

MONTAGUE SELECTBOARD MEETING
1 Avenue A, Turners Falls and VIA ZOOM

Monday, March 2, 2026

AGENDA

Join Zoom Meeting: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85912531123>

Meeting ID: 859 1253 1123 Password: 933163 Dial into meeting: +1 646 558 8656

This meeting/hearing of the Selectboard will be held in person at the location provided on this notice. Members of the public are welcome to attend this meeting. Please note that while an option for remote attendance and/or participation is being provided as a courtesy to the public, the meeting/hearing will not be suspended or terminated if technological problems interrupt the virtual broadcast, unless otherwise required by law. Members of the public with particular interest in any specific item on this agenda should make plans for in-person vs. virtual attendance accordingly.

Topics may start earlier than specified, unless there is a hearing scheduled

Meeting Being Taped

Votes May Be Taken

1. 6:30PM Selectboard Chair opens the meeting, including announcing that the meeting is being recorded and roll call taken
2. 6:30 Approve Minutes: Selectboard Meetings:
3. 6:32 **Public Comment Period:** Individuals will be limited to two (2) minutes each and the Selectboard will strictly adhere to time allotted for public comment
4. 6:32 **Thomas Taaffe, Executive Director, Brick House Community Resource Center**
 - Authorize Letter of Support for the Brick House United Way Application
5. 6:40 **Maureen Pollock, Planning Director**
 - Montague City Village Center Redevelopment/Farren Project Updates & Request Transfer of \$800 into ULI TAP from Community Development Discretionary Account
6. 6:45 **Personnel Board**
 - First read of draft Personnel Policy Manual
 - Health Insurance Updates
7. 7:05 **Town Administrator's Business**
 - Invitation from Senator Comerford to participate in Rural and Declining Enrollment Schools Week of Action from March 9 to 13 and to authorize statement of support for proposed bill S.314 "An Act to Provide a Sustainable Future for Rural Schools"

Next Meeting

Selectboard Meeting: Monday, March 9, 2026, at 6:30pm via ZOOM



TOWN OF
MONTAGUE
MASSACHUSETTS

Selectboard Office
One Avenue A
Turners Falls, MA 01376

413-863-3200
Ext. 107 & 108

March 2, 2026

Dear Members of the United Way Grant Review Committee,

The Town of Montague Selectboard enthusiastically supports the Brick House Community Resource Center's application for a 3 year Aligned Impact Grant to improve health outcomes for our community by incorporating and expanding positive health and social connectedness programming into their lives.

Coming out of the pandemic, we have seen an uneven return of local residents to the life and activities of the town. New residents have not necessarily engaged in the broader social life of their community as readily as long time residents. Others have settled into smaller social networks, shaped by Covid-era virtual relationships and 'social bubbles'. Others remain isolated and alone, particularly in the more rural areas of our town.

Thus, social isolation remains a significant issue, exacerbating feelings of loneliness and increased reports of depression. As you know, this can have a negative impact on physical as well as mental health. This also affects the town as a whole. Supporting broader and deeper participation in the life of the town enriches us all.

Rising living costs have further challenged the ability of people to return to the social life of their community. Economic realities have added stress to their lives, reducing the available income for recreational and social activities. By providing free health, mental health and fun social activities, this proposal will make a positive difference for many in our midst.

The Brick House proposal seeks to address these challenges by providing a wide range of health, mental health, creative and social activities. These will provide support to various niche social sectors (families, LGBTQ+, low-income people, artists, etc.) as well as cross-community social activities that will allow our community to return more robustly to the social sphere. This will allow them to develop new connections, friendships and support. By including activities that address stress, trauma, providing dental clinics, positive lifestyle changes, self-care training and education, this project will help people live healthier, happier lives, while further breaking down social isolation.

Some of these Brick House proposals are well integrated into the town's plans to promote the social life of the community, including River Culture's year-long events program and our Turners Falls Downtown Working Group. Your support will lend itself to broader efforts to encourage a healthier, more socially engaged and inclusive community.

The Town of Montague is an equal opportunity provider and employer

These efforts will be integrated with existing Brick House programs that you are generously supporting to address youth mental health and food insecurity. We recognize and thank you for your critical support for these issues in our community. Your timely commitment to addressing food insecurity proved critical during the recent SNAP crisis and Federal shutdown. The Montague Food Security and Sustainability Coalition has become a powerful collaborative lifeline to address hunger in our midst, one that has brought the community together in a time of crisis. The Montague Selectboard was proud to support this effort with additional funding to better serve those in need. We look forward to the continued growth and expansion of these programs, alongside the healthy community's proposal you are now considering.

Thank you again for supporting the Town of Montague and the good work of the Brick House Community Resource Center. Your generosity has enriched the lives of our community. We believe this proposal will further enhance the health and social connectedness of those we serve.

Respectfully,

Town of Montague Selectboard

Matthew Lord, Chair

Richard Kuklewicz, Vice Chair

Marina Goldman, Clerk



TOWN OF
MONTAGUE
MASSACHUSETTS

TOWN HALL
One Avenue A
Turners Falls, MA 01376

DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING &
CONSERVATION
(413) 863-3200 ext. 112
Planner@montague-ma.gov

MEMORANDUM

TO: Selectboard
FROM: Maureen Pollock, Director of Planning & Conservation
RE: Montague City Village Center Redevelopment Project Updates
DATE: March 3, 2026

Update 1 (Farren Zoning Amendments are approved by the MA Attorney General):

After the Fall 2025 Town Meeting approval of Article 12 Farren zoning amendment and zoning map change, the zoning text and zoning map change were submitted to the Massachusetts Attorney General for final review and approval.

On February 25, 2026, the Town was notified that the Massachusetts Attorney General approved Article 12 Farren zoning amendment and zoning map change and will become effective on March 13, 2026.

Update 2 (March 10, 2026 Montague TAP + Request funds):

Before the Town issues a Request for Proposal (RFP) for development on the Farren sites, the Town will participate in the [Urban Land Institute's Technical Assistance Program \(TAP\)](#). This will help the Town determine the best redevelopment strategy that balances economic feasibility with community goals. A panel of senior level experts in planning, development, construction, and finance will provide the Town with candid, unbiased insights over a one-day session. The TAP Panelists will assist the Town in addressing the following key questions::

- **Planning & Feasibility:** Should the site be subdivided prior to disposition? What are the benefits and disadvantages of subdivision?
- **Implementation:** If subdivision occurs, should the Town issue a single RFP for a master developer or multiple RFPs?
- **Market & Financing:** What are the advantages and disadvantages of selecting a master developer for a site of this size and condition in Franklin County?

Montague's TAP intensive is scheduled on Tuesday, March 10, 2026.

Members of the public are invited to attend a public presentation followed by Q&A at 6:00pm on Tuesday, March 10, 2026 in the Shea Theater Arts Center. Light refreshments will be provided. The evening event will be recorded by MCTV.

Request: The Planning Department requests Community Development Discretionary funds of \$800 to cover the cost of three meals for 20+ TAP panelists participating in the all-day Urban Land Institute's Technical Assistance Program scheduled for March 10, 2026, as required by the program. Additionally, requested funds will pay for light refreshments and mailing event flyers to Montague City residents, promoting the March 10 public presentation at the Shea Theater Arts Center, starting at 6:00 pm.

Update 3 (Farren Neighborhood Zoning & Design Guideline Project): The Town is exploring possible zoning amendments, zoning map changes, and design guidelines for parcels on Masonic Ave, Rod Shop Road, and three parcels on Montague City Road to the north and south of the former Farren Hospital site, respectively.

- Neighborhood Stakeholder Meeting #1: The Town is scheduled to hold its first neighborhood stakeholder meeting at 5:00pm on Tuesday, February 10 at 20 Masonic Avenue.
- Working Group Meeting #1: The Town is scheduled to hold its first working group meeting at 6:00pm on Thursday, February 26 via Zoom.
- Community-wide Workshop #1: The Town is scheduled to hold its first community-wide workshop on Tuesday, March 31 at 6:30pm at _____. More info forthcoming!

Community Development Discretionary Account

Transfer Request

Allocation from 225-5-184-5200 (CD Unallocated)

Request Date: February 26, 2026

Authorization to transfer \$800

From: CD Discretionary Unallocated (225-5-184-5200)

To: ULI TAP (223-184-5275-223006)

To cover the cost of three meals for 20+ TAP panelists participating in the all-day Urban Land Institute's Technical Assistance Program scheduled for March 10, 2026, as required by the program. Additionally, requested funds will to pay for light refreshments and mailing event flyers to Montague City residents, promoting the March 10 public presentation at the Shea Theater Arts Center, starting at 6:00 pm.

Selectboard Chair

Balances before transfer

CD Discretionary Unallocated: \$62,334.02

Balances post transfer

CD Discretionary Unallocated: \$61,534.02



Office of the Town Administrator Town of Montague

Walter Ramsey, AICP, MCCPO
413) 863-3200 ext. 108
Walterr@montague-ma.gov
One Avenue A Turners Falls, MA

To: Montague Selectboard
From: Walter Ramsey, Town Administrator
Date: Feb 26, 2026
Re: Comprehensive Personnel Policy Manual
– Selectboard Review and Adoption

Purpose of This Briefing

This memorandum provides an overview of the updated Personnel Policy Manual following internal administrative review and union consultation. The draft before you reflects consolidation, modernization, and legal alignment of the Town's personnel policies and is presented for Selectboard review and direction prior to final adoption.

Background and Rationale

The Town's personnel policies and bylaws have evolved over time through separate amendments, memos, and stand-alone policies. This has resulted in:

- Inconsistent formatting and organization
- Gaps in procedures
- Overlapping or duplicative provisions
- Areas not fully aligned with current Massachusetts and federal law
- Variability in application across departments

The updated manual consolidates these policies into a single, comprehensive framework that improves clarity, consistency, legal compliance, and administrative efficiency.

This effort was undertaken to:

1. Modernize employment policies
2. Reduce operational and legal risk
3. Promote consistency across departments
4. Improve transparency and accessibility for employees and supervisors
5. Ensure compliance with current statutory requirements

Process Undertaken

The development process included:

- Comprehensive internal administrative review
- Section-by-section refinement and reorganization
- Legal alignment with FLSA, Massachusetts Wage Act, PFML, ADA, MCAD standards, and Conflict of Interest law
- Engagement with department heads
- Formal opportunity for union review and feedback
- Incorporation of operational clarifications where appropriate

The draft presented to the Selectboard reflects revisions made following that review process.

Overview of Manual Structure

The manual is organized into five primary sections:

Section 1 – Governance & Framework

Establishes employment philosophy, inclusivity statement, applicability, at-will employment statement, governance structure, and personnel records administration.

Section 2 – Employment Lifecycle

Addresses recruitment, hiring, background checks, introductory period, performance management, discipline, promotions, and separation procedures.

Section 3 – Compensation & Benefits

Covers classification and pay administration, wages, overtime, hours of work, leave policies (vacation, sick, personal, parental leave, domestic violence leave), holidays, and benefits including insurance and retirement.

Section 4 – Conduct, Safety & Expectations

Includes code of conduct, anti-harassment and discrimination, ADA procedures, DEI policy, workplace violence prevention, drug and alcohol policy, ethics and conflict of interest, political activity, technology use, and related workplace standards.

Section 5 – Administration

Addresses travel policy, vehicle use, credit card policy, personnel records, and other administrative procedures.

Key Improvements

The revised manual provides:

- Clearer definitions and standardized formatting
- Stronger performance and discipline procedures
- Updated leave policies aligned with current state law
- Clear ADA accommodation procedures
- A defined personnel records system under the Town Administrator
- Updated internal financial controls (travel, credit cards, vehicle use)
- Consistent timekeeping and emergency closing procedures

Importantly, the manual clarifies that collective bargaining agreements control where provisions overlap.

Impact on Collective Bargaining Agreements

The manual does not supersede any collective bargaining agreement. Where contract language governs wages, hours, or working conditions, the agreement controls.

The manual fills policy gaps where agreements are silent and standardizes administrative procedures that apply Town-wide.

Risk Management and Compliance Considerations

Adoption of the updated manual strengthens the Town's position in the following areas:

- Wage and hour compliance
- Consistent leave administration
- Harassment prevention and workplace investigations
- ADA accommodation processes
- Personnel file management
- Public records and documentation practices
- Defensible disciplinary procedures

The manual reduces risk exposure associated with inconsistent departmental practices.

A modern policy manual is more nimble and adaptable than a bylaw which requires a town meeting vote.

Implementation Plan

Upon adoption, the following steps are proposed:

1. Formal issuance of the manual to all employees
2. Required acknowledgment of receipt
3. Supervisor training sessions on key operational changes
4. Targeted training on harassment prevention, ADA processes, and updated conduct policies
5. Annual review cycle for policy updates

Requested Selectboard Action

At this stage, the Town Administrator seeks:

- Policy-level feedback from the Selectboard
- Direction on any section requiring further refinement
- Commitment to place an article on town meeting warrant to rescind existing personnel bylaws and grant Selectboard authority to adopt these personnel policies in place of the bylaws.

The goal is to formally adopt these policies shortly after Annual Town Meeting on May 2.

Conclusion

This comprehensive Personnel Policy Manual provides a modern, legally compliant, and operationally practical framework for managing Town employment matters. It promotes fairness, consistency, accountability, and professionalism across all departments while respecting existing labor agreements.

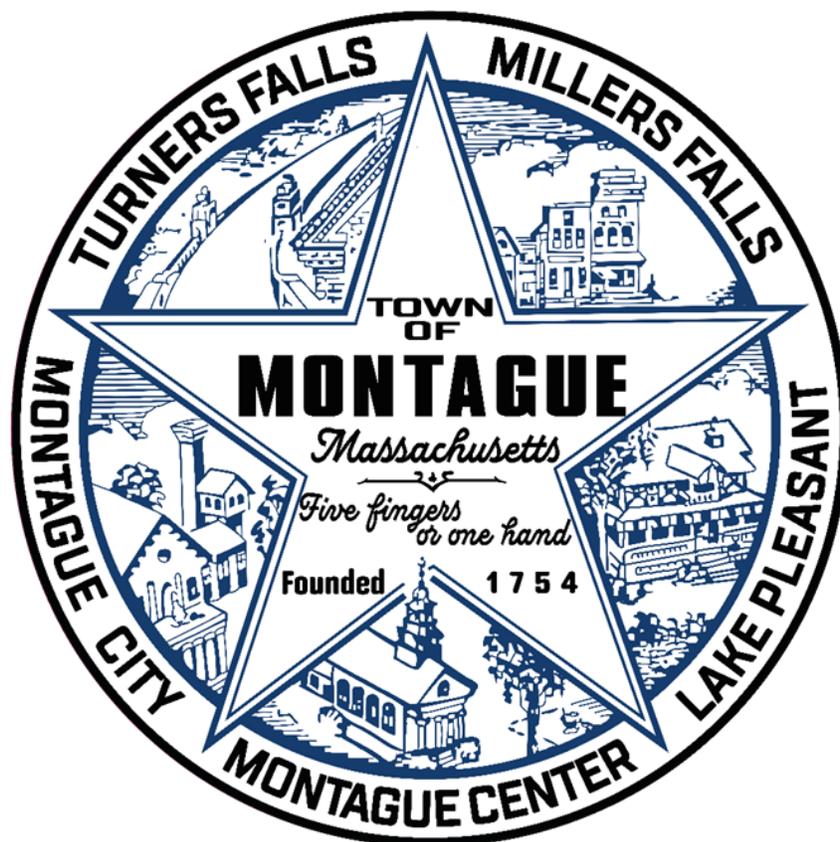
The Selectboard's review and guidance are respectfully requested.

Respectfully,



Walter Ramsey
Montague Town Administrator

TOWN OF MONTAGUE PERSONNEL POLICY MANUAL



Public Draft February 25, 2026

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SECTION 1

GOVERNANCE & FRAMEWORK

Preamble (Employment as a Partnership)

Welcome to the Town of Montague. Whether you are beginning your service or continuing your career with us, we are grateful that you have chosen to contribute your time, talent, and commitment to our community.

Working for the Town is more than holding a job—it is a partnership. It is a shared responsibility between employees, supervisors, department heads, and elected officials to uphold public trust, deliver high-quality services, and maintain a safe, respectful, and equitable workplace. Every employee plays an essential role in our ability to serve the residents of Montague with professionalism, compassion, and integrity.

The Town is committed to supporting your success. We strive to provide a workplace where employees feel valued, respected, and empowered; where expectations are clear; and where opportunities for growth, learning, and collaboration are encouraged. In return, employees are expected to bring their best efforts, uphold Town policies, and contribute positively to our shared mission.

This Personnel Policy Manual provides guidance on our policies, employee benefits, standards of conduct, and operational procedures. It is intended to promote fairness, consistency, and transparency across the organization. It is not a contract of employment, and it does not alter the at-will employment relationship that exists between the Town and its employees, except where governed by law or collective bargaining agreements. The Selectboard, acting as the Personnel Board and under the authorization of the Montague Personnel Bylaw, reserves the right to amend or update these policies as needed.

Working together—in partnership—we strengthen the capacity of local government, elevate the quality of services, and build a community in which all residents, employees, and visitors feel welcome. Thank you for choosing to serve Montague and for the important contributions you make each day.

Statement of Inclusivity

The Town of Montague values and celebrates the rich diversity of our workforce and community. We believe that embracing differences in identity, experience, culture, and perspective drives innovation and enhances public service. We are committed to ensuring equity and inclusion in all aspects of employment and governance.

- **Diversity:** We welcome individuals of all backgrounds, including but not limited to race, ethnicity, national origin, color, religion, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, age, marital or family status, veteran or immigrant status, neurodiversity, and socio-economic background
- **Equity:** We commit to removing barriers and ensuring fair access to opportunities, resources, and advancement. We proactively address historical and systemic inequities in our employee and community practices.
- **Inclusion:** We strive to foster a workplace culture where every person feels respected, heard, and empowered to contribute their unique voice and talents

This is more than a guiding principle—it is our collective responsibility. Through continuous awareness, training, open dialogue, and accountability, we pledge to build a workplace and community that reflects the diverse needs and strengths of Montague.

Purpose & Applicability

Purpose

The purpose of this Personnel Policy Manual is to provide a clear and consistent framework for employment practices within the Town of Montague. These policies are designed to support a fair, respectful, and well-functioning workplace that enables employees to perform at their best in service to the community.

This manual outlines expectations, rights, responsibilities, and resources for all Town employees. It also guides managers and supervisors in applying policies consistently and equitably. By establishing transparent standards, the Town seeks to ensure that employment decisions are made in a manner that promotes accountability, professionalism, and mutual respect.

While this manual serves as an important reference tool, it does **not** constitute a contract of employment. The Town reserves the right to interpret, revise, supplement, or rescind any policy or procedure at its discretion, except where otherwise required by law or collective bargaining agreements.

Applicability

These policies apply to all non-elected employees of the Town of Montague, including full-time, part-time, and per-diem staff, unless specifically noted otherwise.

- **Unionized employees** are also covered by this manual; however, when a provision of this manual conflicts with an active collective bargaining agreement, the terms of the collective bargaining agreement will govern.
- **Contracted employees** and **appointed officials** are subject to these policies unless their employment contract explicitly provides different terms.
- **Elected officials**, volunteers, and board/committee members are expected to uphold the Town's values and standards of conduct but may be governed by separate policies or statutory requirements.
- In all cases, federal and state laws—including but not limited to wage and hour laws, anti-discrimination statutes, family and medical leave requirements, and workplace safety regulations—take precedence over this manual.

The Town Administrator, acting under the authority of the Selectboard, is responsible for interpreting these policies and ensuring consistent application across departments.

Definitions

Definitions

For the purposes of this Personnel Policy Manual, the following definitions apply:

“Employee”

Any individual hired by the Town of Montague, whether full-time, part-time, seasonal, temporary, appointed, or hourly, except where a policy explicitly applies only to a specific category of employee.

“Full-Time Employee”

An employee regularly scheduled to work the full number of hours established for their position, typically 35–40 hours per week depending on department and classification.

“Part-Time Employee”

An employee who works fewer hours than a full-time schedule, on either a regular or variable basis.

“Exempt Employee”

An employee who is exempt from overtime requirements under the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA). Exempt employees are compensated for completion of job responsibilities rather than hours worked.

“Non-Exempt Employee”

An employee who is eligible for overtime compensation in accordance with the FLSA and Town policy.

“Department Head” or “Supervisor”

An individual appointed or elected to oversee the operations of a Town department and supervise staff.

“Appointing Authority”

The individual or board empowered by statute, bylaw, or vote of Town Meeting to hire, discipline, or terminate employees within a specific department.

