

***TOWN OF EASTON***

***EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK***

**Revision November 2023**

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**TOWN OF EASTON**  
**\*EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK\***

Revision November 2023

Reviewed by Pension & Employee Benefits Commission

Effective Date: November 9, 2023

## **INTRODUCTION**

This Handbook has been prepared to provide you with a general guideline of the Town of Easton's basic personnel policies on compensation, working hours, holidays, vacations, sick leave, funeral leave, jury duty, military reserve duty and the fringe benefits for which you are eligible as an Employee of the Town\*\*. More specific descriptions of the various benefits outlined in this Handbook are available from the Payroll Department. The personnel policies and fringe benefits described in this Handbook apply to non-union employees who are not employed pursuant to a specific written agreement. Employees who are covered under collective bargaining agreements should be guided by those agreements. All Employees who were hired before July 1, 2012 and were scheduled to work 20 hours or more per week as of June 30, 2012 and employees who were hired on or after July 1, 2012 and work 35 hours or more per week, are governed by all provisions in this Handbook. Employees hired before July 1, 2012 who work fewer than 20 hours per week, and Employees hired on or after July 1, 2012, who work fewer than 35 hours per week, are only subject to the provisions in Sections 1, 2, 4, 10, and 17 through 36 (and statutory benefits to which they are entitled).

Easton has proven to be a good town in which to live and work. The quality of life in our Town depends significantly on the quality of municipal services which Town Employees provide, individually and as a team. That quality, in turn, depends on the dedication of all Employees to their work, and their capacity to work together towards the enhancement of our Town.

Many of our Employees have served the Town loyally for many years. Management wants all Employees to achieve satisfaction through their contributions. At the same time, management wants them to be compensated fairly, to enjoy a reasonable sense of security, and to share equitably in the benefits available to Employees.

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\*This Handbook is not a legal and binding contract. While we and you look forward to a long and mutually rewarding relationship, we recognize that circumstances can change. Thus, your employment is and remains an "at will" employment and may be terminated at any time by you or by us subject to any legal requirements.

\*\*Employees should also review the most recent Selectman's Policies and Procedures and any Department Employee Procedures Booklet. In the event of any conflict between the Employee Handbook or such Procedures Booklets and the Law, the applicable Law shall control. In the event of any conflict with an applicable contract (e.g., insurance) the contract shall control. If a conflict is believed to exist, please bring it to the attention of the Payroll Department.

## **1. COMPENSATION**

During the 1995/1996 year, a concerted effort was made to establish a compensation system for all non-union positions which provides fair and equitable pay. This is based on the analysis of each job's content and requirements. The Board of Selectmen sets compensation, subject to budgetary approval. In 2014, the Town began employee evaluations for non-union employees. While these evaluations have not figured directly into compensation decisions heretofore, they may be used for that purpose in the future.

In establishing the compensation system, a formal factor comparison and point-rating position evaluation system was used. Thus, factors common to exempt (salaried) positions and non-exempt (hourly paid) positions were identified. Typical were factors such as education required, experience required, judgment exercised, and extent of interactions with other employees, town officials and the public. Points were assigned based on the level of intensity for each factor.

This provided the basis for establishment of eight pay grades, with a maximum and minimum level of pay for each grade. The minimum reflects what is to be paid a new, relatively inexperienced employee. The "quarter-point" (one-fourth the distance from minimum to maximum) represents the minimum an incumbent with two years' experience in the position should be paid. The maximum is the most an incumbent in grade can be paid, unless the pay prior to the study exceeded the maximum.

All rates -- minimum, mid-point, and maximum -- are to be adjusted upwards at the time of a general increase, cost of living or otherwise, as set by the Board of Selectmen, subject to budgetary approval.

Compensation above the half-point is to be determined based on recommendation by the Town's Management, (i.e., the governing Commission or Board, Department Head, or First Selectman) as reviewed and set by the Board of Selectmen subject to budgetary approval. Increases, other than for longevity, are to be based on the incumbent's overall performance in the job. Compensation questions which cannot be resolved at the department level should be brought to the First Selectman, who may bring it to the full Board of Selectmen.

## **2. OVERTIME**

Hourly Employees shall be paid at their regular hourly rates for all time worked in excess of the regular workweek up to forty (40) hours. Hourly Employees shall be paid at the rate of time and one-half for all hours worked in excess of forty (40) hours. In any work week, hourly Employees may not work overtime without the prior written authorization of their Supervisor.

In lieu of overtime, hourly Employees, with the approval of their Supervisor, may take compensatory time (at straight time for hours in excess of the regular workweek to forty (40) hours and at time and one-half for overtime) during the same pay period as the overtime accrued.

With the advance approval of the Employee's Supervisor and subject to accurate contemporaneous time keeping and based on the needs of the Town, hourly Employees may bank time worked in excess of their scheduled work week and salaried Employees may bank time worked in excess of ten (10) hours over their regular work week when such work is performed to meet the needs of the Department with such banked time to be taken within the same year when the needs of the Department permit. No banked time shall be carried beyond the fiscal year in which it is earned and shall be used or paid for within the fiscal year.

### 3 BENEFITS

Employees who are budgeted and scheduled to work thirty-five (35) or more hours per week are eligible for the following benefits with the following waiting periods:

Medical and dental insurance (if elected) will begin the 1st of the month following date of hire.

There will be a 30-day waiting period for Life Insurance coverage.

Employees working 35 hours per week or more are eligible for Long Term Disability Insurance coverage and there is a 90-day waiting period for such coverage to become effective.

Employees hired after July 1, 2012 and twenty one (21) years of age will be eligible for The Town's Defined Contribution Retirement Plan after completing six (6) months of service.

