

EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK  
FOR  
THE CITY OF MERIDIAN, MISSISSIPPI

The City of Meridian welcomes you to the service of the public. Our goal is to provide the citizens of and visitors to Meridian with the best possible service. You are important because the quality of your work directly affects the quality of service provided to the people of this City. Whether you are picking up garbage, reading a water meter, sweeping the streets, fighting a fire, answering a telephone, pruning a tree, sweeping a floor, issuing a ticket or any of the other tasks performed by City employees, the public forms its opinion of the City as a whole by the impression you make.

The City of Meridian is proud to have you as a member of our team of public service employees.

Percy Bland, III  
Mayor

**CITY OF MERIDIAN, MISSISSIPPI EMPLOYEE ACKNOWLEDGMENT FORM**

I acknowledge that I have received my personal copy of the City of Meridian's (City) Employee Handbook including policies and procedures effective\_\_\_\_\_. I understand that this handbook contains important information.

I have read and understand the guidelines stated in this handbook. I understand that if I have any questions about my employment or anything contained within this handbook, I should consult with my supervisor or the Human Resources Director. I understand that this handbook may be revised or amended within the discretion of the City of Meridian. I will receive a copy of any and all amendments or revisions.

I understand and agree that I will follow the policies, procedures, guidelines and rules outlined in this handbook. I will at all times strive to serve the residents of the City of Meridian with the best customer service and quality service in my position.

**I understand that there are no oral or implied contracts of employment at the City of Meridian and this handbook does not constitute an employment contract. I also understand that my employment is at will and can be terminated with or without cause at any time at the discretion of the City of Meridian in accordance with applicable law and subject to civil service protections, if I so qualify.**

I also understand that no one other than the Mayor of the City of Meridian has any authority to enter into any agreement for employment for any specified period of time, to assure me of any future positions, benefits, or terms or conditions of employment, or to make any promises contrary, or in addition, to this handbook. Any past or future promises contrary to, or in any way different from, this handbook, including my right, and the right of the City of Meridian, to terminate our relationship at our individual discretion must be in writing, signed, and dated by an officer of the City of Meridian.

Employee Name (please print):\_\_\_\_\_

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

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

Please sign, date, and return this page (or a photocopy) to your supervisor within three days of receiving a copy of this handbook.

Supervisor's Signature\_\_\_\_\_

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

TO BE RETAINED IN YOUR PERSONNEL FILE

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## SECTION 100 – INTRODUCTION

This employee handbook is designed to introduce you to the City of Meridian and to provide you with clear and concise information about our employment policies and practices. We require that you read the entire handbook and sign the acknowledgment form which is located at the front of this handbook within your first three (3) days of employment. Return the signed and dated form to your supervisor. This form will be placed in your personnel file.

This handbook supersedes and replaces any and all prior handbooks and policies. The information contained within this handbook applies to all employees. This handbook does not replace the Civil Service Commission Code of Rules and Regulations which governs hiring, discipline, promotion, and other employment matters.

This handbook does not replace or modify any existing union contracts, inter-departmental rules and regulations, Standing Operating Procedures, General Orders, City Ordinances, or state and federal laws. Various state and federal laws have been summarized for your convenience. These summaries are not meant to supersede or place additional standards or obligations upon the City, nor are they intended to be relied upon by City employees when making decisions which could impact a legal right they may have. Rather than relying on the legal summaries of state and federal law contained within this handbook, City employees should consult the Human Resources Director. In case of a conflict between this handbook and City ordinances, state laws, or federal laws, those ordinances and/or laws will prevail. This handbook may be amended or revised at any time without notice, upon approval of the City Council.

This handbook is not an employment contract and is not intended to create contractual agreements of any kind. The policies and procedures in this handbook are designed to serve as guidelines for management action; they are not intended to create any contract or binding agreement between the employer and employee. All policies and procedures outlined herein are subject to change or modification at the City's discretion.

The City of Meridian acknowledges that every job in the City is an essential part of the effective operation of our municipal government. All employees are expected to act professionally and maintain a positive attitude toward all residents and every person with whom you may come into contact. The City of Meridian insists upon a high standard of quality service at all times.

Any employee may bring questions regarding employment rights and duties to his/her supervisor, the Human Resources Director, or the Equal Opportunity Officer.

## **SECTION 200 – GENERAL EMPLOYEE INFORMATION**

### **201 – TYPES OF EMPLOYMENT**

The City employs approximately 600 individuals in full time, part-time and temporary positions. The following definitions apply throughout this handbook.

**Probationary Employee:** An employee on an applicable trial period.

**Regular Full-Time Employee:** A full-time civil service classified employee who has successfully completed the probationary period and is assigned to a position that is expected to continue for an indefinite duration and who regularly works a 40-hour or more work week.

**Appointed Full-Time Employee:** An employee who is appointed by the appointing and/or governing authority to a position that is expected to continue for an indefinite duration and who regularly works a 40-hour or more work week. Such positions serve at the will and pleasure of the Mayor (or the City Council, in the case of the Clerk of Council) and may be terminated at any time, with or without cause.

**Part-time Employee:** An employee who is assigned to a position that is expected to continue for an indefinite duration and who regularly works less than 30 hours per week. No part-time employee may work more than 25 hours per week without approval from the Human Resources Director. Part-time Employees are not subject to civil service protections and regulations.

**Temporary Employee:** An employee whose work assignment is usually limited in duration, but who regularly works a 40-hour or more work week. Seasonal employees and specially funded employees (those whose positions are funded in whole or in part from non-recurring funds, such as grants) are considered temporary employees. Temporary Employees are not subject to civil service protections and regulations, however the tenure of Temporary Employees is governed by the Civil Service Commission Rules and Regulations.

### **202 – HIRING PROCESS**

Approximately 120 full time job classifications are provided civil service protection and are filled through the Civil Service Commission. Through its competitive examination process, the City's civil service system provides lists of eligible persons for full-time employment for these positions. Examinations are announced through several sources including the local newspaper. Requirements for positions are included in the announcement along with necessary instructions regarding how and when to apply. All examinations are job-related and seek to fairly measure the relative merit and fitness of the applicant. Certain examinations will contain a physical fitness component.

Successful candidates from the examination process are placed on an eligibility list for employment consideration by the City for up to one year. As vacancies in a job occur,

the City administration selects qualified individuals for appointment to respective positions.

Individuals interested in part-time or temporary (including seasonal) employment can apply through the Human Resources Director. Many City functions are subject to the need for qualified employees who can provide part-time or temporary work on an as-needed basis. In most cases, employment in this manner is in response to temporary increases in workload or staffing shortages in critical areas.

The City's Human Resources Director and Civil Service Commission are available to answer questions related to the employment process and any related matters.

### 203 – PRE-EMPLOYMENT DRUG SCREEN

Everyone offered employment by the City of Meridian, regardless of employment type, will be required to submit to a pre-employment drug screen, the successful completion of which is a condition to any offer of employment. Any job applicant who tests positive for prohibited drugs will not be considered for employment with the City. Pre-employment drug screens will be administered in accordance with the City's drug and alcohol policy, found in Section 702.

### 204 – EMPLOYEE ORIENTATION

All new employees of the City must attend a new employee orientation program. At the orientation program, each new employee will be provided with information on employee benefits, policies and operations. New employees will complete federally required Incident Command System (ICS) training. The hiring department may provide additional information to the new employee, including, for example, information related to standard operating procedures, general hours of work, time cards or reports, and leave requests.

### 205 – PROBATIONARY PERIOD

All full time employees in civil service classified positions are subject to a probationary period. The purpose of the probationary period is to evaluate an employee's performance and suitability for continued employment. In all departments, except Fire and Police, whether for initial appointment, transfer, promotion, or re-employment, the employee shall serve a probationary period of 6 months, unless said period is properly extended as authorized by civil service rules.