“Immediate Family”

For purposes of leave and certain benefits, immediate family generally includes an employee’s spouse or domestic partner, child, stepchild, parent, stepparent, parent-in-law, sibling, grandparent, or grandchild, unless otherwise defined in a specific policy.

“Town Administrator (TA)”

The chief administrative officer responsible for day-to-day management of Town operations and implementation of Selectboard policy.

“Reasonable Accommodation”

Any modification or adjustment to a job, work environment, or employment process that enables an individual with a disability to perform the essential functions of their position, consistent with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

“Essential Functions”

Fundamental job duties necessary to perform a position. These do not include marginal or incidental tasks that are not critical to the job.

“Undue Hardship”

A significant difficulty or expense incurred by the Town in providing a requested accommodation, as defined by ADA regulations.

“Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA)”

Contract negotiated between the Town and one of the Unionized bargaining units of the Town (NAGE, UE, NEPBA). These are typically renegotiated every three years.

Employment Relationship Statement (At-Will Disclaimer)

Employment with the Town of Montague is based on a relationship of mutual trust, shared purpose, and open communication. While we strive to create a supportive and stable workplace, it is important to clarify the nature of the employment relationship.

Unless an employee has a written employment agreement signed by the Selectboard that expressly states otherwise, all employees of the Town of Montague are employed **at will**. This means:

- **Employees may end their employment** with the Town at any time, for any lawful reason, with or without notice.
- **The Town may also end the employment relationship** at any time, for any lawful reason, with or without notice.

Nothing in this manual, in Town policies, in verbal statements, or in past practices should be understood to create or imply a contract of employment for a specific duration or to alter the at-will nature of the relationship. No supervisor, manager, or employee has the authority to enter into an employment contract or make any agreement contrary to this at-will policy, except the Selectboard through a written and signed employment agreement.

While the Town may choose to use progressive discipline, performance reviews, or improvement plans as tools to support employees, these practices do not change the at-will nature of employment.

The Town reserves the right to modify, revoke, suspend, or terminate any of the policies described in this manual, in whole or in part, at any time, except where prohibited by law or by a collective bargaining agreement.

Governance Structure

The Town of Montague operates under a governance structure that balances local autonomy, professional administration, and accountability to the community. The following roles and authorities guide personnel administration:

Selectboard / Personnel Board

Under the Town's consolidated Personnel Bylaw, the Selectboard serves as the Personnel Board and is responsible for:

- Establishing and maintaining personnel policies.
- Approving appointments where required by law or bylaw.
- Overseeing classification and compensation plans.
- Making final determinations regarding interpretation of personnel policies.
- Acting as the final appointing authority for positions not otherwise assigned to another board, commission, or official.

Town Administrator

The Town Administrator serves as the chief administrative officer. The Town Administrator oversees the Selectboard office and supervises Department Heads. The Town Administrator is responsible for:

- Implementing and enforcing personnel policies adopted by the Selectboard.
- Overseeing day-to-day personnel matters, including recruitment, hiring processes, employee performance management, and workplace standards.
- Providing guidance to department heads on personnel matters.
- Ensuring compliance with federal, state, and local employment laws.
- Coordinating updates to the Personnel Policy Manual as needed.

Department Heads

Department heads are responsible for:

- Managing staff within their departments in accordance with Town policies and applicable laws.
- Recommending hiring decisions to the appropriate appointing authority.
- Conducting performance evaluations and maintaining fair and consistent supervision.
- Identifying training, safety, or resource needs within their department.
- Ensuring a respectful, equitable, and inclusive workplace.

Boards and Commissions with Appointing Authority

Certain elected or appointed boards have independent authority to hire and oversee staff within their jurisdiction. These boards:

- Follow Town personnel policies unless superseded by statute.

- Collaborate with the Town Administrator and Selectboard to maintain consistency in personnel administration.

Employees

All employees share responsibility for:

- Understanding and following Town policies.
- Contributing to a respectful, safe, and inclusive work environment.
- Performing their duties with professionalism, integrity, and accountability.

Personnel Records Policy

I. Centralized System

The **Town Administrator** shall be responsible for establishing and maintaining a centralized personnel records keeping system. The personnel records keeping system shall contain such records as may be required by law and as necessary for effective personnel management.

All employees and department heads shall comply with this policy and shall assist in the furnishing of records, reports, and information as may be requested by the Town Administrator or designee.

The Town Administrator may establish written guidelines authorizing department heads to maintain specific personnel records or duplicate records when necessary for operational purposes.

II. Contents of Records

The Town Administrator or designee shall maintain an individual personnel file for each employee, which may include, but is not limited to, the following:

- (a) Employment application materials (including resume and related documentation, as applicable);
- (b) A record of personnel actions reflecting the original appointment and any subsequent promotion, demotion, re-assignment, transfer, separation, or layoff;
- (c) A history of employment and correspondence directly related to the employee's employment status, including but not limited to: reclassification, changes in pay rate or position title, commendations, disciplinary actions, and training records; and
- (d) Performance evaluations and other records that may be pertinent to the employee's employment history.

Records required by law to be maintained separately (including medical or other protected records) shall be maintained in accordance with applicable legal requirements.

III. Confidentiality and Access to Records

Personnel records shall be treated as confidential. Access to personnel records shall generally be limited to:

- The Town Administrator (or designee);

- Individuals authorized by the Town Administrator who have a legitimate need to know in order to administer personnel functions; and
- Department heads, as appropriate for supervisory or administrative purposes.

Employees may review their own personnel file in the presence of the Town Administrator or a person authorized by the Town Administrator to administer the personnel system.

IV. Centralization of Recordkeeping System

Personnel records shall be maintained in the office of the Town Administrator unless otherwise determined by the Town Administrator. The centralized personnel files maintained by the Town Administrator shall serve as the Town's official depository of personnel records.

Centralized personnel records shall be maintained in a secure and protected location, with reasonable safeguards to prevent unauthorized access, loss, or damage.

V. Release of Records

No information concerning an employee shall be released to outside parties, except for verification of employment dates (and position title, when appropriate), unless written authorization is received from the employee or disclosure is otherwise required or permitted by law.

VI. Forms and Reports

The Town Administrator shall adopt standardized administrative forms and procedures to support consistent and accurate personnel recordkeeping. The Town Administrator may request department heads to prepare reports or provide information as necessary to ensure proper maintenance of records and effective personnel administration.

SECTION 2

EMPLOYMENT LIFECYCLE

Hiring & Recruitment

I. Purpose

The purpose of this Hiring & Recruitment Policy is to ensure that the Town of Montague attracts, selects, and retains highly qualified employees through a fair, consistent, and inclusive hiring process.

II. Applicability

This policy applies to:

- All departments and hiring managers,
- All benefited and non-benefited positions,
- Full-time, part-time, temporary, and seasonal positions,
- All stages of the recruitment process, from vacancy approval through onboarding.

It does not apply to elected offices or externally governed positions established by statute (e.g., Library Trustees, Board of Health), although these entities are encouraged to follow best practices outlined here.

III. Guiding Principles

The Town's recruitment process is grounded in the following principles:

1. Merit-Based Selection

Candidates are evaluated based on qualifications, competencies, experience, and ability to perform essential job functions.

2. Fairness and Consistency

All applicants are treated equitably through a transparent and structured hiring process.

3. Commitment to Inclusiveness

The Town strives to broaden applicant pools and reduce barriers for underrepresented groups, promoting a workforce that reflects the diversity of the community we serve. It shall be the policy of the Town to guarantee equal opportunity to all qualified applicants without regard to age, race, color, religious affiliation, gender, gender identity, ethnicity, military or veteran status, national origin, sexual orientation, disability, pregnancy, childbirth or related condition, or genetic information.

4. Compliance With Federal and State Laws

The Town's recruitment and hiring practices shall comply with all applicable federal, state, and municipal employment laws, including equal pay, anti-discrimination, disability accommodation, CORI, and veterans' preference requirements where applicable. All departments involved in hiring are responsible for ensuring compliance.

IV. Recruitment Authorization Process

1. Vacancy Identification

Upon resignation, retirement, promotion, or new hire, the Department Head shall notify the Selectboard's Office.

2. Position Review

Before posting, the Town Administrator shall review:

- The job description for accuracy and ADA compliance
- The classification and compensation grade
- Departmental needs and organizational impact

3. Approval to Recruit

No position may be posted or filled without written approval from the Town Administrator and, where required, the Selectboard.

V. Job Description and Posting

1. Updated Job Descriptions

Hiring Authorities must obtain and use an approved job description from the Selectboard Office.

2. Posting Requirements

All postings must be conducted in accordance with collective bargaining agreements. CBA's may have internal posting requirements that must be met prior to conducting an external posting.

All external postings must include:

- A clear, public-facing job summary,
- Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) language,
- Salary range or classification (required under MEPA),
- Application deadline and instructions,
- Required CORI/SORI and background screening statements.

3. Posting Venues

Positions will be posted:

- On the Town of Montague website,
 - Department website (if applicable)
 - Internally for employee awareness,
 - On MassHire or statewide municipal job boards,
 - In professional networks or publications as appropriate,
 - With outreach to broaden diversity within candidate pools (e.g., affinity professional groups).
-

VI. Application and Screening Process

1. Minimum Qualifications Screening

The Town Administrator and/or designee (often the department head) will review all applications for minimum qualifications and completeness.

2. Structured Screening Process

Screening shall use consistent evaluation criteria, such as:

- Education and experience,
- Skills and competencies,
- Alignment with job requirements,
- Ability to meet essential job functions.

3. Interview Standards

- Interviews may be conducted by a panel assembled to ensure fairness and representation.
- Questions must be job-related and consistent for all candidates.
- Interviewers must avoid prohibited topics under federal and Massachusetts law (e.g., wage history, disability, family status).

4. Reasonable Accommodation

Applicants may request accommodations at any point in the hiring process.

VII. Selection and Appointment

1. Reference and Background Checks

Conditional offers are contingent upon:

- CORI/SORI checks when authorized by law,
- Verification of licenses or certifications,
- Reference checks conducted in a consistent manner.

2. Conditional Offer

A written offer must be reviewed by the Town Administrator and will outline:

- Position title and department,
- Salary or hourly rate,
- Work schedule,
- Start date,
- Any contingencies (e.g., medical clearance, certifications).

3. Final Appointment

Appointments are made by:

- Selectboard for general employees,
- Independent boards for statutory positions (as allowed by law).

VIII. Employment Eligibility

All hires must complete:

- The federal Form I-9 employment eligibility verification,
- All onboarding documents required by the Town.

IX. Records and Confidentiality

- Applicant materials are public records unless otherwise protected by law.
- Personally identifiable information not relevant to the hiring decision (i.e. Social Security number, address, personal contact information, date of birth, or date of graduation) shall be removed or redacted prior to review, distribution, or retention, in accordance with applicable laws and Town policies.
- Sensitive documents (e.g., CORI results) shall be stored separately with restricted access.
- Hiring documentation must be retained per the Town's records retention schedule.

Background Checks (CORI/SORI)

I. Purpose

The Town of Montague is committed to providing a safe workplace, ensuring the protection of vulnerable populations, and meeting all legal requirements related to the screening of applicants, employees, volunteers, and contractors.

II. Applicability

This policy outlines when and how Criminal Offender Record Information (CORI) and Sexual Offender Registry Information (SORI) may be obtained, used, stored, and disposed of in accordance with Massachusetts law and Department of Criminal Justice Information Services (DCJIS) regulations

This policy applies to:

- All final candidates for employment with the Town of Montague
- Current employees where permitted by law (e.g., position changes, investigations, or recertification)
- Volunteers, interns, temporary staff, independent contractors, and vendors when duties justify a background screen

No CORI or SORI check will be requested unless the Town has been properly certified or authorized through DCJIS.

III. Definitions

- **CORI:** Criminal Offender Record Information maintained by DCJIS.
 - **SORI:** Information contained in the Massachusetts Sex Offender Registry.
 - **Qualified Entity:** The Town or department authorized under statute or DCJIS regulations to request, receive, and review CORI/SORI.
 - **Subject:** The individual about whom CORI or SORI is requested.
-

IV. When Background Checks Are Conducted

1. **After a Conditional Offer:**
CORI and SORI checks are conducted **only after** the Town extends a conditional offer of employment or assignment. CORI checks will only be conducted as authorized by the DCJIS and

G.L. c. 6, § 172, and only after a CORI Acknowledgement Form has been completed by the individual to be checked.

2. **Position-Specific Screening:**

CORI/SORI checks are required for positions that involve:

- Unmonitored access to children, seniors, or individuals with disabilities
- Law enforcement or public safety duties
- Handling financial records or cash
- Sensitive or confidential information
- Other responsibilities identified by the Town Administrator or Department Head

3. **Re-Screening:**

The Town may require updated CORI checks when:

- An employee moves into a position that requires screening
- Required by law or regulation
- Reasonable cause exists to do so (e.g., workplace incident)

V. Informed Consent

Before any CORI check is conducted:

- The subject must complete a **CORI Acknowledgment Form** that meets DCJIS standards.

SORI checks require similar notification and may require verification of the subject's identity.

- In no instance will the applicant be asked or required to provide a copy of his/her own CORI.

SORI checks require similar notification and may require verification of the subject's identity.

VI. Verification of Identity

- In accordance with state regulations, prior to running a CORI check, the applicant's identity will be verified with government-issued photographic identification (such as a driver's license).
- If the individual has not been issued such a form of identification, then the applicant's information will be verified with a government-issued non-photographic identification, such as a birth certificate or social security card, or other identification authorized by DCJIS.
- A copy of this identification, together with the CORI Acknowledgment Form, shall be maintained on file by Town for at least one year from the date the Form was signed by the applicant.

VII. Access, Storage & Confidentiality

- Only staff **authorized and trained** under DCJIS rules may access CORI/SORI.
- CORI/SORI information is confidential and must be stored in a **locked, secure, and restricted-access** location—paper or electronic.
- CORI/SORI may only be used for the specific purpose for which it was obtained.
- Unauthorized dissemination is strictly prohibited.

VIII. Review & Use of Information

1. **Accuracy Review:**

If CORI is returned, the Town will compare identifying information to confirm the record belongs to the subject.

2. **Opportunity to Respond:**

Before an adverse decision is made:

- The subject must receive a copy of their CORI/SORI
- The subject must be informed of the potential adverse decision
- The subject must be given an opportunity to dispute accuracy or provide context

3. **Decision-Making Criteria:**

Consistent with DCJIS regulations, suitability decisions may consider:

- Relevance of the offense noted on the record to the position and job duties
- Seriousness and nature of the work to be performed (where applicable)
- Time elapsed since the conviction
- Age at the candidate at the time of the offense
- Seriousness and specific circumstances of the offense pattern of behavior
- Evidence of rehabilitation or lack thereof
- Whether the subject has pending charges
- Any other relevant information submitted by the candidate

No subject will be automatically disqualified solely because of a criminal record unless required by law.

IX. Adverse Decisions

If the Town makes a final adverse decision based on CORI:

- The subject will:
 - be notified promptly with a written explanation of the decision
 - be provided a copy of the Town's CORI policy
 - Be provided a copy of the criminal history at issue, indicating the source of said criminal history

- DCJIS's Information Concerning the Process of Correcting a Criminal Record, or similar information published by the DCJIS
-

X. Retention & Disposal

- For current employees, it is recommended that the employer should retain the CORI report during the total period of his or her employment.
 - A CORI report may be retained for no longer than three (3) years after termination of the employment relationship.
 - A CORI report should be retained for a reasonable amount of time for a candidate that did not become an employee.
 - Destruction shall occur by shredding or other similar means (hard copies), prior to disposal. Electronically-stored CORI shall be deleted from all hard drives on which they are stored and from any system used to back up the information. Appropriate measures shall be taken to "clean" any computer used to store CORI, prior to disposal or repurposing of such a computer. ~~Destruction must comply with DCJIS standards (shredding, secure deletion, etc.).~~
-

XI. Training

All personnel authorized to review or access CORI, which includes all personnel authorized to conduct criminal history background checks, shall review and be thoroughly familiar with the educational and relevant training materials regarding CORI laws and regulations made available by the DCJIS.

XII. Compliance

This policy will be reviewed and updated as laws or DCJIS regulations change.
If there is any conflict between this policy and state law, Massachusetts law will govern.

Introductory Period

I. Purpose

The Introductory Period, also known as “Trial Period” or “Probationary Period”, provides the Town of Montague and the employee an opportunity to evaluate whether the employment relationship is a good fit. During this time, supervisors assess the employee’s performance, attendance, workplace behavior, and overall suitability for the position, while the employee becomes familiar with job responsibilities, expectations, and the Town’s organizational culture.

The Introductory Period is **not a guarantee of employment for a set duration**, nor does successful completion alter the at-will status of employment.

II. Length of Introductory Period

All newly hired, rehired, or promoted employees shall serve an **Introductory Period of twelve (12) months**, unless a collective bargaining agreement specifies otherwise.

III. Performance Evaluation During the Introductory Period

Department Heads and supervisors are responsible for:

- Setting clear expectations when the employee begins work;
- Providing feedback, coaching, and training; and
- Conducting a written performance review prior to the conclusion of the Introductory Period.

The performance review should address job knowledge, productivity, quality of work, communication, attendance, teamwork, and adherence to Town policies and values.

IV. Employment Actions During the Introductory Period

During the Introductory Period, employees may be:

- Confirmed in their position upon successful completion;
- Extended for an additional evaluation period; or
- Separated from employment at any time when performance, conduct, or operational need warrants.

Nothing in this policy shall limit the Town's right to terminate employment **at will**, with or without cause, and with or without notice.

V. Benefits Eligibility During the Introductory Period

Employees become eligible for benefits in accordance with the employee's collective bargaining agreement, employee contract, benefit plan documents, state law, and this Personnel Policy Manual. If there is any conflict between this policy and state law, Massachusetts law will govern. If there is any conflict between this policy and collective bargaining agreement, the collective bargaining agreement will govern. Some benefits may begin immediately upon hire; others may begin after the Introductory Period or on the first of the month following hire, depending on plan rules.

Completion of the Introductory Period **does not** guarantee continued employment, a pay increase, or movement to a different employment status.

VI. Transition to Regular Employment Status

Employees who successfully complete the Introductory Period will receive confirmation of regular employment status from their Department Head or the Town Administrator. Ongoing performance will then be evaluated in accordance with the Town's Performance Evaluation process.

Performance Management Process

I. Purpose

The purpose of the Town of Montague’s Performance Management process is to support continuous growth, clear communication, and mutual accountability between employees and supervisors. Performance management helps ensure that employees understand their job expectations, receive timely feedback, and have the opportunity to develop the skills necessary to succeed in their roles and contribute to high-quality Town services.

The process also provides the Town with a consistent and equitable method for evaluating performance, identifying training and development needs, recognizing strong performance, and addressing performance concerns.

II. Philosophy

The Town views performance management as a *collaborative, ongoing process*—not a single annual event. It reflects the Town’s commitment to:

- Fair and transparent expectations
- Supportive and constructive feedback
- Recognition of employee contributions
- Professional development and growth
- Accountability for performance standards
- Consistency across departments

Performance management aligns with our values of partnership, equity, and inclusion.

III. Scope

This policy applies to all appointed Town employees, except where a collective bargaining agreement, statute, or employment contract provides otherwise.

IV. Components of the Performance Management Process

1. Position Descriptions and Expectations

Each employee shall receive a current job description outlining the essential functions, responsibilities, qualifications, and reporting relationships associated with their position. Supervisors shall review these expectations with employees during onboarding and whenever job duties change.

Supervisors are responsible for ensuring job descriptions remain accurate and up to date.

2. Ongoing Feedback and Coaching

Supervisors are expected to provide regular, constructive feedback throughout the year, including:

- Recognition of achievements and strengths
- Identification of areas for improvement
- Guidance on priorities and workload
- Support in accessing training or development resources

Employees are encouraged to seek feedback proactively and engage openly in discussions about performance.

3. Performance Improvement Plans (PIPs)

A performance improvement plan (PIP) is a formal document that seeks to help Employees who are not meeting job performance goals. It covers specific areas of performance deficiencies, identifies skills or training gaps, and sets clear expectations for an Employee's future performance. Terms of PIPs should derive from a discussion of the performance issues with the Employee and shall be reviewed by The Town Administrator or Selectboard Staff. If an employee's performance falls below expectations, the supervisor may initiate a **Performance Improvement Plan** to:

- Clearly define performance deficiencies
- Establish specific, measurable goals
- Identify resources or training needed
- Set check-in dates and timelines for improvement
- Document expected consequences if improvement does not occur

PIPs are meant to support success—not punishment—while also ensuring accountability.

