

Employee Handbook

This Employee Handbook applies to civic department personnel of the City of China Grove, Texas, including the City Secretary, Chief Municipal Court Clerk, Deputy Municipal Court Clerk & Administrative Assistant, Permitting & Code Compliance Officer, and Animal Control Officer. It is designed to guide staff policies, expectations, and procedures for non-police personnel.

Sworn law enforcement personnel operate under separate departmental policies; however, where those policies are silent, the provisions of this Employee Handbook shall apply.

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Section 1: Introduction

1.1 Welcome from the Mayor

Welcome to the City of China Grove, Texas! As Mayor, I want to thank you for your service and dedication to our community. This handbook has been created to serve as a resource for you — our valued city staff — and outlines the policies, expectations, and benefits that support your work. Our goal is to foster a positive, respectful, and efficient workplace where everyone can thrive and contribute to the public good.

1.2 Purpose of the Handbook

This Employee Handbook outlines general policies and procedures that apply to civic employees of the City of China Grove, Texas. It is intended to provide guidance, clarify expectations, and support consistency in how we work. The Police Department maintains a separate handbook and is not governed by this document.

1.3 Scope and Applicability

This handbook applies to the City Secretary, Municipal Court Clerk, Permitting Officer, Animal Control Officer, and Code Compliance Officer, as well as any part-time or seasonal staff working in administrative or field roles under city operations. It does not apply to sworn police personnel.

A. Operational Continuity and Service Delivery

- The City of China Grove is committed to maintaining continuity of municipal operations and minimizing disruptions to public services. Employees are expected to support reasonable documentation, cross-training, knowledge sharing, process improvement, and continuity planning efforts necessary to maintain effective municipal operations.
- Employees may be assigned temporary duties, support responsibilities, or administrative functions outside their normal assignments when necessary to maintain continuity of operations, comply with legal requirements, or address staffing shortages, provided such assignments are consistent with applicable law and the employee's qualifications and abilities.

1.4 At-Will Employment Disclaimer

All employment with the City of China Grove, Tx is "at-will," unless otherwise specified by employment contract or state statute. This means that either the employee or the City may terminate employment at any time, with or without cause or notice, in accordance with applicable laws.

1.5 Equal Employment Opportunity Statement

The City is an equal opportunity employer and does not discriminate in any employment practice on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, veteran status, or any other category protected by law.

1.6 Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Compliance

In compliance with the ADA, the City will provide reasonable accommodations to qualified employees or applicants with disabilities, unless doing so would cause undue hardship. Employees should direct accommodation requests to the Mayor.

1.7 Non-Discrimination and Anti-Harassment Policy

The City is committed to a workplace free of harassment, discrimination, and retaliation. Harassment of any kind — verbal, physical, or visual — will not be tolerated. Employees are encouraged to report concerns through the complaint and grievance procedures outlined in Sections 5.10 and 9 of this handbook.

Section 2: Employment Policies

2.1 Hiring and Employment Classification

All hiring decisions are made in accordance with applicable laws and based on qualifications, experience, and the needs of the City. Employees may be classified as:

- Full-Time: Employees are regularly scheduled to work 32 hours per week.
- Part-Time: Employees are regularly scheduled to work up to 20 hours per week.
- Temporary or Seasonal: Employees hired for a specific project or time-limited task.
- Exempt vs. Non-Exempt classifications will be determined based on Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) guidelines.

2.2 Job Descriptions and Responsibilities (see Appendix B for Job Descriptions)

Each position covered by this handbook has a written job description that outlines essential duties, reporting structure, and qualifications. These documents help clarify expectations and guide performance evaluations. Job descriptions may be updated from time to time to reflect organizational needs.

Employees are expected to perform duties assigned within their job description as well as reasonable administrative, continuity, documentation, training, or operational support duties assigned by the Mayor.

Refer to Appendix B for each Job Description.