Sworn members of the Fire and Police Departments shall serve a probationary period of 12 months after their initial appointment, transfer, promotion, or re-employment.

Prior to the end of the probationary period the employee will be advised of his/her standing. The employee may be recommended for permanent status, extended probation, dismissal, or return to prior position.

An entry level, probationary employee serves as an “at-will” employee of the City and, as such, may be terminated for any reason, or for no reason, during the probationary period and all extensions thereof which are approved by the Civil Service Commission.

#### 206 – AT WILL EMPLOYMENT

Part-time, temporary and appointed full time employees are at-will employees and may be terminated for any reason, or for no reason, at any time during their employment. They are not subject to civil service protection.

#### 207 – DATE OF HIRE/SENIORITY

The date of hire or anniversary date of employment is the effective date of the individual's employment. This date is used to measure the length of the individual's continuous uninterrupted service with the City. An individual's service may be interrupted by a layoff, a leave of absence, suspension from work without pay, or for other reasons. As a result of these interruptions, an individual employee's benefits, including retirement, may be affected.

Seniority is determined by the length of continuous uninterrupted service in a specific position. In some departments, seniority may be used to determine the selection of vacation leave, days off, or shift assignments.

#### 208 – PERFORMANCE EVALUATION

Evaluations are used as communication tools for the purpose of monitoring the development and skill level of employees. Evaluations are also used as a way for supervisors to share their performance expectations, goals, and objectives with the employees they supervise. There are different types of evaluation forms covering a range of positions, each of which has been designed to measure performance of specific skills related to each job.

All full-time City employees are subject to probationary job performance evaluations as well as annual evaluations given at or near the employee's date of hire anniversary. The Human Resources Director typically provides supervisors on a monthly basis with a list of employees in their respective departments who are due for evaluation. Ultimately, however, supervisors are responsible for ensuring accurate, honest, and timely annual evaluations of those under their supervision. Other special evaluations may be administered at any given time as requested by the employee's supervisor or department head.

#### 209 – POSITION DESCRIPTIONS

Comprehensive statements describing the duties and responsibilities of positions are maintained by the Human Resources Director. Position descriptions are developed through a process that focuses on the duties and responsibilities of a job and reflects the specific type, level and complexity of work a person with that job is expected to

perform. A position description would generally include the title of the position, nature of work, examples of work, essential functions, minimum education and experience, and any special requirements.

Position descriptions are reference points for the determination of job pay levels, and they serve as guides for preparing work-related examinations used to assess the qualifications of job applicants. Despite the City's best efforts, these descriptions may not encompass all duties for a particular position and should not be used to restrict an employee's responsibilities.

### 210 – PROMOTIONS/LATERAL TRANSFERS/TEMPORARY ASSIGNMENTS

Promotion means a change from a position in a lower classification and/or pay grade to a position in a higher classification involving an increase in duties, responsibilities, and salary. The Civil Service Commission conducts competitive promotional examinations through its examining board as vacancies occur or new positions are added. Department Heads recommend qualified applicants to the Mayor from the Civil Service Commission list of eligible employees.

A lateral transfer means that an employee moves from one division or department to another division or department while retaining the same job classification and pay grade. An employee desiring to be considered for a lateral transfer must make a written request to the appropriate department head. The Mayor may initiate transfers on his/her own initiative.

A temporary assignment may be initiated by the Mayor upon his/her own or upon recommendation by department heads, based upon need and circumstances. Ordinarily, these assignments do not exceed 90 days. Any temporary assignment resulting in the movement of an employee to a higher classification shall, after the first 30 working days, require a comparable increase in salary. Such an assignment to a lower classification shall not be a demotion and shall not result in a lower salary.

### 211 - TRAVEL AND TRAINING

City employees may be subject to travel for training or to fulfill their job responsibilities. Travelers on official City business must receive approval from their department head and the Chief Administrative Officer or Mayor prior to travel. The administrative procedure to be followed in requesting approval for official City travel and for claiming reimbursement of expenses incurred is contained in the City's Standard Operating Procedure (SOP), which is available in every department or can be obtained from the Human Resources Director.

The employee must complete a Personnel Action Memorandum (PAM), which requires the employee to list anticipated expenses, such as conference registration, travel costs (including mileage), accommodations, food, and other expenses. If the PAM is filed in a timely manner, the employee may be given an advance check with which to pay

allowable expenses. When the employee returns from the trip, actual expenses are determined and the employee may be eligible for reimbursement or be required to reimburse the City for anticipated expenses not incurred.

### 212 – EMPLOYEE PERSONNEL RECORDS

The Human Resources Director shall maintain an employment record and file for each employee. These records are confidential. The release of any employee confidential information shall meet all legal requirements.

Employees may review their individual files by making a request to the Human Resources Director. An employee may not remove or add anything to his/her file without the approval of his/her department head and the Chief Administrative Officer or Mayor. Changes of address, telephone number, or other changes in personal information should be brought to the attention of the Human Resources Director as soon as they are known. All employee personnel records and files are the property of the City of Meridian.

### 213 - EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

The general policy of the City of Meridian is to support and encourage continuing education, training, and certification of each employee.

Training and certifications required for the employee to maintain the ability to perform the duties for which he/she is appointed shall be treated in a manner similar to other assigned work activities. This may include, at the discretion of the Mayor and department heads, providing the necessary funding for tuition, fees and training materials for such activities through the annual departmental budget. All requests shall be submitted through your department head prior to the yearly budgetary process. It is the responsibility of the employee requesting such training to make proper and timely requests for such expenses. Education, training, and certification required for the employee to be eligible for promotion and advancement beyond the duties for which the employee is appointed shall be supported to the degree reasonable and feasible given departmental budgetary constraints and the logical relationship to fulfilling the mission of the department.

Education, training, and certification desired by the employee to improve general knowledge and thereby the ability to enhance performance is supported by partnering with local educational providers, such as Meridian Community College and Mississippi State University-Meridian. This is achieved by the creation of programs, provision of financial services, reasonable adjustments to work assignments and schedules, and similar activities which promote a positive learning/growing environment for all employees. Such education and training must first be approved by the employee's department head and is subject to departmental policies and approval by the applicable educational institution.

Full-time City employees may earn pay increases under the City's educational incentive program for possessing a level of education beyond that required by their positions. For example, an employee holding a job which requires an Associate's Degree in Business may be eligible for a pay increase for achieving a Bachelor's Degree in Business Administration. Credit given by colleges and universities must meet regional accreditation standards. Department heads are responsible for making pay recommendations to the Mayor based on the job relatedness of the education obtained by the employee which must be approved by the City Council.

The Barnett Scholarship program is a private endowment that pays tuition costs for eligible City employees, as funding allows. Barnett Scholarship applications are available at Meridian Community College Financial Aid Office.

#### 214 – SEPERATION FROM EMPLOYMENT

An employee may be separated from employment by resignation, abandonment or dismissal.

Resignation occurs when an employee voluntarily terminates employment with the City. To leave City employment in good standing, an employee must give notice at least two weeks in advance of leaving. Employees who resign in good standing may be considered for re-employment if they meet the requirements set forth in the Civil Service Commission Rules and Regulations.

Any employee's unauthorized absence for a period of three (3) consecutive work days or more shall be considered job abandonment and a resignation not in good standing.

Dismissal is the most severe form of disciplinary action and should be generally used only after less severe and progressive discipline has failed to correct the unacceptable behavior, or in response to an infraction of such severity that a lesser form of discipline is clearly not sufficient. Dismissal may result from, but is not necessarily limited to, infractions such as incompetence, insubordination, neglect of duty, legal or ethical wrongdoing, or discourteous treatment. Dismissal becomes effective when the department head provides the employee with a written notice containing one or more reasons for the dismissal along with a clear statement of the facts on which the action is based. Under Civil Service Commission rules, every non-probationary civil service employee has the right to appeal a dismissal to the Commission.