4. Professional Development

The Town encourages employee growth by supporting training, continuing education, workshops, and other learning opportunities that:

- Enhance job performance
- Expand knowledge and skills
- Prepare employees for advancement or new responsibilities

Supervisors and employees should work collaboratively to identify development opportunities, resources, and funding sources.

V. Roles and Responsibilities

Supervisors

- Provide ongoing coaching and documentation
- Offer clear, objective, and fair assessments
- Support employee development
- Address performance issues promptly and respectfully

Employees

- Take responsibility for understanding expectations
- Communicate openly about challenges, needs, and goals
- Strive to meet or exceed performance standards

Town Administrator

- Oversees the performance management process
 - Ensures consistency of practice across departments
 - Provides training and tools to support supervisors
-

VI. Confidentiality

Performance Improvement Plans and related documents are confidential personnel records and will be maintained in accordance with Massachusetts Public Records Law, labor laws, and Town policy.

VII. Relationship to Discipline

Performance Improvement Plans are separate from disciplinary action, but patterns of documented poor performance may contribute to disciplinary decisions in accordance with the Town's Conduct and Discipline policies.

Promotions & Reclassifications

I. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that promotions and reclassifications within the Town of Montague are administered in a fair, transparent, and consistent manner. This section outlines the processes through which employees may advance to positions with greater responsibility or have their current positions reviewed when job duties have evolved.

The Town is committed to recognizing employee growth and ensuring that job classifications accurately reflect the work performed.

II. Definitions

- **Promotion**
The movement of an employee from one position to another with increased responsibilities, higher skill requirements, and a higher pay grade.
 - **Reclassification**
A change in the title, grade, or classification of an existing position based on substantial and sustained changes in job duties—not based on performance, workload, or temporary assignments.
 - **Vacancy**
A budgeted, approved, and unfilled position.
-

III. Promotional Opportunities

1. **Posting Requirements**
 - All vacancies will be posted internally and externally unless the Town Administrator, in consultation with the appointing authority, determines that an internal promotional process better serves operational needs.
 - Internal posting periods will generally be at least five (5) business days.
2. **Eligibility for Promotion**
Employees must:
 - Meet the minimum qualifications of the posted position;
 - Have successfully completed their introductory period; and
 - Possess a satisfactory performance record.
3. **Selection Process**
The Town may use interviews, job-related assessments, credential reviews, and reference checks. The Town Administrator and Department Head will recommend a candidate to the appointing authority for approval.
4. **Compensation Following Promotion**

- Promotional increases will be established in accordance with the Town’s Classification and Compensation Plan.
 - The Personnel Board may authorize placement above the minimum step when justified by experience or operational needs.
-

IV. Reclassification of Positions

1. Basis for Reclassification

A position may be considered for reclassification when:

- The scope of responsibilities has significantly changed or expanded;
- New programs, technologies, or mandates alter the nature of the work; or
- The position no longer aligns with its assigned classification.
- A classification study commissioned by the Selectboard justifies a reclassification. These studies are typically conducted every 7-10 years.

Reclassification is based on job duties—not on employee performance, longevity, or temporary workload increases.

2. Request for Reclassification

Requests may be initiated by:

- The Department Head;
- The Employee (with Department Head endorsement);
- The Town Administrator.

All requests must include:

- A written explanation of changes in duties;
- A current job description annotated to show changes; and
- Supporting documentation such as organizational charts, mandates, or program descriptions.

3. Review Process

- The Town Administrator evaluates the request and may consult with the Department Head, or external classification specialists.
- A recommendation is submitted to the Personnel Board for consideration.

4. Approval Authority

- The Personnel Board evaluates classification recommendations.
- Changes that impact the Compensation Plan require Town Meeting approval.

5. Effective Dates

- Reclassifications will not be applied retroactively unless required by law.
 - Approved reclassifications will take effect at the start of the next full pay period unless otherwise determined.
-

V. Limitations

- Reclassification requests may be denied if budget constraints, organizational structure, or operational needs do not support the change.
 - Reclassification does **not** guarantee salary.
-

VI. Communication of Decisions

Employees will receive written notification of promotional or reclassification decisions, including the effective date, new job title, updated pay rate (if applicable), and any next steps.

VII. Annual Review

The Town Administrator and Personnel Board may review classifications annually to ensure alignment with evolving operational needs and market conditions.

Discipline

I. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to maintain a productive, safe, and respectful workplace by clearly defining performance and conduct expectations and establishing a fair, consistent process for addressing employee misconduct or performance deficiencies. The Town of Montague is committed to supporting employees in meeting expectations while also ensuring accountability to the public, coworkers, and the organization as a whole.

II. Principles of Fair and Consistent Discipline

The Town applies disciplinary action with the following principles:

1. **Fairness** – Employees will be treated with respect and provided an opportunity to be heard.
2. **Consistency** – Similar situations will generally be addressed with similar approaches, taking context into account.
3. **Progressive Action** – Discipline typically progresses in steps; however, the Town may bypass steps depending on severity, risk, or legal obligations.
4. **Documentation** – All disciplinary actions will be documented to ensure accuracy, transparency, and clear communication.
5. **Corrective Intent** – Discipline is intended to support improvement and prevent recurrence, not to punish unnecessarily.

This policy applies to all Town employees except where superseded by a collective bargaining agreement or employment contract.

III. Expectations of Conduct and Performance

Employees are expected to:

- Follow all Town policies, department procedures, and legal/ethical standards
- Perform job duties competently, safely, and professionally
- Interact with the public, coworkers, and officials courteously and respectfully
- Protect Town property, resources, and information
- Maintain reliable attendance and punctuality
- Comply with supervisory direction and established workflows

Failure to meet these expectations may result in disciplinary action.

IV. Progressive Discipline Framework

While the Town encourages improvement through progressive discipline, the Town Administrator or appointing authority may proceed directly to **suspension or termination** depending on severity.

Typical progressive steps include:

1. **Coaching / Verbal Warning**
 - Used for minor or first-time issues.
 - Supervisor identifies the issue, clarifies expectations, and documents the conversation internally.
2. **Written Warning**
 - Issued when issues persist or are more serious.
 - Outlines the problem, corrective expectations, and potential consequences.
 - Employee may submit a written response.
3. **Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) (for performance-related issues)**
 - A structured plan outlining expectations, timelines, supports, and review checkpoints.
 - Typically 30–90 days.
4. **Suspension (With or Without Pay)**
 - Considered for serious misconduct, policy violations, or safety risks.
 - Duration determined by the appointing authority.
 - Employee receives written notice of reasons and length of suspension.
5. **Termination**
 - Used for severe misconduct or when prior steps have not corrected the issue.
 - At-will employees may be terminated at any time for lawful reasons.

V. Conduct That May Result in Disciplinary Action

Examples include but are not limited to:

- Violation of Town or departmental policies
- Unsafe acts or failure to follow safety protocols
- Insubordination or refusal to follow reasonable direction
- Discrimination, harassment, or inappropriate conduct
- Theft, misuse, or unauthorized removal of Town property
- Falsification of records (e.g., timesheets, reports)
- Excessive absenteeism or misuse of leave
- Working under the influence of alcohol or drugs
- Breach of confidentiality
- Unprofessional behavior that undermines public trust
- Any illegal or unethical activity

This list is not exhaustive; the Town retains discretion to discipline behavior not explicitly listed.

VI. Investigatory Leave

When allegations involve safety, serious misconduct, or potential harm to Town interests, the Town may place an employee on **paid investigatory leave** pending a review. Paid investigatory leave is not discipline. The employee will be informed of the general reason and expected duration.

VII. Employee Rights

Employees have the right to:

- Be informed of the reason for disciplinary action
- Respond to allegations (verbally or in writing)
- Seek clarification of expectations
- Have union representation or appeal through the CBA's grievance process, if applicable

VIII. Documentation and Recordkeeping

All disciplinary actions—verbal (documented by supervisor), written warnings, PIPs, suspensions, and terminations—will be placed in the employee's personnel file in accordance with Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 149, §52C.

Employees will receive copies of any disciplinary documentation.

IX. Relationship to At-Will Employment

Nothing in this policy alters the Town's at-will employment relationship. The Town maintains the right to terminate employment at any time for lawful reasons, with or without cause, except where restricted by collective bargaining agreements or statute.

Separation & Exit Procedures

I. Purpose

The Town of Montague is committed to ensuring that the separation of employment—whether voluntary or involuntary—is handled with fairness, professionalism, and clarity. This section outlines procedures for resignation, retirement, involuntary separation, transition of duties, final pay, and return of Town property.

II. Types of Separation

A. Voluntary Resignation

Employees are encouraged to provide written notice of resignation as early as possible, ideally:

- **Non-exempt employees:** at least **two (2) weeks' notice**
- **Exempt employees:** at least **four (4) weeks' notice**

The notice should be submitted to the employee's Department Head. Notice should be dated, signed and include the intended last day of employment. Department Head shall submit the written notice as soon as possible to the Selectboard's Office

B. Retirement

Employees intending to retire should notify their Department Head and the Selectboard's Office-in writing as early as practicable to allow for planning and transition. Employees participating in the Montague Retirement System must contact the Retirement Board for benefit estimates and required forms

C. Job Abandonment

Failure to report to work for **three consecutive workdays** without notice may be considered voluntary resignation/job abandonment. The Town Administrator will confirm abandonment before finalizing separation.

D. Involuntary Separation

Involuntary separations may occur for reasons including but not limited to:

- Job elimination or reorganization
- Unsatisfactory performance
- Misconduct
- Loss of required licenses or certifications

- Violation of Town policies

All involuntary separations must be approved by the Appointing Authority.

Employees will receive written notice outlining the reason(s) for separation where applicable.

III. Transition of Duties

During the notice period, employees must work cooperatively with their supervisor to:

- Transfer documents, files, and work in progress
- Provide updated status reports
- Return Town equipment and records
- Share passwords or access instructions (where authorized under IT policies)

When feasible, employees may be asked to assist with training a successor or ensuring a smooth handoff.

IV. Town Property & Access

Employees must return all Town property **no later than their final day**, including but not limited to:

- Identification badges
- Keys, access cards, and key fobs
- Computers, phones, and mobile devices
- Tools, equipment, or uniforms
- Credit cards or purchasing cards
- Confidential files or documents

IT access (email, software, databases) will be disabled on the employee's final day, unless otherwise approved by the Town Administrator.

V. Exit Interviews

The Town may conduct an exit interview to:

- Discuss the employee's experience with the Town
- Identify workplace or process improvements
- Provide an opportunity to share feedback

Exit interviews are confidential to the extent permitted by law and do not affect eligibility for rehire.

VI. Final Pay and Benefits

A. Final Paycheck

Employees will receive their final paycheck in accordance with Massachusetts wage laws:

- **Voluntary resignations:** paid on the next scheduled payday
- **Involuntary separations:** paid on the last day of employment

Accrued and unused **vacation** will be compensated in accordance with Town policy.

Sick leave is **not paid out**, except for eligible sick leave buyback at retirement if applicable.

B. Health Insurance & COBRA

Separating employees may continue health insurance under **COBRA**. Information will be provided by the Selectboard Office.

C. Retirement Contributions

For eligible employees, contributions to the Montague Retirement System continue through the final paycheck.

VII. Rehire Eligibility

Employees who left in good standing may be considered for re-employment. Rehire eligibility will be determined based on:

- Performance during previous employment
- Nature of separation
- Departmental needs

VIII. Records & Documentation

The Selectboard Office will maintain documentation related to separations, including:

- Notice of resignation or termination
- Property return checklist
- Exit interview form (if completed)
- Final payroll documentation

Records will be retained in accordance with state record retention schedules.

SECTION 3

COMPENSATION & BENEFITS

Classification & Pay Plan

I. Purpose of the Classification and Pay Plan

The Town of Montague maintains a Classification and Pay Plan to ensure that compensation is administered fairly, consistently, and in alignment with the duties, responsibilities, and qualifications required for each position. The Plan supports internal equity, external competitiveness, and clear job expectations for all employees.

The Plan provides a structured framework for:

- Establishing job titles and job descriptions
- Aligning positions with pay grades and salary ranges
- Ensuring compliance with state and federal wage laws
- Supporting transparent personnel decisions, including hiring, advancement, and compensation adjustments

The Plan is adopted by Town Meeting and administered by the Selectboard, acting as the Personnel Board.

II. Structure of the Classification Plan

1. **Position Classification**

Each position in the Town is assigned to a job title and classification based on:

- The nature, complexity, and scope of work
- Required knowledge, skills, certifications, and abilities
- Level of responsibility, supervision, and impact
- Working conditions and physical requirements

2. **Job Descriptions**

Official job descriptions define essential duties, qualifications, and FLSA exemption status.

Job descriptions:

- Serve as the basis for classification
- Guide hiring, performance evaluation, and training
- Reflect the current needs of the Town and may be updated periodically

3. **Use of Official Titles**

The official title for each position must be used in payroll, budgets, personnel records, and official communications to ensure consistency.

III. Structure of the Pay Plan

1. **Salary Ranges and Pay Grades**

Each classification is assigned a pay grade with an associated salary range, approved by Town Meeting. Salary ranges typically include:

- **Minimum** (entry rate)
- **Midpoint** (market-aligned rate for experienced performers)
- **Maximum** (cap for the range based on duties and market conditions)

2. **Setting Pay Upon Hire**

- See “Wages and Adjustments” policy

3. **Wage Adjustments**

See “Wages and Adjustments” policy

4. **Overtime Eligibility**

- Non-exempt employees are compensated in accordance with the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA).
- Exempt employees are not eligible for overtime but may be eligible for flex time as defined elsewhere in this manual.

IV. Administration of the Classification and Pay Plan

The Selectboard, acting as the Personnel Board, is responsible for administering the plan, including:

- Ensuring positions are properly classified
- Reviewing proposed changes to job descriptions
- Evaluating reclassification requests
- Maintaining pay range structures
- Recommending amendments to Town Meeting

Department Heads are responsible for:

- Ensuring job duties assigned to employees align with their classification
- Requesting review when significant changes occur in job duties

V. Reclassification and Position Review

1. **Basis for Reclassification**

A position may be considered for reclassification when:

- The scope of responsibilities has significantly changed or expanded;
- New programs, technologies, or mandates alter the nature of the work; or
- The position no longer aligns with its assigned classification.
- A classification study commissioned by the Selectboard justifies a reclassification. These studies are typically conducted every 7-10 years.

Reclassification is based on job duties—not on employee performance, longevity, or temporary workload increases.

2. **Request for Reclassification**

Requests may be initiated by a Supervisor or the Town Administrator

All requests must include:

- A written explanation of changes in duties;
- A current job description annotated to show changes; and
- Supporting documentation such as organizational charts, mandates, or program descriptions.

3. **Review Process**

- The Town Administrator evaluates the request and may consult with the Supervisor, or external classification specialists.
- A recommendation is submitted to the Personnel Board for consideration.

4. **Approval Authority**

- The Personnel Board evaluates classification recommendations.
- Changes that impact the Compensation Plan require Town Meeting approval.

5. **Effective Dates**

- Reclassifications will not be applied retroactively unless required by law.
- Approved reclassifications will take effect at the start of the next full pay period unless otherwise determined.

VI. Amendments to the Classification and Pay Plan

Proposed amendments must:

- Be submitted in writing to the Selectboard
- Include justification and supporting documentation
- Be reviewed in a public meeting, with affected employees notified

The Selectboard will issue recommendations for consideration by Town Meeting.

VII. Limitations

- No employee may be paid outside the approved salary range without authorization of Town Meeting or unless permitted under an approved hiring exception.
- Reclassification requests may be denied if budget constraints, organizational structure, or operational needs do not support the change.
- Salary adjustments may not be used to reward performance outside the mechanisms provided in this manual.

- The Plan does not create a contractual right to continued employment or specific compensation.

Wages & Adjustments

I. Purpose

The purpose of this section is to define how employee wages are established, administered, and adjusted within the Town of Montague's Classification and Compensation system. This policy ensures equitable, consistent, and transparent compensation practices aligned with the Town's financial capacity, legal requirements, and commitment to fair employment practices.

II. Wage Determination

1. **Approved Compensation Plan**

Employee wages shall be based on the salary schedules, wage ranges, and position groupings established by Town Meeting through the Classification and Compensation Plan. No employee may be paid outside the approved range for their classification unless specifically authorized by the Selectboard.

2. **Starting Wages**

- Newly hired employees are typically placed at the minimum step or rate for their classification.
- The Selectboard (acting as Personnel Board) may approve a higher starting wage based on:
 - Exceptional qualifications,
 - Market competitiveness,
 - Recruitment difficulty, or
 - Other substantiated operational needs.

3. **Position Changes and Compensation**

- When an employee is promoted, reclassified, or moves to a higher grade, their wage will be adjusted to align with the designated range for the new position.
 - Wage adjustments resulting from demotions or reassignments will be set within the new range in consultation with the department head and Town Administrator.
-

III. Annual Wage Adjustments

1. **Cost-of-Living Adjustments (COLA)**

COLAs may be implemented when approved by Town Meeting. COLAs are not guaranteed and depend on:

- The Town's financial capacity,
- Economic conditions,
- Recommendations of the Selectboard.

2. **Step Adjustments**

- Annual step increases are based on union contracts and non-union contracts.

3. **Market Adjustments**

- The Personnel Board may periodically review wages relative to comparable municipalities.
 - Recommendations for market adjustments may be brought to Town Meeting for adoption.
-

IV. Additional Compensation Provisions

1. **Overtime Eligibility**

- Overtime is governed by state and federal law (Fair Labor Standards Act).
- Only non-exempt employees are eligible for overtime compensation.
- Overtime rates and procedures are addressed in the Hours of Work and Overtime Policy.

2. **Shift Differentials**

If approved by Town Meeting or collective bargaining agreement, eligible employees may receive additional compensation for designated shift schedules.

3. **Stipends & Additional Duties**

Stipends may be provided when employees assume additional responsibilities beyond their regular duties, subject to budget authorization and Selectboard approval. Some stipends are governed by CBAs

4. **Temporary Assignments**

Employees temporarily assigned to perform duties of a higher classification for an extended period may be eligible for temporary pay adjustments in accordance with union contracts.

V. Payroll Administration

1. **Pay Schedule**

Employees are paid on the Town's regular payroll cycle as established by the Town.

2. **Required Documentation**

Employees must submit accurate time records in accordance with payroll procedures. Falsification of records may result in disciplinary action.

3. **Deductions**

Mandatory and authorized voluntary deductions shall be processed as permitted by law.

VI. Authority & Amendments

- The Selectboard administers this section of the Personnel Policy Manual.
- Any proposed wage changes requiring appropriation must proceed through Town Meeting.
- This section may be amended by vote of the Selectboard following appropriate review and consultation.

Hours of Work and Overtime Policy

I. Purpose

The Town of Montague establishes the following standards to ensure consistency in scheduling, attendance, overtime administration, timekeeping, and workplace expectations. These policies are intended to comply with the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA), Massachusetts wage and hour laws, and Town operational needs.

II. Standard Hours of Work

1. **Workweek Definition**

The Town of Montague's standard workweek begins at **12:01 AM on Sunday** and ends at **12:00 midnight on Saturday**, unless otherwise defined by department-specific requirements.

2. **Work Schedules**

Work schedules are established by Department Heads based on operational needs. Employees are expected to be at their workstation and ready to work at the beginning of their scheduled shift.

3. **Attendance Expectations**

Good attendance is an essential function of every Town employee's job. Employees are expected to maintain regular and reliable attendance.

- Patterns of absenteeism (e.g., frequent absences adjacent to weekends or holidays) will be reviewed and may result in discipline.
 - Employees who exhaust all accrued leave and have not been granted additional legally protected leave may be considered on unauthorized leave and disciplined up to and including termination.
-

III. Meal and Break Periods

1. **Meal Periods**

Full-time employees are granted an unpaid meal period, typically **30 minutes**, scheduled near the midpoint of the workday when feasible. Employees are encouraged to take their meal break away from their work area when possible. **Working through meal breaks is discouraged** and does **not** count toward compensatory or overtime hours unless expressly authorized in advance by a supervisor. Excessive or repeated requests to skip meal periods by either employees or supervisors will be subject to review by the Town Administrator. Department heads are expected to exercise judgement and discretion in determining their particular staffing levels during meal periods. Wherever possible, each office should make an effort to provide coverage during meal periods; or if this is not possible to post a sign with available hours and the procedure for leaving messages or an alternate contact person. CBA's may have rest break rules

that supersede this section. (I.e. DPW employees follow different rules for meal and break periods)

2. Rest Breaks

Rest breaks are not required by Massachusetts law. Departments may permit short rest periods as long as they do not interfere with operations. Rest breaks, if permitted, are paid but may not be used to extend meal periods or shorten the workday. Supervisors should support reasonable opportunities for employees to step away from work to promote wellness, focus, and productivity. CBA's may also have rest break rules that supersede this section.

