be allowed to operate any Town vehicles:

- ☐ Conviction of DWI / DWAI
- ☐ Conviction of Reckless Driving
- ☐ Suspended or Revoked Drivers License
- ☐ Conviction of Speeding 25 MPH or more above the speed limit
- ☐ Conviction of a Drug or Alcohol offense which would materially affect one's ability to operate a vehicle
- ☐ Conviction of Hit and Run/Leaving the scene of an accident
- ☐ Conviction of Two or more at-fault accidents
- ☐ Conviction of Three or more moving violations in the past three years
- ☐ Conviction of failure to stop for stopped school bus
- ☐ Less than three years driving experience

Failure to maintain acceptable insurability standards may affect the employee's employment status with the Town.

## **508    *Supplies, Tools and Equipment, and Fuel Usage***

**Supplies** – All Town owned supplies must be used efficiently and not wasted. An employee may not use any Town supplies including, but not limited to, postage, paper, or office supplies for personal use.

**Tools and Equipment** – The employee must repair or replace any Town-owned tool or piece of equipment lost or damaged by the employee as a result of negligence or intentional misuse. An employee may not use any Town-owned tool or piece of equipment, including, but not limited to, fax machines, copiers and computer equipment for personal use. An employee may not use Town facilities, Town-owned tools or equipment to work on vehicles or trailers not owned by the Town.

**Fuel** – An employee may not use gasoline, fuel oil, or motor oil purchased by the Town for personal use.

## 509 Telephone / Cell Phone Usage

**Guidelines** – Telephone and cell phone usage must adhere to the following guidelines:

- ☐ An employee must answer promptly and speak in a clear, friendly and courteous tone.
- ☐ An employee must give the name of the department or office and one's own name. If the call is not for the employee who answers, the employee must transfer the caller to the correct party or take a message recording all pertinent information.
- ☐ If the call must be placed on hold, the employee who answered the call must return to the line frequently to confirm that the call is being transferred.
- ☐ During office hours, each employee is responsible for there being at least one employee in the department or office to answer telephones. If the department or office has a limited staff, arrangements must be made with another department or office for telephone coverage or an answering device must be in operation.
- ☐ An employee may make personal telephone calls, however, such calls should be limited in duration and frequency and must not interfere with the performance of the employee's job duties.
- ☐ An employee may not make or receive personal calls on a Town provided telephone or cell phone that will result in additional charges to the Town, except in an emergency and/or with prior approval from the Department Head. The employee must reimburse the Town for the cost of the call.
- ☐ The use of Town issued cell phones is monitored to ensure no excessive or inappropriate use occurs.
- ☐ The use of a cell phone while driving on Town business must be in compliance with all applicable laws.

**Personal Cell Phone / Electronic Device Usage** – Employees are permitted to carry personal cell phones during working hours but must adhere to the guidelines shown below. These guidelines do not apply to Town-owned cell phones that are issued for the specific use of an employee's job duties. Where the term cell phone is used in these guidelines, it shall be considered to include all types of portable electronic devices (e.g. iPads, Kindles, MP3 players, netbooks, etc.)

- ☐ Cell phones may not be used for personal purposes during work hours except on a limited basis as outlined above, unless the employee is on an authorized break or has permission from a supervisor.
- ☐ Use of a cell phone for personal text messaging during work hours is permissible only on a limited basis for family matters; texting must not interfere with the performance of the employee's job duties.
- ☐ No web browsing, music, movies, or all other uses of cell phones will be allowed during working hours.
- ☐ Personal cell phones that are broken, damaged or lost during working hours will not be replaced or paid for by the Town.

## **510 Computer Systems and Internet / E-mail Service**

**Policy Statement** – The purpose of this policy is to provide the following requirements for the use of Town-owned communication systems and equipment. Communication systems and equipment include but are not limited to computer systems, internet services, hardware, software, laptops, tablets, smart phones, cell phones, land-line phones, printers, facsimile machines, copiers, and scanning devices.

**Property** – All communication systems, equipment and files are the property of the Town. This includes the messages created, transmitted, and stored on such systems and equipment.

**Usage** – All communication systems and equipment are provided to an employee for the purpose of aiding that employee in the performance of the employee's job functions. All hardware and software used is to be supplied by the Town. No unauthorized or unlicensed hardware or software may be used or installed on any Town-owned computer. Any hardware or software necessary to perform job duties should be requested of the employee's Department Head.

**Town's Right to Monitor Communication Systems and Equipment** – There is no guarantee of privacy when using Town-owned communication systems and equipment. The Town reserves the right to enter, search, and monitor employee communication systems, equipment, and files, with or without advance notice, at any time in the normal course of business. Department Heads have the authority to inspect the contents of any Town communication systems, equipment, data/files, or electronic messages of their subordinates in the normal course of their supervisory responsibilities. In addition, the data/files of Department Heads and supervisors may be inspected by the Town Supervisor in the normal course of duty. This applies to all information, messages, and files that are created, transmitted, downloaded, received, stored, or deleted on such systems, including items that are password protected. Additionally, the Town has the authority to monitor and record each web site, chat room, and newsgroup visited on the Internet, and every electronic message and file transfer into and out of the Town's network or communication service. The Town may also monitor each employee's Internet activity and usage patterns to ensure that the Town's resources are being utilized for appropriate business purposes. Usernames and passwords are the property of the Town of Caroline. An employee may be required to disclose their username and password to a Department Head at any time.

**Personal Use** – Employees are responsible for exercising good judgment regarding the reasonableness of personal use. Any non-business use should be incidental and occasional and must conform to all standards set forth in this policy. Any personal use that interferes with the performance of an employee's work or burdens or compromises the effectiveness of the Town's network and equipment is strictly prohibited.

**Prohibited Uses** – In addition to the requirements set forth above, the following uses of Town-owned communication systems and equipment are prohibited. This list is meant to be illustrative, and not exhaustive.

- ☐ Any illegal activity;
- ☐ Threats or harassment;
- ☐ Slander or defamation;
- ☐ Transferring, viewing, displaying, storing, distributing, editing, archiving, or recording of any discriminatory message, image, or material, or any obscene, graphic, or suggestive message, image, or material;

- ☐ Activity that is in violation of any provisions set forth elsewhere in this Employee Handbook;
- ☐ Any unauthorized commercial activity;
- ☐ Accessing or attempting to access the data/files of another person, unless otherwise authorized as necessary in the course of performing Town business;
- ☐ Using or aiding in the unauthorized use of another person's password;
- ☐ Harming or destroying data/files (other than editing or deleting information in the normal course of one's job duties);
- ☐ Use of non-business software;
- ☐ Gambling;
- ☐ Use of entertainment software, such as games and puzzles;
- ☐ Installation or use of any hardware or software, not authorized by the Town;
- ☐ Installation or use of Town-owned hardware or software for any use that is not Town related business;
- ☐ Installation or use of any unauthorized or unlicensed hardware or software; and
- ☐ Installation of any software containing viruses.

### **Internet / Electronic Messaging Requirements**

**Eligibility** – Internet / electronic messaging service may be provided to employees who can demonstrate a work-related reason to have access. Electronic messages (e-messages) include but are not limited to e-mails, text messages, blogs, instant messages and posting to social networking or other sites. Approval must be given by the employee's Department Head or supervisor, subject to further approval of the Town Supervisor.

**Proper Usage** – In addition to the prohibitions set forth in the above paragraphs, any activities prohibited for any other general computer user are also prohibited with respect to Internet / e-messaging service usage. Employees are expected to communicate in a manner that will reflect positively on both themselves and the Town. Additionally, it is the responsibility of the employee to adhere to the following requirements:

- ☐ E-messaging must be used in a professional manner;
- ☐ Messages must not be threatening, insulting, obscene, abusive, or derogatory;
- ☐ Messages must not include content that constitutes workplace harassment including sexual harassment;
- ☐ E-messaging may not be used to transmit chain letters;
- ☐ Employees are responsible for saving any e-messages that they want to keep permanently;
- ☐ E-messages must not involve personal sales or solicitation or be associated with any for-profit outside business activity;
- ☐ E-messages must not involve personal not-for-profit solicitations;
- ☐ E-messages must not potentially embarrass the Town;
- ☐ Passwords should not be given to anyone other than the employee's Department Head or supervisor;
- ☐ Internet must not be used for the propagation of computer viruses;
- ☐ Internet must not be used for personal recreational activities (e.g. online games);
- ☐ Participation in non-business Internet chat groups, blogging or instant messaging is prohibited;
- ☐ As a security precaution, a workstation must not be left signed onto E-mail or the Internet while unattended for a long period of time (or overnight). Each employee must log off the network when not in use and power down at the end of the day;



- ❑ Employee Internet usage and e-messaging may be subject to filtering and may be monitored;
- ❑ Employees should be aware that deletion of any E-message or file does not truly eliminate that message or file from the system. All E-mail messages are stored on a central back-up system in the normal course of data management;
- ❑ Employees should ensure that no personal correspondence appears to be an official communication of the Town; and
- ❑ Employees may not use the Town's address for transmitting or receiving personal mail or use the Town's e-mail address for transmitting or receiving personal e-messages.

**Disclosure of Information** – Employees and Elected Officials must bear in mind that e-messages are not private and its source is clearly identifiable. E-messages may remain part of the Town's business records long after they are deleted. Electronic records, including e-messages, are public records subject to state Freedom of Information Law and will be disclosed upon request unless an exemption to disclose is found to apply. In general, e-messages are subject to discovery in civil lawsuits.

**Reliability** – Users should be aware that because the internet is a collection of computer networks with no single central authority over information consistency, data is subject to inaccuracies. The Town is not responsible for loss or damage to a user's data or for the reliability of information that is obtained via the Internet service. Also, this information must be used in accordance with applicable copyright laws.

**Reporting of Violations** – Anyone with information as to a violation of this policy is to report said information to the employee's Department Head. Once the employee's Department Head is informed of the violation, a formal process, consistent with this Employee Handbook and/or applicable law, will begin.

**Disciplinary Action** – Any employee who violates this policy will be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment.

## **511 Social Media**

**Policy Statement** – The purpose of the policy is to provide the framework for employee usage of Social Media, both inside and outside of the workplace. Social Media in general refers to internet based applications that allow for the creation and exchange of user generated content. Examples of Social Media include, but are not limited to: Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr, LinkedIn, Instagram, Pinterest, Flickr, Snapchat, YouTube, web blogs, and web based wikis whereby users can add, modify, or delete its content via a web browser.

**Usage During Working Hours** – Unless the use of Social Media is pertinent to Town business or authorized by a Department Head, employees are prohibited from using Social Media during working hours. This applies regardless of whether or not such usage occurs on Town-owned computers or communication equipment or a device personally owned by the employee.

**Usage During Meal and Rest Breaks** – Employees are responsible for exercising good judgment when using Town-owned computers or communication equipment to access Social Media sites while on a meal and rest break. The Town's right to monitor communication systems and equipment also applies to the use of Social Media if employees are using Town computers or communications systems.

**Posting Content on Social Media (regardless of point of access)** – The following uses of Social Media are prohibited. These terms pertain to content posted from computers or communication systems that are not Town owned, as well as those that are Town property.

This list is meant to be illustrative, and not exhaustive.

- ☐ Disclosing confidential or proprietary information pertaining to matters of the Town that is not otherwise deemed accessible to the general public under the Freedom of Information Law (Public Officers Law Article 6, §§84-90).
- ☐ Matters which will imperil the public safety if disclosed.
- ☐ Promoting or endorsing any illegal activities.
- ☐ Threatening, promoting, or endorsing violence.
- ☐ Directing comments or sharing images that are discriminatory or insensitive to any individual or group based on race, religion, gender, disability, sexual orientation, national origin, or any other characteristic protected by law.
- ☐ Knowingly making false or misleading statements about the Town, or its employees, services, or Elected Officials.
- ☐ Posting, uploading, or sharing images that have been taken while performing duties as an agent of the Town, or while wearing Town uniforms – the only exception to this rule is when it is directly pertinent to Town business and such posting, uploading, or sharing of images is authorized in advance by the appropriate Department Head.
- ☐ Representing that an opinion or statement is the policy or view of the Town, or of any individual acting in their capacity as a Town employee or official, or otherwise on behalf of the Town, when that is not the case.
- ☐ Posting anything in the name of the Town or in a manner that could reasonably be attributed to the Town without prior written authorization from the applicable Department Head.
- ☐ Using the name of the Town or a Town e-mail address in conjunction with a personal blog or Social Media account.

An employee's Social Media usage must comply with Town policies pertaining to but not limited to Non-Discrimination and Harassment, Confidentiality, Violence in the Workplace, and Substance Abuse. Any harassment, bullying, discrimination, or retaliation that would not be permissible in the workplace is not permissible between co-workers online, even if it is done after hours, outside of the workplace, using computers or communication systems that are not Town-owned.

Notwithstanding the above, nothing in this policy is designed to interfere with, restrain, or prevent employee communications regarding wages, hours, or other terms and conditions of employment. Nor is it meant to imply any restriction or diminishment of an employee's right to appropriately engage in protected concerted activity under law, including but not limited to NLRA Section 7 protected communications on non-work time. Town employees have the right to engage in or refrain from such activities as they choose.

**Reporting of Violations** – Anyone with information as to a violation of this policy is to report said information to the appropriate Department Head. Once the Department Head is informed of the violation, a formal process, consistent with this Employee Handbook and/or applicable law, will begin.

**Disciplinary Action** – An employee who violates this policy will be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment.

## **512    *Personal Appearance***

**Policy Statement** – It is the policy of the Town that each employee's dress, grooming and personal hygiene should be appropriate to the work situation.