#### 215 – EMPLOYEE COUNCIL

The Employee Council is an advisory organization consisting of employees elected or appointed by their respective departments at the beginning of each calendar year to represent their department for that year. The number of Employee Council representatives from each department is determined by the total number of employees in the department. The Council is not a political organization nor does it serve as a bargaining agent for employees. The mission of the Employee Council is to effectively

serve the residents and patrons of the City by promoting a positive working environment for City of Meridian employees.

## **SECTION 300 – PAYROLL INFORMATION**

### 301 – WORK PERIODS/HOURS OF WORK/ABSENTEEISM/TARDINESS

The work period for all City employees, other than 24-hour-shift firefighters and all sworn police officers, shall be a 7-day period beginning on Wednesday at 12:00 a.m. and continuing through the following Tuesday at 12:00 a.m. (midnight). The work period for all employees shall comply with the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA). The work period for any 24-hour shift firefighter and sworn police officers shall comply with Title 29 of the FLSA and any other applicable statutes or regulations.

Being on time and regular in attendance are required of all employees. Employees are expected to be at their work locations, on time, every day they are scheduled to work and to remain at work for their full shift until their designated quitting time, with the exception of lunch and break periods as established by each department. Unscheduled absences, late arrivals, and early departures are disruptive, impair our ability to serve our citizens, and place unnecessary burdens on your coworkers. From time to time, the department head or Mayor may adjust work hours to better serve the citizens and address needs.

Requests for leave shall be made to the employee's supervisor with as much notice as possible. Such requests are subject to the approval of the employee's supervisor and department head. Approval of leave time without advance notice is permissible only in the event of unforeseen circumstances or emergencies. Unexcused or excessive absence from work or improper notification of absence may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination. Following an absence of three (3) or more working days, an employee may be required to provide a doctor's excuse or other valid reason for their absence. At the discretion of the employee's supervisor or department head, a doctor's excuse may be required for any absence from work.

If an employee anticipates being late for work, advance notice of tardiness must be provided prior to the beginning of your scheduled work time. Notification must be made by the employee, not by another employee, friend or relative, unless the employee is physically unable to make notification. Tardiness may be made up during the pay period in which it occurs, if approved by the employee's supervisor and department head. Excessive tardiness may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

Any questions related to this section should be referred to the Human Resources Director.

### 302 – OVERTIME/FLEX TIME

The City of Meridian's overtime policy is determined by the provisions of the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA). In certain situations, as provided for within the FLSA, the City of Meridian may pay to an employee compensation equal to one and one-half times the employee's regular hourly rate of pay. Please be advised that under the FLSA, the formula for calculating an employee's overtime eligibility is different for law enforcement and fire protection personnel than it is for other City employees. If an employee has any questions about the City's overtime policy, or that employee's overtime eligibility, please contact the Human Resources Director.

For those employees who are not hourly workers, but rather are paid a standard salary, flex time is available if they work more than 40 hours in a given week. Flex time is leave time equal to the time worked over the 40-hour work week and it is not deducted from the employee's available vacation time. In addition to flex time approved by the employee's supervisor and department head, short periods of leave may be taken with approval without charge to the employee's accrued leave if the work schedule allows. Any questions related to this section should be referred to the Human Resources Director.

### 303 – COMPENSATION

Total compensation consists of pay, paid leave and other fringe benefits. For each position, the City has a pay scale. The new employee's prior experience, qualifications and/or training may be given consideration in pay determination to increase pay up to the maximum of the pay scale for the position.

The City provides paid leave through its leave policies, addressed in Section 400 of this handbook.

Other fringe benefits directly related to compensation are the City's group health and life insurance, social security, and membership in the Public Employees Retirement System (PERS). Specific benefits are addressed in Section 500 of this handbook.

### 304 – PAYROLL AND DEDUCTIONS AND GARNISHMENTS

All employees of the City are paid every other week. Direct deposit of pay is strongly encouraged. Specific details may be acquired through the Human Resources Director.

City employees are able to satisfy both required and approved voluntary deductions through the payroll system. Mandatory deductions for state income tax, federal income tax, social security, and state retirement are withheld each pay period. Voluntary deductions such as dependent health premiums, deferred compensation, and supplemental life and cancer coverage are withheld upon the employee's authorization.

It is the employee's responsibility to inform the City of his/her appropriate withholding status for state and federal income taxes by completing the required forms, which are available from the Human Resources Director. It is the employee's responsibility to

make sure amounts withheld are accurate and coverages are as agreed upon with the respective service providers.

Garnishments will be withdrawn from an employee's payroll as instructed by a court of competent jurisdiction and in the manner prescribed by Mississippi and federal law. It is the employee's responsibility to address any problems with garnishments with the Human Resources Director.

### 305 – TIME CARDS/PREPARATION OF PAYROLL

Employees must complete and sign a time card, which is a record of the hours worked during the work period and which will be used in preparing the payroll. Some employees complete or fill in a time card and others punch a time clock. In other instances an electronic time record system may be utilized. In all cases, the employee is responsible for the accurate and complete recordation of time. All sick leave, vacation, holidays, and overtime taken must be correctly recorded by the employee and approved by their department head. Fraudulently preparing a time entry for yourself or another employee will result in disciplinary action up to and including termination.

Each supervisor, division head, and department head is responsible for checking and approving the time cards and hours of work of all those within his/her area of responsibility. Department heads are responsible for turning in completed and approved time cards and divisional/departmental payroll summaries to the Human Resources Director prior to 10:00 a.m. on the day immediately following the close of the payroll period, in order to ensure that payroll checks are processed and distributed on schedule.

## SECTION 400 – LEAVE BENEFITS

For the purpose of calculating leave benefits, a day of leave is 8 hours in length, with the exception of fire personnel scheduled to work 24 hours on and 48 hours off, for whom a day of leave is 11.2 hours.

### 401 – ANNUAL LEAVE

Annual leave is time off with pay earned by full-time employees and appointed full-time employees. Annual leave may be used for vacation, illness, personal business, an illness in the employee's immediate family, and for any other approved absence from work. Annual leave must be approved by the department head and is considered leave without pay if approval is not given. Taking leave without prior approval may result in discipline, up to and including termination.

All full-time employees accrue credits for annual leave as follows:

| <u>Continuous Service</u> | <u>Annual Leave</u> |
|---------------------------|---------------------|
| 01 month to 03 years      | 18 days per year    |
| 37 months to 08 years     | 21 days per year    |
| 97 months to 15 years     | 24 days per year    |
| Over 15 years             | 27 days per year    |

There is no limit to the accumulation of annual leave. Upon termination of employment, employees shall be paid for not more than 240 hours of accumulated annual leave and all other unused annual leave shall be counted as creditable service for purposes of the Public Employees Retirement System (PERS).

### 402 – SICK LEAVE

All full-time employees accrue credits for sick leave as follows:

| <u>Continuous Service</u> | <u>Annual Leave</u> |
|---------------------------|---------------------|
| 01 month to 03 years      | 12.0 days per year  |
| 37 months to 08 years     | 10.5 days per year  |
| 97 months to 15 years     | 9.0 days per year   |
| Over 15 years             | 7.5 days per year   |

If calling in sick, the employee shall call in before the start of the shift, in accordance with department policy. The first day of sick leave shall be taken as an annual leave day and following an absence of three (3) or more days, an employee may be required to provide a doctor's excuse or other valid proof of absence. There is no limit to the accumulation of sick leave.