2.3 Bonding Requirement for Key Officials

As a best practice and in the interest of financial integrity and public trust, the City of China Grove requires that the City Secretary, Permitting Officer, Municipal Court Clerks, and the Mayor be bonded. These individuals are entrusted with handling significant financial transactions, including the collection of payments, oversight of public funds, issuance of permits, and execution of financial documents on behalf of the City. Bonding serves as a protective measure for the City, ensuring accountability and providing financial recourse in the event of error, negligence, or misconduct. The cost of the bonds shall be borne by the City, and proof of bonding must be maintained in the personnel files of each applicable position.

2.4 Introductory/Probationary and Termination

All new employees are subject to an introductory probationary period of not less than ninety (90) days and not more than one hundred eighty (180) days from their date of hire. The specific probationary period shall be established by the Mayor at the time of hire based upon the position, training requirements, operational needs, and other relevant factors. During this period, the City evaluates the employee's performance, conduct, professionalism, reliability, and suitability for continued employment.

At the conclusion of the probationary period, employment may be:

- Continued,
- Extended for an additional probationary term, or
- Terminated if performance or conduct does not meet expectations.
- Termination at the end of the probationary period does not require cause and may occur without prior disciplinary action.

2.5 Performance Evaluations

City staff will receive a written performance evaluation at least once per year, conducted by the Mayor. Evaluations are intended to recognize strengths, identify areas for improvement, and set goals for professional development.

Performance evaluations are a key part of an employee's personnel record. The City of China Grove shall retain these documents in accordance with state guidelines as follows:

During Employment: All annual performance evaluations and related documentation shall be maintained in the employee's official personnel file for the duration of their employment.

After Separation: Upon an employee's resignation, termination, or retirement, the City shall retain the complete personnel file—including all performance reviews—for a minimum of five (5) years from the date of separation, in accordance with the Texas State Library and Archives Commission Retention Schedule (GR1040-20).

This policy supports transparency, compliance, and accurate employment history documentation.

2.6 Promotions, Transfers, and Reassignments

The Mayor has the authority to authorize promotions, reassignments and transfers of nonpolice, nonappointed staff as deemed necessary for effective administration of City operations. These actions do not require approval by the City Council, except where a position is specifically designated by ordinance or policy as Council approved. Personnel actions that result in salary changes beyond approved budget thresholds or create new positions must be presented to Council for approval.

Department heads will recommend staff actions to the Mayor, including job classification changes, salary adjustments within budget, and transfers across departments. The Mayor will review recommendations and implement changes if approved. All personnel changes will be reported to the Council as part of regular staff updates without requiring separate Council action.

Texas Legal Context

Under Texas Local Government Code § 22.042, the Mayor serves as the chief executive officer of a Type A general-law municipality and is responsible for ensuring that municipal laws and ordinances are faithfully executed. In the City of China Grove's Mayor-Council form of government, and subject to applicable law and City Council policy, the Mayor oversees the supervision and coordination of City staff and municipal operations. Salary changes beyond approved budget limits and the creation of new positions remain subject to City Council approval.

2.7 Separation of Employment

Employment may end due to resignation, retirement, layoff, or termination. Employees are requested to provide at least two weeks' written notice of voluntary resignation. Exit procedures will include returning City property, final timesheet submission, and participation in an exit interview.

2.8 Exit Interviews (see Appendix I for Exit Interview Template)

Departing employees will be invited to participate in an exit interview with the Mayor or designated representative. Feedback provided during the interview helps identify opportunities to improve the workplace and employee experience.

Section 3: Work Hours, Pay, and Attendance

3.1 Work Schedule and Office Hours

Standard City business hours are 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Thursday. Employees are expected to perform their duties at City facilities during scheduled working hours unless otherwise directed by the Mayor.

3.2 Municipal Court Payment Window Hours

The Municipal Court payment window operates on a set schedule to provide consistent service to the public.

The payment window shall be open during the following hours:

- Monday through Thursday: 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

The payment window shall be closed on:

- Friday through Sunday
- All City-recognized holidays

These hours are established to support efficient court operations and may be adjusted as necessary by the Mayor to meet operational needs or public demand.