**Standards** – An employee must maintain a personal appearance in a manner that reflects a good image to the public. Acceptable personal appearance is an ongoing requirement of employment with the Town. Radical departures from conventional dress or personal grooming and hygiene standards are not permitted. Employees should not wear suggestive attire, athletic clothing, shorts, tank tops, novelty buttons, and similar items of casual attire since this clothing does not present a businesslike appearance.

**Safety Clothing and Equipment** – An employee may be required to wear safety clothing and personal protective equipment as directed by the Department Head. If such is the case, the employee must comply with all safety requirements.

**Uniforms** – An employee may be required to wear a uniform as directed by the Department Head and/or as provided in a collective bargaining agreement. If such is the case, the employee must comply with all requirements.

## **513    *Solicitations/Distributions***

**Policy Statement** – It is the policy of the Town to prohibit solicitation and distribution on its premises by non-employees and to permit solicitation and distribution by employees only as outlined below.

**During Working Hours** – An employee may not distribute literature or solicit other employees during working hours without approval from the appropriate Department Head.

**During Meal and Rest Breaks** – With permission from the Department Head, an employee may distribute literature and solicit other employees during meal and rest breaks provided it does not interfere with the normal operations of the department, reduce employee efficiency, annoy fellow employees, or pose a threat to the Town's security.

## **514    *Disclosure of Information***

**Policy Statement** – The Town of Caroline promotes open government and complies with all requirements regarding public access to information. However, the Town recognizes that certain documents, records, and other information pertaining to Town operations and activities contain sensitive and confidential information about Town residents and others who do business with or on behalf of the Town and/or its residents. Such information cannot be photocopied, duplicated, discussed, or otherwise disclosed to any outside party except in accordance with the Freedom of Information Law or any other applicable laws and regulations. An employee is also prohibited from sharing or otherwise disclosing such information with other Town employees, family members or friends who do not have a Town business reason to have such information.

**Responsibility for Security of Confidential Information** – Elected Officials, Department Heads and employees are responsible for maintaining the security of documents, records and other information that fall within their department operations. Any request from outside parties for disclosure of information under the Freedom of Information Law or any other applicable laws or regulations must be submitted to the Town Clerk or other Records Access Officer so designated by the Town Board. The Records Access Officer shall be responsible for coordinating responses by the Town to Freedom of Information Requests. The Supervisor and Town Board shall be notified of all Freedom of Information Requests at the time that they are received and at the time that they are fulfilled.

**Employee Personal Information** – An employee should never provide a caller or visitor with confidential information regarding employees, including home addresses and personal telephone numbers. An employee should take the person's name and telephone number and inform the caller/visitor that a message will be forwarded to the employee.

**Technology Policy** – In an effort to protect New York State residents from identity theft, pursuant to the New York State Technology Law, the Town of Caroline has adopted a detailed technology policy which provides procedures to protect and secure private computerized information from being released and requires notification once the security system has been breached. Town officials and employees are required to familiarize themselves with this policy and comply with its requirements. Any breaches or potential breaches of the security of the system must immediately be reported to the Town Clerk.

## **515    *Visitors***

**Policy Statement** –Visitors are allowed for brief visits during work hours as long as such visits do not interfere with Town operations or interrupt other employees who are still working.

## **516    *Purchasing***

**Policy Statement** – The Town has established an official procurement policy that must be followed without exception. No employee shall make purchases for the Town, or use the Town's name to make purchases, unless so authorized by the Town Board and in adherence to the procedures set forth in the procurement policy.

## **517 Maintenance of Work Area**

**Policy Statement** – It is the policy of the Town that work areas must be kept safe, clean and orderly at all times.

**Employee Responsibility** – Employees are responsible for maintaining their work area in a safe and orderly fashion. As such, each employee should, at a minimum, do the following:

- ☐ Place coats, boots, umbrellas and other items of clothing in designated areas so that work areas are not unnecessarily cluttered;
- ☐ Consume food or beverages only in designated areas so that work areas are kept free of food and related litter;
- ☐ Report any existing or potential workplace hazards and safety violations to the Department Head;
- ☐ Abide by the smoking policy as specified in Section 908 of this Employee Handbook;
- ☐ Clean and store all tools and equipment and properly store any items, papers or confidential information in a manner prescribed by the Department Head.

**Supervisory Responsibility** – Supervisors are responsible for having their employees maintain their work areas according to the requirements of this policy. Each supervisor should:

- ☐ Make sure that aisles, floors and walls are free from debris and other unnecessary items;
- ☐ Monitor the facilities and equipment and issue maintenance requests where appropriate;
- ☐ Arrange for the removal of any items from the workplace that are not needed for the flow of business or the enhancement of employee comfort;
- ☐ Abide by and enforce the Town's smoking policy;
- ☐ Ensure the proper disposal of all trash and waste.

## **518 Personal Property**

**Policy Statement** – It is the policy of the Town to ask each employee to refrain from bringing unnecessary or inappropriate personal property to work. The Town recognizes that an employee may need to bring certain items to work. However, employees should take care to ensure that personal property brought to the workplace does not disrupt work or pose a safety risk to other employees.

**Personal Liability** – An employee is expected to exercise reasonable care to safeguard personal items brought to work. Except as otherwise provided by a collective bargaining agreement, the Town will not repair, replace or reimburse an employee for the damage or loss of the employee's personal property. An employee bringing personal property to the workplace does so at one's own risk.

**Security Inspections** – Desks, lockers and other storage devices may be provided for the convenience of employees, but remain the sole property of the Town. Accordingly, such storage devices, as well as any articles found within them, can be inspected by any agent or representative of the Town at any time, with or without notice. The inspection may be made in the presence of the employee. The Town is not responsible for loss or damage to personal property placed in such storage devices.

## **519 Town Property**

**Employee Responsibility** – An employee will be responsible for any item issued by the Town which is in the employee's possession and/or control, such as, but not limited to the following:

- ☐ Equipment, including Protective Equipment
- ☐ Identification Badges
- ☐ Keys
- ☐ Uniforms
- ☐ Books or other Reference Materials, including this Employee Handbook

**Return of Property** – Except as otherwise provided by a collective bargaining agreement, all Town property must be returned to the Town before the employee's last day of work.

## **520 Unauthorized Work**

**Policy Statement** – An employee may not perform work for any entity other than the Town during the employee's authorized work hours, or claim that Town work was done when such is not the case.

## **521 Outside Employment**

**Policy Statement** – It is the policy of the Town that an employee may engage in outside work as long as such outside work does not interfere with the employee's performance standards, pose an actual or potential conflict of interest, or compromise the interests of the Town.

**Guidelines** – The following guidelines have been established for an employee who engages in outside work.

- ☐ An employee will be judged by the same performance standards and will be subject to the Town's scheduling demands, regardless of any existing outside work requirements.
- ☐ If the Town determines that an employee's outside work interferes with the performance or the ability to meet the requirements of the Town as they are modified from time to time, the employee may be required to terminate the outside employment if the employee wishes to remain employed by the Town.
- ☐ No Town equipment, supplies, or other material may be used by an employee on other than Town work.

☐ Outside employment that does or may constitute a conflict of interest is prohibited. An employee may not receive any income or material gain from individuals outside of the Town for materials produced or services rendered while performing the employee's Town job.

☐ An employee may not work on outside employment during any period which the employee is regularly scheduled to work for and is paid by the Town.

☐ A Town employee who engages in outside work must notify the person for whom the work is being performed that such work is being done on the employee's own time and that the employee is not representing the Town while performing such work.

**Employee Responsibility** – A Town employee who wishes to engage in outside work is responsible for ensuring that the above guidelines are maintained. Questions should be directed to the Department Head.

**Union Employees** – In addition to the above guidelines, an employee who is a member of Teamsters Local 317 Highway bargaining unit may be subject to rules and/or guidelines regarding outside employment as set forth in the collective bargaining agreement or rules of the department to which the employee is assigned.

## 600 ABSENCE POLICIES

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### 601 Attendance

Except as otherwise provided by a collective bargaining agreement, the following procedure shall apply regarding absence from work:

**Tardiness** – An employee must be ready and able to work at the time the employee is scheduled to begin work. In the event an employee is unable to report to work at the scheduled time, the employee must notify the employee's Department Head before the employee's scheduled starting time or as soon thereafter as possible. The reason for tardiness and the expected time of arrival must be indicated to the Department Head.

**Daily Notification** – In the event an employee is unable to report to work, the employee must notify the employee's Department Head each day of the absence and state the reason for the absence. In the event the absence was pre-authorized, this requirement will be waived.

**Scheduled Absences** – Requests for scheduled time off, such as the use of vacation leave and personal leave, must be approved by the Department Head in advance. The use of vacation leave and personal leave by Highway Department personnel must be in accordance with the Teamsters Local 317 Highway Unit collective bargaining agreement.

**Unscheduled Absences** – An employee who is unable to report to work must personally contact the employee's Department Head before the employee's scheduled starting time or as soon thereafter as possible. The employee must speak directly with the Department Head, indicating the reason for the absence and when the employee expects to return to work. Asking another person to call in on the employee's behalf is not permitted. Notification requirements may be waived in cases of emergency.

**Unexcused Absences** – Notification of an absence to an employee's Department Head does not automatically mean the absence is authorized. Any time off from work that is without approval of an employee's Department Head is considered an unexcused absence. An unexcused absence is without pay and may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

**Early Departure** – In the event an employee must leave work during the workday, the employee must seek permission from the employee's Department Head prior to leaving.

**Leaving the Premises** – An employee must obtain prior approval from the employee's Department Head to leave an assigned worksite during working hours due to a non-work related reason. An employee who leaves an assigned worksite during the workday due to business reasons must notify the employee's supervisor in accordance with department policy.

**Documentation of Absences** – An employee who has frequent absences may be required to provide documentation of the reason for any future absences.



## **602    *Jury Duty Leave***

**Jury Leave** – In the event a full-time or part-time employee is required to perform jury duty on a day the employee is scheduled to work, the employee will receive paid jury duty leave. Such leave will not be subtracted from any of the employee's leave credits. An employee is obligated to notify the Commissioner of Jurors that the Town is paying the employee's full pay during jury duty. If the employee receives a jury stipend from the courts, such amount must be reimbursed to the Town. An employee can collect and keep any mileage or parking expense reimbursement that may be issued by the court system for performing jury duty.

The Town shall pay a temporary or seasonal employee up to \$40 of the employee's wages for the first three days the employee serves jury duty if on those days the employee is scheduled to work for the Town. After the first three days, the employee may be eligible for a stipend issued by the court system if the employee continues to serve on jury duty.

**Notification of Jury Duty** – When an employee receives notice to report for jury duty, the employee must immediately submit a copy of the notice to the employee's Department Head.

**Return to Duty** – In the event the employee is released from jury duty on a given day and there are two or more hours remaining in the employee's scheduled workday, the employee must report to work. The employee will be allotted time to return home and prepare for work.

**Accrual of Benefits** – The Town will continue to provide health insurance benefits for an eligible employee during the jury leave. Vacation leave, sick leave and holiday benefits will continue to accrue during jury duty leave.

## **603    *Military Leave and Military Leave of Absence***

**Military Leave (New York State Law)** – This section refers only to a paid leave for military service under New York State Law and does not affect an employee's entitlement to leave needed for military service under federal statute. The Town of Caroline recognizes the importance of the Military Reserve and National Guard, and will permit any employee the use of military leave to perform ordered military duty or required training. The Town will grant such leave with pay for up to twenty-two workdays or thirty calendar days in a calendar year, whichever is greater. Such military leave beyond the twenty-two workdays or thirty calendar days in a calendar year will be unpaid, however accumulated vacation leave may, at the employee's option, be used at any time during the leave. In accordance with applicable New York State law, the employee may keep all pay received for military service.

**Military Leave of Absence (Federal Law)** – An unpaid leave of absence for a period of up to the federal statutory limits will be granted to an employee to serve in any of the Armed Forces of the United States. The employee's accumulated vacation leave may, at the employee's option, be used at any time during such leave of absence.

**Leave For Military Spouses (New York State Law)** – In accordance with NYS Labor Law §202-i, the Town will grant an unpaid leave of absence of up to ten days to an employee (who works an average of twenty hours per week) whose spouse is a member of the armed forces of the United States, National Guard, or reserves who has been deployed during a period of military conflict, to a combat theater or combat zone of operations. This leave shall

only be used when the employee's spouse is on leave from such deployment. This does not preclude the employee's option to use available paid leave upon approval of the employee's Department Head.

#### **604    *Leave for Cancer Screening***

**Policy** – The Town of Caroline complies with New York State Civil Service Law which entitles all Town employees excused leave to undertake screening for breast cancer (under Section 159-b) and prostate cancer (under Section 159-c). This excused leave will not be charged against any available sick, vacation, personal or other leave accruals. The excused leave allowed under this policy is unpaid; however, this does not preclude an employee's option to use available paid leave for this same purpose.

**Allowance** – An employee will be allowed four hours of excused leave per year for the purpose of undergoing a screening procedure for breast cancer, and four hours of excused leave per year for the purpose of undergoing a screening procedure for prostate cancer (male employees only). Such excused leave will be accrued as of January 1 each year. If the employee does not exercise his/her rights to the excused leave, those hours are not carried forward to the next year. The allowed excused leave may include the travel time to and from the appointment and any subsequent follow up consultation visits. In addition, the allowed excused leave may be staggered throughout the year until the maximum allowance has been reached.

**Scheduling** – An employee must receive prior approval from the employee's Department Head to take excused leave for this purpose. The request for excused leave should be submitted to the Department Head in writing a minimum of two days in advance. The Department Head will have total discretion in the approval of this excused leave, but will not unreasonably deny such request.