Employees hired before October 1, 1991, have the option of receiving payment for a certain amount of sick leave at retirement or creditable service for the sick leave under the

Public Employees Retirement System (PERS). Employees hired after October 1, 1991, will not receive payment for unused sick leave but will receive credible service for unused sick leave under the Public Employees Retirement System (PERS). Please note that this is subject to change at the discretion of the Public Employees Retirement System (PERS).

#### 403 – HOLIDAYS

In accordance with Section 3-3-7 of the Mississippi Code of 1972, as amended, the following holidays are observed:

- The first day of January (New Year's Day)
- The third Monday of January (Robert E. Lee's and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s birthday)
- The third Monday of February (Washington's birthday)
- The last Monday of April (Confederate Memorial Day)
- The last Monday of May (National Memorial Day and Jefferson Davis's birthday)
- The fourth day of July (Independence Day)
- The first Monday of September (Labor Day)
- The eleventh day of November (Armistice or Veterans' Day)
- The day fixed by proclamation by the Governor of Mississippi as a day of Thanksgiving, which shall be fixed to correspond to the date proclaimed by the President of the United States (Thanksgiving Day)
- The twenty-fifth day of December (Christmas Day)

In those departments where employees have work schedules that permit the department to be closed on the holiday, employees normally scheduled to work will receive the day off with pay. In those departments where hourly employees are required to work on a holiday, employees will be paid for working on the holiday and will also receive holiday pay for that day. In those departments where employees have regular off days that coincide with holidays, those employees will receive the same number of holiday hours on an annual basis as all other employees.

The taking of holiday leave in advance is not allowed. Use of accrued holiday leave requires the prior approval of your department head. Holiday leave may be carried over from one calendar year to the next. At termination of employment there will be no payment for any accrued holiday leave the employee has not used.

#### 404 – BEREAVEMENT LEAVE

An employee may use up to three (3) days of earned sick leave in any calendar year because of a death in the immediate family requiring the employee's absence from work. No use of annual (vacation) leave will be required prior to use of sick leave for this purpose. The immediate family is defined as spouse, parent, step-parent, sibling,

child, step-child, grandchild, grandparent, son- or daughter-in-law, mother- or father-in-law or brother- or sister-in-law.

#### 405 – MILITARY LEAVE

In accordance with federal and state law, the City will grant military leave with pay to an employee for absences not exceeding fifteen (15) working days per calendar year. The City will not require the employee to use normal annual leave (accrued vacation) for such purposes. The employee may, however, request use of annual leave, or leave without pay to supplement absences exceeding those covered by the fifteen (15) working days of military leave allowance. Annual leave and sick leave will not accrue while an employee is on military leave that is outside of the fifteen (15) working days per calendar year period if he or she is not on annual leave or sick leave.

An employee is allowed up to five (5) years of unpaid leave to perform military duty, if the employee performs that duty satisfactorily and requests his or her job back within time limits set by law. In most situations the individual on military leave will be re-employed without loss of seniority or position, and without regard to whether the military duty was voluntary or involuntary. Specific details may be obtained from the Human Resources Director.

#### 406 – FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE ACT (FMLA)

In accordance with the Family and Medical Leave Act, 29 C.F.R. § 825, et. seq., the City will grant job-protected unpaid family and medical leave to eligible employees. For more information see [www.dol.gov/whd/fmla](http://www.dol.gov/whd/fmla) or contact the Human Resources Director.

#### 407 – JURY/COURT LEAVE

Involuntary court or jury duty is classified as leave with full pay. The employee shall be given time off provided a copy of the jury summons or subpoena is given to his/her supervisor and attached to the employee's time card.

#### 408 – LEAVE OF ABSENCE

A leave of absence is approved leave for a specific purpose with or without pay.

Leave of absence with pay can include City-directed absence from the normal working area, scheduled annual National Guard duty or military leave (15 days per calendar year), involuntary court attendance or jury duty, and such absences as approved by the City.

Leave of absence without pay can include leave where an employee must be absent from work and has no appropriate leave accrued. For instance, if an employee has no remaining sick leave, that employee may, at the discretion of the City, be eligible to take a leave of absence without pay for medical reasons, provided their request is (1) written,

(2) for a specific period of time, and (3) supported by a doctor's medical statement of necessity. Such leave may also be used to attend career enhancing educational programs and other requests as may be desired by the employee and approved by the City.

#### 409 - DONATED LEAVE

Any City employee may donate a specified portion of his/her earned annual leave or sick leave to another eligible employee who is suffering from a catastrophic injury or illness, or who has a member of his/her immediate family who is suffering from a catastrophic injury or illness, and who has exhausted all leave benefits. Any request to donate leave is subject to approval by the Human Resources Director.

#### 410-EMERGENCY LEAVE

From time-to-time the Mayor or Chief Administrative Officer may at his/her discretion send nonessential personnel home due to unforeseen circumstances, such as severe weather. In the event the Mayor or Chief Administrative Officer sends employees home or orders nonessential personnel not to report to work, the employee shall receive emergency leave, which is leave time that does not affect the individual's other leave time.

Essential personnel who are ordered or expected to report to work will receive an equal amount of leave time, which may be taken at the discretion of the supervisor prior to termination or retirement.

Employees who had scheduled time off before an unforeseen circumstance occurs shall not be eligible for emergency leave.

#### 411-ADMINISTRATIVE LEAVE

From time-to-time the Mayor or Chief Administrative Officer may at his/her discretion send home or prohibit the return to work any employee upon issuing a notice of administrative leave to the employee. Administrative leave shall be with pay and shall not affect any other leave available to the employee.

## **SECTION 500 – INSURANCE AND OTHER BENEFITS**

### **501 – GROUP MEDICAL INSURANCE**

The group medical plan currently provides coverage for major medical, inpatient and outpatient hospitalization, office visits, prescription drugs, routine wellness, dental, and vision care.

All new full-time employees may enroll in the plan; coverage is effective on the first day of the month following 30 calendar days of employment. Any new employee desiring to cover eligible dependents must complete their enrollment within 30 days of his/her hire date in order for dependents to initially qualify for coverage under the plan.

The City currently pays the entire employee cost for each full-time employee's coverage. Employees pay the cost of dependent coverage through payroll deduction.

The City provides a Summary Plan Description (SPD) that describes in more detail the plan's benefits, eligibility, and usage. For additional information, employees may contact the Human Resources Director.

### **502 – LIFE/ACCIDENTAL DEATH AND DISMEMBERMENT INSURANCE**

The City's group medical plan currently provides the employee life insurance and accidental death and dismemberment (AD&D) insurance at no cost to the employee. An employee's group term life and AD&D coverage are effective on the first day of the month following 30 calendar days of employment.

Details about the group term life insurance and AD&D are provided in the insurance certificate booklet, which can be obtained from the Human Resources Director.

### **503 – CONTINUANCE OF MEDICAL COVERAGE (COBRA)**

The Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1985 (COBRA) allows employees and their families who are covered under the City of Meridian group medical plan to elect a temporary extension of health coverage, where coverage under the health plan would otherwise end due to qualifying events such as loss of job, change in job status, or change in dependent status.

COBRA continuation coverage is the temporary extension of group medical plan coverage that must be offered under certain circumstances to employees and their eligible family members at group rates. The right to COBRA continuation coverage is triggered by the occurrence of a qualifying event that results in the loss of coverage under the terms of the health plan. The coverage must be identical to the health plan coverage that the qualified beneficiary had immediately before the qualifying event. If

the group coverage subsequently changes, the COBRA coverage must be identical to the coverage provided to active employees.

A copy of the City of Meridian COBRA plan can be obtained from the Human Resources Director.

#### 504 – RETIREMENT SYSTEM

The Public Employees' Retirement System (PERS) of Mississippi currently provides retirement and disability retirement benefits to its current and future retirees. PERS is administered by a state-wide Board of Trustees, which sets policies regarding contributions and payments based on periodic reviews and revisions.