3.3 Timekeeping and Payroll

Payroll is processed on a bi-weekly basis, and paydays normally occur every other Friday. Payroll administration, timekeeping systems, and payroll processing functions may be performed by authorized City employees, contracted service providers, or approved payroll systems under the oversight of the Mayor and in accordance with established internal control procedures.

Employees are responsible for submitting accurate and timely timesheets, leave requests, and supporting documentation. Failure to accurately report hours worked, leave used, or other payroll-related information may result in disciplinary action.

Nothing in this policy shall be construed as authorizing compensation in excess of amounts approved by the City Council through the annual budget and compensation plan.

3.4 Overtime and Compensatory Time

All overtime must be approved in advance by the Mayor. Unauthorized overtime will result in disciplinary action, but employees will still be paid for hours worked.

Non-exempt employees will be compensated at one-and-a-half times their regular rate for all hours worked beyond 40 hours in a workweek, in accordance with the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA). With prior approval, compensatory time off may be granted in lieu of overtime pay. (See Appendix J: FLSA and Texas Local Government Code § 142.0015)

3.5 Attendance and Tardiness Policy

Reliable attendance is essential to city operations. Employees are expected to report to work on time each scheduled day. If an employee will be late or absent, they must notify the Mayor as early as possible, preferably before the start of the workday. Excessive unexcused absences or tardiness may result in disciplinary action.

Employees are expected to cooperate with reasonable continuity, cross-training, and temporary coverage assignments necessary to maintain municipal operations during employee absences, staffing shortages, emergencies, or other operational disruptions.

3.6 Meal and Rest Breaks

Employees working more than six (6) hours in a day should take a total of up to one (1) hour of break time, consisting of a 30-minute unpaid meal break and two 15-minute paid rest breaks. Breaks may be taken in any order during the workday as workload permits.

Breaks are intended to support employee well-being and productivity and should not be routinely skipped in order to shorten the workday or leave early.

In limited circumstances, an employee may request approval from the Mayor to modify or forgo scheduled break periods due to operational needs or personal circumstances. Any such modification must receive prior approval from the Mayor.

Employees are encouraged to take their breaks away from their primary workstations whenever practical.

3.7 On-Call Expectations (If Applicable)

Some positions, such as Animal Control or Code Compliance, may occasionally require after-hours or weekend on-call availability. These expectations will be communicated in advance and compensated according to the City's on-call or standby policy if one is in place.

Section 4: Benefits and Leave

4.1 Holidays

The City observes the following paid holidays each calendar year:

New Year's Day – January 1

Martin Luther King, Jr. Day – Third Monday in January

Presidents' Day – Third Monday in February

Memorial Day – Last Monday in May

Juneteenth National Independence Day – June 19

Independence Day – July 4

Indigenous Peoples' Day (Columbus Day) — Second Monday in October

Veterans Day – November 11

Thanksgiving – Fourth Thursday in November

Christmas Eve – December 24

Christmas Day – December 25

4.2 Vacation Leave

The City provides paid vacation after one year of service. Employed 6 months – 1 year receive 4 days of vacation. Employed 1 - 2 years receive 8 days of vacation. Employed 3 – 5 years receive 12 days of vacation. Employed 6 – 10 years receive 16 days of vacation. Employed more than 10 years 20 days of vacation.

Unused vacation leave does not roll over year to year and has no cash value upon separation. Vacation leave may not be transferred between employees.

4.3 Sick Leave & Accrual Timing

The City of China Grove offers limited paid sick leave to support employee health and minimize the spread of illness in the workplace. Employees regularly scheduled to work 32 hours per week shall receive eight (8) days of paid sick leave each calendar year. Sick leave may be used for the employee's personal illness or injury, medical appointments, or to care for an immediate family member.

Employees should provide **to the Mayor** reasonable notice of anticipated absences whenever possible to support continuity of operations and scheduling of temporary coverage.

Sick leave usage must be reported as early as possible and is subject to **approval by the Mayor**. Sick leave may be used only after it has been accrued and approved in accordance with City policy. Employees may not use sick leave in advance of accrual.