### 4 HOLIDAYS

The following holidays are observed by the Town of Easton and will be paid days off only for Employees working 35 hours or more per week, or those hired before July 1, 2012 who work 20 hours or more per week:

New Year's Day  
Martin Luther King, Jr. Day  
Presidents' Day  
Good Friday  
Memorial Day  
Juneteenth  
Independence Day  
Labor Day  
Columbus Day/Indigenous Peoples' Day  
Veterans' Day  
Thanksgiving Day  
Day after Thanksgiving  
Day before Christmas  
Christmas

### 5 VACATIONS

Employees shall be granted vacation time with pay. Vacation is earned on the anniversary date of employment. Duration:

|     |                                 |                           |
|-----|---------------------------------|---------------------------|
| (a) | Six (6) months of service:      | 5 working days (1 week)*  |
| (b) | One (1) year of service:        | 10 working days (2 weeks) |
| (c) | Five (5) years of service:      | 15 working days (3 weeks) |
| (d) | Ten (10) years of service:      | 16 working days           |
| (e) | Eleven (11) years of service:   | 17 working days           |
| (f) | Twelve (12) years of service:   | 18 working days           |
| (g) | Thirteen (13) years of service: | 19 working days           |
| (h) | Fourteen (14) years of service: | 20 working days           |
| (i) | Fifteen (15) years of service:  | 21 working days           |
| (j) | Sixteen (16) years of service:  | 22 working days           |

- (k) Seventeen (17) years of service: 23 working days
  - (l) Eighteen (18) years of service: 24 working days
  - (m) Nineteen (19) years of service: 25 working days
- Maximum vacation: 25 working days.

Vacation time must be taken within 12 months of the accrual date. Unused vacation time in a given year will be lost unless extenuating circumstances prevent an Employee from taking their vacation. Under such extenuating circumstances, up to ten (10) working days' vacation can be carried over with the approval of the Employee's Department Manager and the First Selectman. Compensation will not be paid in lieu of vacation time.

Except for terminations for cause and voluntary resignations without two week notice, pro-rated accumulated vacation shall be paid to an Employee who terminates service with the Town. For such purpose, vacation will be assumed to be accumulated at the monthly rate earned by the Employee during the fiscal year in which termination occurred (e.g. an employee with 12 vacation days accumulates at one day per month). The maximum vacation payout shall be 25 days.

\*If taken, this is subtracted from the ten (10) working days available after one (1) year of service, so that only five (5) days will remain to be used in the period of the first to second year of service.

## **6. SPECIAL ABSENCES**

During each fiscal year, you may be allowed special absences. These absences are non-cumulative and include:

### **A. Bereavement Leave**

1. Leave of up to five (5) working days, with pay, shall be granted in the event of the death of a spouse, child, stepchild, mother, father, sister, brother, mother-in-law or father-in-law.
2. Leave of up to three (3) working days, with pay, shall be granted in the event of the death of a grandparent or grandchild or for other relatives who are actual members of the household of the Employee.
3. For relatives (not indicated in 1 and 2 above) up to one (1) working day, with pay, may be taken for the purpose of attending the funeral.
4. Under extenuating circumstance of hardship, up to three (3) additional working days, with pay, may be taken with the approval of the First Selectman.
5. Any bereavement leave shall be taken within ten (10) working days after the date of death.
6. The leave is phrased in terms of "up to" the number of days because it is recognized that bereavement leave is a personal matter and in the Employee's discretion, may not require the full possible number of days.
7. An Employee shall provide documentation if requested.

### **B. Personal Time Off**

Personal Days are earned as follows:

- (a) 1 day after 6 months of service
- (b) 2 days after 1 year of service
- (c) 3 days after 3 years of service

(d) 4 days after 4 years of service

Personal Days must be approved by the Department Head and First Selectman and requested in advance, except in the event of unforeseen circumstances. Personal time may not be used to extend time off the day before or after a paid holiday, and must be used within 12 months of the accrual date. Personal time will not be paid out upon termination of employment.

### **C. Military Leave**

An Employee who is a member of the United States Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, Coast Guard, National Guard, or Reserves will be granted a Military Leave of Absence for military services, training or related obligations in accordance with applicable state and federal law. Pension benefits, health insurance benefits and other Town benefits will be calculated pursuant to applicable state and federal laws.

### **D. Jury Duty**

Employees must inform the Payroll Department when called for Jury Duty, and provide a record of days served. The Town shall pay the difference between an Employee's regular pay and the amount received from the courts if any Employee is summoned to jury duty; provided, however, that an Employee released from jury duty before 1:00 p.m. shall immediately report back to work.

## **7. FAMILY MEDICAL LEAVE**

The Town of Easton is a covered employer under the Federal Family and Medical Leave Act and is subject to all rules and regulations under the Act. The Connecticut Family and Medical Leave statutes and regulations do not apply to the Town of Easton as said Act specifically excludes Towns.

The Family and Medical Leave Act allows eligible Employees to take leave for the reasons specified in the law. Eligibility for leave, the reason for leave, the allowable length of leave, and the protections of the Act are specified in the Act and related regulations.

It is the policy of the Town of Easton to grant Family Medical Leave Act to the full extent of the law. For Employees with accumulated paid leave, leave is first charged to the Employees' accrued paid leave which is eligible for use based on the reason for the FMLA leave. Sick leave, if applicable, vacation and personal leave run concurrently with FMLA leave time until the paid leave is exhausted. When an Employee has no accrued leave time or when accrued paid leave time is exhausted, FMLA leave is unpaid. During the period of FMLA leave, whether paid or unpaid, an Employee remains eligible for health insurance coverage paid by the Town to the same extent as prior to the leave.

Questions concerning the FMLA can be directed to the Town's Payroll Department.

## **8. SICK LEAVE**

The Town's Sick Pay Plan covers your absence from work due to a non-occupational sickness or disability. The benefits and procedural guidelines are:

Employees regularly working 35 or more hours per week will accumulate sick leave at the rate of 10 hours per month for each month of employment, cumulative to 1000 hours maximum.

You, a family member, or your physician, must notify your Supervisor on the first day of the sick leave and on each succeeding day up to one week; thereafter, notification should be given on the first working day of each week.

You will be paid at the rate of 100% of your regular pay while on sick leave until benefits are exhausted.

A Department Supervisor or the Payroll Department will request medical evidence of sickness or disability from a physician or hospital following the third day of any such leave. After an Employee has been out of work one (1) week for sickness or disability, the Town has the right to have the Employee examined by a physician chosen by the Town at its expense as often as it deems necessary.

Your Department Supervisor will maintain sick leave records and provide the Payroll Department with account totals each pay period.