A copy of the PERS member handbook can be obtained from the Human Resources Director.

#### 505 – DEFERRED COMPENSATION

Any full-time employee may invest a portion of his/her present earnings in a deferred compensation plan sponsored by the State of Mississippi Public Employees Retirement System (PERS). Benefits received through this program are in addition to any Social Security or PERS retirement benefits for which the participating employee may be eligible.

This plan is voluntary and enrollment can be arranged through the Human Resources Director. Contributions to the program are financed solely by the employee through payroll deduction and the City makes no guarantee or recommendation of specific investments under this plan.

#### 506 – VOLUNTARY INSURANCE

The City, through its designated agents, may offer other supplemental insurances, such as cancer and life insurance policies, that can be acquired on a voluntary basis. These agents schedule times to meet with eligible employees on an annual basis during the open enrollment period to discuss these plans' costs and benefits and to offer coverage. The Human Resources Director has the agents' contact information for new employees or any other interested employees who are eligible for enrollment to these plans throughout the remainder of the year.

#### 507 – UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION

If a City employee becomes separated from employment for reasons beyond the employee's control, that employee may be eligible for unemployment compensation. Inquiries regarding unemployment compensation should be directed to the Mississippi Department of Employment Security.

### 508 – WORKERS' COMPENSATION

The City of Meridian, in accordance with Mississippi law, provides all employees with worker's compensation insurance coverage for all on-duty accidental injuries and work-related illnesses. Benefits are paid as set by the Mississippi Workers' Compensation Commission. Wage benefits are not paid for the first five (5) days unless the time off extends to 14 or more days.

Employees can use any accrued leave time for what is not covered by lost wage benefits. In the event of a work-related fatality, worker's compensation benefits will be paid to the spouse or any dependents as set forth in Mississippi law.

An employee who is injured on the job must immediately report the injury to his/her supervisor. An accident report must be completed by the employee and his/her supervisor and submitted to the Human Resources Director and the Risk Manager. This accident report is essential for any subsequent compensation claims and should be completed within three (3) calendar days.

The Human Resources Director is responsible for reporting worker's compensation claims and maintaining records of all work-related accidents and injuries. More details about workers' compensation coverage can be obtained from the Human Resources Director and/or the City Risk Manager.

## SECTION 600 – EMPLOYEE CONDUCT

### 601 – EMPLOYEE ETHICS

Employees and officials are required to adhere to and abide by all applicable and governing laws, ordinances, and regulations pertaining to ethics, and conflicts of interest, including, but not limited to, Miss. Code Ann. § 25-4-101, et seq., which states:

*The legislature declares that elective and public office and employment is a public trust and any effort to realize personal gain through official conduct, other than as provided by law, or as a natural consequence of the employment or position, is a violation of that trust. Therefore, public servants shall endeavor to pursue a course of conduct which will not raise suspicion among the public that they are likely to be engaged in acts that are in violation of this trust and which will not reflect unfavorably upon the state and local governments.*

In addition, employees:

- Must always conscientiously perform all assigned job duties;
- Must be tactful, patient, and courteous when conducting City business;
- Shall not grant special consideration to any citizen or group of citizens;
- Shall not engage in any outside employment or have a financial interest that will conflict with his/her duties, be detrimental to the City or otherwise violate the provisions of any federal, state, or local law or City division standard operating procedures (SOPs);
- Shall not request or permit the use of City vehicles, equipment, materials or property for personal convenience or profit;
- Shall not accept (except those of little value) or ask for any gift or consideration from any person or firm doing, or seeking to do, business with the City or intending to influence the employee to provide preferential treatment;
- Shall not abuse, misuse, neglect, or waste government property, materials or equipment; including City-owned or leased vehicles, communication devices such as telephone lines, cell phones, computers, etc.;
- Shall not use the City's name or tax exempt status for his/her personal advantage on any purchases;
- Shall not answer or make personal telephone calls while on duty except in an emergency;
- Shall not discuss or reveal confidential City information to anyone, under any circumstances, except within the scope of his/her job duties; or
- Shall disclose to their department head any potential ethical violation of their own or of any other employee.

### 602 – POLITICAL ACTIVITY

Employees have a right to vote and to voluntarily support candidates and issues of their choosing, however they may only do so while off-duty. No such activity will be conducted during working hours, at the expense of the City, or through utilization of City property. The City will not tolerate employees being subjected to coercion, intimidation, or threat of reprisal because of their political views or activities.

### 603 – WORKPLACE ENVIRONMENT

The term “workplace environment,” when applied to a municipality, covers a broad range of locations and/or situations in which employees may be required to perform their assigned job duties. Whether inside an office or out in the field, the City of Meridian strives to maintain a professional and productive business setting for all employees. When employees are at ease in their surroundings, they are better able to concentrate on the job at hand and perform their assigned tasks without increased risk of errors or accidents.

Natural environmental factors affecting the workplace cannot be controlled. However, the attitude and actions of employees can be guided and directed to create the best working conditions possible. When employees exhibit a behavior of cooperation and respect for each other, all daily operations are accomplished in a more productive manner. Peaceful surroundings that are free of tension, aggravation, and offensive physical and verbal conduct represent the ideal setting for a productive workplace environment.

Inappropriate actions or language, whether intended to harass or not, may be offensive to other employees or individuals who are subjected to them. Disparaging remarks, profanity, hostile language, and personal conversations of a private nature, whether directed to or overheard by an individual or a group, could contribute to what could be considered an undesirable work environment. Bullying of another employee or individual and/or verbal remarks made by an employee that degrade or insult another employee or individual may be also considered hostile. Behavior of this nature may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

### 604 – PERSONAL APPEARANCE

Employees of the City of Meridian should always be dressed in a manner suitable for the public service environment and which favorably reflects the City’s image. Employees are required to dress appropriately according to their assigned jobs, be neat and clean in appearance, and adhere to reasonable and customary personal grooming and hygiene standards in the performance of their respective responsibilities and job assignments.

All employees represent the City of Meridian and shall avoid wearing clothing and accessories that would deter from the City's professional image or that could be considered safety hazards.

All garments, whether casual or uniform, shall fit properly and be of appropriate size. For example, skin tight apparel, clinging body suits, skirts or shorts falling higher than three (3) inches above the knee, necklines showing excessive cleavage, and clothes exposing bare midriffs are not suitable for a business working environment. Visible piercings with the exception of earlobe piercings, as well as visible tattoos, are discouraged and may be deemed unacceptable by the Mayor, Chief Administrative Officer or the employee's department head.

Additionally, employees are expected to conform to the specific dress codes set forth in their respective departmental rules and regulations. Office staff and business customer service personnel should be dressed in "business casual" attire, such as skirts/dress pants/khakis with shirts/blouses/polo shirts or casual business suits or dresses for the ladies. Slacks/suit pants/khakis with dress/polo shirts or button downs would be appropriate dress for men, with suit jackets and ties being optional, depending on the circumstances and personal preference.

Employees assigned to work inside City of Meridian office buildings shall remove all personal communication and entertainment devices while on duty.

If uniforms are provided in a department, they are to be worn in accordance with each department's policies. Police and Fire Department employees are expected to further conform to any inter-departmental dress and personal appearance codes as set forth in their respective General Orders and SOPs.

The Mayor or Chief Administrative Officer may from time to time deem a casual day as appropriate and will so notify employees. The Mayor or his designee shall be the final authority in interpreting and evaluating compliance with the dress-code policy of the City.

### 605 – GRIEVANCES

A grievance is a claim or complaint based upon an event or condition that may affect an employee's working environment. A grievance might involve safety or health issues; physical facilities; surroundings; materials or equipment; supervisory practices; treatment by fellow workers; work quotas; or any other application of rules and regulations or policies.