Unused sick leave does not roll over year to year and has no cash value upon separation. Sick leave may not be transferred between employees. Misuse of sick leave may result in disciplinary action. This policy is reviewed annually and is subject to change based on budget and operational needs.

4.4 Family and Medical Leave

FMLA (See Appendix J: 29 U.S. Code § 2611)

Although the City of China Grove is classified as a covered public employer under the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA), employees of the City are currently not eligible for FMLA leave. This is because FMLA eligibility requires the employer to have 50 or more employees within a 75-mile radius, a threshold the City does not meet at this time. As a result, while the City recognizes the provisions of FMLA, its employees are not entitled to FMLA leave protections under federal law. Should the City's workforce expand to meet the eligibility threshold, this policy will be revised accordingly. Discretionary unpaid medical or personal leave may be granted by the Mayor on a case-by-case basis.

4.5 Bereavement Leave

The City of China Grove recognizes that the loss of a loved one can be a difficult time and supports employees in managing their personal needs during such events. The City provides up to three (3) workdays of paid bereavement leave in the event of the death of an immediate family member (spouse, child, parent, sibling, grandparent, or grandchild).

Bereavement leave must be taken within a reasonable time of the loss, is subject to Mayoral approval, and may require appropriate documentation. Bereavement leave may be used only in accordance with this policy and is limited to the amount of leave authorized herein. Bereavement leave may not be advanced beyond the limits established by this policy.

Employees may request additional time off using accrued compensatory time (if available) or unpaid time.

Sick leave may not be used for Bereavement Leave unless the absence is due to illness and may require appropriate documentation.

The City will reassess FMLA eligibility annually or upon workforce expansion to ensure compliance and consider offering comparable leave as needed.

4.6 Jury Duty and Court Appearances

The City of China Grove supports civic responsibility and will provide leave to employees who are summoned for jury service. Employees must notify the Mayor as early as possible and provide a copy of the jury summons and verification of jury service.

Employees will be allowed time off to serve on a jury without penalty. Paid jury duty leave will be provided for scheduled work hours missed but shall not result in total compensation exceeding the employee's annual budgeted salary.

If jury service results in extended absence or would cause total compensation to exceed the budgeted amount, the time may be taken as unpaid leave or, if available, covered using accrued compensatory time.

Sick leave may not be used for jury duty unless the absence is due to illness.

4.7 Military Leave

The City of China Grove supports employees who serve in the military, whether in the Texas Military Forces or the United States Armed Forces.

In accordance with Texas Government Code § 437.202, employees who are members of the Texas National Guard, Texas State Guard, or other Texas Military Forces are entitled to up to 15 workdays of paid military leave per fiscal year (October 1– September 30) for training or active duty under state orders. An additional 7 workdays of paid leave may be granted if called to active state duty during a declared disaster. This leave will not be deducted from other accrued leave and shall not result in compensation exceeding the employee's annual budgeted salary. (see Appendix J for statutory references)

Employees called to service in the United States Armed Forces or Reserve components are covered by the federal Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA). While military leave for federal service is unpaid, employees may use available compensatory time. Upon timely return from service, employees are entitled to reinstatement with full seniority and benefits in accordance with USERRA.

Documentation of military orders will be required. This policy is subject to state and federal law and may be updated as applicable regulations change.

Military leave is provided as required by law; however, the use of paid military leave shall not result in total compensation exceeding the employee's annual budgeted salary. If the combination of military leave and other paid leave (e.g., sick leave, jury duty, bereavement) is projected to exceed the employee's total salary allocation, the City may require a portion of military leave to be taken as unpaid or delay payment until within budget. The City will work with the employee to ensure compliance with all applicable laws while maintaining fiscal responsibility.

4.8 Retirement Benefits – Texas Municipal Retirement System (TMRS)

The City of China Grove participates in the Texas Municipal Retirement System (TMRS) to provide retirement benefits for eligible employees. Participation is mandatory for all employees who meet eligibility requirements under TMRS rules. Employees contribute a set percentage of their gross compensation each pay period, and the City matches those contributions at the rate established by the City's TMRS plan.