**Documentation Requirements** – If an employee uses unpaid excused leave for a cancer screening procedure under this policy, documentation must be provided to the Department Head from the health care provider verifying that the absence from the workplace was for cancer screening. If an employee uses paid leave for a cancer screening procedure, the provisions of the applicable paid leave policy (e.g. sick, personal, vacation) will apply; there is no requirement in such a case to provide specific documentation regarding cancer screening.

#### **605    *Leave for Blood and/or Bone Marrow Donations***

**Policy** – The Town of Caroline complies with New York State Labor Law §§202-a and 202-j which entitle Town employees who work an average of twenty hours or more per week to time off from work to donate blood and/or to undergo a medical procedure to donate bone marrow. This leave of absence will not be charged against any available sick, vacation, personal, compensatory or other leave accruals. The leave allowed under this policy is unpaid, however, this does not preclude an employee's option to use available paid leave for these purposes.

**Blood Donation Allowance** – An employee may take unpaid leave of up to three hours per year under this policy. Such leave will be accrued as of January 1 each year. If the employee does not exercise his/her rights to this leave, those hours are not carried forward to the next year. The allowed leave may include the travel time to and from the appointment. The Town may require the employee to provide proof of blood donation.

**Bone Marrow Donation Allowance** – An employee may take unpaid leave in order to donate bone marrow as well as to recover from the procedure and for resulting medical care. The employee's physician will determine the amount of leave required by the employee. However, the leave may not exceed 24 work hours unless additional leave is agreed to by the Town. There is no limitation on how frequently an employee may take such leave. The Town may require the employee to provide proof of bone marrow donation.

**Scheduling** – An employee must receive prior approval from the employee's Department Head to take leave for this purpose. The request for leave should be submitted to the Department Head in writing a minimum of two days in advance. The Department Head will have total discretion in the approval of this leave, but will not unreasonably deny such request.

## **606    *Bereavement Leave***

**Eligibility** – Full-time employees who are members of the Teamsters Local 317 Highway Unit are provided with paid bereavement leave in accordance with the collective bargaining agreement. Town personnel employed on a part-time, temporary, or seasonal basis are not eligible for paid bereavement leave.

## **607    *Volunteer Firefighters / Emergency Responders***

**Policy** – In the event that a volunteer firefighter and/or Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) associated with a volunteer fire company is called to a working fire or emergency during the employee's actual scheduled working hours, the Town of Caroline shall compensate the employee at the employee's regular straight time hourly rate of pay for only those emergency hours which overlap the employee's scheduled hours. It is expected that the employee shall respond to a fire or medical emergency only when that individual's services are necessary. Whenever possible, the employee shall request leave from their supervisor before departing from the workplace. The employee shall not depart from the workplace knowing that such departure may cause or contribute to unsafe conditions at the job site or damage to Town property. If after responding to a fire or medical emergency, such employee's presence is not required, the employee shall immediately return to the employee's work assignment, provided there is time remaining in the employee's shift. In the event that a volunteer firefighter and/or EMT is required to respond to a working fire or emergency during the eight hours immediately preceding the start of the employee's shift, the employee shall receive compensatory time off during the upcoming shift equal to the actual time spent resolving the fire or medical emergency. In no event shall the employee receive compensatory time off for time greater than their shift assignment for that day. Any hours compensated under this provision shall be counted as hours paid, but shall not apply to any calculations for premium pay. The employer shall pay and provide compensatory time off only for time spent responding to a fire or medical emergency. The employer may designate an employee as

exempt from this provision if the nature of the employee's job responsibilities is such that the employee's sudden absence could create a hazard or unduly disrupt Town business. The employer reserves the right to verify any claim made by an employee under this provision. Employees who are members of Teamsters Local 317 Highway Unit should refer to the bargaining unit contract for volunteer firefighters/emergency responders release provisions.

## **608    *Family and Medical Leave Policy***

**Policy Statement** – It is the policy of the Town of Caroline to grant a full-time employee a maximum of twelve workweeks (defined by the employee's normal workweek) of unpaid leave in any twelve-month period for certain family and medical reasons. The twelve-month period is calculated as the twelve month period measured forward from the date of the employee's first leave usage.

**Granting of Leave of Absence** – The granting and duration of each leave of absence will be determined by the Town Board in conjunction with applicable federal and state laws, including Civil Service Law Sections 71, 72 and 73, as applicable, and the *(Name of Civil Service Rules)*. If and when any employee meets the eligibility requirements under the *Family and Medical Leave Act*, the provisions of that Act will then take precedence over this policy.

**Types of Leave** – The following types of leaves of absence will be considered:

□     **Sick Leave of Absence** – Employees who are unable to work because of a serious health condition or disability may be granted a sick leave of absence. This type of leave includes disabilities caused by pregnancy, childbirth, or other related medical conditions. The Town requires certification of an employee's need for sick leave, both before the leave begins and on a periodic basis thereafter, by the employee's health care provider.

In addition to leave provided under this policy, employees may be eligible for a leave of absence pursuant to Civil Service Law Section 71. Section 71 provides that **covered** employees shall be entitled to a leave of absence for at least one cumulative year (unless found to be permanently disabled) when disabled due to an occupational injury or disease as defined in the Workers' Compensation Law. This leave runs concurrently with the designated Family and Medical Leave. Employee should consult with their Department Head for further details regarding this provision.

□     **Parental Leave of Absence** – Female employees, when not disabled by pregnancy or childbirth (see above), and male employees may be granted a parental leave of absence to care for a child upon birth or upon placement for adoption or foster care.

□     **Family Care Leave of Absence** – Employees may be granted a family care leave of absence for the purpose of caring for a child, spouse or parent who has a serious health condition. The Town requires certification of the family member's serious health condition, both before the leave begins and on a periodic basis, by the family member's health care provider.

**Eligibility** – To be eligible, an employee must meet the following requirements:

☐ The employee must have completed at least one year of full-time, continuous service during the previous twelve months prior to the date leave commences.

☐ Spouses who both work for the Town of Caroline are allowed a combined maximum of twelve workweeks of leave for the birth or care of a newborn child, adoption or foster care of a child and to care for such newly placed child, or the serious health condition of a child, spouse or parent, during any twelve month period.

**Definitions** – For the purpose of this policy, the following definitions will apply:

☐ **Serious Health Condition** will mean and refer to an illness, injury, impairment, or physical or mental condition that involves inpatient care in a hospital, hospice, or residential medical care facility, or any subsequent treatment in connection with such inpatient care; or continuing treatment by a health care provider, including, but not limited to:

A period of incapacity of more than three consecutive calendar days and any subsequent treatment or period of incapacity that also involves continuing treatment by a health care provider;

A period of incapacity due to pregnancy or prenatal care;

A period of incapacity or treatment for such incapacity due to a chronic serious health condition;

A period of incapacity which is permanent or long-term due to a condition for which treatment may not be effective; or

A period of absence to receive multiple treatments, including any period of recovery, by a health care provider, or by a provider of health care services under orders of or on referral by a health care provider, for restorative surgery after an accident or other injury or for a condition that would likely result in a period of incapacity of more than three consecutive calendar days in the absence of medical intervention or treatment.

**Health Care Provider** will mean and refer to a doctor of medicine or osteopathy who is authorized to practice medicine or surgery by the State in which the doctor practices; or any other person defined in the FMLA regulations capable of providing health care services.

**Family Member** will mean and refer to:

**Spouse** – means husband or wife. For purposes of this definition, husband or wife refers to the other person with whom an individual entered into marriage as defined or recognized under state law for purposes of marriage in the State in which the marriage was entered into or, in the case of a marriage entered into outside of any State, if the marriage is valid in the place where entered into and could have been entered into in at least one State. This definition includes an individual in a same-sex or common law marriage that either: (1) was entered into in a State that recognizes such marriages; or (2) if entered into outside of any State, is valid in the place where entered into and could have been entered into in at least one State.

**Parent** – biological parent or an individual who stands or stood in *loco parentis* to an employee when the employee was a child as defined directly below. This term does not include an employee's parents "in law".

**Child** – biological, adopted or foster child, a stepchild, a legal ward, or a child of a person standing in *loco parentis*, who is either under age eighteen, or age eighteen or older and "incapable of self-care because of a mental or physical disability". Persons who are "*in loco parentis*" include those with day-to-day responsibilities to care for and financially support a child or, in the case of an employee, who had such responsibility for the employee when the employee was a child. A biological or legal relationship is not necessary.

**Notification Requirements** – If the need for leave is foreseeable, the employee must give notice to the Department Head at least thirty calendar days prior to the commencement date of the unpaid leave. This notice may be written or verbal, however, additional medical certification may be required for final approval of the absence as qualifying under this policy. The failure of an employee to give thirty days' notice of foreseeable leave with no reasonable excuse for the delay may result in the delay of the employee taking the leave until thirty days from the date of notice. When the need for leave is unforeseeable, notification must be provided as soon as possible and practical.

**Status Reports** – The employee must periodically update the Department Head as to the employee's status and intent to return to work.

**Medical Certification** – The employee may be required to produce a medical certification issued by a health care provider which supports the need for a leave under this policy. When required, the employee must provide a copy before the leave begins, or if the leave was unforeseeable, no later than fifteen calendar days from the date the certification was requested. Failure to submit medical certification may jeopardize the employee's eligibility for an unpaid leave of absence and/or the ability to return to work. The medical certification must include:

- ☐ The date the medical condition began;
- ☐ The probable duration of the medical condition;
- ☐ Pertinent medical facts; and,
- ☐ An assertion that the employee is unable to perform the employee's essential job functions or that the employee is needed to care for a family member for a specified period of time.

*The Town of Caroline reserves the right to request a second opinion by another health care provider. The Town will pay for the second opinion. In the event a conflict occurs between the first and second opinion, the Town may, again at its own expense, obtain a third opinion from a health care provider approved jointly by the Town and the employee. This third opinion will be final and binding.*

**Leave for the Birth, Adoption or Foster Care Placement of a Child** – Leave for the birth of a child or the placement of a child for adoption or foster care must conclude within twelve months from the date of the birth or placement.

**Certification for Adoption/Foster Care** – An employee must produce proper certification from the appropriate agency for an unpaid leave for the adoption or foster care of a child.

**Employment Restrictions During Leave of Absence** – While on an approved leave, the employee may not be employed by another employer during the same hours that the employee was normally scheduled to work for the Town of Caroline.

**Benefits During a Leave of Absence** – For the purpose of this policy, the following will apply:

☐ **Use of Accrued Paid Leave Credits** – An employee taking leave for the **birth, adoption or foster placement of a child or to care for a spouse, child or parent with a serious health condition** must first use all vacation leave credits which will be included in the maximum twelve weeks of leave. The substitution of paid leave for unpaid leave for these types of leave does not extend the twelve-week period.

For leaves taken due to the **employee's own serious health condition**, the employee must first use all sick leave and vacation leave credits, which will be included in the maximum twelve weeks of leave. However, in the event that the paid leave credits available are greater than the maximum twelve-week period, an employee may use paid leave credits to extend the leave of absence beyond the twelve-week period, **up to a maximum of one year**. If, after the completion of the one-year leave of absence, the employee is medically unable to return to work (as determined by a health care provider) and the employee has leave credits remaining, the Town Board may authorize an extension of the employee's leave of absence until such benefits are exhausted. However, **job reinstatement** beyond the one-year leave of absence **is not automatic** and will be dependent upon job availability, in accordance with Civil Service Law Sections 71, 72 and 73, as applicable, and the *Tompkins County Civil Service Rules*.

☐ **Accrual of Paid Leave Credits** – An employee will continue to accrue vacation and sick leave and receive holiday pay during the portion of the leave that is paid. **Paid leave is defined as leave during which the employee continues to use accumulated paid vacation and sick leave.** After all such paid leave is exhausted, the remaining leave of absence is unpaid. An employee will not earn paid vacation or sick leave or receive holiday pay for any holidays that may occur during an unpaid leave of absence.

☐ **Medical Insurance** – During the period of authorized leave under this policy, up to a maximum of twelve weeks, an employee's eligibility status for medical insurance coverage will not change. All employee contributions (if any) must be paid on a timely basis in order to maintain the continuous coverage of benefits. Contributions will be at the same level as if the employee was working. Coverage will cease if payments are not made within a thirty-calendar day grace period of the due date. Premium payments or policy coverage are subject to change. In the event the employee fails to return to work after the maximum twelve week period of leave under this policy has been exhausted, the employee may continue coverage with responsibility for payment of the full premium amount under COBRA provisions (see Section 804). In addition, the Town may recover the premium that it paid for maintaining the coverage during any period of the unpaid leave except for the following circumstances:

The continuation, recurrence, or onset of a serious health condition of the employee or the employee's eligible family member with proper medical certification; or,

Circumstances beyond the employee's control, such as: parent chooses to stay home with a newborn child who has a serious health condition; employee's spouse is unexpectedly transferred to a job location more than 75 miles from the employee's work-site; the employee is laid off while on leave.

**Return to Work** – The following conditions for returning to work will apply:

- ☐ **Job Restoration** – At the conclusion of the leave of absence, (except for leaves beyond a one-year period) the employee, provided that the employee returns to work immediately following such leave, will be restored to the position the employee held when the leave began, or an equivalent position with equivalent benefits, pay and working conditions. For an authorized leave of absence beyond the one-year period, job restoration will be dependent upon job availability, in accordance with Civil Service Law Sections 71, 72 and 73, as applicable, and the Tompkins County Civil Service Rules.
- ☐ **Medical Statement** – Before resuming employment, an employee must submit a statement from the employee's health care provider indicating that the employee is able to return to work either with or without restrictions. The Town reserves the right to have the employee examined by a physician selected and paid for by the Town to determine the employee's fitness to return to work either with or without restrictions. Failure to return to work when required may be considered a voluntary termination.
- ☐ **Early Return** – An employee who intends to return to work earlier than anticipated must notify the Department Head at least five business days prior to the date the employee is able to return. The Department Head shall in turn notify the Town Supervisor.
- ☐ **Extension of Unpaid Leave of Absence** – An employee who wants an extension of the leave previously requested must notify the employee's Department Head at least two business days from the date the change occurred which necessitates the change in leave time. The Town Board reserves the right to approve all leave extensions.