Sick leave may also be used to care for a member of your immediate family who is sick and requires your personal care. Immediate family is defined as spouse, child, parent, parent-in-law, or any relative living in your household. Use of sick leave to care for family members may be denied where the operations of the Town would be adversely affected.

The Town will pay unused accumulated sick leave to an Employee who retires or to the designated beneficiary of an Employee who dies while an active employee or to an employee who has been employed at least five (5) years, and who terminates in good standing with two weeks' notice as follows:

For Employees regularly working 35 or more hour per week a maximum of 500 hours accumulated sick leave shall be paid.

## **9. LONG TERM DISABILITY INSURANCE**

Employees regularly working thirty-five (35) hours or more per week are covered by the Long Term Income Protection Insurance Policy which takes effect on the first day of the month following ninety (90) days of employment. It covers both occupational and non-occupational injuries and sicknesses according to the provisions of the policy in effect during the time of employment.

## **10. WORKERS' COMPENSATION**

If you are injured or disabled in the course of the performance of your duties, you shall be entitled to Workers' Compensation. The Town may request examination by a physician chosen by the Town and at the expense of the Town. Medical expenses and income benefits are paid from the day of the occupational injury in accordance with Connecticut's Workers' Compensation Law.

The Town will pay an Employee for time lost as a result of work-connected injury equal to the difference between workers' compensation payments and his regular take home pay, to a maximum of twelve (12) weeks. These payments shall not reduce accumulated sick leave.

## **11. MEDICAL AND DENTAL INSURANCE**

The Town offers group health insurance in the form of a high deductible health plan. Details as to the exact nature of the insurance plan, and information as to limits of coverage, are contained in descriptive material available from the Payroll Department. Dental insurance is also made available at the Town's group rate. The Payroll Department will handle your applications.

Prior to age 65 retirees may continue their regular medical benefits at the retired Employee's expense.

At age 65, retirees become eligible for Medicare and at that time they will be offered coverage which supplements Medicare, Parts A and B at the retired Employee's expense.

Upon retirement, Employees can continue insurance by making the required premium payments to the Town on a monthly basis.

The Town reserves the right to change insurance coverage and plans at any time.

## **12. IN LIEU OF MEDICAL INSURANCE BENEFITS**

Employees who elect not to take the health insurance coverage provided by the Town, upon signing of a waiver, shall receive the following annual payment in lieu of such coverage less necessary taxes:

- \$ 1,000 (if eligible for individual coverage)
- \$ 2,000 (if eligible for individual plus one dependent coverage)
- \$ 3,000 (if eligible for family coverage)

Employees who are married to each other may:

- (a) Have one elect medical insurance benefits and the other elect payment in lieu of individual coverage benefits,
- or**
- (b) Both elect payment in lieu of benefits with one for individual coverage and the other for individual plus dependent or family coverage as applicable.

Elections and payments shall be on the basis of current status.

Such payments shall be made in two lump sums in the payroll period nearest to December 1 of each year and June 1 of each year.

In order to receive a payment in lieu of coverage, the Employee shall apply for same by letter to the Payroll Department between June 1 and June 30 of the fiscal year preceding the fiscal year in which the insurance coverage will be dropped.

Employees who have opted for payment in lieu of insurance, but find during the year that their insurance needs have changed, may, subject to the requirements of the insurance carrier, elect to change to insurance coverage and will reimburse the Town for payment received, pro-rated for the number of months in the fiscal year that the Employee received insurance coverage. The Employee must offer proof of insurability.

### **13. LIFE INSURANCE**

After one month of employment, the Employee is provided \$50,000 Group Term Life Insurance and \$50,000 Accidental Death and Dismemberment Benefits. Details of this coverage are available from the Payroll Department.

### **14. EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM**

The Town provides an Employees' Assistance Program. See the Payroll Department for details.

### **15. RETIREMENT BENEFITS**

A Town sponsored Pension Plan exists for employees hired before July 1, 2012, and is administered by the Pension and Employee Benefits Commission. A description of the Plan including Payment Options, Disability, Death Benefit and Example of Payment are explained in the booklet entitled "Summary of the Town of Easton Retirement Plan II" together with supplements and modifications to the Plan. Employees of the Town Pension Plan currently contribute 2.25% of their gross earnings to the plan. Copies may be obtained at the Payroll Department.

All Employees hired on or after July 1, 2012, are exempt from joining the Town Pension Plan and will only be eligible for the Town's Defined Contribution Retirement Plan option. Eligibility for the Defined Benefit Retirement Contribution Plan will commence after six (6) months of employment. The Town will match up to seven (7) percent of an Employees contribution.

The Town reserves the right to change retirement benefits and contribution rates.

### **16. LONGEVITY**

Employees hired before January 29, 2008 shall receive longevity pay based on the following:

| <u>Continuous Years of Service</u> | <u>Annual Longevity Pay</u> |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 5 years, but less than 10          | \$200.00                    |
| 10 years, but less than 15         | \$400.00                    |
| 15 years, but less than 20         | \$600.00                    |
| 20 years or more                   | \$800.00                    |

Longevity pay shall be earned on the Employee's anniversary hiring date and paid on the pay

date following the pay period on which the longevity anniversary date is reached. Employees hired after January 29, 2008 shall not be eligible for longevity pay.

## **17. CREDIT UNION**

You may join the Trumbull Credit Union by signing a deduction form agreeing to have funds deducted from your paycheck and forwarded to the Credit Union by the Town. You may participate in their savings plan and Holiday Club. Loans are available for the purchase of new and used cars, home equity and personal use through the Credit Union. Rates and limits are available upon request.

## **18. TAX DEFERRED ANNUITY (Optional)**

The Town offers several optional tax deferred annuity plans, known as a 457 Deferred Compensation Plan, which allow a Town Employee to have a portion of present earnings deferred from each pay period and thereby defers current income taxes to be paid in the future. Information on these plans is available at the Payroll Department. The Town makes no matching contribution on this optional plan.

## **19. PART TIME EMPLOYEES**

For purposes of this Agreement, part time Employees are Employees who are regularly scheduled to work twenty (20) or more hours per week, but less than thirty-five (35) hours per week. Such Employees are eligible for prorated paid holidays and sick time in accordance with the applicable law.