Grievances shall not include suspensions, demotions, removals, separations, or discharge of permanent employees, all of which are handled through the appeal procedure of the Civil Service Commission for civil service employees, or through the Human Resources Director for all other employees. Grievances that fall under federally protected categories will be handled through the Equal Opportunity Officer.

Both supervisors and employees are expected to make every effort to resolve problems as they arise. However, it is recognized that there will be grievances which will be resolved only after a formal appeal and review.

For employees covered under collective bargaining agreements, grievances are handled through the collective bargaining representatives.

For all other employees, the procedures for filing a grievance are:

- The employee gives his/her supervisor a clear statement of the circumstances which affected the employee and caused the dissatisfaction, and a clear statement of the requested remedy to resolve the dissatisfaction. The supervisor investigates and gives the employee an answer within five (5) working days. The supervisor reports the grievance and response to the department head and the Human Resources Director. Most problems should be resolved by this point.
- If the employee wishes to take the grievance further, he/she has ten (10) working days, from receipt of the supervisor's report, to file a written grievance with the department head; the department head investigates and renders a written decision within five (5) working days.
- If the employee still isn't satisfied, the written grievance may be submitted to the Chief Administrative Officer within five (5) working days of the department head's report, clearly stating the problem and resolution being sought. The Mayor will render a final and binding decision within ten (10) working days.

### 606 – ACCIDENTS

All accidents involving City employees must be reported immediately. This includes accidents involving City vehicles, City equipment, property damage, any employee who suffers accidental injury, and work-related illnesses. An accident report must be completed by the employee and his/her supervisor and submitted to the Human Resources Director. This report should generally be completed within three (3) working days. Even if the employee chooses not to seek medical attention, a report of the incident must be filed.

A police report must be made on all motor vehicle accidents involving a City employee on duty or in a City vehicle. Any employee who is involved in an accident while using a City vehicle or equipment negligently, improperly, for unauthorized purposes, or without a valid operator's license may be held personally liable for any damage to City property, any other property, and/or injury to person(s). Additionally, disciplinary action may be taken, up to and including termination. A post-accident drug screen is required of any employee involved in a motor vehicle accident and may be required in other circumstances at the discretion of the employee's department head.

## 607 – DISCIPLINARY ACTION

The Mayor or his designee is responsible for administering and maintaining discipline and shall impose appropriate discipline for instances of misconduct.

For civil service employees, the disciplinary action shall be as set forth in the Civil Service Code of Rules and Regulations. Generally, disciplinary action shall be applied in steps of progressive severity, in the discretion of the Mayor, in order to bring about a change in behavior.

Exceptions to this progressive system of discipline may be made in cases of major misconduct, where discipline up to and including termination may be administered.

Examples of misconduct, which may warrant discipline include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Wrongdoing, poor performance, or failure to perform required work or work related activities;
- Conduct detrimental to the department or City;
- Conduct detrimental to, or in prejudice of, good order and discipline;
- Violation of any rule or regulation of the Civil Service Code of Rules and Regulations;
- Violation of work rules and/or rules of conduct established by the Mayor;
- Repeated incidents of carelessness or a pattern of errors, neglect, and/or inattentiveness to job performance which are of a serious nature. Each case of carelessness or neglect will be evaluated and considered on its merits and also considered in conjunction with other such incidents and will result in appropriate disciplinary action up to and including the discharge of the employee; and
- Violation of General Orders, SOPs, or the provisions of this handbook.

The Mayor or designated representative shall take action to formally discipline an employee who is guilty of misconduct. A written notice containing one or more reasons for the disciplinary action shall be served upon the employee. The employee shall be given an opportunity to respond in writing. In certain circumstances, the employee may be placed on immediate suspension with or without pay pending investigation of formal disciplinary charges. An employee shall cooperate fully with the appointing authority, the Civil Service Commission and/or its authorized representative in any investigation that involves the conduct or activities of the employee. Failure to cooperate in an investigation constitutes grounds for termination.

An employee who has completed the probationary period may appeal to the Civil Service Commission any disciplinary action that results in demotion, dismissal, suspension, or loss of employee rights. Such appeals must be made within ten (10) calendar days of the adverse action. After investigation, the Civil Service Commission may affirm, reverse or modify the disciplinary action in accordance with their rules.

## 608 – FITNESS FOR DUTY

Fitness for duty addresses behavioral changes in employees that may pose a potential threat to one's self, others in the work place, and/or the individuals the City serves. Occasionally, circumstances arise when the physical or emotional stability of an employee or his/her ability to perform as required is questioned. While there is a great variety and range of acceptable behavior among employees, dramatic or sudden changes in any particular employee's customary behavior should be reported to their direct supervisor by other employees and/or supervisors observing the behavior. If there are documented reasons to question an employee's fitness for duty or ability to perform job duties, a department head may require the employee to obtain and furnish an evaluation from an appropriate professional and/or submit to drug and alcohol testing. When the City requires such an evaluation or testing, related costs are covered by the City.

### 609 – WHISTLEBLOWING

The City strives to conduct its business with the utmost integrity and in strict accordance with all applicable federal, state, and local law. Accordingly, employees are encouraged to bring to the attention of the City any improper actions of City employees, commonly known as whistleblowing. Such actions taken by employees other than the Mayor, City Council Members or department heads should be reported to the Mayor. Alleged improper actions by the Mayor, City Council Members or department heads should be reported to the City Attorney. The City will not retaliate against any employee who makes such a disclosure in good faith.

Improper actions are actions undertaken by an officer or employee in the performance of his/her official duties which:

- Are in violation of any federal, state, or local law;
- Constitute an abuse of authority;
- Create a substantial and specific danger to public health or safety;
- Amount to a violation of any policies, procedures, or provisions of this employee handbook or other City policies, procedures, or regulations; or
- Grossly waste public funds.

Improper actions do not include common personnel actions, such as the processing of grievances, decisions regarding hiring, promotion, terminations of employment and other discipline, or alleged violations of employment contracts.

### 610 – CHAIN OF COMMAND

By act of its incorporation, the City government is made up of legislative [City Council] and executive [Mayor] functions in a Mayor-Council or Strong Mayor form of government. The Mayor and Chief Administrative Officer supervise all executive personnel. All administrative employees are assigned to one of seven departmental units as established by Council Ordinance. These departments are: Police, Fire, Public

Safety and Training, Public Works, Parks and Recreation, Community Development and Finance & Records. All of the administrative functions, powers and duties of the municipality are allocated and assigned among and within these departments.

The Mayor, through the Chief Administrative Officer, supervises all City departments and requires each department to make an annual report and such other reports of its work as the Mayor deems desirable. Each department is headed by a director who is appointed by the Mayor and confirmed by an affirmative vote of a majority of the Council present and voting at any such meeting. Each director serves during the term of office of the Mayor until the appointment and qualification of the director's successor.

Directors of departments appoint division heads, subordinate officers and employees within their respective departments through the civil service system and may, with approval of the Mayor, remove such division heads, subordinate officers and employees subject to the provisions of the civil service system.

Employees are obligated to take guidance and direction only from the Mayor, Chief Administrative Officer, department head, division head, or immediate supervisor. Any employee may be made available to answer questions and requests for information by the City Council. The Chief Administrative Officer is the primary information liaison between the Council and employees. When the Council makes an information request to an employee, the employee must inform the Chief Administrative Officer so that he/she is aware of such request. Employees are expected to provide their best professional recommendations on issues, providing information about alternatives to recommendations as appropriated, as well as pros and cons for recommendations and alternatives.