IV. Overtime Standards

1. Eligibility

- **Non-exempt employees** (as defined by FLSA) are eligible for overtime compensation.
- **Exempt employees** are not eligible for overtime but may be eligible for flex time under the Town's Flex Time Policy.
- Employees covered by collective bargaining agreements (CBAs) are subject to CBA provisions where they differ.

2. Authorization Requirement

- Overtime must be **approved in advance** by the Department Head or Town Administrator.
- Employees may not self-authorize overtime; doing so may result in discipline.

3. Compensation

- Non-exempt employees will be compensated at **1.5 times their regular hourly rate** for all hours **physically worked** over 40 in a workweek.
- **Regular Rate of Pay** is the employee's hourly wage. It does not include shift differentials, stipends, reimbursements, uniform allowances, nor bonuses not tied to hours worked.
- Paid leave (e.g., holidays, vacation, sick time) does **not** count toward the 40-hour overtime threshold unless required by a collective bargaining agreement.

4. Compensatory Time for Non-Exempt Employees

- Comp time may be substituted for paid overtime **only if** authorized in advance and in accordance with the Town's Flex Time Policy.
 - Comp time accrues at **1.5 hours for each hour worked beyond 40** in the workweek.
-

VII. Payroll and Timekeeping

1. Time Reporting Requirements

- Employees must accurately record **all hours worked**, including meal periods, overtime, and any leave used.
- Falsification of time records or recording time for another employee is prohibited and may result in discipline.

2. Pay Deductions and Corrections

- The Town makes all legally required payroll deductions.
 - Employees must immediately report any payroll discrepancies (overpayment or underpayment) to their supervisor and the Town Accountant.
 - Corrections will be made as promptly as practicable.
-

VIII. Flex Time for Non-Exempt Employees

Flex time for non-exempt employees may be granted **only** in accordance with the Town's Flex Time Policy. Flex time may not be used to avoid compensating non-exempt employees for overtime hours legally owed.

IX. Compliance and Enforcement

Employees are expected to comply with all provisions of this policy. Violations may result in corrective action up to and including termination.

Flex Time Policy for Exempt Employees

I. Purpose and Scope

The purpose of this policy is to support the effective delivery of Town services by allowing limited flexibility for exempt employees who perform work outside the normal business day. Flex time may be used when evening meetings, community events, training, travel, or other approved duties result in work hours that exceed the employee's regular weekly schedule. Flex time is intended to support operational efficiency and employee well-being while ensuring the Town's service needs are met.

This policy applies only to employees who are exempt from overtime under the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) as designated by the Selectboard acting as the Personnel Board. Flex time is not a statutory entitlement; it is a discretionary management tool. Elected officials and employees covered by collective bargaining agreements are subject only to applicable contract language.

II. Definitions

Flex Time Earned

Hours worked outside the normal workday that cause an exempt employee's total weekly hours to exceed their standard schedule (e.g., 35, 37.5, or 40 hours).

Flex Time Used

Paid time off taken to offset previously approved flex time earned.

Note: The term *compensatory time* is not used for exempt employees in Montague and is distinct from FLSA compensatory time for non-exempt employees.

III. Policy

Flex time may be accrued and used when an exempt employee is required to work outside normal business hours to meet operational needs. Examples include:

- Required evening or weekend meetings or events
- Approved travel time that exceeds an employee's normal commute
- Required work at conferences outside normal hours
- Work required to meet urgent deadlines or respond to emergencies

Flex time:

- Must be approved in advance by the employee's supervisor
- Must not disrupt departmental operations
- Is not payable upon separation unless provided in an employment contract
- Is a privilege that may be limited or discontinued at management's discretion

- Is encouraged to be used within the week that the time is accrued, if possible.

Employees may not routinely work through lunch or extend their workday solely to accrue flex time.

IV. Accrual Procedures

1. Eligibility & Approval

- All flex time must be approved by the employee's supervisor or the Town Administrator prior to accrual.
- Supervisors should ensure that flex time supports operational needs and is used equitably.

2. Accrual Rate

- Exempt employees: One (1) hour of flex time earned for each hour worked beyond the employee's regular weekly schedule.

3. Maximum Accrual

- Employees may carry no more than **75 hours** of flex time unless otherwise authorized by the Selectboard.

4. Conference Hours

- Flex time for conferences may be limited to hours spent in required sessions, not all hours away from home.
-

V. Use of Flex Time

1. Approval for Use

- Requests to use flex time must be approved by the supervisor in advance.
- Flex time should be scheduled to minimize operational disruption.

2. Limitations

- Unless specifically approved by the Town Administrator, no more than **one week of flex time** may be taken consecutively per year.
-

VI. Recordkeeping

- Employees must accurately record flex time earned and used.
- Holidays, sick leave, personal leave, and vacation leave and other leaves count as hours worked solely for the purpose of flex time eligibility.

- The official record is maintained through weekly payroll reporting using forms designated by the Selectboard's Office.
- Supervisors are responsible for reviewing and approving all flex time records, ensuring policy compliance.

Emergency Closing Policy

I. Purpose

This policy establishes procedures for closing Town Hall and certain Town facilities during inclement weather or other public safety conditions, and explains how employee compensation and leave will be handled during closures.

II. Authority to Close

When weather conditions or other public safety concerns warrant, the **Chair of the Selectboard**, or their designee, will determine whether **Montague Town Hall** will open, close early, open late, or remain closed during business hours.

In making this decision, the Chair (or designee) will seek input from the **DPW Superintendent**, **Police Chief**, and/or the **Town Administrator**, as appropriate.

If the Chair is unavailable

- The designee will be determined by **Selectboard seniority**.
 - If no Selectboard member is available, the designee will be the **Town Administrator**.
-

III. Facilities Covered

When Town Hall is closed during business hours, the following facilities will also be closed:

- **Libraries**
- **Parks & Recreation**
- **Senior Center**

Evening and Weekend Library Closings

Evening and weekend Library closings will be determined by the **Library Director**, in consultation with the **Library Board of Trustees**. These closings will be treated as Town Hall closings for purposes of employee compensation and leave under this policy.

Friday Closings at DPW and CWF

With Town Hall typically closed on Fridays, Friday closings at DPW and CWF will be determined by the respective Superintendent, with notice of closure to be provided to the Town Administrator.

IV. Essential Employees

Essential employees are expected to report to work as scheduled and are exempt from the paid closure provisions for non-essential employees.

Essential employees include:

- All **Police Officers**, including the **Chief of Police**
- All **Dispatchers**, including the **Dispatch Manager**
- All **DPW employees**
- Essential Operators at the **Clean Water Facility**

Compensatory Time for Essential Employees

No additional compensation will be granted unless specified by a collective bargaining agreement, **except:**

If Town Hall is declared closed for a **full workday**, essential employees who work during the period between **6:00 AM on the day of closing through 5:59 AM the following day** will receive **compensatory time equal to the hours actually worked** during that period.

Compensatory time earned under this provision may only be taken when the employee's shift can be left vacant, **or** covered without paying overtime.

V. Non-Essential Employees (Town Hall Closure)

If Town Hall is declared closed, non-essential employees will be paid for their **normally scheduled hours** from the time of the closure declaration through the close of the regular business day.

Non-essential employees must record this paid closure time on their time sheet as **Other Leave Time – Inclement Weather**.

Employees Already on Approved Leave

Employees who were already scheduled to be out on approved leave (e.g., vacation, sick leave, or compensatory time) will remain charged to that leave and will **not** receive Other Leave Time under this policy.

Work Required During a Closure

If a Department Head determines that a non-essential employee (including the Department Head) must perform work that cannot be delayed:

- The hours worked must be recorded as **time worked, in addition to** the Other Leave Time provided for the closure.
- The Department Head must notify the Town Administrator of this determination on the following workday.

VI. Town Hall Open During Inclement Weather

When Town Hall remains open during inclement weather, employees may choose to:

1. Not report to work; or
2. Arrive late and/or leave early.

Any missed work time under these options must be charged to **vacation, compensatory time, or personal time**, and may **not** be charged to sick leave.

This applies even if Town Hall later closes.

VII. Policy Administration

The Town Administrator may issue additional procedures or guidance as needed to ensure consistent application of this policy and proper payroll reporting.

Holidays

I. Purpose

The Town of Montague observes designated holidays each year to provide employees with paid time away from work in recognition of nationally or culturally significant events, and to support employee well-being, work–life balance, and equity in time off benefits.

This policy outlines eligibility, paid holiday benefits, scheduling, and procedures for holiday observance.

II. Recognized Holidays

The Town of Montague observes the following holidays each year. These holidays are granted as paid leave for eligible employees:

1. **New Year's Day**
2. **Martin Luther King Jr. Day**
3. **Presidents' Day**
4. **Patriots' Day**
5. **Memorial Day**
6. **Juneteenth**
7. **Independence Day**
8. **Labor Day**
9. **Indigenous Peoples' Day**
10. **Veterans Day**
11. **Thanksgiving Day**
12. **Christmas Day**

The Friday after Thanksgiving is only a paid holiday for employees on a 5 day workweek.

The day before Christmas (i.e. December 24th) shall be a paid holiday when it falls during the Monday through Thursday work week (or when it falls on a scheduled work day of an employee on a different work week).

The Selectboard may designate additional holidays or modify this list as needed.

III. Eligibility

Holiday benefits apply to:

- **Regular full-time employees**

- **Regular part-time employees** who work at least 20 hours per week (pro-rated)
- **Union employees**, consistent with their applicable collective bargaining agreements

Temporary, seasonal, and per-diem employees are not eligible unless otherwise required by contract or regulation.

IV. Holiday Pay

A. Full-Time Employees

Receive full day of holiday pay at their regular straight-time rate.

B. Part-Time Employees

Receive holiday pay **proportional to their normal weekly schedule**.

C. Employees Required to Work on a Holiday

If an employee is required to work due to operational needs:

- **Non-exempt employees** will be paid **1.5 times** their regular hourly rate for hours worked *in addition to* holiday pay or in accordance with their role and collective bargaining agreement.
 - **Exempt employees** will receive alternative time off or compensation as approved by the Town Administrator or department head, consistent with FLSA rules.
-

V. Holidays Falling on a Weekend

For employees on a 5 day workweek (Mon-Fri), when a holiday falls on:

- **Saturday** → Observed on the preceding Friday
- **Sunday** → Observed on the following Monday

For employees on a 4 day workweek (Mon- Thurs), when a holiday falls on:

- **Friday or Saturday** → Observed on the preceding Thursday
- **Sunday** → Observed on the following Monday
- If Christmas Eve falls on a Thursday or Friday, it will be taken on the preceding Wednesday

Employees scheduled to work on the *actual* holiday may receive appropriate premium pay depending on their role and collective bargaining agreements.

VI. Holiday During Paid Leave

Employees on approved **vacation, personal leave, or sick leave** during a Town holiday will receive holiday pay rather than using accrued leave.

Holiday pay does *not* count as “hours worked” for overtime calculation purposes.

VII. Religious and Cultural Observances

In alignment with the Town’s inclusivity principles:

- Employees may request time off for religious or cultural observances not included on the official holiday list.
- Departments will make reasonable efforts to accommodate such requests through **personal leave, vacation leave, flex time, or unpaid leave**, consistent with operational needs.

Supervisors must evaluate such requests equitably and without discrimination.

VIII. Inclement Weather or Emergency Closures on Holidays

If the Town closes due to weather or emergency on a holiday:

- Eligible employees will still receive their regular holiday pay.
- Employees required to work will be compensated per Section IV.

Vacation Leave

I. Purpose

Vacation leave provides employees with paid time away from work for rest, personal wellbeing, and work–life balance. The Town of Montague is committed to offering fair and predictable vacation benefits as part of its overall compensation plan.

II. Eligibility

1. **Permanent employees** scheduled to work **20 hours or more per week** are eligible for vacation leave.
 2. Vacation is granted annually on the employee’s **anniversary date of hire**.
 3. Part-time employees (over 20 hours weekly) receive vacation leave **prorated** based on their scheduled weekly hours and the full-time equivalent hours of their position.
-

III. Accrual Schedule

Vacation leave is awarded as a lump-sum on the anniversary date according to the employee’s length of continuous service:

Years of Service Annual Vacation Leave Awarded

4 months	1 week
8 months	1 week
1 to <5 years	2 weeks
5 to <10 years	3 weeks
10 to <20 years	4 weeks
20+ years	5 weeks

Notes:

- “Week” is defined as the employee’s regular scheduled workweek (e.g., 35-hr, 37.5-hr, or 40-hr).
 - Vacation does not accrue while an employee is on unpaid leave status.
 - Vacation accrual schedule is subject to collective bargaining agreements or individual employment agreements.
-

IV. Use of Vacation Leave

1. Vacation leave must be **requested and approved in advance** by the employee's supervisor or department head. Department heads shall report their planned vacation dates on the shared vacation calendar maintained by the Selectboard office.
 2. Vacation scheduling will consider departmental operational needs but should also support employee wellbeing and reasonable access to leave.
 3. Employees are encouraged to plan leave early each year to support adequate staffing.
-

V. Carryover and Forfeiture

1. Employees may **carry over up to one (1) week** of unused vacation into the next anniversary year with prior approval from their department head.
 2. During or immediately following a declared public health emergency or other extraordinary situation, the Town Administrator may authorize employees to carry over **up to two (2) weeks** to support operational continuity.
 3. Any vacation leave **not used or carried over** by the anniversary date will be **forfeited**, except when prevented by operational necessity at the direction of the Town Administrator.
-

VI. Vacation Payout Upon Separation

Upon separation from Town service:

- Employees will be compensated for **all unused, earned vacation leave**, provided they have completed at least six months of continuous service or based on collective bargaining agreement.
 - Vacation may not be used to **extend an employee's date of separation** unless approved by the Town Administrator.
-

VII. Scheduling Considerations

1. Department heads may limit the number of employees on leave simultaneously when necessary for service delivery.
 2. New employees may not take vacation during the first six months unless otherwise approved.
 3. Employees transferring between departments must coordinate vacation scheduling with both supervisors to avoid operational disruption.
-

VIII. Holidays During Vacation Leave

If a paid Town holiday occurs during an employee's approved vacation, the day will be counted as a **holiday**, not as vacation leave.

IX. Advanced Vacation Leave

The Town may, at its discretion, allow an employee to take vacation leave **in advance of the anniversary date**, provided:

- The employee submits a written request, and
 - The Town Administrator approves it.
- If the employee separates before earning the advanced time, the Town may deduct the value of the unearned leave from the employee's final paycheck as permitted by law.
-

X. Recordkeeping

All vacation leave balances and usage will be recorded in the Town's official payroll/timekeeping system. Supervisors must verify accuracy monthly.

Sick Leave

I. Purpose

Sick leave provides eligible employees with paid time off when they are unable to work due to illness, injury, medical appointments, or to care for an immediate family member with a health-related need. The Town of Montague is committed to supporting employee well-being while ensuring continuity of operations, fairness, and compliance with applicable state and federal laws.

II. Eligibility

1. **Permanent employees** regularly scheduled to work **20 hours or more per week** are eligible to accrue sick leave.
 2. Employees with fewer than 20 scheduled hours per week may be eligible under state law for unpaid leave or other statutory benefits, but they **do not accrue paid sick leave under this policy**.
 3. New employees begin accruing sick leave **on their date of hire**, but may not use accrued sick leave until completion of their **first 30 days of employment**, unless otherwise required by law.
-

III. Accrual of Sick Leave

1. Eligible employees accrue sick leave **annually on their anniversary date** at the following rate:
 - o **Four (4) weeks of sick leave per year**, prorated according to the employee's regular weekly schedule.
 2. Sick leave may accumulate up to a **maximum of 28 weeks**.
 3. Sick leave is **not advanced** and cannot be borrowed against future accruals.
 4. Sick leave **does not accrue during unpaid leaves of absence**.
-

IV. Permitted Uses of Sick Leave

Sick leave may be used for the following reasons:

1. Employee Illness or Injury

Absence due to bona fide personal illness, injury, medical appointments, treatment, or preventative care.

2. Family Care

Employees may use up to **two (2) weeks per anniversary year** to care for:

- Spouse or domestic partner
- Child or stepchild
- Parent or parent-in-law
- Sibling
- Grandparent or grandchild

Family sick leave may be used only when the employee's presence is reasonably required, and when they have made a good-faith effort to secure alternative care.

3. Newborn or Newly Placed Child

Employees may use up to **two (2) weeks of accrued sick leave** during the first month following the birth, adoption, or placement of a child.

V. Reporting Sick Leave

1. Employees must notify their supervisor **as soon as reasonably possible**, generally before the start of their scheduled workday.
2. Notification should include:
 - The anticipated duration of the absence
 - Whether family sick leave is being used
3. Failure to provide timely notice may result in denial of paid sick leave for the period of unreported absence.

VI. Medical Documentation

A supervisor or the Town Administrator may require a medical provider's note:

1. **After three (3) consecutive workdays** of absence;
2. If the employee has used **50% or more of their annual sick leave** within a 12-month period;
3. When a pattern of unscheduled or frequent absences occurs;
4. Before returning to duty, if the absence raised concerns about the employee's fitness for duty.

Documentation may be required to confirm an employee's ability to perform essential job functions.

All medical information will be kept **confidential**.

VII. Extended Illness or Exhaustion of Sick Leave

If an employee exhausts their accrued sick leave:

1. They may use available **vacation, personal, or compensatory time**, if eligible;
 2. They may request **unpaid leave**, subject to Town approval.
-

VIII. Sick Leave Upon Separation

1. Sick leave is **not paid out** upon resignation, termination, or death.
 2. However, upon **approved retirement** from the Montague Retirement System, the Town will buy back **up to 25%** of the employee's unused sick leave, **not to exceed \$4,500**, at the employee's straight-time hourly rate.
-

IX. Misuse of Sick Leave

Misrepresentation, falsification of documentation, or misuse of sick leave may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

Personal Leave

I. Purpose

Personal leave provides employees with limited paid time off to address urgent or important personal matters that cannot be reasonably scheduled outside the workday. This policy ensures that all eligible employees have access to predictable and equitable personal leave benefits.

II. Eligibility

Personal leave is available to all **regular, benefits-eligible employees** working **20 or more hours per week**, and any other permanent employee classification specifically designated as eligible by the Town.

Temporary, seasonal, per-diem, or contract employees are not eligible unless explicitly stated in their employment agreement.

III. Amount of Leave

Eligible employees receive personal leave **equal to 0.6 of their regularly scheduled weekly hours or in accordance with collective bargaining agreement**, granted:

- **Upon hire**, and
- **Annually on the employee's anniversary date** thereafter.

Example:

Scheduled Weekly Hours	Annual Personal Leave
20 hours/week	12 hours
30 hours/week	18 hours
37.5 hours/week	22.5 hours
40 hours/week	24 hours

IV. Use of Personal Leave

1. Purpose of Leave

Personal leave may be used for personal, legal, family, household, or business matters that cannot be addressed during non-work hours. No explanation of the specific reason is required beyond indicating that leave is “personal.”

2. Scheduling

- Employees must request personal leave **in advance** whenever possible.
- Approval from the supervisor or department head is required, based on operational needs.
- Requests will not be unreasonably denied.

3. Minimum Increments

Personal leave may generally be taken in **one-hour increments**, or in accordance with collective bargaining agreement, unless a department has a different standard that is reasonable and consistently applied.

V. Carryover and Forfeiture

- **Personal leave does not carry over** into the next year
 - End of anniversary year treatment is subject to collective bargaining agreements.
 - Unused personal leave is **forfeited** at the end of the employee’s hiring anniversary.
 - Personal leave is **not paid out** upon separation or retirement.
-

VI. Interaction With Other Leave

Personal leave is distinct from vacation, sick leave, and other statutory or contractual leave entitlements. It may not be used to extend paid leave where such extension is prohibited by law or policy.

VII. Recordkeeping

Employees must record personal leave usage accurately through the Town’s designated timekeeping system. Department heads are responsible for verifying personal leave balances and ensuring accurate reporting.

Other Leaves (Bereavement, Jury Duty, Military)

I. Purpose

The Town of Montague recognizes that employees may need time away from work to address important family, civic, or military obligations. The following policies establish uniform standards for Bereavement Leave, Jury Duty Leave, and Military Leave in compliance with Massachusetts and federal law, while ensuring continuity of Town operations.

II. Bereavement Leave

A. Eligibility

All regular full-time and regular part-time employees (scheduled 20+ hours per week) are eligible for paid bereavement leave upon hire.

B. Leave Allowance

Employees may take **up to five (5) paid workdays** in the event of the death of a member of their immediate family.