**Statement of Compliance** – The Town of Caroline now offers benefits that mirror the benefits offered under the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA). **The Town of Caroline does not regularly employ fifty or more employees. Under that circumstance, Town employees are not eligible for leave under the FMLA.** If at some point the Town of Caroline should employ fifty or more employees, eligible employees will be afforded leave in compliance with FMLA.



## **700 COMPENSATION**

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### **701 *Wage and Salary***

**Rate of Pay** – An employee's rate of pay will be established by the Town Board.

**Merit Increases** – An employee may receive a pay increase based upon the employee's past performance. The merit increase will be granted at the discretion of the Town Board.

**Overtime** – A Department Head may require an employee to work additional hours beyond the employee's normal workday and workweek. An employee must receive prior approval from the employee's Department Head or supervisor before working additional hours. In accordance with the Fair Labor Standards Act, an FLSA non-exempt employee will be paid one and one-half times the employee's regular hourly rate of pay for all authorized time worked over forty hours in a given workweek. FLSA non-covered and exempt employees will not be paid for overtime nor receive "compensatory time" for any hours worked in excess of the employee's normal workday or workweek.

**Union Employees** – An employee who is a member of the Teamsters Local 317 Highway bargaining unit is not covered by the Wage and Salary provisions set forth above and should refer to the collective bargaining agreement.

### **702 *Pay Period and Check Distribution***

**Payroll Period** – Normally, hourly employees are paid on a bi-weekly basis and salaried employees are paid on a weekly basis. An hourly employee's paycheck will be based on the amount earned during the preceding payroll period, while a salaried employee's paycheck will be based on the amount earned in the current payroll period. Certain employees may be paid on a different schedule as established by the Town Board.

**Payday** – Under normal circumstances, paychecks will be issued on a Wednesday for hourly employees and on a Friday for salaried employees. In the event the payday is a designated holiday, paychecks will be distributed on the previous workday.

### **703    *Payroll Deductions***

**Statutory Deductions** – The required portion of an employee's pay for federal and state taxes, and any other deduction required by law, will be deducted from the employee's paycheck. Such deductions will be noted on the paycheck.

**Voluntary Deductions** – Payroll deductions provided through the Town's payroll system will be made from an employee's paycheck when authorized by the employee. Such deductions will be noted on the paycheck.

**Distribution** – The Bookkeeper will deliver paychecks to the Department Heads for further distribution to employees.

**Direct Deposit** – The Town provides a direct deposit option for employees. If elected, the paycheck will be deposited directly into the employee's account at the designated financial institution. The employee must submit a signed, written authorization for direct deposit to the Bookkeeper.

**Authorized Check Release** – The Department Head will not release a paycheck to anyone other than the employee unless the employee has submitted a signed, written authorization with the Bookkeeper.

### **704    *Deferred Compensation Plan***

**Summary** – The Town of Caroline has established a Deferred Compensation Plan whereby a portion of an employee's salary may be voluntarily withheld and invested. The money saved is paid out to the employee at a later date, generally during retirement years. Neither the deferred amount nor earnings on investments are subject to current Federal and State Income Taxes. Taxes become payable when the deferred income plus earnings are distributed to the employee, presumably at retirement when the tax bracket may be lower. A description of the plan may be obtained from the Bookkeeper.

## 800 EMPLOYEE BENEFITS

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Holiday, Vacation Leave, Sick Leave, Personal Leave, and Medical Insurance benefits herein defined will be effective as of January 1, 2020.

### 801 *Holidays*

**Designated Holidays** – The Town of Caroline currently observes the following ten holidays: New Year's Day, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Veterans' Day, Thanksgiving Day, Day after Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day, and two Floating Holidays.

**Eligibility** – Full-time and part-time employees are eligible for holiday pay, paid at the expected average number of hours worked each week divided by five. Temporary or seasonal employees are not eligible for paid holidays.

**Holiday Observance** – In the event a designated holiday occurs on a Saturday, the holiday will be observed on the preceding Friday. In the event a designated holiday occurs on a Sunday, the holiday will be observed on the following Monday. If a holiday occurs on an unscheduled day during Highway Department summer hours, the Highway Superintendent will designate an alternate day off for department employees.

**Floating Holiday** – A full-time employee is credited with two floating holidays on the employee's first day of employment. On each subsequent January 1, the employee is granted two floating holidays to be used during the calendar year. An employee must receive prior approval from the employee's Department Head to take the floating holiday.

### 802 *Vacation Leave*

**Eligibility** – A full-time employee (Class A) is eligible for paid vacation leave in accordance with this policy. A part-time, temporary, or seasonal employee is not eligible for paid vacation leave but may be allowed to take time-off without pay provided the employee has prior approval from the Department Head.

**Allowance** – A full-time employee will be credited with paid vacation leave in accordance with the vacation schedule below. Vacation leave is based on the average number of hours an employee is normally scheduled to work each week. An employee may take vacation leave only after it has been credited. The employee will be credited on a monthly basis for the vacation leave credits that were earned during the previous month.

Applicable Employment Period	Vacation Leave
Zero through three years	One week
Fourth year and beyond	Two weeks

**Continuous Service** – Continuous Service shall mean uninterrupted service. An authorized leave of absence without pay, or a resignation followed by reinstatement within one year following such resignation, shall not constitute an interruption of continuous service. However, the duration of the absence from work without pay will be excluded from the computation of length of continuous service. Vacation is earned only for monthly pay periods during which an employee is in full pay status for at least fifteen working days during such monthly pay period.

**Scheduling** – An employee must receive prior approval from the employee's Department Head to take vacation leave. Vacation leave credits may not be used in increments of less than one hour. The Department Head will have total discretion in the approval of vacation leave.

**Accumulation** – An employee may accumulate vacation leave credits to a maximum of two times their annual allotment. For example, an employee with three years of service may accumulate up to two weeks of vacation leave credits.

**Holiday During Scheduled Vacation** – In the event a designated holiday occurs on an employee's normal workday and the employee is on paid vacation, the employee will receive holiday pay for the day and the employee's vacation leave credits will not be charged for that day.

**Union Employees** – An employee who is a member of a collective bargaining unit is not covered by the Vacation Leave provisions set forth immediately above and should refer to the applicable collective bargaining agreement.

## **803 Sick Leave**

**Eligibility** – Full-time and part-time employees are eligible for paid sick leave in accordance with this policy. Temporary or seasonal employees are not eligible for paid sick leave.

**Allowance** – A full-time or part-time employee will be credited with one day of paid sick leave each month. The employee will be credited on the first day of the month after the sick leave has been earned. A sick leave day is based on the average number of hours an employee is normally scheduled to work each week divided by five.

**Accrual During Leaves of Absence** – An employee will be credited with sick leave credits while on a paid leave of absence, but not while on an unpaid leave of absence.

**Notification of Sick Leave** – In the event an employee must take sick leave, the employee must notify the Department Head prior to the employee's scheduled reporting time. The notification must be made personally to the Department Head, unless the Department Head authorizes the use of an answering device for this purpose. Unless an extended sick leave absence has been authorized, the employee must notify the employee's Department Head each day of the absence. These procedures must be followed to receive paid sick leave.

**Proper Use of Sick Leave** – Sick leave is provided to protect an employee against financial hardship during an illness, injury, or medical procedure. An employee may use sick leave credits for a personal illness, injury, or medical/dental appointment that inhibits the employee's ability to work. Sick leave credits may not be used in increments of less than one hour. An employee may take sick leave only after it has been credited.

**Family Sick Leave** – An employee may use up to five days of sick leave credits annually for family illness or injury if the employee must provide direct care to an immediate family member. Such leave will be subtracted from the employee's accumulated sick leave credits. For purpose of family sick leave, "immediate family member" will mean the employee's parent, spouse or child, including step-child and foster child.

**Accumulation** – An employee may accumulate sick leave credits. It is important to recognize that paid sick leave can provide income protection and continued medical insurance coverage in the event the employee is unable to work for a long period of time due to illness or injury. Therefore, each employee should take care to manage the use of sick leave to ensure adequate time is available should such a need arise.

**Medical Verification** – The Town may require medical verification of an employee's absence if the Town perceives the employee is abusing sick leave, or has used an excess amount of sick leave, or when an employee is absent for more than two consecutive workdays due to an illness or injury. The Town reserves the right to require medical verification of an employee's ability to resume work duties, with or without restrictions, following an absence due to an injury or illness resulting in physical impairment(s). If an employee is on an authorized leave of absence, the provisions of the Family and Medical Leave Policy in this Employee Handbook shall apply.

**Abuse of Sick Leave** – An employee who, after investigation, is found to have abused the use of sick leave or falsifies supporting documentation, will be subject to disciplinary action.

**Union Employees** – An employee who is a member of a collective bargaining unit is not covered by the Sick Leave provisions set forth immediately above, **except** for Proper Use of Sick Leave, Medical Verification, and Abuse of Sick Leave, and should refer to the applicable collective bargaining agreement.

## **804    *Personal Leave***

**Eligibility** – Full-time and part-time employees are eligible for paid personal leave in accordance with this policy. Temporary or seasonal employees are not eligible for paid personal leave.

**Allowance** – A full-time or part-time employee will be permitted to convert three accumulated days of sick leave into paid personal leave on an annual basis. This conversion will be permitted to occur on January 1 of each year. A personal leave day is based on the average number of hours an employee is normally scheduled to work each week divided by five. An employee may take personal leave only after it has been converted from earned sick leave.

**Proper Use of Personal Leave** – An employee may use personal leave credits to conduct personal business which cannot be conducted outside of normal working hours, non-emergency medical and dental appointments, and for personal emergencies. In no event may personal leave credits be used on the scheduled workday immediately prior to or following a holiday or vacation; in lieu of sick leave or other leaves of absences, except to extend bereavement leave. Personal leave credits may not be used in increments of less than one hour.

**Scheduling** – An employee must receive prior approval from the employee's Department Head to take personal leave. The Department Head will have total discretion in the approval of personal leave.

**Accumulation** – An employee may not accumulate personal leave credits. Any personal leave credits remaining unused at close of business on the last day of the calendar year will be converted back to sick leave.

**Separation of Employment** – An employee whose employment with the Town is terminated for any reason, including retirement, will not receive cash payment for unused personal leave.

**Union Employees** – An employee who is a member of a collective bargaining unit is not covered by the Personal Leave provisions set forth immediately above, **except** for Proper Use of Personal Leave and Scheduling, and should refer to the applicable collective bargaining agreement.

## **805    *Disclosure of Insurance Benefits***

**Summary** – The following is a brief description of the insurance benefits currently offered by the Town to eligible employees. Eligibility for benefits is dependent upon a variety of factors, including employment classification and length of service. The description of the benefits provided is only an overview. The plan documents or specific government regulation provide a full description of the specific benefit.

**Plan Administrator** – The Bookkeeper serves as the Administrator of the Town's benefits plans. The Administrator is responsible for all communications and disclosures concerning Town benefits and is available to answer questions concerning the benefit plans. A description of each of the plans may be obtained from the Bookkeeper.

**Plan Documents** – Benefits are administered according to applicable government regulation, benefit plan documents, insurance carrier master policy, or Town policy. Should there be a discrepancy between the information presented in this Employee Handbook and the benefit plan document, the Town Board has the discretionary authority to determine eligibility for benefits and to interpret the plan's terms. The Town Board is responsible for compliance with all applicable laws and regulations. The Town Board may, at its discretion, change carriers and/or offer alternative insurance plans for non-union employees. Changes in carriers and/or plans for union employees shall be in accordance with collective bargaining negotiations and/or procedures.

**Changes in Benefits** – Any benefit offered by the Town to non-union employees or Elected Officials is subject to change or discontinuance by resolution of the Town Board. Changes in benefits for union employees shall be in accordance with collective bargaining negotiations and/or procedures.

**Waiver of Benefits** – An employee who is eligible to participate in any of the available insurance plans but who elects not to participate must sign an appropriate waiver of enrollment form.

**Enrollment Information** – The Bookkeeper will provide the employee with the enrollment forms and assist with the administrative and operational aspects of the various insurance plans. Enrollment in a benefit plan is not automatic. Employees must complete the

appropriate enrollment forms and applicable payroll deduction authorizations in order to receive benefits.

**Changes in Status** – Employees whose status changes from full-time to part-time are notified of the changes to their Town benefits. This notification contains all legally mandated information regarding applicable benefits, including COBRA health insurance continuation. An employee must immediately notify the Bookkeeper in the event that the employee has a change in marital or family status that may affect coverage, such as marriage, divorce, legal separation, death of a spouse or dependent, acquiring or losing a dependent, changes in address.

**Beneficiary** – Under some of the Town's benefit plans, each employee must designate a beneficiary for the employee's death benefits. This designation must be made in writing and on the form provided by the plan Administrator.

## **806 Medical Insurance**

**Eligibility, Employees** – Employees who meet the following employment status criteria (under "Employee Benefit Categories") are eligible for the Town's health insurance plans. Full-time employees who are members of the Teamsters Local 317 Highway Unit are provided with medical insurance benefits in accordance with the applicable collective bargaining agreement. All other Town employees may participate in the medical insurance plan offered by the Town at their own expense. In order to be eligible for the Town contribution, employees must average the required work hours per week for a three month period; this will be verified quarterly after benefits begin. The Town's premium contribution for family and individual plans will be established by Town Board Resolution.