Effective July 1, 2017, part time Employees shall be eligible to participate in the Town of Easton Defined Contribution Retirement Plan. Employees who elect not to participate in the Defined Contribution Retirement Plan shall be eligible for a paid vacation benefit after one (1) complete year of service.

The paid vacation benefit shall be equal to two (2) paid vacation days for each year of service to a maximum of fifteen (15) days of paid leave. Vacation eligibility shall be calculated based on the Employee's anniversary date of hire.

One (1) "day" for part time Employees shall be defined as twenty (20%) percent of the number of regularly scheduled weekly hours assigned to that individual part time Employee.

Part time Employees shall receive holiday pay for any days of a scheduled Town holiday that is part of their normal scheduled work week.

Part time Employees shall be eligible for two paid bereavement days, annually, with the approval of the First Selectman.

If an Employee selects the option of participating in the Defined Contribution Retirement Plan in lieu of the vacation benefit, they cannot reverse this decision.

However, an Employee who initially elects the vacation benefit is eligible for a one time change to participate in the Defined Contribution Retirement Plan.

Part time Employees are not eligible for personal time or insurance benefits, unless otherwise specified by law.

Elected Officials, for which this section applies, shall be eligible after the 2017 Municipal Election, provided necessary funds have been budgeted.

## **20. CODE OF ETHICS**

Easton has a Code of Ethics, the provisions of which you will find in the Town's Ordinances, a copy of which appears in Appendix A. You should familiarize yourself with and abide by this Code as an Employee of the Town.

## **21. TWO-WAY COMMITMENT**

A two-way commitment, between the Town's Leadership and Employees, is deemed essential to achieve a productive and satisfying workplace. Towards that end, Management at all levels will endeavor to:

- Compensate Employees fairly;
- Provide a safe work place;
- Provide job and personal security through a range of benefits;
- Keep Employees informed;
- Respond to concerns expressed by Employees; and
- Offer opportunities for learning and growth to the extent possible.

Employees are expected, in return, to:

- Give their best efforts in providing services in which they can take pride;
- Work collaboratively with other Town Employees toward shared goals;
- Keep the work place safe;
- Consider the public as the ultimate "customer" for the services we provide and to seek ways to serve that customer better;
- Treat fellow Employees and the public in a courteous manner.

## **22. TEAMWORK**

Although an organization consists of units, each of which has a specialized function, the organization's performance is enhanced to the extent that Employees have a shared sense of mission and collaborate towards achievement of a common purpose.

Our purpose is to provide the public with efficient and effective government, and to continuously improve our delivery of such services.

In doing so, all Departments shall collaborate, whether in the sharing of information, or resources, or simply by helping each other.

### **23. KEEPING EMPLOYEES INFORMED**

Town management (Selectmen and Department Heads) will attempt to keep Employees informed of relevant matters through periodic meetings, memoranda, and telephone calls.

The Town's objective is to share information based on "What do you want to know?" as well as "What do we think you need to know to do your job effectively?" ~ with due regard for respecting the demands for personal privacy on given issues.

### **24. GRIEVANCES**

Management wants very much to respond to grievances. Any Employee who feels that he/she has been treated unfairly has the right, without prejudgment or penalty, to make an appeal, first to the Department Head, then the Commission Chairperson (if any) and finally to the First Selectman.

### **25. THE BOARD OF SELECTMEN SETS HUMAN RESOURCE POLICIES AND PRACTICES**

The Board of Selectmen sets human resource policies and practices including, but not limited to: compensation and benefits, hiring, training, teamwork, job descriptions, job classifications, the creation of new positions, the elimination of existing positions, and the performance review and improvement process.

The First Selectman is the Town's Chief Human Resource Officer.

### **26. EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY**

The Town of Easton is an Equal Opportunity Employer. The Town hires and promotes Employees on the basis of their qualifications, without regard to race, color, religion, national origin, sex, age, disability, veteran status, marital status or sexual orientation. The Town complies with all applicable federal, state and local labor laws.

## **27. VERIFICATION OF EMPLOYMENT ELIGIBILITY**

The Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 (Form I-9) requires that all Employees hired provide documentation establishing identity and authorization to work in the United States. Any one of the following documents is sufficient, on its own, to meet the requirements:

- An unexpired United States Passport
- An unexpired foreign passport with an I-551 stamp
- An alien registration card or permanent resident card
- An unexpired employment authorization card
- An unexpired employment authorization document, issued by the United States Customs and Immigration Service, which contains a photograph
- An unexpired foreign passport with Form I-94 containing an endorsement of nonimmigrant status

An employee who does not have one of the documents listed above must produce two documents: one establishing that he or she is authorized to work in the United States and another verifying identity.

To prove employment authorization, United States Customs and Immigration will accept the following documents:

- A Social Security card
- A U.S. birth or birth abroad certificate
- A Native American tribal document
- A U.S. citizen ID card
- Unexpired employment authorization documents issued by the Department of Homeland Security

As proof of identity, the United States Customs and Immigration Service will accept the following documents:

- A current U.S. or Canadian driver's license that contains a photograph or description of personal characteristics
- A federal, state or local identification card with a photograph on it
- A school ID card with a photograph
- A voter's registration card
- A U.S. military card or draft card
- A military dependent's ID card
- A U.S. Coast Guard Merchant Mariner card
- A Native American tribal document

For workers age 16 or younger, the United States Customs and Immigration Service considers a school report card, daycare or nursery school record, or a hospital record acceptable as proof of identity.

## **28. DRUG-FREE/ALCOHOL-FREE WORKPLACE POLICY**

The Town is committed to providing and maintaining a drug-free and alcohol-free workplace. The manufacture, distribution, dispensing, possession, or use of a "controlled substance" (as defined by the Drug-free Workplace Act of 1988) or alcohol is unlawful and prohibited. The use, possession, transfer, or sale of a controlled substance in the workplace is in violation of this policy and a serious offense subject to disciplinary action which may include termination of employment and legal prosecution. Where such a complaint is determined to be valid, prompt remedial action will be taken by the Town up to and including termination of the employment of the offending person.

## **29. SMOKING**

In accordance with the Connecticut State Statutes Sections 1-21b, 31-40r, 31-40s, smoking is prohibited within Town facilities except at designated areas.