For the purposes of this policy, *immediate family* includes:

- Spouse or domestic partner
- Child or stepchild
- Parent or stepparent
- Sibling or stepsibling
- Grandparent or grandchild
- Parent-in-law or child-in-law
- A relative or household member for whom the employee is the primary caretaker

An employee should be granted **one (1) day off** with pay in the event of the death of any other relative.

An employee may be granted additional time off with pay (such as vacation or personal time) at the discretion of the supervisor.

C. Notification

Employees must notify their supervisor as soon as possible. The Town may request reasonable documentation (e.g., funeral program) solely to confirm eligibility.

III. Jury Duty Leave

A. Civic Responsibility

Employees are encouraged to fulfill their civic obligation to serve on juries.

B. Paid Leave

Employees summoned for jury duty will receive their regular base pay for **the first three (3) days** of juror service, as required by Massachusetts law.

If service extends beyond three days:

- The Commonwealth compensates the employee for subsequent days.
- The Town will reduce the employee's pay for funds received from the court.

C. Work Expectations

Employees must provide their supervisor with a copy of the jury summons within 24 hours of being received. The employee must report to work as regularly scheduled on days when the court is not in session or after the court recesses on a particular day. The employee shall furnish evidence satisfactory to the Supervisor that he or she reported to court and served as a juror.

D. Benefits Impact

Jury duty leave is treated as **paid time** for purposes of benefits, accruals, and seniority.

IV. Military Leave

A. Compliance with Law

Military leave is administered in accordance with:

- The federal *Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA)*
- Massachusetts General Laws, including provisions for paid military leave for qualifying service

B. Eligibility

Employees who are members of the uniformed services—including the National Guard, Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, Coast Guard, Space Force, and commissioned corps—are eligible for protected leave when called to active duty, training, examinations, or emergency service.

C. Paid Military Leave (MA Requirement)

In accordance with Massachusetts law, employees in military service are entitled to **up to 17 days of paid military leave** per calendar year for authorized training or service.

D. Unpaid Military Leave (USERRA)

For extended active duty or deployment, employees may take unpaid leave. During this period:

- Health insurance may be continued in accordance with COBRA and USERRA options.
- Seniority and retirement credit continue to accrue as required by law.
- Employees have the right to reinstatement to their position (or equivalent) upon honorable completion of service.

E. Notice Requirements

Employees must provide advance written or verbal notice of upcoming military service unless prevented by military necessity.

F. Differential Pay

The Town may elect to provide differential pay to employees called to active duty so that total compensation does not fall below the employee's regular base pay. This benefit, if offered, shall be subject to annual appropriation and Selectboard approval.

V. Coordination With Other Policies

Other leave policies (e.g., sick leave, vacation, personal leave, FMLA) may apply concurrently or consecutively depending on circumstances and applicable law. The Town Administrator will assist employees in understanding available options. Employees covered by a collective bargaining agreement (CBA) will follow the terms of that agreement unless otherwise stated or unless state or federal law supersedes those provisions.

Parental Leave (Family Medical Leave Act)

I. Purpose

The Town of Montague is committed to supporting employees as they welcome a new child into their family. This policy outlines employee rights and responsibilities under applicable federal and state laws, including the **Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA)** and the **Massachusetts Parental Leave Act (MPLA)**. These laws provide job-protected leave for the birth, adoption, or foster placement of a child. This policy is intended to provide clear guidance on eligibility, duration, compensation, benefits, and required documentation for parental leave.

II. Applicability

This policy applies to all Town of Montague employees. However, the specific leave entitlements under FMLA and MPLA vary depending on the employee's length of service, hours worked, and payroll status. Employees covered by a collective bargaining agreement (CBA) will follow the terms of that agreement unless otherwise stated or unless state or federal law supersedes those provisions.

III. Types of Parental Leave

1. Massachusetts Parental Leave Act (MPLA)

Employees who have completed **three months of employment** are eligible for **up to eight (8) weeks of job-protected unpaid leave** for:

- the birth of a child,
- adoption of a child under 18, or
- adoption of a child under 23 if the child is disabled.

If both parents work for the Town, the combined entitlement is eight weeks for the same child.

For complete MPLA guidelines please go to www.mass.gov and search "MPLA"

2. Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA)

Eligible employees may take **up to 12 weeks of unpaid, job-protected leave** in a 12-month period for the birth, adoption, or foster placement of a child.

FMLA eligibility requires:

- 12 months of employment with the Town, and
- 1,250 hours worked in the previous 12 months.

For complete FMLA guidelines please go to www.dol.gov and search “FMLA”

IV. Coordination of Leave Types

To the maximum extent permitted by law, **leave types will run concurrently**, including:

- FMLA job-protected leave,
- MPLA parental leave.

Paid leave does not extend the total duration of job-protected leave.

V. Use of Accrued Time

Employees may, but are **not required to**, use accrued leave as follows:

- **Sick Leave:** Up to two (2) weeks may be used for immediate postpartum or bonding care.
 - **Vacation or Personal Leave:** May be used at the employee’s discretion.
 - **Unpaid Leave:** Employees may take unpaid time if they choose not to use accrued leave or do not have available balances, subject to approval of the Town Administrator.
-

VI. Benefits During Leave

1. Health Insurance

The Town will continue to provide health insurance to employees on FMLA or MPLA leave on the same terms as if the employee were actively working. Employees must continue to pay their share of premium costs.

2. Seniority and Benefits Accrual

Employees do not accrue vacation, sick leave, or seniority during unpaid portions of leave unless required by law or CBA.

VII. Notice Requirements

Employees must give **at least two weeks notice** of the need for parental leave whenever practicable. Notice should be provided to the employee’s supervisor and the Town Administrator.

In situations where 30-day notice is not possible (e.g., premature birth, unexpected adoption placement), employees must provide notice as soon as reasonably practicable.

VIII. Required Documentation

Documentation may include:

- Birth certificate or medical confirmation,
- Adoption or foster placement documents,
- Any forms required under FMLA.

Medical information will be kept confidential.

IX. Return to Work

Employees returning from protected leave will be restored to their prior position or an equivalent one, consistent with federal and state requirements. Employees must provide reasonable notice of their intent to return.

Employees who do not return when expected and who fail to communicate with the Town may be considered to have voluntarily resigned.

X. Non-Retaliation

The Town strictly prohibits retaliation against any employee for requesting or taking parental leave, or exercising any rights under this policy.

Domestic Violence Leave

I. Purpose

The Town of Montague is committed to supporting employees who are experiencing domestic violence or whose family members are victims of abusive behavior. Consistent with M.G.L. c. 149, §52E, this policy provides eligible employees with job-protected leave to address safety, legal, medical, and related needs arising from domestic violence.

The Town recognizes that domestic violence is a deeply personal and often traumatic experience, and that confidentiality, compassion, and flexibility are essential to ensuring employee safety and well-being.

II. Eligibility

Employees are eligible for leave under this policy if:

- The employee is a victim of “abusive behavior” as defined by state law; **or**
- The employee’s family member is a victim of abusive behavior.

For the purposes of this policy, *family member* includes:

- spouse or domestic partner
- parent or stepparent
- child or stepchild
- sibling
- grandparent or grandchild
- a person with whom the employee has a child in common
- a person with whom the employee is in a substantive dating or engagement relationship and resides
- any person for whom the employee is legally responsible

Employees who are perpetrators of abusive behavior are not eligible for leave under this section.

III. Amount of Leave

Eligible employees may take **up to 15 days of leave in any 12-month period** for purposes related to domestic violence. Leave may be taken intermittently or consecutively.

Employees may choose to use accrued sick, vacation, personal, or other available paid leave during this period. Once paid leave is exhausted, the remainder of the 15 days, if any, will be unpaid.

IV. Permissible Uses of Leave

Leave may be used for the employee or an eligible family member to:

- Seek or obtain medical attention, counseling, or victim services.
- Secure safe housing or shelter.
- Meet with law enforcement or participate in criminal or civil court proceedings.
- Seek a protective order, restraining order, or other judicial relief.
- Consult with an attorney or legal advocate.
- Attend child custody proceedings or address other issues directly related to the abusive behavior.
- Engage in safety planning or other actions necessary to address imminent or ongoing risk.

V. Notice Requirements

Employees must provide **advance notice** of their need for leave whenever possible.

If there is a risk of imminent danger to the employee or a family member, notice may be provided by:

- the employee,
- a family member,
- a counselor, social worker, shelter worker, legal advocate, or other professional assisting the employee.

Documentation

If the leave is unscheduled, the employee must provide documentation within **30 days**. Acceptable forms include:

- court orders, police reports, or witness statements
- documentation from a medical provider, counselor, or victim services organization
- a signed statement from the employee affirming that they or a family member is a victim of abusive behavior

The Town will not require disclosure of unnecessary details of the abuse.

VI. Confidentiality

All information related to domestic violence leave shall be kept **strictly confidential** and stored separately from the employee's personnel file.

Information may be disclosed only if:

1. requested or authorized in writing by the employee;
 2. ordered released by a court;
 3. otherwise required by state or federal law;
 4. necessary to protect the safety of the employee or others in the workplace; or
 5. needed for coordination with law enforcement in an active investigation.
-

VII. Employment Protection

The Town shall not:

- interfere with, restrain, or deny an employee's use of domestic violence leave;
- take adverse action against an employee for requesting or using leave;
- retaliate against an employee for seeking help or asserting their rights under this policy.

Employees will be restored to the same or an equivalent position upon return from leave, consistent with applicable law.

VIII. Interaction with Other Laws and Policies

This policy is intended to work in harmony with the Town's leave policies and with applicable state and federal laws, including:

- Massachusetts Parental Leave
- Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA)
- Victim protections under M.G.L. c. 258B

If another law provides greater protection or benefits, that law prevails.

Insurance, Retirement, and Benefits

I. Purpose

The purpose of this section is to outline the employee benefits offered by the Town of Montague, including insurance programs, retirement system participation, and other ancillary benefits. These benefits are designed to support employee well-being, financial security, and work–life balance. Specific plan details are governed by official plan documents and applicable Massachusetts and federal laws; where conflicts arise, the official plan document or governing law prevails.

II. Applicability

This section applies to all eligible employees of the Town of Montague. Eligibility is determined by employment status (full-time, part-time, elected, temporary, or seasonal), hours worked, collective bargaining agreements, and specific rules of benefit plans and statutes.

III. Health Insurance Benefits

1. Plan Offerings

The Town offers medical, dental, and vision insurance plans to eligible employees in accordance with Massachusetts General Laws (M.G.L. c. 32B) and any local acceptance provisions. Available plan options, premium contribution rates, and coverage summaries are provided annually during open enrollment.

2. Eligibility

Employees regularly scheduled to work at least the minimum number of hours required under M.G.L. c. 32B are eligible for health insurance benefits. Eligibility for dependents follows the terms of the plan document.

3. Premium Contributions

The Town contributes a portion of the health insurance premium, with the remaining share paid by the employee via payroll deductions. Contribution rates may be adjusted by vote of the Selectboard and/or Town Meeting, consistent with applicable law.

4. Open Enrollment & Qualifying Events

- Open enrollment occurs annually (Typically in April)
- Mid-year enrollment changes are permitted only following qualifying life events (marriage, birth, adoption, loss of other coverage, etc.), consistent with federal IRS regulations.

5. Continuation of Coverage (COBRA)

Employees losing coverage due to termination or reduction in hours may be eligible to continue insurance under COBRA as outlined in the Town’s COBRA Policy.

IV. Life Insurance

The Town offers group life insurance to eligible employees in accordance with M.G.L. c. 32B and the applicable plan document. Coverage amounts and employee contribution requirements are communicated upon hire and annually through the Selectboard Office.

V. Retirement Benefits

1. **Membership in the Montague Retirement System**

Eligible employees are required to participate in the Montague Retirement System in accordance with M.G.L. c. 32. Mandatory contributions are deducted from payroll and remitted to the Retirement Board.

2. **Vesting and Service Credit**

Vesting and service credit requirements are established under state law and administered by the Montague Retirement Board. Employees may obtain benefit estimates or counseling directly through the Retirement Office.

3. **Social Security Participation**

The Town participates in Social Security for certain positions. Employees should consult with the Town Accountant to understand whether their position is subject to Social Security withholding or the Massachusetts public retirement offset rules.

VI. Deferred Compensation Programs

The Town may offer employees the opportunity to participate in tax-advantaged deferred compensation programs (e.g., 457(b) plans). Participation is voluntary, and contributions are made through payroll deduction. All terms are governed by plan documents.

VII. Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

The Town provides an Employee Assistance Program at no cost to employees. The EAP offers confidential counseling, referral services, and work-life support for employees and household members. Participation is voluntary and does not impact employment status or performance evaluations.

VIII. Additional Employee Benefits

Depending on budget appropriations and bargaining agreements, the Town may provide additional benefits such as:

- Flexible Spending Accounts (if offered)
- Health Savings Accounts (HSA) (if offered)
- Short-term or long-term disability insurance
- Wellness programs or incentives

These benefits are subject to eligibility requirements and may vary by fiscal year

IX. Limitations and Governing Documents

This section summarizes benefits but does not replace official plan documents. Where discrepancies arise:

- The **official insurance plan document**,
- The **Montague Retirement System plan**,
- Applicable **collective bargaining agreements**, and
- **State or federal law** will supersede this policy.

The Town reserves the right to modify benefit programs in accordance with law, budget decisions, and negotiated agreements.

COBRA Policies

(Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act)

I. Purpose

The Town of Montague complies with the federal Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act (COBRA), which provides eligible employees and their covered dependents the opportunity to temporarily continue group health insurance coverage after certain qualifying events that would otherwise result in loss of coverage.

This policy summarizes employee rights and responsibilities under COBRA. The Town's Health Plan documents and applicable federal law govern in all cases.

II. Eligibility for Continuation Coverage

COBRA continuation coverage may be available to:

- **Employees** enrolled in the Town's group health insurance plan
- **Spouses** of covered employees
- **Dependent children**, as defined by plan documents and law

A qualified beneficiary must be enrolled in the Town's group health plan on the day before a qualifying event occurs.

III. Qualifying Events

A. For Employees

You may elect COBRA continuation coverage if coverage is lost due to:

1. **Termination of employment** for any reason other than gross misconduct
 2. **Reduction in work hours** below the plan's eligibility threshold
-

B. For Spouses of Covered Employees

A spouse may elect COBRA if coverage is lost due to:

1. Death of the employee

2. Termination or reduction in the employee's hours
 3. Divorce or legal separation
 4. Employee's entitlement to Medicare
-

C. For Dependent Children

A dependent child may elect COBRA if coverage is lost due to:

1. Any qualifying event affecting the employee (listed above)
2. Loss of dependent child status under the plan (e.g., aging out at age 26)

Children born to or adopted by the employee during a COBRA coverage period may also be added to coverage if properly enrolled.

IV. Length of COBRA Coverage

COBRA coverage generally lasts:

- **Up to 18 months** for termination or reduction in hours
- **Up to 36 months** for spouse- or dependent-based qualifying events

Extensions may apply:

- **Disability Extension:** Up to 29 months if the Social Security Administration determines disability within the first 60 days of COBRA coverage
 - **Multiple Qualifying Events:** Up to 36 months from the date of the first event when applicable under federal law
-

V. Premiums and Payment

Qualified beneficiaries must pay the full premium cost for COBRA continuation coverage, plus a 2% administrative fee (as allowed by law).

- Premiums are due on the **first business day** of each month
 - A **30-day grace period** applies
 - Failure to pay within the grace period will result in cancellation of coverage
-

VI. Responsibilities of Employees and Dependents

A. Notice Requirements

Employees or dependents must notify the Town's Plan Administrator **within 60 days** if:

- A divorce or legal separation occurs
- A child loses dependent eligibility
- A disability determination or termination of disability status is issued

Failure to provide timely notice may result in loss of COBRA rights.

B. Providing Updated Contact Information

Qualified beneficiaries are responsible for maintaining current mailing and email addresses with the Town.

VII. Responsibilities of the Town (Plan Administrator)

The Town will:

- Provide COBRA election notices within federally required timeframes
- Administer continuation coverage in accordance with COBRA regulations
- Maintain required documentation and plan disclosures

The **Plan Administrator** for COBRA is the Selectboard Office.

VIII. COBRA Election Procedures

After a qualifying event:

1. The Plan Administrator will send a written **COBRA Election Notice** to eligible beneficiaries.
 2. Beneficiaries have **60 days** from the date of the notice or loss of coverage (whichever is later) to elect coverage.
 3. Coverage is retroactive to the date of the qualifying event if elected and premiums are paid.
-

IX. Termination of COBRA Coverage

COBRA coverage may end before the maximum period if:

- Premiums are not paid on time
 - The Town stops offering group health coverage to all employees
 - A beneficiary becomes covered under another group health plan
 - A beneficiary becomes entitled to Medicare after COBRA begins
-

X. Additional Information

The Town's group health insurance plan documents and federal COBRA law govern in all cases. Employees with questions may contact:

Montague Selectboard Office
Town of Montague
Phone: 413-863-3200x 108

SECTION 4

CONDUCT, SAFETY & EXPECTATIONS

Code of Conduct

I. Purpose

The Town of Montague is committed to maintaining a professional, respectful, and ethical workplace that supports high-quality public service. This Code of Conduct establishes expectations for all employees in order to promote public trust, safeguard Town resources, and ensure that the community is served with integrity and fairness.

These standards apply to all employees, volunteers, temporary staff, and contractors working on behalf of the Town.

II. General Expectations of Employee Conduct

Employees of the Town of Montague are expected to:

1. Demonstrate Professionalism

- Treat colleagues, residents, Board and Committee members, and members of the public with courtesy, respect, and patience.
- Communicate clearly, thoughtfully, and in a manner appropriate for public service.
- Conduct themselves in ways that reflect positively on the Town at all times.

2. Act with Honesty and Integrity

- Provide accurate information in the course of their work.
- Avoid deceptive, fraudulent, or misleading behavior.
- Use their position only for lawful, ethical public purposes.

3. Maintain Confidentiality

- Safeguard confidential, sensitive, or legally protected information.
- Discuss confidential matters only with authorized individuals and only for legitimate work purposes.
- Understand that violations may result in disciplinary action and/or legal consequences.

4. Exercise Good Judgment

- Make decisions consistent with Town policies, applicable laws, and ethical standards.
 - Seek guidance from supervisors or the Town Administrator when uncertain about proper conduct.
-

III. Respectful Workplace Requirements

The Town is committed to a workplace free from unlawful harassment, discrimination, bullying, or intimidation. Employees must:

- Interact respectfully with all individuals, regardless of differences in background or identity.
- Comply with all Inclusivity, Anti-Harassment, ADA, Workplace Violence Prevention, and Safety policies.
- Report concerning conduct promptly, through appropriate channels.

Employees are expected to contribute positively to a climate where all voices are heard and valued.

IV. Use of Town Property and Resources

Employees are entrusted with Town property and resources, including but not limited to equipment, vehicles, records, technology systems, and facilities. Employees must:

- Use Town resources only for legitimate Town business unless incidental personal use is explicitly permitted.
- Protect Town assets from loss, damage, theft, or misuse.
- Comply fully with the Technology Use and Cybersecurity policies.

Unauthorized removal, improper use, or destruction of Town property is prohibited.

V. Attendance, Work Hours, and Professional Accountability

Employees are responsible for:

- Arriving to work on time and performing assigned duties during established work hours.
- Notifying supervisors as soon as possible when ill, delayed, or otherwise unable to report to work.
- Accurately recording hours worked, leave taken, and other required information.

Misrepresentation of time worked or leave taken is considered falsification of records and may result in discipline.

VI. Conflicts of Interest and Ethical Obligations

Employees must comply with Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 268A (Conflict of Interest Law) and Town ethics policies. Employees shall:

- Avoid participating in matters where they or an immediate family member have a personal financial interest.
- Not use their position to secure unwarranted privileges or advantages.
- Complete required ethics training and file disclosures when necessary.

Employees with questions about potential conflicts must seek guidance before acting.

VII. Prohibited Conduct

The following actions are strictly prohibited. Violations may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination:

- Fraud, theft, embezzlement, or misuse of Town funds or property.
 - Falsifying or altering Town records.
 - Harassment, discrimination, retaliation, or abusive conduct.
 - Physical or verbal violence, threats, or intimidation.
 - Being impaired by drugs or alcohol while on duty.
 - Possession of weapons unless job-related and authorized.
 - Insubordination, including refusal to perform assigned work.
 - Conduct unbecoming of a public employee or that brings discredit to the Town.
 - Smoking, vaping, or using tobacco or nicotine delivery products in a municipal facility or vehicle. Employees may only smoke in designated outdoor areas where permitted by supervisor.
-

VIII. Duty to Report

Employees must promptly report:

- Safety hazards
- Conflicts of interest
- Suspected fraud or misuse of Town resources
- Violations of this Code of Conduct or any Town policy

Reports may be made to a supervisor, Department Head, or the Town Administrator without fear of retaliation.