### 611 – CUSTOMER SERVICE

The term “customer service” relates to the level of assistance provided to an individual. City employees should always perform their job duties in an efficient and competent manner. Courtesy, attentiveness, and respect should be extended to citizens, visitors and customers at all times. The attitude and proficiency expressed during contact with each citizen will likely be the basis on which the City and its success are judged. A customer is not to be viewed as an interruption of work, but rather to be treated and respected as the purpose for it.

Telephone etiquette largely affects the standard of customer service. Employees are encouraged to present their best image and adhere to proper procedures when answering incoming calls, whether from a citizen, customer or a professional business associate. A proper attitude as well as a good telephone personality should be projected for the duration of the conversation. The last thirty seconds of the call are just as important as the first thirty second because a lasting impression is being left that should convey to the caller a positive image of the City.

### 612 – SAFETY

Safety precautions and procedures are set to ensure a safe and healthy environment for all City employees and citizens. These precautions include following established safety procedures and being alert to potential hazards.

The City of Meridian's safety manual details safety practices and procedures, prevention, responsibilities and disciplinary actions. The responsibility for following the procedures lies primarily with the individual employee and, therefore, safety is a significant part of his/her job evaluation. Responsibility for enforcement lies primarily with the supervisor.

Employees must, as a condition of employment, follow safety precautions to prevent injuries to themselves and others and to avoid damages to equipment, property, and materials. At a minimum employee shall:

- Report all conditions considered unsafe;
- Keep work areas clean and orderly;
- Report all accidents immediately;
- Avoid horseplay or other distracting behavior;
- Lift and handle materials properly;
- Obey all safety rules;
- Operate only equipment that he or she has been authorized to operate;
- Use only the prescribed equipment for a job and use it properly;
- Use and wear protective equipment; and
- Be drug and alcohol free while on duty.

### 613 – SOCIAL MEDIA USE POLICY

We understand that social media can be a fun and rewarding way to share your life and opinions with family, friends and co-workers. However, use of social media also presents certain risks and carries with it certain responsibilities. To assist you in making responsible decisions about your use of social media, we have established these guidelines for appropriate use of social media.

The rapid speed at which technology continuously evolves makes it difficult, if not impossible, to identify all types of social media. Social media includes all means of communicating or posting information or content of any sort on the Internet, including to your own or someone else's web log or blog, journal or diary, personal web site, social networking or affinity web site, web bulletin board or a chat room, whether or not associated or affiliated with the City, as well as any other form of electronic communication. Social media specifically includes Facebook, Twitter and comments on websites.

The nature of the Internet is such that what you communicate online will be captured forever and can be transmitted repeatedly without your consent or knowledge. Employees should remember that any information that is shared online instantly becomes permanent and public. Employees should be aware that, while certain types

of speech may be subject to protection under the First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States, the City does have the right to discipline an employee whose comments may affect the public services of the City or public confidence in the City.

Ultimately, you are solely responsible for what you post online. Before creating online content, consider some of the risks and rewards that are involved. Keep in mind that any of your conduct that adversely affects your job performance, the performance of fellow co-workers or otherwise adversely affects citizens, suppliers, or the City's legitimate interests may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination. A violation of this policy may be considered insubordination, neglect of duty and potential moral turpitude as set forth in Section 10.04 (Dismissal) of the Meridian Civil Service Code of Rules and Regulations.

This Policy applies to all employees' use of the Internet, including participation in the use of social media, regardless of whether such use occurs in the workplace and regardless of whether such use involves the City of Meridian's electronic equipment or other property.

Nothing in this Policy is intended to or will be applied in a manner that limits employees' rights to engage in protected concerted activity.

Social media changes rapidly and there will likely be events or issues that are not addressed in this policy. If, at any time, you are uncertain about the application of this policy or if a question relating to the appropriate use of social media arises that is not fully addressed by this policy, you should seek the guidance of your supervisor or department head before posting or otherwise engaging online. When in doubt, employees always should ask for guidance first because, once the information is online, it can never be deleted.

As part of the City's Social Media Policy, you, the employee, are required to:

- Carefully read these guidelines and the rest of the Handbook, and ensure your postings are consistent with these policies. Inappropriate postings that may include discriminatory remarks, harassment, endorsement of controlled substances, and threats of violence or similar inappropriate or unlawful conduct will not be tolerated and may subject you to disciplinary action up to and including termination.
- Always be fair and courteous to coworkers, citizens, visitors, suppliers or people who work on behalf of the City. Also, keep in mind that you are more likely to resolve work-related complaints by speaking directly with your co-workers than by posting complaints to a social media outlet. Nevertheless, if you decide to post complaints or criticism, avoid using statements, photographs, video or audio that reasonably could be viewed as malicious, obscene, threatening or intimidating, that disparage citizens, visitors, coworkers or suppliers, or that might constitute harassment or bullying. Examples of such conduct include offensive posts meant

to intentionally harm someone's reputation or posts that could contribute to a hostile work environment on the basis of race, sex, disability, religion or any other status protected by law or company policy.

- Make sure you are always honest and accurate when posting information or news, and if you make a mistake, correct it quickly. Be open about any previous posts you have altered. Remember that the Internet archives almost everything; therefore, even deleted postings can be searched. Never post any information or rumors that you know to be false about the City, coworkers, citizens, visitors, suppliers, or other people working on behalf of the City.
- Maintain the confidentiality of the City's private or confidential information. Even information that is subject to public disclosure must go through the proper process; it should not be disseminated online. Do not post internal reports, policies, procedures or other internal City-related confidential communications.
- Refrain from posting, uploading, or sharing any recording or images (including audio, pictures, and videos) taken in the workplace or at any City-sponsored event without express advance authorization from their department heads, the Mayor, or Chief Administrative Officer.
- Refrain from posting a link from your blog, website or other social networking site or page to a City website.
- Express only your personal opinions. Never represent yourself as a spokesperson for the City. If the City is a subject of the content you are creating, be clear and open about the fact that you are an employee and make it clear that your views do not represent those of the City, coworkers, suppliers or other people working on behalf of the City. If you do publish a blog or post online related to the work you do or subjects associated with the City, make it clear that you are not speaking on behalf of the City. It is best to include a disclaimer such as "The postings on this site are my own and do not necessarily reflect the views of the City of Meridian, its elected officials, or employees."
- Refrain from using social media while on work time or on equipment we provide, unless it is work-related as authorized by your manager and consistent with the City's IT Policy. Do not use City email addresses to register on social networks, blogs, or other online tools utilized for personal use.
- Refrain from taking negative action against any coworker for reporting a possible deviation from this policy or for cooperating in an investigation. Any employee who retaliates against another employee for reporting a possible deviation from this policy or for cooperating in an investigation will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination. All employees are under an affirmative duty to report to their supervisors and/or department heads any violation of this policy of which they are aware.

- Only speak to the media on the City's behalf after first receiving the permission of the Mayor. All media inquiries should be directed to the Mayor's Office.

## **SECTION 700 – CITY EMPLOYMENT POLICIES**

### 701 – TELEPHONES, COMPUTERS, VEHICLES/CITY PROPERTY USE

Employees of the City may be provided City-owned/leased property, equipment or services in connection with their employment with the City and the purchase, rental, lease and use of such shall be subject to rules established by the City. The failure of any employee to follow the rules may result in disciplinary action, including termination of employment. Additionally, employees are responsible for taking reasonable precautions to prevent loss, theft, or vandalism of the City's property, equipment or services.

All City issued telephones are to be used for City business, and personal calls, other than a minimal number of necessary calls as determined by an employee's supervisor, are prohibited. Because transmissions of any kind can be captured by others, discretion is to be used in communicating confidential information across voice or data networks. In addition, City employees have no expectation of privacy in their work premises. All City property is subject to access and inspection at any time by an employee's supervisor, department head, Mayor, Chief Administrative Officer, IT personnel, and other employees or third parties designated by the City. This includes an employee's workstation, all physical storage areas, and all electronic storage areas, including all software and data on all computers, voicemail, text messages and email.