TMRS provides retirement, disability, and death benefits, with vesting and retirement eligibility based on a combination of age and years of credited service. Employees can monitor their account and benefits through the TMRS Member Portal at my.tmrs.com

This is the City's only retirement benefit. No other pension, 401(k), or deferred compensation plan is offered at this time.

4.9 Operational Continuity, Documentation, and Knowledge Transfer

The City of China Grove recognizes that continuity of operations is essential to maintaining public services and meeting legal obligations. Employees are expected to maintain reasonable documentation of processes, records, procedures, and work activities necessary to support continuity of operations.

Employees may be asked to assist with process documentation, cross-training activities, knowledge transfer efforts, workflow development, records organization, technology implementation, or other operational improvement initiatives designed to strengthen the City's ability to maintain services during staffing changes, employee absences, emergencies, or organizational transitions.

Employees shall cooperate with reasonable requests related to continuity planning, documentation, and operational resiliency efforts.

4.10 Coordination with Contracted Service Providers

The City may utilize contractors, consultants, auditors, attorneys, financial service providers, technology vendors, and other professional service providers to support municipal operations.

Employees are expected to cooperate with authorized service providers and provide information, records, documentation, or operational support that is reasonably necessary for the performance of approved services.

All requests from service providers shall be coordinated through appropriate City management channels. Employees shall continue to follow City policies regarding confidentiality, records retention, cybersecurity, and protection of sensitive information when working with external providers.

Section 5: Code of Conduct and Ethics

5.1 Standards of Conduct

City employees are expected to demonstrate professionalism, integrity, and courtesy in all interactions.

Employees must:

- Carry out duties responsibly and impartially
- Treat coworkers, officials, and the public with respect
- Refrain from using their position for personal gain
- Follow all applicable federal, state, and local laws
- Support operational continuity, documentation, knowledge sharing, and process improvement efforts necessary to maintain effective municipal services

5.2 Conflicts of Interest

Employees must avoid any activity that conflicts with the interests of the City or could compromise impartiality.

This includes:

- Using City resources for personal benefit
- Participating in decisions where there is a personal or financial interest
- Accepting gifts, services, or benefits that could influence official actions
- Potential conflicts must be disclosed in writing to the Mayor for review.

5.3 Confidentiality

Employees may have access to sensitive or confidential information. This information must not be shared with unauthorized individuals or used for personal advantage. Breaches of confidentiality may result in disciplinary action, including termination.

Employees shall share operational information, records, procedures, and documentation with authorized City personnel and approved service providers when necessary to support continuity of operations, records management, financial administration, audit requirements, training, or other legitimate City purposes. Confidentiality requirements do not prohibit appropriate internal knowledge transfer or continuity planning activities authorized by the City.

5.4 Use of City Property

City equipment, vehicles, tools, and supplies must be used only for official business, unless specifically authorized. Employees are expected to maintain City property with care and report any damage, loss, or misuse immediately.

5.5 Political Activity and Public Statements

- Employees may engage in political activity (See Appendix J: Texas Election Code § 255.003) on their own time and as private citizens but must not:
- Use their official position to influence an election or campaign
- Engage in political activity (See Appendix J: Texas Election Code § 255.003) while on duty or using City resources
- Represent personal opinions as official City policy
- Public statements on behalf of the City must be coordinated with the Mayor.

5.6 Dress Code and Appearance

Employees are expected to dress in business casual attire appropriate to their job duties and maintain a neat, professional appearance at all times. Logo t-shirts (except China Grove), shorts, and flip-flops are not permitted during working hours.

Specific dress expectations may vary by department (e.g., uniforms or field-appropriate clothing for Code Compliance or Animal Control staff). When representing the City in Municipal Court or other formal proceedings, employees must wear professional business attire, such as slacks or skirts with collared shirts, jackets, or equivalent clothing that reflects the formality of the setting.

The final determination of appropriate dress rests with the Mayor or the employee's department head. Employees may be asked to return home and change if attire is deemed inappropriate for City duties.