## **30. HARASSMENT/SEXUAL HARASSMENT/WORK PLACE VIOLENCE**

The Town is committed to maintaining a professional work environment that is free of discriminatory intimidation, harassment, and violence. We believe that it is the duty of each employee to contribute to the respectful working environment of others, free of harassment and violence.

Sexual Harassment means "any unwelcome sexual advances or requests for sexual favors or any conduct of a sexual nature when:

- (1) Submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual's employment;
- (2) Submission to a rejection of such conduct by any individual is used as the basis for employment decisions affecting such individual; or
- (3) Such conduct has the purpose or effect of substantially interfering with an individual's work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile or offensive working environment."

Any Employee who believes that he or she has been harassed or sexually harassed or suffered workplace violence should report the incident to our First Selectman, whose functions include personnel administration, or if conflicted, to another Selectman. A prompt and confidential investigation of the incident(s) will be conducted. No retaliation of any kind will be taken against an Employee who brings a harassment or violence issue before management.

## **31. CONFORMANCE WITH THE AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT (ADA)**

It is the policy of the Town to conform to the provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act. The Town bases hiring and other employment-related decisions on the ability of an individual to perform essential functions of each position with due regard for provision of reasonable accommodation for disabilities. Decisions regarding hiring, leaves and return from leaves, and termination of employment will be made on this basis.

## **32. HOURS OF WORK**

The Town Hall is open to the public five days per week from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Certain Departments have hours particularly with respect to the public which vary from this schedule. Most Town Hall salaried Employees work this schedule with one hour for lunch. However, there is some variation of working hours for specific positions in some Departments. Work schedules for hourly Employees are set by their individual Department Manager, with the approval of the First Selectman.

As a Town Employee, your major function is to serve the Citizens of Easton. It is important that all Employees are punctual in starting and quitting hours in order that this service is assured during the hours of 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

## **33. PROBATIONARY PERIOD**

All newly hired Employees are subject to a six (6) month probationary period during which they may be terminated without cause at the discretion of the Department Manager and First Selectman. After the probationary period, an Employee will be given a written statement of the reason for termination but no hearing or meeting on the termination will be held.

## **34. REVIEW OF EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK**

The Handbook will be reviewed as needed by the Board of Selectmen. Please make certain that you have the most current revision. Verification can be made with the Payroll Department.

## **35. POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

Policies and procedures to assist Town operations and the implementation of this Handbook and the management of employees are adopted and modified from time to time. These policies and procedures will be distributed as adopted. A copy of the most recent policies and procedures is available at the Payroll Office or at the First Selectman's Office.

## **36. BREAK IN SERVICE**

An Employee who has had employment with the Town terminated shall, if re-employed within six (6) months of such termination, have the benefits computed as if there were no break in service.

## **Town of Easton, CT**

**Chapter 52** of the Code of Ordinances of the town of Easton adopted on 3/25/80 is repealed and replaced as follows:

### **Chapter 52. Ethics Ordinance and Conflict of Interests; Workplace Conduct**

#### **Section 52-1. Overview of Ordinance Intent; Purpose**

Public service is a public trust. Prohibitions on the conduct of public servants are enacted not to deter interaction or employment with the Town, but to preserve and enhance the trust placed in the public servants of the Town of Easton. This Ethics Ordinance is intended to prevent a public servant from using their job and official position to benefit themselves or someone else with which they are associated. These prohibitions are designed to promote public confidence in government, and to protect the integrity of government decision making by addressing actual conflicts of interest as well as conduct that can create the appearance of such conflicts when a public servant performs their job.

To that end, there shall continue to be an Ethics Ordinance established in order to acquaint the public with a desired level of ethics in local government; to set suitable ethical standards for all public officials and employees; to set forth general principles of conduct to guide such officials and employees; and to prohibit acts or actions of such officials and employees which are incompatible with the discharge of proper public duties.

Every effort has been made so that the language used in this ordinance is non-binary.

#### **Section 52-2. Definitions.**

As used in this chapter, the following terms shall have the meanings indicated:

##### **Associated**

A person or entity associated with a public servant includes a spouse, domestic partner, child, foster child, stepchild, parent, sibling, in-law, or a person with whom the public servant maintains a close familial relationship; a person with whom the public servant has a business or other financial relationship; and, each entity in which the public servant has a present or potential financial or other interest.

##### **Business dealings with the Town**

Any transaction with the Town involving the sale, purchase, rental, disposition or exchange of any goods, service, or property, any license, permit, grant or benefit, and any performance of or litigation with respect to any of the foregoing, but shall not include any transaction involving a public servant's domicile or any ministerial matter.

##### **Confidential**

Personal matters and financial matters which, if disclosed, would be of detrimental interest to the Town and a violation of the trust placed in that public servant. This entails identifying

and recognizing kinds of information: information that may be disclosed with fellow Town employees; information that may be shared with members of the public; not disclosing confidential information acquired in the course of or in performing official duties; and, not using confidential information to benefit yourself, or someone, or an entity, with which you are associated.

### **Duty to Report**

The Town of Easton is committed to maintaining the highest integrity in workplace behavior. Town employees have a duty to report incidents of potential fraud, ethical issues, allegations of and/or witnessing harassment and discrimination in the workplace. The types of matters that can and should be reported within ninety (90) workdays from the date of discovery are the following:

- Embezzlement or misappropriation of assets;
- Intentional accounting omission or misrepresentations;
- Financial statement fraud;
- Internal control problems;
- Bribery, kickbacks and corruption;
- Falsification of contracts, reports or official records and documents;
- Conflicts of interest;
- Theft of inventory, assets, or intellectual property;
- Violation of the law or Town policy;
- Self-dealing;
- Misuse of Town property;
- Vandalism and sabotage;
- Ethics violations or misconduct;
- Human resource concerns;
- Discrimination and Harassment;
- Workplace violence or retaliation;
- Substances abuse;
- Identity theft; and,
- Security of personal information.

This section shall not restrict report of bad acts by a public servant after the ninety-day threshold, nor shall it be construed to restrict or contravene any other applicable law, statute, regulation, litigation, or other legal matter.