### **Employee Benefit Categories**

(Class A) Employees working 30 or more hours/week are eligible for the Town's health insurance for individual and family policies.

(Class B) Employees working 20 or more hours/week and less than 30 hours/week are eligible for the Town's health insurance for individual and family policies.

(Class C) Employees working less than 20 hours/week are eligible for the Town's health insurance for individual and family policies at their own expense.

**Eligibility, Elected Officials** - The Town will make available medical insurance coverage to each Full-time Elected Official. *For purposes of this section, "Full-time Elected Official" shall be defined as the Superintendent of Highways and the Town Clerk, provided they continuously work a minimum of thirty hours per week.*

Full-time Elected Officials who elect to receive medical insurance coverage through the Town will be required to submit weekly time records (as salaried employees) in accordance with Section 503 of this Employee Handbook. If an Elected Official works an average of less than thirty hours per week on an ongoing basis, or fails to submit their time records in accordance with Section 503 of this Employee Handbook, the Town Board reserves the right to discontinue the Town's contribution to the premium payment.

All other Elected Officials may enroll in the Town's medical insurance plan at their own expense.

**Health Reimbursement Arrangement** - The Town will provide Class A and B Employees and Full-time Elected Officials covered by the Town's Health Insurance Plan a Health Reimbursement Arrangement (HRA) to cover Out-of-Pocket medical expenses only, with the annual amount established by Town Board Resolution. HRA funds are Town funds provided annually; the balance of HRA funds in each account at the end of the year remain with the Town.

**Pre-Tax Insurance Premiums** – The employee's contribution towards the health insurance premium will be paid with pre-tax dollars. Deductions are taken from the employee's paycheck before federal, state, and social security taxes are calculated. This reduces the employee's taxable income and increases net take-home pay.

**Vision and Dental Coverage Option** – Employees and Elected Officials are eligible for Vision and Dental coverage. The Town will contribute 50% of the premium for Class A and B employees. Class C employees are responsible for 100% of the premium.

**Changes in Premium Contributions** – The amount of the insurance premium an employee or Elected Official is required to contribute is subject to change by resolution of the Town Board. The Town Board will provide a two-month written notice of such change.

## **807    *Continuation of Health Insurance Benefits (COBRA/NYS Continuation Coverage)***

**Summary** – The federal Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1985 (COBRA) offers “qualified beneficiaries” the right to continue existing health insurance coverage, completely at their own expense, under certain qualifying conditions. **All required premiums and administrative fees must be paid in a timely manner in order for coverage to continue.**

**NYS Continuation Coverage** – For purposes of this policy, references to COBRA will be considered to incorporate the requirements for “Continuation Coverage” set forth in NYS Insurance Law, which provides enhancements over and above the provisions of COBRA.

**Eligibility** – An individual is a “qualified beneficiary” if the individual is covered under a group health plan on the day before a qualifying event as either a covered employee or Elected Official, the spouse of a covered employee or Elected Official, or a dependent child of a covered employee or Elected Official. A child who is either born to or who is placed for adoption with the covered employee or Elected Official during a period of COBRA coverage is also a “qualified beneficiary” entitled to COBRA coverage.

**Period of Coverage** – COBRA coverage is in effect for a period of **up to thirty-six months**, following any qualifying event. The COBRA requirements do not put any limit on the number of times a qualified beneficiary may be entitled to COBRA continuation coverage.

**Qualifying Events** – If a qualified beneficiary loses coverage under a group health plan as a result of a “qualifying event,” the qualified beneficiary is entitled by COBRA to the continuation of group health insurance coverage at the qualified beneficiary's own expense. Any of the following circumstances are considered to be qualifying events:

- ☐ Termination of the covered employee's (or Elected Official's) employment for any reason except gross misconduct, or the covered employee's loss of eligibility to participate due to reduced work hours.
- ☐ When a covered employee is on a leave of absence due to military service obligations.



- ☐ Death of a covered employee or Elected Official.
- ☐ Divorce or legal separation from a covered employee or Elected Official.
- ☐ A covered dependent ceases to be a "dependent child" under the health insurance plan.
- ☐ A covered dependent child's loss of eligibility to participate in the insurance plan due to the covered employee or Elected Official becoming covered by Medicare as a result of total disability or choosing Medicare in place of the insurance plan at age sixty-five.

**Change in Beneficiary Status** – An employee or Elected Official must notify the Bookkeeper within sixty calendar days of a legal separation or divorce or when a dependent is no longer eligible for insurance due to the age limitations or educational status requirements established by the insurance plan. The Town will not be responsible for any loss of coverage resulting from failure by the employee or Elected Official to give notification of such an event.

**Enrollment Information** – The Bookkeeper will provide the employee or Elected Official with the enrollment forms and assist with the administrative and operational aspects of COBRA. **Enrollment is not automatic. The employee or Elected Official must complete the necessary enrollment forms and return all COBRA forms to the Bookkeeper within the time indicated.** If the required forms or premium payments are not received at the time specified, medical insurance coverage will cease.

## **808    *Workers' Compensation Benefits***

**Coverage** – The Town will make available Workers' Compensation benefits, including payment of medical costs and replacement of lost wages up to the regulated maximum, to each eligible employee who suffers an accidental injury arising out of and in the course of employment, as determined by the Workers' Compensation Board. Eligibility for coverage is determined by applicable Workers' Compensation regulations.

**When Coverage Begins** – Coverage will begin on the employee's first day of employment, provided the employee meets all eligibility requirements.

**Premium Payment** – The Town will pay the full premium for Workers' Compensation coverage for each eligible employee.

**Reporting of Injury** – The employee must report any accidental injury arising out of and in the course of employment to the Department Head immediately after the occurrence of the injury. The Department Head will notify the Town Supervisor's Office who will complete and submit the required forms.

**Medical Insurance Coverage** – The Town will continue medical insurance coverage for the employee in accordance with the provisions of the Family and Medical Leave Policy in this Employee Handbook.

**Union Employees** – An employee who is a member of the Teamsters Local 317 Highway Unit should refer to the collective bargaining agreement for information about use of sick leave credits and continuation of medical insurance during an on-the-job disability.

## **809    *Unemployment Benefits***

**Coverage** – The Town will make available unemployment benefits to each employee ruled eligible for benefits under New York State labor law.

## **810    *Social Security***

**Summary** – Social Security benefits are available for retirement, survivor's benefits, and medical costs under qualifying conditions, as determined by the Federal Social Security Administration Office. Employee contributions to Social Security (FICA) are matched by the Town.

## **811    *The New York State Employees' Retirement System***

**Summary** – The Town will make available the New York State Employees' Retirement System pension plan to each eligible employee and Elected Official. An employee or Elected Official is eligible for service retirement benefits after completion of the required minimum period of creditable public sector service (either five or ten years depending on tier.)

**Mandatory Membership** – A full-time employee who began employment with the State of New York or with a participating employer, on or after July 27, 1976, must join the Retirement System. An employee who is appointed to a permanent, full-time position on a probationary basis must join the Retirement System on the effective date of the probationary appointment. Employment is considered full-time unless:

- ☐ The employee works less than thirty hours per week, or less than the standard number of hours for full-time employment as established by the employer for this position; or
- ☐ The annual compensation for the position is less than the State's minimum wage multiplied by 2,000 hours; or
- ☐ Duration of employment for less than one year or employment on less than a 12 month per year basis; or
- ☐ The position is either provisional or temporary under Civil Service Law.

**Optional Membership** – An employee or Elected Official who is not mandated to join may join the Retirement System. Such employee or Elected Official will be informed, in writing, that the employee or Elected Official may join the Retirement System and will acknowledge receipt of such notice by signing a copy thereof and returning it to the Bookkeeper. If the employee or Elected Official elects to join the Retirement System, the employee or Elected Official must complete the application form and return it to the Bookkeeper.

**Waiver of Enrollment** – An employee who is not mandated to join the Retirement System, and who chooses not to join, must complete a waiver of enrollment form.

## 900 COMPLIANCE POLICIES

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### 901 *Equal Employment Opportunity*

**Policy Statement** – The Town of Caroline is an Equal Opportunity Employer. The Town does not unlawfully discriminate on the basis of race, religion, color, sex, age, national origin, citizenship, disability, marital status, pregnancy, application to or present membership in the uniformed services, veteran status, arrest or conviction record, genetic information, genetic predisposition or carrier status, sexual orientation, domestic violence victim status, or any other protected class or status. Likewise, the Town prohibits employees, Elected Officials, vendors, suppliers, visitors, customers, and any other non-employee from discriminating against Town employees based on these protected groups. Discrimination based on any of the above is strictly prohibited. This policy applies to all terms and conditions of employment, including, but not limited to, hiring, placement, compensation, promotion, transfer, training, leave of absence, and termination.

**Notification of Policy Violations** – An employee should immediately report any perceived violation of this policy to the employee's Department Head. In the event the employee is unable to discuss this matter with the Department Head, the complaint should be reported in writing to the Town Supervisor or any member of the Town Board. All complaints of discrimination will be investigated discreetly and promptly. This procedure is not intended to restrict an individual's rights to make a complaint to a federal or state agency. An employee who reports discrimination will not suffer adverse employment consequences as a result of making the complaint.

**Prohibition Against Retaliation** – Retaliation against any employee who brings a written or verbal complaint of discrimination or who assists or participates in the investigation of such a complaint is strictly prohibited. The Town will not tolerate or permit adverse treatment of employees because they report discrimination or provide information related to such complaints, or who otherwise oppose an unlawful employment practice. Any employee who participates in the procedure may do so without fear of retaliation. Violations of this policy may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment.

**Application of Policy** – This policy is for Town use only and does not apply in any criminal or civil proceeding. This policy shall not be construed as a creation of higher legal standard of safety or care in an evidential sense with respect to third party claims. Violations of this policy will only form the basis for Town administrative action. Violations of law will form the basis for civil and criminal sanctions in a recognized judicial setting.

### 902 *The Americans with Disabilities Act*

**Policy Statement** – It is the policy of the Town of Caroline to comply fully with the provisions and spirit of the Americans with Disabilities Act and ensure equal employment opportunity for all qualified persons with disabilities. All employment practices, such as recruitment, hiring, promotion, demotion, layoff and return from layoff, compensation, job assignments, job classifications, paid or unpaid leave, fringe benefits, training, employer-sponsored activities, including recreational or social programs, will be conducted so as not to discriminate unlawfully against persons with disabilities. This also extends to prohibit unlawful discrimination based on a person's relationship or association with a disabled individual. Qualified individuals with disabilities are entitled to equal pay and other forms of compensation (or changes in compensation) along with work assignments, classifications, seniority, leave, and all other forms of employment compensation or advantage.

**Reasonable Accommodation** – Reasonable accommodation is available to all qualified employees and applicants with disabilities, unless it imposes an undue hardship on the Town and/or operations of a program. The Town may require medical documentation or other information necessary to verify the existence of the disability and the need for accommodation. Following receipt of an accommodation request, the Town will meet with the requestor to discuss and identify the precise limitations resulting from the disability and the potential accommodation(s) that the Town might make to help overcome those limitations.

The Town will determine the feasibility of the requested accommodation considering various factors, including, but not limited to the nature and cost of the accommodations(s), and the accommodation's impact on Town operations.

**Pre-Employment Inquiries** – Pre-employment inquiries are made only regarding an applicant's ability to perform the duties of the position and not any disabling condition. Pre-employment physical exams will only be requested when in compliance with the law. The Town of Caroline intends to base employment decisions on principles of equal employment opportunity and nondiscrimination, as defined by law.

**Notification of Policy Violations** – An employee should immediately report any perceived violation of this policy to the employee's Department Head. In the event the employee is unable to discuss this matter with the Department Head, the complaint should be reported in writing to the Town Supervisor or any member of the Town Board. All complaints of possible violations will be investigated discreetly and promptly. An employee who reports a possible violation will not suffer adverse employment consequences as a result of making the complaint. This procedure is not intended to restrict an individual's rights to make a complaint to a federal or state agency.

**Application of Policy** – This policy is for Town use only and does not apply in any criminal or civil proceeding. This policy shall not be construed as a creation of higher legal standard of safety or care in an evidential sense with respect to third party claims. Violations of this policy will only form the basis for Town administrative action. Violations of law will form the basis for civil and criminal sanctions in a recognized judicial setting.

## **903    *Non-Discrimination and Harassment***

**Policy Statement** – It is the policy of the Town of Caroline to promote a productive work environment and to prohibit conduct by any Elected Official or employee (as defined in Section 103 of the Employee Handbook) that disrupts or interferes with another's work performance or that creates an intimidating, offensive, or hostile work environment. In keeping with this goal, the Town is committed to educate Elected Officials and employees in the recognition and prevention of workplace discrimination and harassment, including sexual harassment, and to provide an effective means of eliminating such discrimination and harassment from the workplace. In short, the Town does not tolerate any form of discrimination or harassment, including sexual harassment, and will take all steps necessary to prevent and stop the occurrence of such activity in the workplace. The accompanying complaint procedure is intended to provide an effective mechanism for reporting, and resolving promptly, complaints of discrimination and harassment, including sexual harassment, without any risk of repercussion to any individual covered by this policy who, in good faith, files such complaint.

**Applicability of Policy** – This policy applies to all Elected Officials, Appointed Members of Boards and Commissions, employees, supervisors, and Department Heads, whether

employed full or part-time, temporary or seasonal, paid or unpaid interns, volunteers, independent contractors and those employed by companies contracting to provide services in the workplace. Depending on the extent of the Town's exercise of control, this policy may be applied to the conduct of non-Town employees with respect to harassment of Town employees in the workplace.