IX. Accountability

Employees are responsible for understanding and complying with this Code of Conduct. Supervisors and Department Heads are responsible for consistently enforcing these standards and modeling appropriate behavior.

Failure to uphold these expectations may result in disciplinary action as described in the Town's Discipline Policy.

Dress Code Policy

I. Purpose

The Town of Montague expects employees to present themselves in a manner that reflects professionalism, safety, and respect for the community we serve. Employee appearance should support a productive work environment, maintain public confidence, and be appropriate for the duties performed.

II. Policy

Employees are required to dress in a clean, neat, and appropriate manner consistent with their work environment, job responsibilities, and any applicable safety standards. Clothing or accessories that may interfere with work duties, create a safety risk, or cause undue distraction to colleagues or members of the public are not permitted.

Reasonable accommodations will be made for employees whose dress or grooming practices are related to cultural, religious, disability-related, or other legally protected needs, in accordance with the Town's ADA and Inclusivity policies.

Supervisors may establish additional expectations tailored to specific roles or departments, provided they are job-related and applied consistently.

Employees who report to work in attire deemed inappropriate may be asked to change clothing or return home to do so, with or without pay depending on circumstances. Repeated violations may result in progressive discipline under the Town's discipline policy.

III. Questions or Requests for Accommodation

Employees who need a dress code modification for religious, cultural, medical, or disability-related reasons may request an accommodation through the Town Administrator.

Anti-Harassment & Anti-Discrimination

I. Purpose

The Town of Montague is committed to maintaining a workplace where all employees, applicants, volunteers, and members of the public are treated with dignity and respect. Harassment, discrimination, and retaliation undermine the effectiveness of Town operations and violate federal and state law.

This policy affirms the Town's commitment to providing a work environment that is **free from harassment, discrimination, sexual harassment, and retaliation**, and outlines procedures for reporting and resolving concerns.

II. Policy Statement

The Town strictly prohibits discrimination or harassment against any individual based on:

- Race
- Color
- National origin or ancestry
- Citizenship or immigration status
- Religion
- Sex, pregnancy, or pregnancy-related conditions
- Sexual orientation
- Gender identity or gender expression
- Age
- Physical or mental disability
- Genetic information
- Veteran or military status
- Marital or family status
- Any other protected characteristic under federal or Massachusetts law

Harassment, discrimination, and sexual harassment by **employees, supervisors, elected officials, vendors, contractors, visitors, or members of the public** interacting with Town staff will not be tolerated.

III. Definitions

A. Discrimination

Any adverse employment action taken because of an individual's protected characteristic.

B. Harassment

Unwelcome conduct—verbal, physical, written, or visual—that creates a hostile, intimidating, or offensive work environment or interferes with an employee’s ability to perform their job.

Examples include:

- Derogatory slurs or epithets
- Mocking accents, disability-related characteristics, or cultural traits
- Displaying offensive images or materials

C. Sexual Harassment

As defined by M.G.L. c. 151B: “Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature.”

Examples:

- Suggestive comments or jokes
- Unwanted touching
- Offering work benefits in exchange for sexual behavior
- Displaying sexually explicit materials

D. Retaliation

Any adverse action taken because an individual:

- Reported harassment or discrimination
- Participated in an investigation
- Exercised rights under this policy or the law

Retaliation is strictly prohibited.

IV. Responsibilities

A. All Employees

- Treat coworkers and the public with respect
- Refrain from prohibited conduct
- Report concerns promptly
- Cooperate in investigations

B. Supervisors & Managers

- Model professional behavior

- Act immediately when concerns arise
- Report complaints to the Town Administrator
- Prevent retaliation

C. Town Administrator

- Ensure fair, prompt, and thorough investigations
 - Maintain confidentiality to the extent possible
 - Implement corrective actions
 - Provide training
-

V. Reporting Harassment or Discrimination

Employees are encouraged to report concerns as soon as possible. Reports may be made to:

- Immediate supervisor
- Department Head
- Town Administrator

Complaints may be verbal or written. No “magic words” or formal process are required—if an employee expresses discomfort or concern about discriminatory or harassing conduct, the Town must respond.

Anonymous reports will be reviewed to the extent possible.

If the concern involves a supervisor or department head, employees may bypass the chain of command and report directly to the Town Administrator. If the concern involves the Town Administrator, employees may bypass the chain of command and report directly to the chair of the Selectboard.

VI. Investigation Process

1. **Receipt of complaint**
All complaints will be treated seriously and privately to the greatest extent possible.
2. **Interim measures**
Temporary steps may be taken to ensure safety or prevent further harm.
3. **Investigation**
The Town will conduct a fair, timely, and thorough review, which may include interviews and documentation review.
4. **Findings & corrective action**
If a violation is substantiated, corrective action may include:
 - Counseling or training
 - Written warning
 - Suspension

- Termination
 - Other remedies as appropriate
5. **Protection from retaliation**
The Town will monitor for retaliation and address it immediately.
-

VII. External Agencies

Employees may also file complaints with:

Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination (MCAD)

1 Ashburton Place, Suite 601, Boston, MA 02108
(617) 994-6000
www.mass.gov/mcad

U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC)

John F. Kennedy Federal Building
475 Government Center, Boston, MA 02203
1-800-669-4000
www.eeoc.gov

VIII. No Contractual Rights

This policy does not create a contract of employment and does not change the Town's at-will employment relationship with its employees.

Drug & Alcohol Policy

I. Purpose

The Town of Montague is committed to maintaining a safe, healthy, and productive workplace. The use of alcohol, controlled substances, or misuse of prescription medications can adversely affect employee judgment, performance, and safety. This policy outlines expectations for employees and establishes procedures to prevent and address substance-related impairment in the workplace in accordance with the **Drug-Free Workplace Act**, Massachusetts law, and applicable federal regulations.

II. Applicability

This policy applies to *all* Town employees, including full-time, part-time, temporary, seasonal, on-call, and per-diem personnel, as well as elected and appointed officials, volunteers and interns when acting in an official capacity.

Employees covered by collective bargaining agreements are subject to this policy except where specific contract provisions supersede it.

III. Policy Statement

1. Prohibited Conduct

Employees may not:

- Use, possess, distribute, sell, or be impaired by illegal drugs, controlled substances (without a valid prescription), or alcohol while on duty, on Town premises, operating Town vehicles or equipment, or representing the Town in any capacity.
- Misuse prescription or over-the-counter medications in a manner that impairs job performance or creates safety risks.
- Consume or be impaired by recreational or medical marijuana during work hours, on Town premises, or while operating Town vehicles, even if lawful under Massachusetts law.

Note: Marijuana remains illegal under federal law and is prohibited for workplace use.

2. Off-Duty Conduct

Off-duty substance use that impacts an employee's performance, attendance, behavior, safety, or public trust may result in disciplinary action.

3. Required Notifications

Employees must notify their supervisor or the Town Administrator within **five (5) calendar days** of:

- Any criminal conviction related to drugs or alcohol occurring in the workplace;
 - A change in medication that may affect their ability to safely perform job duties.
-

IV. Prescription and Over-the-Counter Medications

Employees who are prescribed medications that may impair alertness, judgment, coordination, or performance must:

- Consult with their healthcare provider regarding job-related impacts;
- Notify their supervisor if work restrictions, modified duties, or temporary reassignment may be necessary.

Confidential medical information will not be requested or disclosed beyond what is necessary to evaluate workplace safety.

V. Reasonable Suspicion and Fitness for Duty

The Town may require an employee to undergo a fitness-for-duty evaluation or drug/alcohol test when there is **reasonable suspicion** of impairment, including but not limited to:

- Observed behavior indicating impairment;
- Odor of alcohol or drugs;
- Significant performance decline;
- Workplace accidents or near misses.

Testing will be conducted consistent with applicable laws and Town procedures.

VI. Employee Assistance and Support

The Town recognizes substance use disorder as a treatable health condition and encourages employees to seek help early. Employees may voluntarily access:

- The **Employee Assistance Program (EAP)**;
- Their healthcare provider;
- Community treatment or counseling resources.

Voluntary self-disclosure of a substance use problem *prior to policy violation* will not, by itself, result in disciplinary action. Participation in treatment may be required as a condition of continued employment if job performance has been affected.

VII. Confidentiality

All information related to substance use concerns, testing, EAP participation, or treatment will be kept confidential to the fullest extent permitted by law.

VIII. Disciplinary Action

Violations of this policy may result in disciplinary measures up to and including termination. Depending on circumstances, the Town may require:

- Mandatory EAP referral;
- Fitness-for-duty clearance;
- Temporary reassignment or suspension;
- Last-chance agreements when appropriate.

The Town retains discretion to determine appropriate corrective action consistent with due process, applicable contracts, and municipal policies.

IX. Legal Compliance

This policy is intended to comply with:

- The federal **Drug-Free Workplace Act**;
- Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) requirements;
- Federal motor carrier safety regulations (where applicable);
- Massachusetts workplace laws and regulations.

Where federal and state laws differ, the Town will apply the standard that best ensures safety and legal compliance.

Workplace Violence Prevention

I. Purpose

The Town of Montague is committed to maintaining a work environment where all employees, volunteers, contractors, and members of the public feel safe, respected, and secure. Workplace violence—whether verbal, physical, or psychological—undermines safety, productivity, and trust.

This policy establishes the Town’s expectations, reporting procedures, and prevention strategies to maintain a violence-free workplace in compliance with applicable state and federal laws, as well as OSHA recommendations.

II. Policy Statement

The Town will not tolerate any form of workplace violence. Employees are prohibited from committing, threatening, or inciting acts of violence in the workplace, while performing Town business, or while using Town property. The Town also prohibits violence directed toward employees by members of the public and will take appropriate action to address such behavior.

III. Definitions

Workplace Violence includes, but is not limited to:

- **Threatening behavior**—intimidation, stalking, harassment, bullying, menacing gestures, or statements suggesting harm.
- **Verbal abuse**—yelling, swearing, demeaning language, or verbal intimidation.
- **Physical actions**—hitting, pushing, kicking, or any unwanted physical contact.
- **Property damage**—destroying or threatening to destroy Town or personal property.
- **Weapons**—possession of unauthorized firearms, knives, or other dangerous objects on Town premises or while performing Town duties.
- **Domestic or relational violence** that spills into the workplace.

Workplace includes Town buildings, vehicles, remote work locations, customer sites, meetings, and any location where Town business is conducted.

IV. Prohibited Conduct

Examples of behaviors that violate this policy include:

- Threatening injury to another person, directly or indirectly.
- Bringing unauthorized weapons onto Town property.
- Engaging in physical violence or aggressive contact.
- Harassing, stalking, or following another person in a way that causes fear.
- Verbally abusing or intimidating others.
- Vandalizing or damaging property.
- Any conduct that creates a reasonable fear for an individual's safety.

Employees must not ignore or downplay threats, intimidating behavior, or warning signs of potential violence.

V. Reporting Requirements

All employees are responsible for maintaining a safe workplace and must promptly report:

- Any act or threat of violence.
- Any behavior that causes fear or concern for safety.
- Suspicious or disruptive conduct that may escalate.

Reports may be made to:

- Immediate Supervisor
- Department Head
- Town Administrator
- Police Department (in emergencies)

Immediate Danger:

If a situation poses an imminent threat, employees should call **911** before notifying a supervisor.

Reports will be handled discreetly, with confidentiality maintained to the extent possible.

VI. Response and Investigation

Upon receiving a report, the Town will:

1. **Assess immediate risk** and take necessary safety measures.
2. **Initiate an investigation**, which may include interviews, fact-finding, and review of evidence.
3. **Implement protective actions**, which may include:
 - temporary removal of individuals from the workplace,
 - adjusting work assignments,
 - contacting law enforcement,
 - issuing no-trespass orders,

- or other interventions.
- 4. **Take disciplinary action** when employees have violated this policy, up to and including termination.

Violence from members of the public may result in removal from Town property, referral to law enforcement, and/or civil action.

VII. Weapons Prohibition

Except for sworn law enforcement officers or employees specifically authorized by the Town, weapons of any kind are prohibited in the workplace, in Town vehicles, and while performing Town duties.

“Weapons” include firearms, ammunition, explosives, knives (other than appropriate work tools), and any device intended to cause harm.

VIII. Employee Support and Resources

The Town encourages employees to seek help if they believe they may be at risk of committing violence or are experiencing personal stressors that may escalate.

Employees may contact the Town’s **Employee Assistance Program (EAP)** for confidential support, including counseling related to:

- conflict at work,
 - domestic violence,
 - stress management,
 - mental health needs.
-

IX. No Retaliation

The Town strictly prohibits retaliation against any employee who makes a good-faith report of workplace violence or who participates in an investigation. Retaliation may result in disciplinary action.

X. Responsibilities

Employees

- Report concerns promptly.

- Comply with safety procedures.
- Maintain professionalism and civility.

Supervisors and Department Heads

- Act immediately when notified of threats or violence.
- Ensure reports are forwarded to the Town Administrator.
- Cooperate fully with investigations.

Town Administrator

- Oversees policy implementation.
 - Coordinates investigations and corrective action.
 - Engages law enforcement when appropriate.
-

XI. Policy Acknowledgment

Employees must acknowledge receipt of this policy and understand that maintaining a safe, respectful workplace is a shared responsibility.

Anti-Fraud Policy

I. Purpose

The Town of Montague is committed to safeguarding public assets, ensuring the integrity of Town operations, and maintaining public trust. Fraudulent activity undermines the Town's ability to provide services and compromises community confidence. This policy establishes clear expectations for preventing, detecting, reporting, and responding to fraud, misuse of Town resources, or other financial improprieties.

II. Scope

This policy applies to:

- All Town employees (full-time, part-time, seasonal, and temporary)
- Elected and appointed officials
- Volunteers, interns, and contractors
- Any individual acting on behalf of the Town

It covers all Town operations, funds, records, systems, programs, and assets.

III. Definition of Fraud

Fraud is defined as any intentional act or omission designed to deceive others, resulting in a loss or unauthorized benefit to oneself or another party. Fraud may include, but is not limited to:

A. Misappropriation of Assets

- Theft of cash, equipment, supplies, or Town property
- Falsification of financial documents, invoices, or receipts
- Unauthorized use of Town vehicles, fuel, tools, or equipment
- Payroll fraud, including falsifying time sheets or unauthorized overtime
- Misuse of purchasing cards or credit accounts
- Diversion of Town revenue

B. Financial Misrepresentation

- Falsifying accounting or financial reporting
- Manipulating records to conceal improper activity
- Forgery or alteration of checks, records, or official documents

C. Profiteering or Personal Gain

- Using public position for private financial benefit
- Receiving kickbacks, gifts, or favors intended to influence decisions
- Steering contracts or opportunities for personal benefit

Fraud may occur alone or in collusion with others.

IV. Prevention and Internal Controls

Department heads, supervisors, and the Town's financial officers share responsibility for maintaining strong internal controls. Preventive expectations include:

- Segregation of financial duties where feasible
- Regular review and reconciliation of accounts
- Secure handling and storage of sensitive records
- Monitoring of high-risk processes (e.g., procurement, cash handling)
- Mandatory compliance with Town financial procedures

The Town Administrator, Town Accountant, and Treasurer/Collector may develop and update internal control protocols based on emerging risks.

V. Responsibilities for Reporting Suspected Fraud

A. Employee Responsibility

All employees are required to immediately report suspected or known fraud. Failure to report may result in disciplinary action.

B. Reporting Channels

Reports may be made to:

- Immediate supervisor
- Department head
- Town Administrator
- Selectboard (if involving the Town Administrator)
- Law enforcement (in emergencies or imminent harm)

Anonymous reporting is permitted, though employees are encouraged to provide sufficient detail for follow-up.

C. Protection from Retaliation

Employees who report concerns in good faith are protected from retaliation under state law and Town policy.

VI. Investigations

The Town Administrator (or designee) leads investigations unless the allegation involves that office, in which case the Selectboard assumes responsibility. Investigations may involve:

- Town Accountant
- Treasurer/Collector
- IT staff
- Legal Counsel
- Law enforcement or external forensic examiners

Investigations will be conducted promptly, confidentially, and impartially.

VII. Confidentiality

Information related to reports, investigations, and findings shall be kept confidential to the extent permitted by law. Access will be limited to individuals with a legitimate need to know.

VIII. Security of Evidence

Upon receipt of a fraud allegation, relevant documents, electronic records, and physical evidence must be secured to prevent loss, alteration, or destruction. Tampering with evidence is grounds for disciplinary action.

IX. Corrective and Disciplinary Action

If fraud is substantiated, the Town may:

- Take disciplinary action, up to and including termination
- Pursue restitution for losses
- Refer the matter for criminal or civil prosecution
- Implement strengthened internal controls

Misconduct by volunteers or contractors may result in termination of service or contracts.

If a report is made in bad faith or with malicious intent, the reporting party may be subject to disciplinary action.

X. Education and Awareness

The Town will promote awareness of this policy through:

- Employee orientation
- Periodic reminders or trainings
- Updates on internal control practices

A culture of ethics, accountability, and transparency is essential to maintaining public trust.

Facility Access Policy

I. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to establish clear expectations regarding employee access to Town buildings and facilities in order to promote workplace safety, protect Town property, and ensure appropriate use of municipal resources.

II. Scope

This policy applies to all employees, contractors, temporary workers, volunteers, and any other individuals granted access to Town-owned or Town-leased buildings.

III. Policy Statement

1. Authorized Access Only

Employees may access Town buildings or restricted areas only as required for their job duties and only during authorized hours. Employees may not enter secured or restricted areas without proper approval.

2. Keys, Access Cards, and Codes

- Keys and access credentials are issued for official use only.
- Employees are responsible for safeguarding Town-issued keys, cards, or access codes.
- Lost or stolen access items must be reported immediately to the Department Head and Town Administrator.
- Employees may not duplicate keys or share access codes or credentials with others.

3. After-Hours Access

Employees with approved after-hours access are expected to ensure the building is left secure, including locking doors, activating alarms if required, and turning off appropriate equipment. After-hours access may be revoked at any time at the discretion of the Town Administrator or Department Head.

4. Visitors & Contractors

All non-employees (including contractors, vendors, and visitors) must enter through approved public entrances and follow sign-in/check-in procedures where applicable. Employees are responsible for supervising guests they bring into non-public work areas.

5. Security & Building Integrity

- Employees must not prop open secure doors or allow unauthorized individuals to “tailgate” into secure areas.
- Employees must immediately report suspicious activity, unauthorized access, or building security concerns.

6. **Changes in Employment Status**

Upon separation from employment—or change in role requiring different access—employees must return all keys, access cards, and credentials on or before their final day of work.

7. **Violations**

Unauthorized access or misuse of building access privileges may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

Technology Use & Cybersecurity

I. Purpose

The Town of Montague provides technology resources hardware, software and systems (“resources”)—including, but not limited to, computers, mobile devices, software, networks, email, landline phones, fax machines, printers/copiers, door access/alarm systems, camera systems, electronic databases, email and other collaboration systems, and internet access—to support efficient and secure delivery of municipal services. This policy establishes expectations for acceptable use, data protection, and cybersecurity practices that safeguard Town systems, employees, and the public.

This policy applies to all Town employees, contractors, visitors, volunteers, interns, consultants, and any individual who uses Town-issued equipment or accesses Town systems.

II. Acceptable Use of Technology

A. General Expectations

Employees must use Town technology responsibly, professionally, and in a manner consistent with other Town policies, local, state and federal law, and the Town’s obligation to protect public information.

B. Permitted Uses

Town technology may be used for:

- Conducting official Town business
- Communicating with colleagues, residents, vendors, and partner agencies
- Accessing job-related software, records, and systems
- Limited, incidental personal use that does not:
 - interfere with job performance
 - incur additional Town expense
 - violate any Town policy

C. Prohibited Uses

Employees may not:

- Use Town systems for illegal, unethical, or disruptive activities
- Access, store, transmit, or display offensive, harassing, or discriminatory content
- Use Town systems for outside employment or personal business ventures
- Download unauthorized software or circumvent security protections
- Connect personal devices to Town networks without prior authorization

D. Privacy Statement

Users should not expect any right of privacy in the use of Town Resources, including electronic communications and information created or stored on the Town's systems. The Town retains the right to inspect its Resources, including any Town-owned or leased computer or electronic communications equipment, any data contained in such equipment, and any data sent or received by that equipment.