Computer systems are to be used for job-related purposes only. Employees shall be held accountable for usage of their systems and shall keep their keywords and passwords confidential. Because computing systems belong to the City, the City has an obligation to insure their legal and ethical use and has the right to monitor all City users and all messages composed, sent or received. Employees shall not misuse computer systems in any way including, but not limited to, the following: reading the files or data of another employee, unless authorized by the Mayor or Chief Administrative Officer; placing unlawful or unauthorized information on a system; copying or transporting copyrighted material without proper authorization; using objectionable language or images; accessing and/or transmitting non-job-related information such as entertainment sites and messages that are likely to result in the loss of recipient's work or systems; any use that would cause network congestion or disruption or interfere with the work of others; using systems and/or networks in attempts to gain unauthorized access to other networks; and decrypting of system or user passwords. Each employee with computer access must sign an "acceptable use agreement" that details the rules for use of City computers.

City-owned or leased vehicles are provided to certain employees for purposes associated with their positions. Only authorized employees of the City acting in the course of their employment and in connection with the City's business shall operate City vehicles. Only guests of the City and/or other authorized persons shall be carried as passengers or guests in City vehicles. All employees provided or authorized to use and operate City vehicles shall have in their possession a current and valid driver's license

and, where applicable, a current and valid commercial driver's license (CDL). City vehicles shall be operated in a safe and courteous manner and operators shall abide by all rules of the road. All personnel assigned or provided City vehicles shall keep and maintain them in good condition and shall not park them in any location that could cause embarrassment to the City or its employees and/or an increased potential of liability or responsibility on the City. Smoking in City vehicles is prohibited. Any penalties or fines that may be imposed as a result of the operation of such vehicles are the personal responsibility of the operators and not the City or any other City employees. Employees are required to notify their appropriate supervisors as soon as practically possible when a City vehicle has been involved in an incident that may have caused damage or injury to any person or property. For police and fire personnel, additional regulations regarding use of City vehicles are provided in the relevant General Orders and SOPs of those departments.

### 702 – DRUG AND ALCOHOL TESTING

The City of Meridian complies with all federal and state laws that require it to provide its employees with a drug-free workplace. To this end the City has had a Drug and Alcohol Testing Policy since 1994. This policy is attached as Addendum A. The intent of this policy is to establish an effective drug and alcohol testing program for City employees, to offer a helping hand to those employees who need it and to send a clear message that any illegal drug and/or improper alcohol use is incompatible with City service.

Details about the City's Drug and Alcohol Testing Policy are provided in the policy copy attached as Addendum A.

### 703 – HARASSMENT

The City of Meridian is committed to promoting a productive and respectful work environment that is free from workplace harassment including sexual harassment. The City of Meridian prohibits all forms of harassment based on disability, race, religion, national origin, sex, or any other status protected by federal, state, or local law. The policy applies to all employees, including temporary employees, volunteers, customers, vendors and guests whenever or wherever work-related functions take place.

Any employee committing an act of harassment shall face disciplinary action up to and including termination. Any City employee who is a victim of harassment, including sexual harassment, in the workplace must report the incident to his or her immediate supervisor, division or department head, the Equal Opportunity Officer, the Human Resources Director, the Chief Administrative Officer, or the City Attorney. Furthermore, any employee witnessing such action is obligated to report it to one of the above mentioned officials immediately. Failure to report shall result in disciplinary action up to and including termination.

Upon receipt of such information the Equal Opportunity Officer shall initiate a thorough investigation. The results of said investigation shall be submitted to the Chief

Administrative Officer and the Mayor who shall determine the appropriate course of action. If the act of harassment involves a department head, the Chief Administrative Officer, or the Mayor, the City Attorney shall oversee and conduct the investigation.

#### 704 – VIOLENCE IN THE WORKPLACE

The City of Meridian has adopted a zero-tolerance policy regarding violence in the workplace, excluding physical force used in the line of duty by authorized law enforcement officers. Any employee committing an act of violence shall face disciplinary action up to and including termination and/or criminal prosecution. All acts of violence in the workplace shall be reported to the proper authorities immediately by the victim and any witnesses. Failure to do so shall result in disciplinary action up to and including termination.

Violence in the workplace refers to any verbal or physical action that is communicated or reasonably perceived as a threat, harassment, abuse, intimidation or personal contact that produces reasonable fear, causes bodily harm or damage to property.

Any City employee who is a victim of violence or harassment in the workplace must report the incident to his or her immediate supervisor, division or department head, the Equal Opportunity Officer, Police Chief or designee, the Risk Manager, the Chief Administrative Officer or the City Attorney. Furthermore, any employee witnessing such action is obligated to report it to one of the above mentioned officials immediately. Failure to report shall result in disciplinary action up to and including termination.

Upon receipt of such information the Equal Opportunity Officer shall initiate a thorough investigation. The results of said investigation shall be submitted to the Chief Administrative Officer and the Mayor who shall determine the appropriate course of action. If the act of violence or harassment involves a department head, the Chief Administrative Officer or the Mayor, the City Attorney shall oversee and conduct the investigation.

Firearms, knives (excluding pocket knives not over 3" in length) or other items that can be considered deadly weapons are prohibited within or on City facilities unless authorized by the Mayor, the Chief Administrative Officer, the Chief of Police or the Fire Chief.

The City has the right to conduct searches and inspections of employee's person, lockers, baggage, desks, tool boxes, clothing, vehicles, or any other personal property brought onto City property or placed in any area adjacent to City property. Employees are subject to search while in the course and scope of any job duties, while on City property, while on a City jobsite, or while in an area adjacent to any City property or jobsite. Employees do not have a legitimate expectation of privacy in any of the above-described areas. These inspections and searches may be conducted to carry out this and other policies of the City.

The City of Meridian is committed to this policy and will vigorously enforce it. The safety of City employees and the general public is of paramount importance and acts of violence in any form will not be tolerated.

#### 705 – AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT (ADA)

The City of Meridian, in compliance with all provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), prohibits discrimination based on disability in all matters regarding employment. An employee must notify his/her department head or supervisor if a disability would require reasonable accommodations to perform the essential functions of the job. The City will make reasonable accommodations within the guidelines of the ADA as long as those accommodations would not cause an undue hardship on City business and the providing of services.

#### 706 – EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY

The City of Meridian adheres to all federal policies regarding equal employment opportunity. Each employee is assured of equal treatment regardless of race, religion, color, national origin, gender, age or physical or mental disability. Any employee who feels he/she has been subject to discriminatory practices should contact the Equal Opportunity Officer.

#### 707 – EMPLOYMENT OF RELATIVES/NEPOTISM

Nepotism in the workplace occurs when employers favor relatives in making employment decisions. Employees and officials are required to adhere to and abide by all applicable and governing laws, ordinances, and regulations pertaining to nepotism, including Mississippi's Ethics Commission.

Employment in the same department of persons related by blood or marriage is not encouraged, will be maintained at a minimum, and requires prior approval of the Mayor. No immediate family member of a City elected official shall be employed unless such employment existed prior to the official taking office.

A husband and wife shall not be employed in the same division, department or office of the City. When two employees are married to each other while employed by the City, one or the other must be transferred to another division, department or office, or terminated within three (3) months of the marriage.

Approval shall not be granted for the employment, promotion, or transfer of a member of the immediate family of an employee to a position where the relative would be either supervising or influencing the activities of the employee. These family members shall include: father, mother, spouse, son, daughter, grandparent, grandchildren, brother, sister, aunt, uncle, niece, nephew, cousins to the second degree, mother-in-law, father-in-law, or other members of the employee's household.