Prohibited harassment (including sexual harassment) is not limited to the physical workplace itself. It can occur while Elected Officials, employees or other individuals covered by this policy are traveling for Town business or at Town sponsored events or parties. Calls, texts, emails, and social media usage by employees or other individuals covered by this policy can constitute workplace harassment, even if they occur away from the workplace premises, on personal devices, or during non-work hours.

**Prohibited Activity** – No Elected Official, employee or other individuals covered by this policy shall engage in any of the following:

- **Harassment:** Unwanted, unreasonable verbal or physical conduct directed toward or affecting another person that disturbs, frightens, insults, threatens, intimidates, demeans, or offends that other person, that continues or is repeated after a request to cease, and that: 1) has the purpose or effect of creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment; 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. Harassment includes offensive or inappropriate images or written materials or electronic communications (e.g. letters, e-mail, text messages, or graffiti) as well as bias-based harassment and sexual harassment (see below).
- **Bias-Based Harassment:** Harassment that denigrates, offends or shows hostility or aversion toward an individual on the basis of sex, (including gender identity and the status of being transgender), sexual orientation, race, color, national origin, religion, disability, pregnancy, age, marital status, veteran status, military status, arrest or conviction record, genetic information or predisposing characteristics, domestic violence victim status, or any other protected status. Bias-based harassment includes, but is not limited to: epithets, slurs or negative stereotyping; threatening, intimidating, or hostile acts; denigrating jokes; and written, electronic, or graphic material that denigrates, ridicules, objectifies, or shows hostility, aversion or contempt toward an individual or group and that is placed on walls, bulletin boards, lockers or elsewhere on or in the Town's premises, vehicles, or equipment, or is circulated in the workplace, including through electronic means.
- **Discrimination:** The Town of Caroline is an Equal Opportunity Employer. The Town does not unlawfully discriminate on the basis of sex, (including gender identity and the status of being transgender), sexual orientation, race, color, national origin, religion, disability, pregnancy, age, marital status, veteran status, military status, arrest or conviction record, genetic information or predisposing characteristics, domestic violence victim status, or any other protected status. Unlawful discrimination based on membership in these categories is prohibited by applicable federal, state, or local laws. This policy applies to all terms and conditions of employment, including, but not limited to, hiring, placement, assignments, compensation, promotion, transfer, training, leave of absence, and termination.

**Definition of Sexual Harassment** – This policy places special attention on the prohibition of sexual harassment in the workplace.

Sexual harassment is a form of sex discrimination and is unlawful under federal, state, and (where applicable) local law. Sexual harassment includes harassment on the basis of sex, sexual orientation, self-identified or perceived sex, gender expression, gender identity and the status of being transgender.

Sexual harassment includes unwelcome conduct which is either of a sexual nature, or which is directed at an individual because of that individual's sex when:

- ☐ 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, even if the reporting individual is not the intended target of the sexual harassment;
- ☐ Such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of employment; or
- ☐ Submission to or rejection of such conduct is used as the basis for employment decisions affecting an individual's employment.

A sexually harassing hostile work environment includes, but is not limited to, words, signs, jokes, pranks, intimidation or physical violence which are of a sexual nature, or which are directed at an individual because of that individual's sex. Sexual harassment also consists of any unwanted verbal or physical advances, sexually explicit derogatory statements or sexually discriminatory remarks made by someone which are offensive or objectionable to the recipient, which cause the recipient discomfort or humiliation, or which interfere with the recipient's job performance.

Sexual harassment also occurs when a person in authority tries to trade job benefits for sexual favors. This can include hiring, promotion, continued employment or any other terms, conditions or privileges of employment. This is also called "quid pro quo" harassment.

Any individual covered under this policy who feels harassed should report such behavior so that any violation of this policy can be corrected promptly. Any harassing conduct, even a single incident, can be addressed under this policy.

**Examples of Sexual Harassment** - The following describes some of the types of acts that may be unlawful sexual harassment and that are strictly prohibited:

- ☐ Physical acts of a sexual nature, such as:
  - Touching, pinching, patting, kissing, hugging, grabbing, brushing against another employee's body or poking another employee's body;
  - Rape, sexual battery, molestation or attempts to commit these assaults.
- ☐ Unwanted sexual advances or propositions, such as:
  - Requests for sexual favors accompanied by implied or overt threats concerning the target's job performance evaluation, a promotion or other job benefits or detriments;
  - Subtle or obvious pressure for unwelcome sexual activities.
- ☐ Sexually oriented gestures, noises, remarks or jokes, or comments about a person's sexuality or sexual experience, which create a hostile work environment.

- ❑ Sex stereotyping occurs when conduct or personality traits are considered inappropriate simply because they may not conform to other people's ideas or perceptions about how individuals of a particular sex should act or look.
- ❑ Sexual or discriminatory displays or publications anywhere in the workplace, such as:
  - Displaying pictures, posters, calendars, graffiti, objects, promotional material, reading materials or other materials that are sexually demeaning or pornographic. This includes such sexual displays on workplace computers or cell phones and sharing such displays while in the workplace.
- ❑ Hostile actions taken against an individual because of that individual's sex, sexual orientation, gender identity and the status of being transgender, such as:
  - Interfering with, destroying or damaging a person's workstation, tools or equipment, or otherwise interfering with the individual's ability to perform the job;
  - Sabotaging an individual's work;
  - Bullying, yelling, name-calling.

**Prohibition Against Retaliation** – Unlawful retaliation can be any action that could discourage an employee or other individual covered under this policy from coming forward to make or support a claim of discrimination or harassment, including sexual harassment. Adverse action need not be job-related or occur in the workplace to constitute unlawful retaliation (e.g., threats of physical violence outside of work hours).

Unlawful retaliation against any employee or other individual covered under this policy who has engaged in "protected activity" is strictly prohibited by this policy as well as (where applicable) federal, state, and local law. Protected activity occurs when a person has:

- ❑ made a complaint of harassment or discrimination, either internally or with any anti-discrimination agency;
- ❑ opposed harassment or discrimination by making a verbal or informal complaint to management, or by simply informing a supervisor or management of harassment or discrimination;
- ❑ reported that another employee has been subjected to harassment or discrimination;
- ❑ encouraged a fellow employee to report harassment or discrimination;
- ❑ participated in a workplace investigation regarding harassment or discrimination;
- ❑ testified or assisted in a proceeding involving harassment or discrimination under the Human Rights Law or other anti-discrimination laws.

Even if the alleged discrimination or harassment does not turn out to rise to the level of a violation of law, the individual is protected from retaliation if the person had a good faith belief that the practices were unlawful. However, the retaliation provision is not intended to protect persons making intentionally false charges of discrimination or harassment.

**Reporting of Discrimination and Harassment (including Sexual Harassment)** – Reports of alleged discrimination and/or harassment (including sexual harassment) or retaliation may be made verbally or in writing. A form for the submission of a written complaint is attached to this policy and individuals are encouraged to use this form. If an individual chooses to

submit a verbal complaint, such complaint will be recorded by the receiver of this complaint on this form. Employees are encouraged to report incidents of discrimination, harassment (including sexual harassment), or retaliation to their Department Head and/or the Town Supervisor as soon as possible after their occurrence. If the employee's Department Head is believed to be involved in the incident, or if the employee is not comfortable in addressing the incident with the Department Head, the report should be made directly to the Town Supervisor. If the Town Supervisor is believed to be involved in the incident or the employee is not comfortable reporting the incident to the Town Supervisor, the employee should report the incident to a member of the Town Board. Employees who believe they have been discriminated against or harassed and would like to obtain guidance as to how to proceed in filing a complaint, should contact their immediate supervisor, their Department Head, the Town Supervisor, or any member of the Town Board. Employees who work during off-hours are encouraged to contact their supervisor, their Department Head, the Town Supervisor, or any member of the Town Board at home if these individuals do not work during the employee's shift. Non-employees are encouraged to report incidents of alleged discrimination and harassment (including sexual harassment) to either the Department Head of the department where services are being provided, the Town Supervisor, or a member of the Town Board.

**Supervisory Responsibility** – Supervisory personnel must make every effort to ensure a work environment that is free from discrimination and harassment, including sexual harassment. Any Department Head or supervisor who receives a complaint or information about suspected prohibited activity (as outlined above), observes behavior that may constitute prohibited activity, or for any reason suspects that prohibited activity is occurring, is required to report such suspected prohibited activity to the Town Supervisor, or any member of the Town Board.

In addition to being subject to corrective action or discipline if they engaged in prohibited activity themselves, supervisory personnel will be subject to discipline for failing to report suspected prohibited activity or otherwise knowingly allowing prohibited activity to continue. Supervisory personnel will also be subject to corrective action or discipline for engaging in any form of retaliation prohibited by this policy.

**Investigation of Complaint** – The Town Supervisor, in consultation with the Town Board, will determine the appropriate individual(s) to conduct the investigation. All complaints pursuant to this policy, whether reported in verbal or written form, will be investigated promptly, thoroughly, and in as impartial a manner as possible. The investigation will normally include conferring with the parties involved and any named or apparent witnesses. All employees are required to cooperate in an investigation, if so directed. All persons involved, including complainants, witnesses and alleged perpetrators will be accorded due process to protect their rights to a fair and impartial investigation. All relevant materials, including all electronic communications, documents, emails or phone records that are relevant to the allegations will also be considered. A written report will be prepared documenting the results of the investigation. The individual who reported the complaint and the individual about whom the complaint was made will be notified of the final determination.

**Confidentiality** – Complaints of discrimination and harassment, including sexual harassment, will be handled and investigated promptly and in a manner that is as impartial and confidential as possible. In no event will information concerning a complaint be released by the Town to third parties or to anyone within the Town employment who is not directly involved in the investigation or handling of the complaint unless otherwise required by law.

**Corrective Action and Discipline** – Any employee who is found to have violated any aspect of this policy will be subject to corrective or disciplinary action, up to and including termination



of employment, as provided by Town operating procedures, including Civil Service Law Section 75, or a collective bargaining agreement. Any Elected Official who violates this policy will be subject to remedial action as provided for and/or allowed under NYS Public Officers Law, as well as any other applicable statutes. Any vendor, supplier, visitor, customer, or other non-employee who violates this policy will be subject to remedial action, to the extent that the Town is empowered to take such action.

**Legal Protections and External Remedies** – Nothing in this policy should be construed as in any way limiting employees' rights to file a formal complaint with the appropriate state or federal agencies responsible for administering anti-discrimination laws. Complainants should be aware that time restrictions may apply and need to be considered. Aside from the Town's internal process, employees may also choose to pursue legal remedies with the following governmental entities at any time.

#### New York State Division of Human Rights (DHR)

The Human Rights Law (HRL) applies to employers in New York State with regard to harassment and protects employees and non-employees regardless of immigration status. A complaint alleging violation of the Human Rights Law may be filed either with DHR or in New York State Supreme Court. Complaints with DHR may be filed any time within one year of the harassment. If an individual did not file at DHR, they can sue directly in state court under the HRL, within three years of the alleged discrimination. An individual may not file with DHR if they have already filed an HRL complaint in state court. Filing an internal complaint with the Town does not extend the time limits to file with DHR or in court. The one year or three years is counted from date of the most recent incident of harassment. An attorney is not needed to file a complaint with DHR, and there is no cost to file with DHR. DHR will investigate the complaint and determine whether there is probable cause to believe that discrimination has occurred. Probable cause cases are forwarded to a public hearing before an administrative law judge. If discrimination is found after a hearing, DHR has the power to award relief, which varies but may include requiring the Town to take action to stop the harassment, or redress the damage caused, including paying monetary damages, attorney's fees and civil fines.

DHR's main office contact information is: NYS Division of Human Rights, One Fordham Plaza, Fourth Floor, Bronx, New York 10458, (718) 741-8400. Contact DHR at (888) 392-3644 or visit [dhr.ny.gov/complaint](http://dhr.ny.gov/complaint) for more information about filing a complaint. The website has a complaint form that can be downloaded, filled out, notarized and mailed to DHR. The website also contains contact information for DHR's regional offices across New York State.

#### United States Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC)

The EEOC enforces federal anti-discrimination laws, including Title VII of the 1964 federal Civil Rights Act (codified as 42 U.S.C. § 2000e et seq.). An individual can file a complaint with the EEOC anytime within 300 days from the harassment. There is no cost to file a complaint with the EEOC. The EEOC will investigate the complaint and determine whether there is reasonable cause to believe that discrimination has occurred, at which point the EEOC will issue a Right to Sue letter permitting the individual to file a complaint in federal court. The EEOC does not hold hearings or award relief but may take other action including pursuing cases in federal court on behalf of complaining parties. Federal courts may award remedies if discrimination is found to have occurred. If an employee believes that he/she has been discriminated against at work, he/she can file a "Charge of Discrimination." The EEOC has district, area, and field offices where complaints can be filed. Contact the EEOC by calling 1-800-669-4000 (1-800-669-6820 (TTY)), visiting their website at [www.eeoc.gov](http://www.eeoc.gov)

or via email at [info@eeoc.gov](mailto:info@eeoc.gov). If an individual filed an administrative complaint with DHR, DHR will file the complaint with the EEOC to preserve the right to proceed in federal court.

### Local Protections

Many localities enforce laws protecting individuals from sexual harassment and discrimination. An individual should contact the county, city or town in which they live to find out if such a law exists.

### Contact the Local Police Department

If the harassment involves physical touching, coerced physical confinement or coerced sex acts, the conduct may constitute a crime. Contact the local police department.