III. Email & Electronic Communication

All Town email and electronic communications:

- **Are public records** and may be subject to disclosure
- Must be professional and aligned with conduct expectations
- May not include confidential or sensitive information unless properly secured
- Must not be used for political campaigning or personal advocacy
- Keep communications and correspondence professional and appropriately personable
- Email correspondence should reflect the Town's commitment to quality, performance and professionalism at all levels.

Employees should avoid clicking unfamiliar links or opening unexpected attachments, even if they appear legitimate.

IV. Data Security & Confidentiality

Employees must comply with Massachusetts Data Security Law (M.G.L. 93H/93I) and are responsible for safeguarding Town data, including:

- Personnel records
- Financial and billing information
- Law enforcement or public safety information
- Resident or customer information
- Protected health information (PHI), if applicable

Confidential information may not be removed, copied, or shared except as required for official duties.

V. Passwords & Authentication

Employees must:

- Use strong, unique passwords for all Town accounts
- Never share passwords or authentication codes
- Enable multi-factor authentication (MFA) where required
- Secure devices by locking screens when unattended

Passwords must be updated in accordance with IT department requirements.

VI. Town-Issued Devices

A. Care & Control

Employees are responsible for the physical and digital security of any Town-issued device, including laptops, tablets, and mobile phones.

Devices must be:

- Protected from theft, loss, and damage
- Used only by the employee to whom they are assigned
- Returned upon separation from employment

B. Prohibited Device Activities

Employees may not:

- Jailbreak or modify device security settings
 - Install unauthorized applications
 - Disable antivirus, firewalls, or system protections
-

VII. Use of Personal Devices

A. Acceptable use of personal devices

No employee is required to use a personal device for Town business. However, an employee may use a personal device at their discretion (e.g. connecting Town email to a personal cell phone, accessing the Town's cloud-based subscriptions from a personal laptop, remoting into the Town network or third-party software with a personal device, etc.).

B. Security measures

Any personal devices that are used for Town business should have proper security measures with respect to access, transmission, and storage of information. Ensure that the personal device is password or fingerprint protected and locked after 15 minutes of inactivity.

C. Right to inspect personal devices

The Town will respect the privacy of personal devices but reserves the right to request access to the device to implement security controls or to respond to legitimate discovery requests arising out of administrative, civil, or criminal proceedings or Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests related to Town business operations.

VIII. Internet Use

Town internet access must be used primarily for business purposes.

Employees may not access:

- Malicious or unsafe websites
- Pornographic, hateful, or discriminatory sites
- Sites promoting illegal activity
- Streaming or bandwidth-heavy sites for non-business purposes

Town IT reserves the right to block certain sites to protect network integrity.

IX. Cybersecurity Requirements

Employees must immediately report:

- Suspicious emails or cyber threats
- Lost, stolen, or damaged equipment
- Unusual computer behavior (e.g., pop-ups, slow performance)
- Potential data breaches

Employees must participate in cybersecurity training, including:

- Annual cybersecurity awareness training
- Phishing simulations, when deployed
- Training required by the Massachusetts Executive Office of Technology Services and Security (EOTSS) or applicable grants

Failure to complete required training may limit network access.

X. Monitoring & No Expectation of Privacy

The Town may monitor, audit, or review:

- Email and messaging
- File storage
- Internet activity
- Use of Town-issued devices
- Access logs to Town systems

Employees **should not expect privacy** when using Town technology or networks.

XI. Violations

Violations of this policy may result in:

- Revocation of technology access
- Mandatory retraining
- Disciplinary action up to and including termination
- Reporting to law enforcement, when applicable

Social Media Policy

I. Purpose

The Town of Montague recognizes that social media can be a valuable tool for communication, public engagement, and information sharing. This policy establishes expectations for employee use of social media—both in official and personal capacities—to ensure that online activity does not compromise Town operations, public trust, or workplace integrity.

II. Scope

This policy applies to all employees, contractors, volunteers, and individuals who manage or contribute content to any official Town of Montague social media platform, as well as employees' personal use of social media when such activity impacts their employment or the Town's interests.

III. Definitions

- **Official Social Media:** Town-authorized online accounts used to communicate with the public (e.g., Facebook, X, Instagram, YouTube, LinkedIn, municipal websites, blogs).
 - **Personal Social Media:** Online accounts maintained by an employee in their individual capacity.
 - **Posting:** Any written, visual, or audiovisual content shared online—including comments, likes, and shares.
-

IV. Policy

A. Official Use of Social Media

Employees designated to post or manage official Town content must:

1. Communicate accurately, respectfully, and professionally.
2. Share information that is factual, timely, and consistent with Town messaging.
3. Safeguard confidential, sensitive, or restricted information.
4. Comply with all applicable laws, including public records, records retention, copyright, and privacy laws.
5. Obtain required approvals from supervisors or department heads for communications that represent official Town positions.
6. Avoid expressing personal opinions on official Town channels.

Only authorized individuals may create, modify, or deactivate official Town social media accounts.

B. Personal Use of Social Media

The Town respects employees' rights to personal online expression; however, personal social media activity must not:

1. **Interfere with job performance** or workplace productivity.
2. **Disclose confidential information**, including personnel matters, legal issues, public safety information, or internal discussions.
3. **Represent personal opinions as those of the Town** or imply Town endorsement.
4. **Use the Town's name, logo, seal, or branding** without written authorization.
5. **Harass, discriminate, or threaten** colleagues, residents, or Town officials.
6. **Undermine public trust** in Town employees or operations.

When discussing matters related to the Town, employees are encouraged to use disclaimers such as: *"The views expressed are my own and do not represent those of my employer."*

Employees may not use work time or Town equipment for personal social media unless permitted as incidental use under the Technology Use Policy.

C. Prohibited Conduct

The following actions are prohibited on both official and personal platforms when connected to employment:

- Posting content that violates the Town's Code of Conduct, Anti-Harassment Policy, or Ethics/Conflict of Interest laws.
 - Sharing images of Town facilities, equipment, or co-workers without authorization, where such images could compromise safety, privacy, or municipal operations.
 - Posting during emergencies in ways that conflict with official public information officers or emergency communications.
 - Attempting to speak on behalf of the Town without proper authorization.
-

D. Public Records & Retention

All content posted on official Town social media accounts is considered a public record and must be retained in accordance with state records retention laws. Employees managing official accounts must follow Town procedures for saving and archiving posts, messages, and interactions.

E. Reporting Concerns

Employees who become aware of inappropriate or unauthorized social media activity must report it to their supervisor or the Town Administrator.

F. Violations

Violations of this policy may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination, in accordance with the Town's disciplinary procedures

Vehicle Use and Reimbursement Policy

I. Purpose and Scope

The purpose of this policy is to establish clear guidelines regarding:

- Employee use of personal vehicles for authorized Town business;
- Assignment and use of Town-owned vehicles;
- Reimbursement for approved travel expenses; and
- Safe and responsible operation of vehicles when conducting Town business.

These guidelines ensure safety, protect Town assets, and promote consistent and equitable treatment of employees.

II. Applicability

This policy applies to all Town of Montague employees unless otherwise governed by an individual employment contract or a collective bargaining agreement. Contract and union provisions shall supersede this policy where conflicts exist.

III. Definitions

- **Expense Reimbursement:** Payment to an employee for approved business-related travel using a personal vehicle, based on documented mileage and expenses. Reimbursement is not considered salary.
 - **Municipal Vehicle:** Any vehicle owned, leased, or rented by the Town of Montague for official business.
 - **Personal Automobile:** A privately owned or leased vehicle used by an employee.
-

IV. Policy

A. Use of Municipal Vehicles

Some Town positions require access to a municipal vehicle during the shift or on a 24-hour on-call basis. Town vehicles are public assets and must be used **solely for legitimate Town business**. Personal use of Town vehicles is prohibited unless expressly authorized.

Assignment of Town vehicles is based on job needs and may be modified or rescinded at any time by the Town Administrator or supervisor.

B. Reimbursement for Personal Vehicle Use

Employees authorized to use their personal vehicle for Town business will be reimbursed:

- At the **IRS standard business mileage rate** in effect at the time of travel.
- For reasonable parking fees and tolls (receipts required for expenses over \$10).
- Not for normal commuting costs between home and the regular worksite.

Travel to a temporary work location will be reimbursed only for mileage exceeding the employee's normal commute distance.

V. Procedures

A. Expense Reimbursement – Personal Vehicles

1. Mileage reimbursement requires supervisor approval and submission of a Travel Expense Reimbursement Form.
 2. The IRS mileage rate covers fuel, maintenance, insurance, and general wear and tear.
 3. Receipts are required for parking/toll expenses above \$10.
 4. No reimbursement will be provided for tolls normally incurred during a standard commute.
-

B. Allocation of Municipal Vehicles

Department heads may assign municipal vehicles based on job responsibilities. The Town Administrator or Department head may rescind access at any time.

1. Assignment for 24-Hour Use (Commuting Purposes)

The Selectboard may authorize 24-hour vehicle assignments after reviewing:

- On-call status
- Emergency response requirements
- Need for specialized equipment in the vehicle
- Communication device requirements

Conditions:

- Use is restricted to commuting along the most direct route.
- Personal errands are not permitted.
- Assignments will be re-evaluated whenever a position becomes vacant.
- Employees commuting more than **25 miles one way** must reimburse the Town for additional fuel costs.

IRS rules on imputed income may apply. The Town Accountant will determine taxability.

VI. General Rules Governing Municipal Vehicle Use

Employees must:

- Use municipal vehicles **only for legitimate Town business**.
- Transport only Town employees or persons directly involved in Town operations.
- Keep the vehicle clean and promptly report any damage or malfunctions.
- Park safely when the vehicle is taken home.
- Wear seatbelts at all times.
- Maintain a valid Massachusetts driver's license and provide verification when requested.
- Operate vehicles safely and in compliance with all traffic laws.

Prohibited conduct includes:

- Operating a vehicle under the influence of alcohol, illegal drugs, or impairing medications.
- Transporting unauthorized passengers, including family members.
- Using Town vehicles for out-of-state travel without advance approval.

Employees are personally responsible for fines unless the Town Administrator approves reimbursement in limited circumstances.

Employees must immediately (within 24 hours) report to their supervisor:

- Any citation or motor vehicle offense
- Any event resulting in suspension or revocation of a license
- Any accident involving a municipal vehicle

Failure to report is grounds for discipline.

VII. Special Circumstances

The Town Administrator may grant exceptions to this policy when warranted and when not prohibited by law. Employees seeking clarification or exceptions should contact the Town Administrator.

VIII. Violations

Failure to comply with this policy may result in disciplinary action, including:

- Suspension of vehicle privileges

- Revocation of vehicle assignment
- Disciplinary action up to and including termination

Political Activity Policy

The Town of Montague is committed to maintaining a politically neutral and professionally impartial workplace. To ensure compliance with applicable laws and to safeguard public trust, all employees must adhere to the restrictions established by the Federal Hatch Act and the Massachusetts Office of Campaign and Political Finance (OCPF).

I. Prohibited Political Activities During Work Time

Employees **may not**, during their scheduled work hours or while performing work duties:

- Engage in political campaign activities for any candidate or ballot initiative.
- Lobby, circulate petitions, collect signatures, or distribute political materials.
- Organize, participate in, or assist with political meetings, rallies, or events.
- Solicit, collect, or receive contributions for any political campaign or political committee.
- Make speeches or public statements on behalf of a political candidate or campaign.

II. Use of Town Property

Employees may **not**, at any time:

- Use Town facilities, offices, email systems, vehicles, equipment, supplies, or other resources for political purposes.
- Display campaign materials in Town-owned or Town-leased buildings, with the exception of personal items in non-public, non-shared workspaces if consistent with applicable law.

III. Compliance

All employees are required to comply with the Hatch Act, OCPF regulations, and any other federal or state rules governing political activity by public employees. Employees who are uncertain about whether an activity is permissible should seek guidance from the Town Administrator.

Violations of this policy may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination, and may also carry state or federal penalties.

Ethics & Conflict of Interest

I. Purpose

The Town of Montague is committed to maintaining the highest standards of integrity, impartiality, and public trust. As public employees and officials, staff must conduct themselves in accordance with Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 268A (the Conflict of Interest Law) and any additional requirements established by the State Ethics Commission. This policy outlines expected standards of ethical conduct and the responsibilities of all employees to avoid conflicts between personal interests and their public duties.

II. Applicability

This policy applies to all Town employees, officials, volunteers, board and committee members, and contractors performing services on behalf of the Town. Compliance with all provisions of **M.G.L. c. 268A** is mandatory and may not be waived.

III. Standards of Ethical Conduct

All individuals subject to this policy must:

1. Act in the Public Interest

Employees must perform their duties with honesty, objectivity, and fairness, prioritizing the interests of the community over personal or financial interests.

2. Avoid Conflicts of Interest

Employees must refrain from participating in any matter where they, their immediate family, a household member, business partner, private employer, or organization where they serve as an officer or director has a financial interest.

3. Decline Improper Gifts

Employees may not accept gifts, gratuities, or favors worth **\$50 or more**, or any gift offered with the intent to influence official action—regardless of value.

4. Prevent Misuse of Position

Employees may not use their Town position to secure unwarranted privileges, special treatment, or advantages for themselves or others.

5. Protect Confidential Information

Employees may not disclose or misuse non-public information obtained through their work for personal or financial benefit.

6. Uphold Impartiality

Employees must avoid actions that create an appearance of bias, favoritism, or undue influence, even if no actual conflict exists.

7. Comply With Outside Employment Restrictions

Employees may not engage in outside employment that conflicts with their Town responsibilities or impairs their ability to perform their duties.

IV. Required Conflict of Interest Training

All Town employees and officials must:

1. Complete State Ethics Commission online training every **two years**.
2. Acknowledge receipt of the Summary of the Conflict of Interest Law annually. (Distributed by Town Clerk)

Failure to complete mandatory training may result in disciplinary action.

V. Disclosure Requirements

If an employee believes a potential conflict exists, they must:

1. **Immediately disclose** the potential conflict in writing to the Town Administrator or appropriate Appointing Authority;
2. Seek written guidance or an advisory opinion from the State Ethics Commission when appropriate;
3. Abstain from participating in any related action until a determination is issued.

Supervisors and appointing authorities must maintain written disclosure records in accordance with state retention requirements.

VI. Prohibited Activities

Employees are strictly prohibited from:

- Participating in decisions that affect their financial interests;
 - Using Town property or resources for personal or political purposes;
 - Hiring, supervising, or otherwise participating in employment actions involving immediate family;
 - Representing private parties before Town boards, commissions, or departments;
 - Engaging in any activity that compromises, or appears to compromise, the integrity of Town operations.
-

VII. Reporting Violations

Employees who become aware of potential violations must promptly report them to:

- The Employee's Supervisor
- The Town Administrator;
- The Appointing Authority; or
- The State Ethics Commission.

Retaliation against individuals who report concerns in good faith is strictly prohibited.

VIII. Consequences of Violations

Violations of this policy or state ethics laws may result in:

- Disciplinary action, up to and including termination;
 - Civil penalties imposed by the State Ethics Commission;
 - Referral for criminal prosecution, where applicable.
-

IX. Questions and Guidance

Employees with questions about ethics or conflict of interest compliance are encouraged to:

- Speak with the Town Administrator;
- Contact the Massachusetts State Ethics Commission;
- Review the online resources and advisory opinions available at [mass.gov/ethics](https://www.mass.gov/ethics).

Outside or Conflicting Employment Policy

The Town of Montague recognizes that employees may engage in outside employment, volunteer work, or personal business activities. However, such activities must **not conflict with the best interests of the Town** or interfere with an employee's ability to perform their duties effectively.

Employees are expected to ensure that any outside activity or employment:

1. **Does not adversely affect job performance**, attendance, or the ability to meet all responsibilities of their Town position.
2. **Does not create a conflict of interest**, compete with Town services, or compromise the integrity of Town operations.
3. **Does not involve performing services for compensation during hours the employee is scheduled to work for the Town** ("double-dipping").
4. **Does not use Town equipment, supplies, property, confidential information**, without explicit authorization.
5. **Is not conducted during paid Town working time**, unless specifically approved by the Department Head and Town Administrator.
6. **Does not violate M.G.L. Chapter 268A**, the Massachusetts Conflict of Interest Law.

Employees must disclose any outside employment that may pose a potential conflict of interest. The Town reserves the right to determine whether the activity is incompatible with municipal employment and may require modification or discontinuation of the activity.

Failure to comply with this policy may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

Travel Policy

I. Purpose and Scope

The purpose of this policy is to establish clear and consistent guidelines for approving, incurring, and reimbursing expenses related to employee travel for conferences, trainings, and meetings undertaken on behalf of the Town of Montague. The Town is committed to ensuring responsible stewardship of public funds while supporting employee development and participation in professional activities that benefit municipal operations.

II. Applicability

This policy applies to all Town employees, regardless of employment status, who incur travel or training-related expenses as part of their official duties.

III. Policy Statement

The Town of Montague will reimburse employees for reasonable and necessary expenses incurred while attending approved in-state or out-of-state conferences, trainings, or meetings. All reimbursements must comply with Massachusetts law, including the prohibition on reimbursement for alcoholic beverages under M.G.L. c. 44, § 58.

Reimbursement for mileage or vehicle use is governed separately under the Town's *Vehicle Use and Reimbursement Policy*.

IV. Procedures

A. Approval for Out-of-State Travel

- Out-of-state travel must receive **advance written approval** from the department head, Town Administrator, and the chairperson of the appointing authority (if not Selectboard)
 - Documentation of prior approval must accompany the Travel Expense Reimbursement Form.
-

B. Travel Arrangements

Employees are encouraged, whenever feasible, to arrange travel through vendors that can bill the Town directly.

Employees may use:

- A Town credit card (if available), or
- Check through accounts payable process
- A personal credit card as last resort (see Section F).

C. Conferences and Seminars

- The Town will pay or reimburse fees for approved conferences, seminars, and trainings.
- Registration forms or invoices should be submitted on a payment voucher.
- If prepayment by the Town is not practical, the employee may pay the fee directly and request reimbursement with receipts.
- The Town will not reimburse for optional recreational events (e.g., golf outings, tours).
- Manual checks will only be issued in circumstances as determined by the Town Accountant.

D. Lodging

- The Town will reimburse the cost of single-occupancy lodging and associated taxes, the Town will not cover rooms that state multiple occupants unless all are municipal employees.
- Employees should prioritize use Town credit cards, but may use a personal credit card and request reimbursement with receipts.

E. Miscellaneous Expenses

The Town will reimburse reasonable and necessary incidental expenses, including:

- Transportation to/from airports
- Parking
- Local transit (taxis, shuttles, buses)

Receipts are required for all individual expenses..

F. Use of Personal Credit Cards

Employees may use personal credit cards when direct billing is not feasible and when a check through accounts payable is not feasible.

The Town will reimburse the full allowable cost of the approved expense

The Town **will not reimburse:**

- Credit card finance charges
- Late fees or penalties
- Sales tax incurred.

G. Meals

Meal reimbursements require receipts and are subject to the following maximums:

- Breakfast: \$15/ Lunch: \$20/ Dinner: \$30

Guidance:

- The Selectboard may authorize higher limits for high-cost locations if requested in advance of incurring the expense.
- Meal reimbursement is only permitted when approved travel requires an employee to be away from home/office during:
 - Breakfast (5–8 AM)/ Lunch (11 AM–2 PM)/ Dinner (5–8 PM)
- Gratuities up to **20%** of the pre-tax meal cost are reimbursable and included within the applicable meal allowance.
- If a conference-provided meal is paid by the Town, the employee is **not eligible** for additional reimbursement for that same meal.
- Partial-day workshops do **not** qualify for meal reimbursement unless a meal is included in the registration.

V. Other Circumstances

This policy cannot cover every possible scenario. The Town Administrator or their designee may authorize reimbursement for other reasonable and necessary travel-related expenses if:

- The reimbursement is in the Town's best interest, **and**
- The expense is not prohibited by local bylaw or Massachusetts General Law.

ADA Reasonable Accommodations

I. Purpose

The Town of Montague is committed to fostering an accessible, inclusive, and equitable workplace. In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), the ADA Amendments Act of 2008 (ADAAA), and applicable Massachusetts laws, the Town will provide reasonable accommodations to qualified individuals with disabilities so they may participate fully in the hiring process, perform essential job functions, and enjoy equal benefits and privileges of employment.

These procedures outline the steps employees, applicants, and supervisors must follow when requesting, evaluating, and implementing reasonable accommodations.

II. Definitions

“Qualified Individual with a Disability”

An individual who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities and who meets the skill, experience, education, and other job-related requirements of a position and who can perform the essential job functions, with or without a reasonable accommodation.