### **Financial Interest**

Town employees shall not have any interest, financial or otherwise, direct or indirect, or engage in any business or transaction or personal or professional activity or incur any obligation of any nature, which is in conflict with the proper discharge of their duties in the public interest. A public servant should refrain from personal investments that conflict with their official duties and avoid transactions with any entity in which the public servant may have a direct or indirect financial interest.

For the purposes of this ordinance, a “financial interest” is any financial interest, direct or indirect, which is more than nominal and which is not common to the interest of other citizens of the Town. A “nominal” interest is greater than ten thousand (\$10,000) dollars and/or twenty (20 %) percent ownership or other pecuniary interest in an entity.

### **Gifts**

A gift is something that has a fair market value greater than \$15. A gift includes, but is not limited to: money, services, gratuities, favor, loans, travel, lodging, meals, refreshments, entertainment, forbearance (agreeing to change the terms for repayment of a debt), or a thing or promise having a monetary value, or in any other form, under circumstances under which it may be reasonably inferred that the gift is intended to influence the Town officer, public servant, employee, or member in the performance of their official duties.

### **Impartiality and Integrity**

A public servant shall maintain independent judgment with respect to their position; shall zealously avoid situations in which it may appear to a reasonable person that the public servant could be influenced or would unlawfully attempt to influence another; conduct oneself in a manner that seeks to avoid a reasonable suspicion from members of the public that the public servant is personally benefiting or unwarrantedly benefiting another by means of their official position.

### **Indirect Interest**

Includes but is not limited to the interest of any subcontractor in any contract with the Town and the interest of any public servant or a person or entity with which they are associated in any corporation, firm or partnership which has a direct or indirect interest in any transaction with the Town.

### **Ministerial Matter**

An administrative act, including the issuance of a license, permit, or other permission by the Town, which is carried out in a prescribed manner and which does not involve personal discretion.

### **Public Servant/Town Employee/Town Officer**

Includes any official, employee, agent, consultant, or member, elected or appointed, of any board, department, commission, committee, division, or other unit of the Town of Easton, paid or unpaid, with the exception of employees and agents of the local or Region 9 Boards of Education who shall be governed by regulations of said boards and the General Statutes. For the purposes of this ordinance, the terms “public servant”, “Town employee”, “Town officer” shall be used and interpreted interchangeably.

This ordinance does not apply to residents of the Town of Easton that are not public servants as defined in this section, and who attend, testify, comment, vote, or otherwise interact with the Town at the Annual or a Special Town Meeting, Town referenda, or other legislative assembly.

**Transaction**

Includes the offer, sale or furnishing of any real or personal property, material, supplies or services by any person, directly or indirectly, as vendor, prime contractor, subcontractor or otherwise, for the use and benefit of the Town for a valuable consideration, excepting the services of any person as a Town officer.

**Section 52-3 Conflict of Interests**

No public servant shall engage in any transaction or shall have a financial interest or other personal interest which is incompatible with the proper discharge of their official duties in the public interest or would reasonably tend to impair their independence of judgment or action in the performance of their official duties.

Without limiting the nature and type of potential conflicts of the interest, the following examples of specific conflicts are hereby set forth for the guidance of all public servants:

1. No public servant shall engage in or accept private employment or render services for private interest when such employment or service is incompatible with the proper discharge of their official duties or would tend to impair their independence of judgment or action in the performance of their official duties.
2. No public servant shall request or permit the use of Town owned vehicles, equipment, materials or property for personal convenience or profit except when such are available to the public generally or are provided in Town policy for the use of such Town officer in the interests of the Town.
3. No public servant shall grant any special consideration, treatment, favor or advantage to any person beyond that which is generally available to residents and taxpayers of the Town.
4. No public servant or a person or entity with which they are associated shall accept any gifts, things, favor, loans or promises as previously defined in this ordinance, which might tend to influence the performance or nonperformance of their official duties.
5. No public servant shall, without proper written authorization, disclose confidential information concerning the property, government, or affairs of the Town, and may not use such information to advance the financial or private interest of themselves or a person or entity with which they are associated.
6. No paid public servant shall appear on behalf of a private interest before any board, agency, committee or commission of the Town; nor shall they represent, whether paid or unpaid, a private interest in any action or proceeding against the interest of the Town in any litigation to which the Town is a party, except if subpoenaed as a fact witness, or as noted in subsection (7) below. Nothing herein shall prohibit a

public servant from appearing before any such board, agency, committee or commission on their own behalf.

7. An unpaid public servant may appear, with or without compensation, before a board, agency, committee or commission of the Town other than the Town entity of which they are a member, so long as such appearance does not involve the use of confidential information as described in this ordinance, and such appearance is noted on the public servant's financial disclosure form. Any question involving the ethics of such appearance (as for example, a Member of the Planning and Zoning Commission representing a client before the Zoning Board of Appeals) shall be referred to the Board of Ethics whose determination shall be final.

## **Section 52-4 Gifts**

### **A. The practice of giving or accepting gifts**

The practice of giving or accepting gifts regardless of innocent intentions can lead to the perception that public servants may be more favorably disposed and responsive to individuals who show their appreciation in a tangible manner. Therefore, no public servant shall knowingly accept or provide, directly or indirectly, any gift, thing, favor, loan or promise which may tend to influence the performance or non-performance of the public servant's duties on behalf of the Town.

1. A notice shall be posted on the Town website and at Town Hall, stating, "Pursuant to Town policy, we cannot accept gifts. We ask you to respect this policy so as not to place the Town's public servants in a compromising or uncomfortable position."
2. Any public servant who is offered an impermissible gift, thing, favor, loan or promise from a known donor should thank the donor for the thought behind the offer, but must decline or return the gift, thing, favor, loan or promise citing this policy.
3. Any public servant who is offered a gift, thing, favor, loan or promise from an unknown donor or one that cannot be returned must discard the item or deliver it to a charitable organization with which the officer is not associated, and may not use that charitable gift for any personal tax purposes.
4. The public servant may not redirect an impermissible gift to a third party, including a person with whom they are associated, or to a charitable organization with which they are associated.
5. Multiple permissible gifts from the same source, even if each individual gift is worth \$15 or less, is impermissible, as it may create an actual or an apparent conflict of interest or an appearance of improper influence.