## DISCRIMINATION AND HARASSMENT (INCLUDING SEXUAL HARASSMENT)

This form is to be used to document any complaint of alleged discrimination and/or harassment, including sexual harassment, as outlined in the policy. Once you complete this form, please submit it to the appropriate individual as outlined in the policy. If you are more comfortable reporting the allegations verbally or in another manner, refer to your policy for guidance. Once you submit this complaint, the Town will commence an investigation pursuant to its policy.

Name of Complainant:	Department:
Name(s) of individual engaging in alleged discrimination and/or harassment including sexual harassment:	Department:
Describe the specific incident of discrimination and/or harassment alleged. Describe each incident separately, including dates, times and locations. If you cannot remember exact dates, times or locations, provide approximations. Use additional pages if necessary.	
Are there others who may have witnessed this alleged discrimination and/or harassment? If so, provide their name(s).	

Are there others who may have experienced similar alleged discrimination and/or harassment by the individual named above? If so, provide their name(s).

Did you tell anyone about your experience after the alleged incident(s)? If yes, provide their name(s).

Did you speak to the individual named in this report about the alleged discrimination and/or harassment? If yes, what was his or her response?

Complainant Signature\*: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Print Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Job Title: \_\_\_\_\_

\*I understand that the Town of Caroline prohibits any individual from retaliating against me for filing a complaint and that I am to report such retaliation pursuant to the Town's policy.

Signature of Person Receiving Complaint: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Print Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Job Title: \_\_\_\_\_

**Policy Statement** – The Town of Caroline desires to maintain a safe and secure workplace for all Town employees, customers, contractors, vendors and the general public. The Town of Caroline is committed to a zero tolerance for workplace violence maintaining an environment free of violence, threats of violence, harassment, intimidation and other disruptive behavior. Workplace Violence is defined as any physical assault, threatening behavior or verbal abuse occurring in the workplace by employees of the Town of Caroline, the general public, contractors, vendors and customers. It includes but is not limited to, beating, stabbing, shooting, rape, psychological trauma such as threats, obscene phone calls and harassment of any nature such as stalking, shouting or swearing. Implementation of this policy will include compliance with the NYS Workplace Violence Prevention Act in accordance with NYS Labor Law Section 27-b.

**Goals and Objectives** – The objectives of this policy are as follows:

- ☐ Reduce the potential for violence in and around the workplace.
- ☐ Encourage and foster a work environment that is characterized by respect and healthy conflict resolution.
- ☐ Mitigate the negative consequences for employees who experience or encounter violence while at work.
- ☐ Protect employees or citizens who are working on Town property and who may be experiencing threats of violence from anyone, either an employee or a non-employee; and protect employees who are working off Town property or in non-Town facilities.

**Definitions:** Prohibited acts of workplace violence include threats, intimidation, physical attack or property damage.

- ☐ A threat is the expression of intent to cause physical or mental harm. Such an expression constitutes a threat without regard to whether the person communicating the threat has the ability to carry it out, and without regard to whether the threat is made on a present, conditional or future basis. In determining whether the conduct constitutes a threat, including whether the action was intended as a threat, the totality of the circumstances will be considered.
- ☐ A physical attack is unwanted or hostile physical contact such as hitting, pushing, kicking, shoving, throwing of objects or fighting. It includes but is not limited to beating, stabbing, shooting, rape, psychological trauma such as threats, obscene phone calls, harassing communications, both oral, written or electronic and harassment of any nature such as stalking, shouting or swearing.
- ☐ Intimidation includes but is not limited to stalking or engaging in actions intended to frighten, coerce or induce stress.
- ☐ Property Damage is intentional damage to property owned by the Town, its employees, vendors or visitors to a Town operated worksite, campus or facility.
- ☐ A weapon is any object used to attack or intimidate another person.

**The Town of Caroline Prohibits the Following:**

- ☐ Possession, sale or use of any weapon while in a Town owned or leased building. This shall not apply to police or peace officers, charged with the execution of the laws of the state, when acting in the discharge of their official duties if authorized by the law or the Sheriff. This policy prohibits any individual from bearing or having in his or her possession either openly or concealed, any firearm, gun, explosive device or substance, lethal or debilitating chemical or gas, or any dangerous or deadly weapon or

instrument of any description, including, but not limited to a handgun, pistol, revolver, rifle, shotgun, switchblade, gravity knife, pilum ballistic knife, metal knuckle knife, dagger, taser or imitation pistol.

- ☐ Any act or threat of violence made directly or indirectly which endangers or threatens the safety of employees, customers, contractors, vendors and the general public. This includes but is not limited to injuring another person physically, threatening a person or engaging in behavior that creates a reasonable fear of injury to another person.
- ☐ Any act which intentionally damages Town owned property. This includes but is not limited to equipment, Town owned vehicles and structures.

### **Employees**

- ☐ All employees are encouraged to be alert to the possibility of violence on the part of employees, former employees, customers and strangers. Any report of violence will be handled in a confidential manner, with information released only on a need-to-know basis.
- ☐ Employees who act in good faith by reporting real or implied violent behavior or violations of this policy will not be retaliated against or subjected to harassment.
- ☐ Deliberately false or misleading reports of violence under this policy will be handled as incidents of unacceptable personal conduct and the employee making such false or misleading reports will be subject to disciplinary action.
- ☐ Any employee who determines or suspects another employee of carrying a weapon should notify his/her supervisor immediately. An employee who determines or suspects a supervisor/department head of carrying a weapon should notify the Town Supervisor immediately. Any person experiencing or witnessing imminent danger or actual violence involving weapons or personal injury shall call 911 immediately.
- ☐ All reports will be investigated. Employees are required to call 911 if they suspect that their safety or the safety of the public and/or their fellow employees is in question.
- ☐ Any employee found to be in violation of this policy will be subject to disciplinary action.
- ☐ Employees are responsible for notifying their department supervisor of any threats which they have witnessed or received. In all situations, if violence appears to be imminent, employees should take precautions necessary to assure their own safety and the safety of others.
- ☐ When applicable, the Town and its employees shall fully cooperate with the sheriff's office and other law enforcement officials in the investigation and possible prosecution of individuals who violate this policy.
- ☐ The Town, when appropriate may pursue a Temporary Order of Protection or Restraining Order as an injunction against any person who disrupts the workplace through the harassment of an employee.
- ☐ Any employee who receives a protective or restraining order which lists Town-owned or Town work premises as a protected area is required to provide their department head with a copy of such order.

**Supervision** – Managers and supervisors are responsible for assessing potentially violent situations, responding appropriately and communicating information regarding the situation to the appropriate authority (the Town Supervisor).

- ☐ Any report of violence will be evaluated immediately and confidentially by management and appropriate action will be taken in order to protect employees.

- Appropriate disciplinary action will be taken when it is determined that a Town of Caroline employee has committed an act of violence.
- Where issues of employee safety are of a concern, managers and supervisors should evaluate the workplace and take appropriate steps, if any, to eliminate the potential for workplace violence.

**Training** – All supervisors and managers will provide:

- Training of supervisors and managers in recognizing conditions that might contribute to workplace violence and to properly address and respond to these situations.
- Provide training to employees about recognizing and responding to potential violence or violent situations in the workplace.
- To be provided information about resources and services available to them in response to workplace violence and the potential for domestic violence entering the workplace.

**Confidentiality** – Employees shall maintain the confidentiality of investigations of workplace violence to the extent possible. The Town will act on the basis of anonymous complaints where it has a reasonable basis to believe there has been a violation of this policy and that the safety and well being of employees would be served by an investigation.

**Retaliation** – Retaliation against anyone acting in good faith who has made a complaint of workplace violence, who has reported witnessing workplace violence, or who has been involved in reporting, investigating or responding to workplace violence is a violation of this policy. Those found responsible for retaliatory action will be subject to discipline up to and including termination.

## **905    *Drug-Free Workplace / Drug Free Awareness Program***

**Policy Statement** – It is the policy of the Town of Caroline that the unlawful manufacture, distribution, dispensation, possession, or use of an illegal controlled substance as defined in the Federal Drug-Free Workplace Act, is prohibited on the job or at the workplace.

**Coverage** – The Town of Caroline's Drug-Free Workplace Policy pertains to all individuals who are employed by the Town of Caroline.

**Compliance with Federal Drug-Free Workplace Act** – The Federal Drug-Free Workplace Act of 1988 is applicable to all recipients of Federal grants. In order to receive federal funds, the Town must certify to the granting Federal agency that it will provide a drug-free workplace in accordance with the legislation. As a recipient of Federal grants, the Town hereby complies with the requirements of the Drug-Free Workplace Act by adopting this policy and drug-free awareness program:

**Prohibited Conduct** – No employee shall use, sell, distribute, dispense, possess, or manufacture any alcoholic beverage, illegal drugs, or any other intoxicating substance, nor be under the influence of such, while on duty, at any job site or workplace, or in a Town vehicle, a vehicle leased for Town business, or a privately owned vehicle being used for Town business. An employee who, after investigation, is found to have violated this prohibition may be referred for counseling or rehabilitation and satisfactory treatment and will be subject to criminal, civil and disciplinary penalties, up to and including termination of employment. Any work-related accident or injury involving a Town vehicle, equipment, and/or property where it can be demonstrated that the use of alcohol, illegal drugs, or any

other intoxicants may have been a contributing factor will result in disciplinary action which may include penalties up to and including termination of employment.

**Use of Prescription and Over-the-Counter Drugs** – Prescription drugs must be in the possession of the individual to whom the prescription was written, taken in the dosage prescribed, and maintained in their original containers. Employees in public safety or safety-sensitive positions must inform their supervisors of any prescription or legal, nonprescription (i.e., over-the-counter) drugs they are currently taking that could in any way affect or impair the employee's ability to perform the job safely. The legal use of prescribed and over-the-counter drugs is permitted on the job only if it does not impair an employee's ability to perform the job safely and if it does not affect the safety or well being of other individuals in the workplace.

**Non-Discrimination Policy** – The Town of Caroline will not discriminate against an applicant or employee because of past substance abuse provided it can be demonstrated that the applicant/employee has received appropriate treatment and tests negative for controlled substance use. It is the current use of alcohol and controlled substances that will not be tolerated in the workplace.

**Employee Assistance** – It is the policy of the Town to work with an employee suffering from substance abuse so that the employee will receive assistance necessary to overcome dependency. An employee seeking such assistance is encouraged to contact the employee's Department Head to discuss the situation before problems begin to surface in the workplace. Any disclosures made by an employee will be treated as strictly confidential to the greatest extent practicable. The employee's decision to seek assistance will not be used as the basis for disciplinary action nor used against the employee in any disciplinary proceeding.

**Employee Responsibilities** – As a condition of the Town receiving Federal grant monies, each employee must abide by this policy and notify the employee's Department Head of any criminal drug statute conviction for a violation occurring in the workplace within five calendar days of the conviction.

**Town Responsibilities** – The Town will notify the granting federal agency within ten days after receiving notice from an employee of such a conviction or otherwise receiving actual notice of such conviction. In addition, within thirty calendar days of receiving notice of a conviction, the Town will take disciplinary action against the employee and/or require such employee to satisfactorily participate in a drug abuse assistance or rehabilitation program pursuant to Sections 702 and 703 of the Drug-Free Workplace Act.

**Drug-Free Awareness Program** – It is the policy of the Town of Caroline to maintain a drug-free workplace. In accordance with that policy, the Town is providing the following drug-free awareness information to raise employee awareness of the dangers associated with drug abuse in the workplace.

#### **Dangers of Drug Abuse in the Workplace**

Employees with chemical dependence problems have a major negative impact on productivity, staff moral, and labor/management relations. Their hidden illness is responsible for:

##### **1. Declining Performance**

- ☐ poor concentration



- ☐ confusion in following directions
- ☐ noticeable change in the quality of work
- ☐ inability to meet deadlines
- ☐ errors in judgment affecting the health and safety of others
- ☐ customer complaints and injuries

## 2. Increased Costs

- ☐ five times the average sick and accident benefits
- ☐ higher job turnover, replacement and training costs
- ☐ greater workers' compensation and health insurance payments
- ☐ 3 to 5 times more on-the-job accidents
- ☐ unemployment claims

## 3. Absenteeism and Tardiness

- ☐ double the normal rate
- ☐ repeatedly being late for work and often leaving early
- ☐ extended lunch hours
- ☐ frequent illness and accidents both on and off the job

## 4. Damaged Relationships

- ☐ emotional outbursts, over-reaction to criticism, mood swings, complaints from co-workers, associates and the public often leading to damaged relations

## **906    *Controlled Substance and Alcohol Testing***

**Statement of Compliance** – The Town Board has adopted a Controlled Substance and Alcohol Testing Policy that is in compliance with the "Omnibus Transportation Employee Testing Act of 1991" (OTETA). The purpose of this policy is to reduce accidents resulting from an employee's use of controlled substances and alcohol, thus reducing fatalities, injuries and property damage.

**Covered Employees** – The Town's Controlled Substance and Alcohol Testing Policy applies to all covered drivers as defined by the federal regulations, which includes all employees who drive commercial motor vehicles (as defined in Sec. 382.107 of the OTETA) requiring a commercial driver's license to operate.

**Acknowledgment Form** – A covered employee will receive a written copy of the Controlled Substance and Alcohol Testing Policy and must sign an Employee Acknowledgment Form. This form will be placed in the employee's personnel file.

## **907    *Smoking***

**Policy Statement** – In accordance with the Clean Indoor Air Act, the Town is committed to providing a healthy, comfortable, and productive work environment for all employees. Therefore, the smoking of tobacco products is prohibited in all Town Buildings and Town vehicles. Town buildings include, but are not limited to, Town offices, Highway Garage and maintenance facilities.