“Reasonable Accommodation”

A modification or adjustment to a job, work environment, policy, or practice that allows a qualified individual with a disability to participate in the application process or perform essential job functions, unless doing so would impose an **undue hardship** on the Town.

“Undue Hardship”

An accommodation that would cause significant difficulty or expense, taking into account the Town’s resources, the nature of the position, and operational feasibility.

III. Requesting an Accommodation

1. How to Request an Accommodation

A request may be made by:

- The employee,
- A job applicant,
- A representative on behalf of the individual.

Requests **may be oral or in writing** and must be directed to:

- The employee's supervisor, **or**
- The Town Administrator (serving as the ADA Coordinator).

Supervisors must forward all requests **immediately** to the Town Administrator.

2. Timing

Requests may be made at any time:

- During the application process,
- Upon hiring,
- At any point during employment,
- When a disability develops or worsens.

IV. The Interactive Process

Once a request is received, the Town will promptly begin the **interactive process**, which includes:

1. Discussion with the Employee or Applicant

The Town Administrator will meet with the individual to:

- Clarify how the disability impacts essential job functions,
- Explore potential accommodations,
- Review job descriptions and duties.

2. Documentation

The Town may request medical documentation **only as necessary** to:

- Confirm the existence of a disability,
- Understand functional limitations,
- Identify appropriate accommodations.

All medical information will be kept **strictly confidential** and maintained in a separate, secure file.

3. Identifying Accommodations

Possible accommodations may include, but are not limited to:

- Modified work schedules,
- Assistive technology or equipment,
- Job restructuring (non-essential duties),

- Workplace modifications,
- Telework or hybrid arrangements (where appropriate),
- Adjusted training materials or formats,
- Leave of absence.

The employee may suggest accommodations, and the Town may propose alternatives.

V. Determination and Implementation

1. Decision-Making

The Town Administrator, in consultation with the department head and, if necessary, Town Counsel, will determine:

- Whether the individual is a qualified employee or applicant,
- Whether the accommodation is reasonable,
- Whether the accommodation poses an undue hardship.

2. Communication of Outcome

The Town Administrator will provide a written response stating:

- Approved accommodation(s),
or
- Reason(s) for denial and any alternative accommodations considered.

3. Implementation

Upon approval:

- Supervisors must implement the accommodation **promptly**,
- The Town Administrator will monitor effectiveness and compliance.

If an accommodation becomes ineffective or burdensome, the employee must notify the supervisor or Town Administrator to re-engage the interactive process.

VI. Confidentiality

All medical information, documentation, or discussions related to accommodation requests will be:

- Kept confidential,
- Stored separately from personnel files,

- Shared only on a need-to-know basis (e.g., to implement the accommodation).
-

VII. Non-Retaliation

The Town strictly prohibits retaliation against employees or applicants who:

- Request an accommodation,
- Participate in the interactive process,
- Support another individual's request.

Any concerns should be reported to the Town Administrator immediately.

VIII. Questions or Assistance

Employees and applicants may contact the **Town Administrator** for:

- Assistance in making a request,
- Clarification of these procedures,
- Help resolving concerns related to accommodations.

Inclusivity Policy (Procedures)

I. Purpose and Philosophy

The Town of Montague recognizes that our strength and our capacity to serve our community depend on the richness of diverse experiences, backgrounds, identities, and perspectives among our employees and residents. We commit to fostering a workplace and a municipal culture rooted in **diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility**.

We believe that:

- A workforce that reflects the diversity of our community leads to better decision-making, greater innovation, and more equitable service delivery.
- Equity requires proactively identifying and dismantling barriers that limit opportunities for individuals or groups historically underserved or marginalized.
- Inclusion means creating a workplace culture where every person is respected, valued, heard, and able to contribute fully — regardless of their background, identity, or status.
- Accessibility underpins inclusivity; Town policies, practices, programs, facilities, and services should be designed or adapted so that individuals with disabilities or other access needs can fully participate.

II. Core Principles

1. **Diversity** — We embrace and welcome differences in race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, age, sex, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, disability, socio-economic status, veteran status, language, neurodiversity, and other dimensions of identity or experience.
2. **Equity** — We commit to fair and impartial treatment of all individuals. We strive to ensure equal access to opportunities, resources, and benefits, while recognizing and addressing structural or historical inequities whenever possible.
3. **Inclusion & Belonging** — We build a culture where all employees feel respected, valued, and empowered to bring their whole selves to work. Everyone’s voice matters; diverse perspectives strengthen our services and our community.
4. **Accessibility & Accommodation** — We ensure that facilities, programs, services, and employment practices are accessible and provide reasonable accommodations, as needed, to guarantee equal opportunity.
5. **Continuous Improvement & Accountability** — Inclusivity is not a one-time effort; it is integral to all aspects of municipal operations. We commit to evaluating our policies, practices, and outcomes regularly — using data, feedback, and best practices — to sustain progress over time.

III. Practices and Implementation

To live out our commitment, the Town will:

- **Recruit and Hire Inclusively:** Strive for outreach to diverse candidate pools; ensure selection criteria are job-relevant and non-discriminatory; offer reasonable accommodations during hiring.
- **Train & Educate:** Provide regular inclusion, and cultural-competency training to all staff — including leadership, supervisors, and hiring personnel.
- **Maintain Inclusive Work Environment:** Encourage respectful communication, mutual understanding, and collaboration across differences; monitor workplace climate; address harassment, discrimination, or bias swiftly and fairly.
- **Ensure Equitable Access:** Review and adapt policies, benefits, pay practices, work assignments, and workplace accommodations to ensure equity and fairness.
- **Engage & Listen:** Invite feedback from employees and community members on inclusivity issues; facilitate open dialogue to identify needs and build trust.
- **Monitor and Evaluate:** Collect and analyze relevant demographic and outcome data (as permitted by law) to assess representation, equity gaps, and progress; adjust practices as needed.
- **Leadership Responsibility:** Senior leadership and appointed officials will model values, integrate inclusivity into strategic planning, resource allocation, and decision-making.

IV. Prohibited Conduct & Non-Discrimination

Consistent with applicable federal and state laws — including the federal Civil Rights Act, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) guidelines, and Massachusetts law — the Town prohibits discrimination, harassment, or retaliation against any individual on the basis of protected characteristics such as race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, disability, veteran status, and other legally protected categories.

Any employee, applicant, contractor, or volunteer who believes they have experienced or witnessed prohibited discrimination or harassment should follow the reporting procedures described in the Town’s Anti-Harassment & Anti-Discrimination policy.

V. Responsibilities

- **Employees & Staff:** Treat all colleagues and community members with respect; participate in required trainings; report concerns or incidents.
- **Supervisors & Managers:** Apply Inclusivity principles in hiring, supervision, and team management; ensure equitable treatment; support accommodations.
- **Town Leadership & Elected Officials:** Champion Inclusivity values; allocate resources; ensure accountability; lead by example.

VI. Contact & Reporting

For questions, requests for accommodations, training opportunities, or to report concerns: contact the Town Administrator.

SECTION 5

ADMINISTRATION & APPENDICES

Town Issued Credit Cards

I. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to establish consistent procedures and controls governing the issuance, use, and oversight of Town-issued credit cards. This policy ensures that Town credit cards are used **solely for lawful, authorized, necessary, and appropriate Town business**, and that adequate documentation, reconciliation, and review occur in accordance with Massachusetts municipal finance laws and sound internal controls.

II. Scope

This policy applies to:

- All Town-issued credit cards
- All cardholders (Department Heads or designated employees)
- Any employee who uses a Town credit card with express authorization

Nothing in this policy supersedes Massachusetts General Laws regarding procurement, municipal finance, or ethics requirements.

III. Issuance of Credit Cards

1. Authorization to Issue Cards

Town credit cards may only be issued by the Selectboard upon recommendation from the **Town Administrator** and **Town Treasurer**

2. Eligible Roles

Cards may be issued to:

- Department Heads
- Employees with significant purchasing authority
- Employees who frequently travel for required Town business

3. Cardholder Agreement

Before receiving a Town credit card, the employee must sign a **Credit Card Holder Authorization Form**, confirming they understand and will comply with this policy.

IV. Permitted Uses

Credit cards may be used **only** for legitimate Town business purposes, including:

- Conference, training, or workshop registrations (if pre-approved)
- Travel expenses in accordance with the Travel Policy
- Vehicle rentals, lodging, or transportation for official business
- Small-value purchases of goods or services when other purchasing methods are impractical
- Online purchases when vendors will not accept Town purchase orders

All purchases must comply with:

- Massachusetts procurement laws
 - The Town Accountant's purchasing procedures
 - Departmental budgets and authorization levels
-

V. Prohibited Uses

Town credit cards **shall not** be used for:

- Personal expenditures of any kind
- Alcoholic beverages (prohibited by M.G.L. c. 44 §58)
- Cash advances
- Fuel for personal vehicles (unless specifically permitted under policy)
- Meals or travel for non-Town personnel
- Purchases exceeding authorized budget limits
- Recurring subscriptions unless approved by the Town Administrator
- Gifts, donations, gift cards, flowers, or celebrations not expressly authorized

Accidental personal use must be reported immediately and reimbursed within **5 business days** but may still result in discipline depending on circumstances.

VI. Cardholder Responsibilities

Cardholders must:

1. Maintain custody and security of the credit card.
2. Obtain itemized receipts for every transaction.
3. Submit receipts and a completed monthly reconciliation form to the Town Treasurer by the required deadline.

4. Report lost or stolen cards immediately to the Town Treasurer and card issuer.
 5. Ensure purchases adhere to procurement laws and departmental approvals.
 6. Notify the Town Administrator before making any unusual, emergency, or high-value purchases.
-

VII. Town Responsibilities

Town Treasurer

- Maintains a list of all active cards and cardholders
- Reviews all monthly statements and supporting documentation

Town Accountant

- Ensures appropriate accounting and budget allocation
- Flags discrepancies, unapproved purchases, or missing receipts

Town Administrator

- Approves issuance, revocation, or suspension of cards
 - Reviews concerns or violations escalated by the Town Accountant or Town Treasurer
 - May authorize policy exceptions in limited circumstances
-

VIII. Violations and Consequences

Improper use of a Town-issued credit card may result in:

- Revocation of card privileges
- Mandatory reimbursement
- Disciplinary action (up to and including termination)
- In the case of substantial abuse, the Selectboard or appointing authority will consider termination of the employee.
- Possible referral to law enforcement, if applicable
- Reporting to the State Ethics Commission

Failure to submit receipts or reconcile monthly activity may also result in suspension of credit card privileges.

IX. Return of Credit Cards

Credit cards must be returned immediately upon:

- Separation from employment
- Change in role or responsibilities
- Request from the Town Administrator, Town Treasurer, or Town Accountant

The Treasurer will cancel the card upon return.

Cell-Phone Stipend Policy

I. Purpose and Scope

The purpose of this policy is to establish clear, consistent standards governing the use of personal cell phones for Town business and to provide uniform compensation where such use is required or authorized.

The Town of Montague recognizes that cell phone use can enhance operational efficiency, responsiveness, and public service delivery—particularly for employees who perform emergency response functions, work outside of Town offices, or are required to be reachable beyond normal business hours. This policy ensures transparency, equity, and accountability in authorizing cell phone use and providing stipends for such use.

II. Applicability

This policy applies to all Town employees. Employees covered by collective bargaining agreements are subject to this policy except where specific provisions are governed by a negotiated agreement, in which case the agreement shall control.

III. Policy

It is the policy of the Town of Montague to authorize the use of personal cell phones for Town business only when such use is determined to be operationally necessary and in the best interest of the Town.

Authorization for cell phone use, and eligibility for a stipend, shall be granted by the Selectboard (or its designee), based on job duties, operational needs, and the frequency with which the employee is required to use a cell phone for Town business.

Employees approved for cell phone use shall receive a stipend of **\$5.77 per week**. This stipend reflects the understanding that authorized employees will use their personal cell phones for both Town-related and personal purposes and therefore share in the overall cost of service.

The stipend is intended as partial reimbursement and does not constitute full compensation for all costs associated with cell phone ownership or use.

IV. Procedures

1. Request for Authorization

An employee seeking authorization to use a personal cell phone for Town business, and to receive the associated stipend, must submit a written request to the Selectboard (or its designee). The request shall include a justification describing how cell phone use supports the employee's job responsibilities and departmental needs.

2. **Review and Approval**

Requests will be reviewed based on operational necessity, job duties, and budgetary considerations. Authorization may be approved, modified, or denied at the discretion of the Selectboard (or its designee).

3. **Ongoing Review**

Authorization for cell phone stipends may be reviewed periodically and may be modified or revoked if job duties change or if cell phone use is no longer required.

4. **Payroll Administration**

Approved stipends shall be administered through payroll and may be subject to applicable tax treatment in accordance with federal and state law.

Appendix A: Forms & Templates

TBD

Appendix B: Classification Plan

Last Amended 10/22/2026

Classification	DEPARTMENT	POSITION
A		
A	Town Administrator	Town Administrator
A	Police	Chief of Police
B		
B	DPW	Superintendent
B	CWF	Superintendent
C		
C	Board of Assessors	Director of Assessing
C	Building Inspector	Building Inspector
C	Selectboard	Assistant Town Administrator
C	Board of Health	Director of Health
C	Libraries	Director of Libraries
C	Parks and Recreation	Director of Parks and Recreation
C	Planning	Director of Planning and Conservation
C	Town Clerk	Town Clerk
C	Treasurer/Tax Collector	Treasurer/Tax Collector
C	Town Accountant	Town Accountant
C	Council on Aging	Director of Council on Aging
D		
D	CWF	Foreman
D	Airport	Airport Manager
D	DPW	Working Foreman
E		
E	CWF	Lead Mechanic
E	DPW	Lead Mechanic
E	DPW	Collections System Lead Operator
E	Police	Dispatch/Office Manager
E	DPW	Office Manager

E	Libraries	Children's Librarian
E	CWF	Lead Operator
E	Selectboard	Executive Assistant
F		
F	Town Clerk	Assistant Town Clerk
F	Planning	Assistant Planner
F	DPW	Mechanic
F	DPW	Heavy Equipment Operator
F	Clean Water Facility	Lab Manager
F	Treasurer/Tax Collector	Assistant Treasurer/Tax Collector
F	CWF	Wastewater Technician
F	DPW	Lead Groundskeeper
F	Police	Dispatcher
G		
G	DPW	Building Maintenance Worker
G	Board of Assessors	Assessing Technician
G	Libraries	Community Relations Coordinator
G	DPW	Light Equipment Operator
G	Police	Dispatcher in Training
H		
H	DPW	Light Equipment Operator In-Training
H	DPW	Grounds Maintenance Worker
H	CWF	Laborer/Operator
H	Airport	Airport Maintenance Worker
H	Board of Health	Administrative Assistant
H	Building Inspector	Administrative Assistant
H	Clean Water Facility	Administrative Assistant
H	Parks and Recreation	Administrative Assistant
H	Selectboard	Administrative Assistant
H	Town Clerk	Administrative Assistant
H	Libraries	Cataloguer/ Technician
I		

I	DPW	Custodian
I	DPW	Transfer Station Attendant
I	Libraries	Library Assistant

Appendix C: FSLA Exempt Positions

Town Administrator

Assistant Town Administrator

Executive Assistant

Town Accountant

Director of Assessing

Treasurer/Tax Collector

Town Clerk

Director of Planning and Conservation

Police Chief

Police Lieutenant

Building Inspector

DPW Superintendent

Clean Water Facility Superintendent

Director of Public Health

Director Council on Aging

Director of Libraries

Director of Parks & Recreation

Appendix D: Revision History

This manual and the policies contained herein were adopted comprehensively by the Montague Selectboard on X/X/2026. Subsequent revisions are noted below:

Acknowledgment of Receipt

Employee Receipt of PERSONNEL POLICY MANUAL Form

Employee Name: _____

Department: _____

Job Title: _____

I acknowledge receipt the following:

- Town of Montague Personnel Policy Manual _____ - Employee's Initials.
- Conflict of Interest Policy _____ - Employee's Initials
- Drug & Alcohol Free Workplace Policy _____ - Employee's Initials
- Technology Use Policy _____ - Employee's Initials

I have received and reviewed a copy of the policies listed above and understand that this signature sheet will be placed in my personnel file.

I understand that I will be held responsible for complying with the provisions of these policies and understand that any actions which are found to violate the terms of this policy may result in disciplinary action as allowed.

I fully understand the terms of the procedures and agree to abide by them.

Signature: _____

Date: _____



7

Organizing for school funding

From Comerford, Joanne (SEN) <Jo.Comerford@masenate.gov>

Date Wed 2/11/2026 9:34 AM

To Comerford, Joanne (SEN) <Jo.Comerford@masenate.gov>

Cc Cooley, Jessie (SEN) <Jessie.Cooley@masenate.gov>

Colleagues:

I share your concern about school funding.

That's why I want to make sure you know about the **Rural and Declining Enrollment Schools Week of Action from March 9 to 13, to underscore the ongoing plight of our underfunded schools.**

(You may be receiving this information via multiple channels. I just wanted to make sure this news reached constituents.)

People across the state aim to issue an "SOS" call.

You can sign up [here](#).

You can find a toolkit and more information via <https://www.ruralschoolsma.org/>.

To help tell an urgent statewide story, organizers would also appreciate specific data on how underfunding has affected your district: How many staff positions has your district lost since 2019? How many academic and extracurricular programs have you reduced or eliminated? How has inadequate state school funding affected your relationship with your community during budget season?

To get started, you can [fill out this quick form](#) to connect with organizers.

Please let me know if you have any questions/concerns.

Warmest regards,

Jo

Representing 25 cities and towns in Hampshire, Franklin, and Worcester counties

SenatorJoComerford.org

Sign up for our office newsletter [here](#).



TOWN OF
MONTAGUE
MASSACHUSETTS

Selectboard Office
One Avenue A
Turners Falls, MA 01376

413-863-3200
Ext. 107 & 108

February 26, 2026

To: Honorable Karen E. Spilka
From: Town of Montague Selectboard
Re: Bill S.314, "An Act to Provide a Sustainable Future for Rural Schools"

The Montague Selectboard writes to you in support of Senator Comerford's Bill S.314, titled "An Act to Provide a Sustainable Future for Rural Schools." Western Mass rural school districts continue to face the following structural challenges: demographics (aging population), geography (rural), fiscal (Chapter 70 hold-harmless), and operations (declining enrollment and supporting academic programs and services). These challenges shape the educational landscape of Franklin County and constrain the ability of our municipalities to sustain high-quality, equitable education under existing state frameworks.

The Commonwealth's *Rural Schools Commission* highlights rural school district cost pressures arising from low student density, declining enrollment, sparsity, and high transportation cost/distances. Gill-Montague Regional School District reflects the well-documented pattern of low and declining enrollment typical of rural Western Massachusetts, which drives up per-pupil costs in relation to fixed and increasing operational expenses. In addition, regional school transportation reimbursement has not met the state's historical 100% funding commitment in decades; districts have typically received 70–77% reimbursement, requiring towns to absorb the remaining cost. These factors limit the ability of districts like Gill-Montague and Pioneer Valley to achieve economies of scale common in urban areas.

Under the current Chapter 70 formula, Western Mass towns, including Gill and Montague, are net contributors to wealthier towns due to the Combined Effort Yield (CEY) 82.5% Local Contribution cap. Incrementally raising the cap would shift the distribution of state aid toward towns and districts that are, by the State's standards, in more need of the funding. In addition, many rural communities approach or exceed the 82.5% local contribution cap, reflecting a mismatch between calculated local capacity and true economic conditions of Western Massachusetts. School budgets represent a very large share (can be often 60% or more) of the total municipal budget. Due to the Chapter 70 formula, net state aid has been dropping as a percentage of total revenue for rural towns, shifting more pressure and burden onto our local property taxes. Currently, State aid only accounts for 27% of Gill-Montague District's total budget.

Massachusetts' effective 41% state / 59% local funding mix for K-12 Education places heavier burdens on communities that without significant economic growth. For Franklin County towns, the current mix contributes to budget volatility, increased reliance on overrides, and constrained flexibility for capital improvements.

Again, Franklin County faces distinct challenges— declining enrollment, low and aging population density, limited economies of scale, and higher transportation costs that must be recognized in statewide funding frameworks!

The Town of Montague is an equal opportunity provider and employer

The Montague Selectboard appreciates the Commonwealth's attention to the ongoing challenges faced by our rural school districts. We welcome continued dialogue and collaboration on long-term, equitable funding and regionalization solutions that support Western Massachusetts communities and uphold the educational promise for every student in the Commonwealth. Please support Bill S.314 for the sake of our Western Mass rural schools!

Sincerely,
Montague Selectboard

Matt Lord, Chair

Rich Kuklewicz, Member

Marina Goldman, Member