5.7 Social Media Guidelines

Employees should exercise good judgment and professionalism when using social media. Personal social media activity that discloses confidential information, violates City policy, interferes with job performance, creates a conflict of interest, or creates the appearance of official City endorsement may result in disciplinary action.

Employees shall not represent personal opinions as official City positions and shall not use City logos, seals, photographs, or other official City branding on personal social media accounts without written authorization.

Employees are required to comply with the City's Social Media Policy contained in **Appendix G-2**, which provides additional guidance regarding official City accounts, use of City resources, political activity, and employee responsibilities.

5.8 Drug-Free Workplace Policy

The City maintains a drug-free workplace. The use, possession, sale, or being under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs while on duty or on City premises is strictly prohibited. Violations may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

5.9 Smoking and Tobacco Use

In order to maintain a healthy and professional environment for employees and the public, smoking and use of tobacco products (including e-cigarettes and vaping devices) is permitted only in designated outdoor areas on City property, outside of all buildings and at least 20 feet away from all entrances, windows, and ventilation systems.

There are no designated smoking areas indoors. Employees may use scheduled break times to smoke, provided they do not exceed break durations or interfere with job responsibilities. Smoking during working hours must occur in accordance with this policy.

The City prohibits the use of tobacco products—including cigarettes, e-cigarettes, and chewing tobacco—in city-owned vehicles at all times.

Violation of this policy may result in progressive disciplinary action.

5.10 Harassment and Discrimination Policy

A. Employee Harassment

The City of China Grove maintains a zero-tolerance policy toward any form of workplace harassment or discrimination, including but not limited to harassment based on race, color, religion, sex (including pregnancy, sexual orientation, or gender identity), national origin, age, disability, or veteran status.

This policy applies to all employees, officials, contractors, and members of the public who interact with City staff. Harassment may include verbal, physical, or visual conduct that creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment.

Any employee who believes they have been subjected to harassment or witnessed inappropriate conduct must promptly report it to the Mayor. Reports will be investigated confidentially to the extent possible and without retaliation. Violations of this policy may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

B. Employee Complaints Involving the Mayor

The City encourages prompt communication and resolution of workplace concerns whenever practical.

When an employee's concern involves the Mayor and relates primarily to day-to-day management issues, communication concerns, workload disputes, supervisory practices, or other operational matters, the employee is encouraged to first discuss the concern directly with the Mayor and provide any supporting information or documentation relevant to the concern.

If the matter is not resolved, the employee may request review by the Mayor Pro-Tem. The Mayor and Mayor Pro-Tem may meet with the employee in an effort to resolve the concern informally and identify appropriate corrective actions if needed.

If the employee alleges harassment, discrimination, retaliation, ethics violations, abuse of authority, unlawful conduct, or other serious misconduct by the Mayor, or if the matter cannot be resolved through the informal process described above, the employee may report the matter directly to the Mayor Pro-Tem or City Council for review.

The Mayor Pro-Tem may conduct an initial review to determine whether the matter appears to involve a workplace concern suitable for informal resolution, a policy matter requiring Council awareness, or an allegation warranting formal review by the City Council.

The City Council may, at its discretion, authorize consultation with the City Attorney, an outside investigator, or other appropriate resources if additional review is warranted.

Nothing in this policy shall require an employee to report allegations of unlawful conduct, harassment, discrimination, or retaliation directly to the Mayor before seeking review through the Mayor Pro-Tem or City Council.

C. False Malicious Accusations

The City also maintains a zero-tolerance stance toward knowingly false or malicious accusations of harassment or discrimination. While good-faith reports are always protected, making a deliberately false or malicious report undermines the integrity of this policy and may itself result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

This policy is in accordance with Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Texas Labor Code Chapter 21, and applicable federal and state laws.

5.11 Workplace Violence Prevention

Violence, threats, intimidation, or harassment of any kind will not be tolerated. Employees must report any concerns about potential workplace violence to the Mayor immediately. All reports will be taken seriously and investigated promptly.