**Smoking Locations** - Smoking is not allowed within thirty feet of any Town building during authorized meal and break periods.

**Maintenance of Smoking Locations** - Smokers have an obligation to keep smoking areas litter-free and to properly discard trash in appropriate receptacles. Cigarettes and matches should be completely extinguished after use.

**Disciplinary Action** - Violations of this policy may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

## 1000 SAFETY

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### 1001 *Workplace Safety*

**Policy Statement** – Prevention of injury and illness in the workplace requires the cooperation of all employees in all safety and health matters. It is the policy of the Town to reduce the number of workplace injuries and illnesses to an absolute minimum. Accidents can be prevented through use of reasonable precautions and the practice of safe working habits.

**Employee Responsibility** – In an effort to protect all employees and to safeguard equipment and property, before an employee begins a given task, it is the employee's responsibility to understand the correct operation and possible hazards involved, safety procedures, and necessary safety equipment required to perform the job.

**Safety Program** – The Town's safety program includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- ☐ Providing mechanical and physical safeguards to the maximum extent possible;
- ☐ Conducting inspections to find and eliminate unsafe working conditions and practices, control health hazards, and comply with the safety and health standards for every job;
- ☐ Training all employees in safety and health practices;
- ☐ Providing necessary personal protective equipment and instructions for its use and care;
- ☐ Developing and enforcing safety and health rules and requiring that employees cooperate with these rules as a condition of employment;
- ☐ Investigating, promptly and thoroughly, every accident to find the cause and correct the problem to prevent future occurrences;
- ☐ Providing First Aid kits and fire extinguishers throughout buildings and facilities.

**Accident Plan** – In the event of an accident, an employee must immediately stop work and take the following steps:

- ☐ Eliminate the immediate cause of the accident;
- ☐ Provide aid to the injured person and summon for assistance;
- ☐ Call the Department Head immediately;
- ☐ If the accident appears serious, call 911; and
- ☐ Take steps to prevent additional accidents.

**Accident Reporting Procedures** – In the event an accident occurs in the workplace or in the course of employment, the following procedures will apply:

- ☐ When an accident occurs which results either in the loss of an employee's work time, or in the provision of medical care to an employee, the employee must immediately notify the Department Head who will in turn notify the Town Supervisor's Office. The Town Supervisor's Office must complete an *Employer's Report of Injury Form (C-2)* and submit according to operating procedures.
- ☐ When an accident occurs which does not result in the loss of an employee's work time, or in the provision of medical care to the employee, the employee must immediately notify the Department Head who will in turn notify the Town Supervisor's Office. The Department Head will maintain appropriate documentation of the incident.
- ☐ The Town Supervisor's Office will keep a log of the injury or illness for five years following the end of the calendar year to which it relates. A copy of this log, which includes totals and information for the year, must be posted in each department or areas where notices to employees are customarily posted.

## **1002 Hazard Communication Program**

**Statement of Compliance** – The Town of Caroline is committed to providing a safe and healthy work environment and complies with all Federal, State and local laws regarding hazard recognition, accident prevention, and working conditions. The Town considers Hazard Communication and the prevention of workplace injuries and illnesses to be of prime importance.

**Guidelines** – The following guidelines for the identification of chemical hazards and the preparation and proper use of containers, labels, placards, and other types of warning devices must be adhered to:

- ☐ **Chemical Inventory** – The Town must maintain an inventory of all known chemicals in use. An employee may obtain the chemical inventory from the employee's supervisor or Department Head.
- ☐ **Container Labels** – All chemicals on a work-site must be stored in the original or approved containers with the proper label attached. The Department Head must ensure that each container is labeled with the identity of the hazardous chemical contained and any appropriate hazard warnings. The Town will rely on manufacturer applied labels whenever possible. A container that is not labeled or on which the manufacturer's label has been removed, must be properly labeled. A container not properly labeled must be given to the Department Head for labeling or proper disposal.
- ☐ **Dispensing Chemicals** – An employee may dispense chemicals from original containers only in small quantities intended for immediate use. Any chemical leftover must be returned to the original container or to the Department Head for proper handling. No unmarked containers of any size are to be left in the work area unattended.

**Safety Data Sheets (SDS)** – An employee working with a Hazardous Chemical shall obtain a copy of the Safety Data Sheet (SDS) and a standard chemical reference from the employee's Department Head.

**Employee Training** – An employee must be trained to work safely with hazardous chemicals. This training program must cover the following areas:

- ☐ Methods used to detect the release of hazardous chemicals in the workplace;
- ☐ Physical and health hazards of chemicals and the measures used to protect employees;
- ☐ Safe work practices;
- ☐ Emergency responses to the exposure of hazardous chemicals;
- ☐ Proper use of personal protective equipment; and
- ☐ Hazard Communication Standards, including labeling and warning systems, and an explanation of the use of Safety Data Sheets.

**Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)** – Depending on job duties, an employee must routinely wear protective devices, such as gloves and safety glasses, as directed by the supervisor. An employee who is required to wear special safety equipment as directed by the supervisor must comply with the supervisor's request.

**Emergency Response** – Any incident of overexposure or spill of a hazardous chemical/substance must immediately be reported to the employee's supervisor. The supervisor must insure that proper emergency response actions are taken.

**Hazards of Non-Routine Tasks** – The Department Head must inform employees of any special tasks that may arise which would involve possible exposure to hazardous chemicals. Review of safe work procedures and use of required PPE must be conducted prior to the start of these tasks. Where necessary, areas will be posted to indicate the nature of the hazard involved.

## **1100 COMMUNICATION PROCEDURES**

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### **1101 *Organizational Communications***

**Summary** – The Town Board is committed to assuring effective communications between the Board and employees. The success of the organization is dependent upon a set of common interests and goals that are achieved through teamwork, sharing of ideas, and effective communications of our short-term and long-term plans. From time to time, information and updates will be distributed to employees. All employees are encouraged to discuss this information with their Department Head should there be any questions.

**Methods of Communication** – Information will be communicated to employees in a variety of ways, including general and departmental meetings, memos and other written correspondence, notices distributed with paychecks, and posting of information. Employees should check bulletin boards frequently to keep informed on changes in employment matters and other items of interest. Except as otherwise provided by a collective bargaining agreement, all material to be posted on bulletin boards, including memos and announcements, must have the prior approval of the appropriate Department Head.

### **1102 *Adverse Communications***

**Policy Statement** – An employee who receives any communication of a negative nature directed to the Town, or to any of its officers or employees in their official capacity, shall immediately forward the communication to the appropriate Department Head. The term “communication” shall refer to both written and verbal communications, and includes, but is not limited to, memoranda, faxes, messages, letters, legal notices, e-mails, summonses and other communications.

### **1103 *Suggestions***

**Policy Statement** – Giving and receiving feedback is encouraged in order to promote a positive, productive, and cooperative atmosphere. Employees should notify their supervisor or Department Head of any suggestions which may be valuable to the Town’s productivity and success. All suggestions will be carefully reviewed and implemented if feasible.

### **1104 *Public Relations***

**Policy Statement** – The courteous, professional treatment of members of the public by all employees helps to build confidence among the taxpayers we serve. We ask that all employees make every effort to represent the Town in a polite and professional manner.

## **1105 Reporting of Improper Activities (Whistleblower Law)**

**Policy Statement** – Any employee who witnesses or becomes aware of an inappropriate action, improper financial circumstance, inappropriate use of Town funds or property, safety issue, or other matter that appears to be improper, should immediately make his or her Department Head or supervisor, the Town Supervisor, or any Town Board member aware of the issue. When an imminent and serious danger to public health or safety exists, an employee may see fit to immediately report violations to law enforcement or other applicable governing body. Even if you are in doubt about what you witnessed or were made aware of you should report the matter.

**Retaliation** – Under Section 75-B of New York State Civil Service Law, New York State Public Sector Whistleblower Law, an employee, who in good faith, discloses to a governmental body information regarding a violation of law, a substantial and specific danger to the public health or safety, or an improper governmental action which the employee reasonably believes to be true, shall be protected from any adverse personnel action including, but not limited to: termination, disciplinary action, or changes in compensation. Any Town employee or officer who commits or condones any form of retaliation against anyone who in good faith reports alleged misconduct will be subject to discipline up to, and including, termination.

## 1200 DISPUTE RESOLUTION

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### 1201 *Dispute Resolution Procedure*

**Policy Statement** – The Town Board has established a set of procedures to provide for the orderly resolution of differences at the earliest possible stage and to promote a harmonious and cooperative relationship between employees, Department Heads and members of the Town Board which will enhance the overall operation of the Town. The Town will attempt to resolve all work-related complaints that are appropriate for handling under this policy.

**Definition of Dispute** – For the purpose of this Employee Handbook, a “dispute” will mean a claimed violation, misinterpretation or inequitable application of any of the provisions of this Employee Handbook. In addition, the term “dispute” shall not apply to any matter as to which the Town is without authority to act. A few examples of matters that may be considered appropriate disputes under this policy include:

- ☐ A belief that Town policies, practices, rules, regulations, or procedures have been applied in a manner detrimental to an employee;
- ☐ Treatment considered unfair by an employee, such as coercion, reprisal, harassment, or intimidation;
- ☐ Alleged discrimination because of race, color, sex, age, religion, sexual orientation, national origin, marital status, disability; or any other protected class; and
- ☐ Improper or unfair administration of employee benefits or conditions of employment such as scheduling, vacations, fringe benefits, promotions, retirement, holidays, salary, or seniority.

**Step One** – An employee who claims to have a dispute may present the dispute to the employee’s Department Head. The dispute must be submitted, in writing, within seven working days following knowledge of the event(s) which caused the dispute or when the employee should have had knowledge. The dispute will specify the date of submission, the name of the aggrieved employee, the date the dispute arose, the nature of the dispute, the provision of the Employee Handbook that was allegedly violated and a statement of facts, times, dates, and the remedy sought.

Within seven working days after receiving the dispute, the employee’s Department Head will meet with the employee to discuss and attempt to resolve the matter.

**Step Two** – In the event the informal dispute is not resolved at Step One, or the employee reasonably believes that the employee cannot present the dispute to the employee’s Department Head, the employee may submit the matter to the Town Supervisor. The dispute must be submitted, in writing, within seven working days from receiving the Step One response or when the response should have been received or if Step One is not utilized for the above reason, within seven working days following knowledge of the event(s) which caused the dispute or when the employee should have had knowledge.

Within seven working days after receiving the dispute, the Town Supervisor will meet with the employee to discuss and attempt to resolve the matter. Within seven working days from the meeting, the Town Supervisor will issue a written response.



**Step Three** – In the event the employee is not satisfied with the response at Step Two, the employee may submit the matter to the full Town Board by filing a Request for Hearing with the Town Clerk. The Request for Hearing must be submitted, in writing, within seven working days from receiving the Step Two response, or when the response should have been received. The Request for Hearing will include a written statement of the dispute as outlined in Step One of this Procedure.

The Town Board will set the time and place for the hearing. All decisions rendered by the Town Board will be final and binding.

**Time Limits** – The employee must adhere to the time limits set forth in this dispute procedure. In the event the employee does not advance the dispute to the next step within the established time limit, the dispute will be considered withdrawn and no further appeal will be accepted. The time limits may be extended by mutual agreement provided the extension is in writing, dated and signed by the employee and the person who is to receive the dispute.

**Final Decisions** – Final decisions on disputes will not be precedent-setting or binding on future disputes unless they are stated as official Town policy.

**Proper Use of Dispute Resolution Procedure** – Employees will not be penalized for proper use of the dispute resolution procedure. However, it is not considered proper use if an employee raises a dispute in bad faith or solely for the purposes of delay or harassment, or repeatedly raises meritless disputes. Implementation of the dispute procedure by an employee does not limit the right of the Town to proceed with any disciplinary action that is not in retaliation for the use of this procedure.

**Refusal to Proceed with Dispute** – The Town Board may, at its discretion, refuse to proceed with any dispute it determines is improper or baseless under this policy.

**Union Employees** – An employee who is a member of a collective bargaining unit should refer to the applicable collective bargaining agreement to determine if the employee's dispute (grievance) may be subject to the grievance procedure contained in the employee's collective bargaining agreement.

## 1300 EMPLOYEE ACKNOWLEDGEMENT FORM

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Detach and place in employee's personnel file.

### TOWN OF CAROLINE

### EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I hereby acknowledge that I have received a copy of the ***Town of Caroline Employee Handbook*** outlining the rules, regulations, procedures, practices, work standards, employment classifications, compensation, and benefits of the Town of Caroline. I further acknowledge that I have read, or will read the contents of the Employee Handbook and will contact my Department Head or the Town Supervisor if I have any questions.

I understand that the Employee Handbook is not meant to create a contract of employment, nor should it be construed as creating a contract of employment and that the Town Board of the Town of Caroline reserves the right to interpret, change or modify any section of the Employee Handbook at any time.

I understand that, if I am covered by a collective bargaining agreement between the Town of Caroline and an employee organization as defined by the Public Employees' Fair Employment Act, in the event an expressed and explicit provision set forth in a collective bargaining agreement should conflict with an employee benefit, personnel policy, personnel procedure, or other provision set forth in the Employee Handbook, the expressed and explicit provision of the collective bargaining agreement will control. Otherwise, unless expressly excluded herein, the Employee Handbook is applicable to all employees.

I agree to abide by the personnel policies, procedures, rules and regulations outlined in the Employee Handbook.

I understand that the Employee Handbook and the changes contained herein are intended to supersede all prior manuals and guidelines issued by the Town of Caroline.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Employee name (please print)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Department Head Name (please print)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Employee Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Department Head Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Signature