## **B. Exceptions**

The following are permissible exceptions to the gifts rules, so long as the acceptance does not create an actual or apparent conflict of interest, or give the reasonable impression of improper influence.

1. Awards or plaques in recognition of public service;
2. Honorary degrees;
3. Promotional items with no resale value;
4. Discounts available to the general public;
5. Gifts from family members and personal relationships where it is clear that the relationship is longstanding and is not a pretext to give an otherwise impermissible gift;
6. Meals and beverages provided to participants at professional and educational programs;
7. Local travel payments for tours related to one's official activity;
8. Food or beverage at authorized events, so long as all participants at the event are offered the same or similar food or beverages; and,
9. Complimentary attendance at events, expositions, exhibitions, conferences or other proceedings relevant to the Town employee's work on behalf of the Town.

## **C. Election Campaign Donations**

Nothing in this section shall preclude the solicitation or acceptance of lawful contributions for election campaign purposes, provided that the official accepting such contribution shall recuse themselves from involvement with such donor's business dealings with the Town during such campaign cycle, and for a six-month period thereafter.

## **D. Town Funds**

Town funds may never be used to purchase gifts for employees, vendors, or consultants, except as noted below.

The following exceptions to this policy are as follows:

1. Reimbursement for expenses by a person volunteering their time.
2. A plaque, certificate or ceremonial award costing less than \$150.00 to commemorate a significant life event such as retirement or other employment related milestones.
3. Town funds may be used to purchase candy or cookies for general distribution to employees, vendors, consultants, or the general public and for reasonable quality and quantity of food and non-alcoholic beverages for occasional in-office special events and an annual holiday party.

4. Food and gifts of nominal value if offered to all attendees at conferences, special events and the like attended by Town employees.
5. Food or gifts of nominal value if offered to a department, office, or the Town and not to an individual Town officer; and,
6. Gifts given entirely outside the scope of employment for which it could reasonably be inferred that the gift was not intended to influence official actions or offered as a reward for past official actions.

#### **E. Questions**

Any questions about whether or not to make or accept a gift, thing, favor or promise should be referred to the First Selectman for a determination as to propriety. If the donor or recipient is the First Selectman, such inquiry should be brought to the attention of the Board of Ethics. The determination of the First Selectman, or the Board of Ethics, as the case may be, shall be binding and final.

#### **Section 52-5 Disclosure of Financial Interest**

1. Any public servant having a financial interest in any transaction with the Town, or in any action to be taken by the Town, shall first divulge and disclose such interest in writing to the committee, board or agency involved, and if no such committee, board or agency is involved, to the Board of Selectmen; and shall further refrain from using their office to exert their influence or vote on such transaction or action. The First Selectman shall determine, and may consult with the Board of Ethics, if recusal of the public servant in such circumstances and in such matter is warranted.
2. Within sixty (60) business days of enactment of this ordinance, the Board of Ethics shall promulgate a financial disclosure form to be completed within sixty (60) days thereafter by the Town's officers, employees, and public servants. All public servants hired or sworn in after such date shall complete such form within sixty (60) days after their starting date of employment or being sworn in.
3. The Board of Ethics may promulgate financial disclosure forms containing differing level of disclosure, relevant to the public servant's job title, job description, and substantive tasks performed on behalf of the Town. The board may modify, amend, or revise these forms in its discretion upon sixty (60) days notice, and shall consult with appropriate Town directors regarding personnel policies and procedures, as well as appropriate collective bargaining agreements.
4. Such form shall be confidential, within the Town's legal ability to assert such confidentiality.

### **Section 52-6 Employment of Associated Persons**

The employment of associated persons within the Town of Easton is permitted subject to the following procedures:

1. Persons who are associated within the meaning of this ordinance, may be employed by the Town of Easton.
2. A "temporary" position is one for no more than a cumulative ten weeks per calendar year.
3. An employee may not be the sole supervisor of a person with whom they are associated for more than a cumulative ten weeks per calendar year.
4. An employee is absolutely prohibited from participating in the hiring of a person with whom they are associated, for a permanent position with or on behalf of the Town. This blanket recusal continues even after the associated person is hired. For example, direct supervision, performance evaluations, or participation in discussions of promotions or raises are also prohibited.
5. An employee may participate in the hiring of a person with which they are associated, for a temporary position in a division other than the employee's, provided someone from the proposed hiring division is the decision maker in the hiring process. As in permanent hiring matters, direct sole supervision for more than ten weeks per calendar year, performance evaluations, or participation in discussions of promotions or raises are also prohibited.
6. Nepotism is prohibited. Nepotism occurs when a public official or employee authorizes an associated person's employment or uses their position in any way to obtain a public job for a person with which they are associated. Thus, for example, a public servant may not agree to hire a person with whom another Town employee is associated, on the understanding that the Town employee will hire a person with whom the public servant is associated.

### **Section 52-7 Revolving Door Prohibitions**

"Revolving door" refers to the movement of high-level employees from public-sector jobs to private-sector jobs and vice versa. After leaving public service, high-level employees and officials frequently engage in business dealings with the entities they dealt with in their public service. Alternatively, some private industry officials receive or seek government appointments that relate to their former private posts. This becomes an issue when former government officials utilize connections formed and knowledge attained in public service to enrich themselves or when former private sector employees are overly influential in shaping, watering down, or augmenting pending legislation.

1. Former Town Selectmen are banned for a period of one year from their last date of service from being paid by an outside party to communicate with the Town in an attempt to influence certain actions or proceedings.
2. Former public servants may be paid by the Town if requested to appear or advise on matters relating to their former public employment. The Town Director of Finance shall determine if such appearance and payment are necessary for the benefit of the Town. The Board of Ethics may review said determination.
3. Former Town employees are permanently prohibited from being paid by an outside party to appear in a *specific* proceeding or matter involving *specific* parties (e.g., a lawsuit, administrative law hearing, or a contract) in which the official previously and *substantially* participated.

All public servants are prohibited from making, participating in making, or influencing a Town-related decision that directly relates to a prospective employer.

#### **Section 52-8 Discrimination and Harassment**

Connecticut fair employment laws prohibit discrimination, including sexual harassment and harassment based upon the following legally protected classes: race, color, creed, age, sex, pregnancy, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, marital status, national origin, ancestry, intellectual disability, genetic information, learning disability, physical disability, including but not limited to blindness, mental disability (past/present history thereof), military or veteran status, or criminal record.

These state laws cover all public and private employers that employ three or more people. The Connecticut Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities has the primary responsibility for administering and enforcing these laws.

The Town of Easton accordingly follows and adheres to these laws. Violation of such is a violation of workplace conduct. The Town is committed to maintaining a professional work environment that is free of harassment and discrimination.

#### **Section 52-9 Political Activities**

All Town officials and employees are free to engage in political activity to the extent permissible by current law, and consistent with the proper discharge of their official duties. Town employees are to be treated with respect, and likewise, provide fair and equal treatment of all townspeople and any others the public servant may encounter. There are limitations upon political activity, as follows:

1. No Town official, employee, or other public servant may allow partisan political activity to interfere with or to affect, directly or indirectly, the proper discharge of their official Town duties. This section does not apply to routine appointments to

boards or commissions of the Town where political party registration is a factor, as for example, appointment to the Board of Ethics.

2. No Town employee may be ordered or required, directly or indirectly, to participate in political activities.
3. No Town employee may, while on official business, display at their workstation, or wear any clothing, symbol, pin, or any other sign or representation of partisan political preference.

#### **Section 52-10 Acknowledgement**

Within sixty (60) days after enactment of this ordinance, every Town employee, and every newly hired, appointed, or elected public servant, shall sign and file with the First Selectman an acknowledgement form supplied by the First Selectman, indicating their awareness of and review of the provisions of this ordinance.

Within (60) days after enactment of this ordinance, every consultant and person having business dealings with the Town of Easton shall sign and file with the First Selectman an acknowledgement form supplied by the First Selectman, indicating their awareness of the provisions of this ordinance. The First Selectman shall forward an additional copy of the form to be filed with the Town board, commission, committee or agency that retains the consultant or person having business with that Town unit.

#### **Section 52-11 Board of Ethics**

There shall continue to be a Board of Ethics in and for the Town which shall be charged with the administration of this ordinance and which shall consist of five (5) members, one of whom shall serve as chair. Not more than three (3) of said members shall be of the same political party, and none of whom shall hold any of the elected or appointed Town offices, or be a Town employee, or be a member of the Town committee of any political party.

1. One member of the board shall serve a one -year term commencing January 1, 2022, and ending December 31, 2022.
2. Two members of the board shall serve a two-year term commencing January 1, 2022, and ending December 31, 2023.
3. Two members of the board shall serve a three-year term commencing January 1, 2022, and ending December 31, 2024.
4. Members of the Board of Ethics shall thereafter be appointed for a two (2) year term. No member may serve more than six (6) successive (consecutive) years.
5. The members of the board shall, by majority vote of the board, elect a chair.

6. The board shall promulgate and adopt reasonable rules and regulations for the administration of its proceedings. The rules and regulations so promulgated and all amendments thereto shall be made available at the office of the Town Clerk to any elector of the Town, and shall be prominently posted on the Town website.
7. Within sixty (60) days after enactment of this ordinance, the board shall post a video on the Town website explaining the parameters of this chapter. All public servants are required to annually view this ethics video, and to sign and file an acknowledgement form supplied by the board, indicating their compliance therein.

#### **Section 52-12 Adjudicatory and penalty powers of the Board of Ethics**

1. The board shall receive all complaints, in writing, of violation of this ordinance, shall investigate the same and, after giving the public servant concerned an opportunity to be heard, shall, within thirty-five (35) workdays make such findings and recommendations as it may deem appropriate in each case to the Board of Selectmen, including penalties as appropriate, and consistent with any other applicable rules and regulations. The board may request of the Board of Selectmen additional time to investigate allegations of this ordinance, which shall not be unreasonably denied. The Board of Selectmen shall, thereupon, take such action as it may deem appropriate.
2. Pending the hearing and determination of charges of violation of this ordinance, the public servant against whom such charges have been referred may be suspended with or without pay for a period not exceeding thirty-five (35) workdays. Such determination shall be made by the first selectman after consultation with the public servant's board, department, commission, committee, division or other unit appointing authority or head, and in accordance with any applicable collective bargaining agreement.
3. If such public servant is found guilty by the Board of Ethics of the charges, the penalty or punishment may consist of a private or public reprimand, a fine to be determined by the board not to exceed twenty-five thousand (\$25,000) dollars, suspension without pay for a period not exceeding sixty (60) workdays, demotion in grade and/or title, rescission of the consultancy, payment to the Town of any financial gain realized as a result of the violation, dismissal from Town employment or forfeiture of membership, whether paid or unpaid, elected or appointed, from any board, department, commission or committee, with the exception of employees and agents of the local or Region 9 Boards of Education who shall be governed by regulations of said boards and the Connecticut General Statutes. This section shall be in accordance with any applicable collective bargaining agreement.
4. If the public servant is found not to have violated the charges referred, they shall be restored to their position with full pay for the period of suspension less the amount of any unemployment insurance benefits received during such period.

5. If the public servant against whom charges have been referred is the First Selectman, then the Board of Ethics shall have plenary power to determine the scope and manner of its investigation and shall also possess unilateral power of suspension of the First Selectman from office, as well as other penalties if any, to be imposed.
6. Upon written request of any public servant, said board shall render an advisory opinion in writing to such public servant with respect to this ordinance, and may publish same with appropriate redactions so as to ensure confidentiality, and to provide guidance to other Town employees.

Approved by the Board of Selectmen on September 1, 2021  
Adopted by Town Referendum on September 21, 2021  
Published in the Fairfield Citizen on October 1, 2021

Amendment Approved by the Board of Selectmen on November 17, 2022  
Amendment Adopted by Town Referendum on December 5, 2022  
Published in the Fairfield Citizen on December 16, 2022

## TOWN OF EASTON

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I, the undersigned Employee of the Town of Easton, have received and reviewed a copy of the Town of Easton Employee Handbook November 2023.

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

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

Date \_\_\_\_\_