Section 6 – Administrative Policies

The Mayor serves as the chief executive officer of the City and is responsible for the supervision and coordination of City employees and municipal operations, subject to applicable law and City Council policy. Operational procedures, communication standards, and technology coordination practices may be issued by the Mayor as administrative procedures and updated from time to time as needed to support City operations. These administrative procedures are intended to guide day-to-day operations and may be revised as necessary, provided they remain consistent with City policy and applicable law.

6.1 Investment Oversight

The City of China Grove appoints an Investment Officer to oversee the prudent management of City financial assets in accordance with the **Texas Public Funds Investment Act (Government Code Chapter 2256)**.

The Investment Officer develops and monitors the City's investment program and ensures that City funds are invested only in authorized instruments in accordance with the City's adopted investment policy.

The Investment Officer prepares quarterly investment reports for review by City Council as required by state law and participates in the annual review of the City's investment policy.

Training requirements for the Investment Officer shall comply with the Public Funds Investment Act.

6.2 Financial Services Oversight

The City Secretary coordinates documentation related to financial services contracts, reporting requirements, audit materials, and communications with authorized financial service providers.

The Mayor oversees this review process and presents recommendations to the City Council when contracts require renewal or reconsideration.

The City Secretary maintains documentation related to financial services contracts, reporting requirements, and audit materials.

The City Council is responsible for approving the City's investment policy, authorizing financial service contracts, and receiving required financial reports.

6.3 Financial Operations, Reconciliation, and Internal Controls

The City of China Grove utilizes a combination of City personnel, contracted financial service providers, independent auditors, financial institutions, and other authorized resources to support financial operations and maintain appropriate internal controls.

Financial operations may include payroll administration, accounts payable processing, financial reporting, reconciliation support, budgeting support, audit preparation, and other financial management functions approved by the City Council.

The City Secretary serves as the City's primary administrative coordinator for financial operations and is responsible for coordinating financial records, supporting financial workflows, facilitating communications among City personnel and authorized service providers, and ensuring required documentation is properly maintained.

Contracted financial service providers may perform reconciliation activities, reporting support, payroll administration, workflow management, and other financial services as authorized by agreement.

The Mayor shall maintain oversight of financial operations and support implementation of internal control measures designed to promote accountability, transparency, continuity of operations, and protection of public funds.

The use of contracted service providers does not replace the City's independent annual audit or the responsibilities of City officials and employees. Rather, these services serve as an additional operational resource designed to strengthen financial administration, continuity, and reporting accuracy.

6.4 Public Works Planning and Project Management

The City maintains a systematic process for evaluating and planning public works projects, including street maintenance and drainage improvements.

The Mayor or a designated representative may coordinate with the City Engineer to periodically assess street conditions and infrastructure needs. Project recommendations may be presented to City Council for prioritization and consideration during the annual budgeting process.

City Council determines which projects will be funded based on available resources and community priorities.

Once projects are approved and funded, the Mayor may designate a project manager to coordinate implementation and provide progress updates to City Council.

6.5 Records Management and Public Information

City employees are responsible for maintaining accurate and complete records in accordance with City policy and applicable state law.

All records created or received in the course of City business are the property of the City and may be subject to disclosure under the **Texas Public Information Act**.

Requests for public records must be referred to the City Secretary for processing in accordance with statutory requirements.

Employees shall ensure that official records, including electronic communications related to City business, are maintained and preserved in accordance with applicable records retention schedules.

Employees shall cooperate with records management, continuity planning, documentation, and public information processes established by the City. Employees may be required to organize records, document procedures, support records retention efforts, or assist with continuity planning activities necessary to maintain uninterrupted municipal operations and compliance with applicable law.

6.6 Purchasing and Procurement

All purchases made on behalf of the City must comply with the City's purchasing procedures and approved budget.

Employees may not make purchases or commit City funds without prior authorization from the Mayor or other authorized official.

Receipts, invoices, and purchase documentation must be submitted promptly and must include the appropriate budget GL code to support financial accountability and recordkeeping.

Purchasing activities shall comply with applicable City ordinances, internal control procedures, and administrative purchasing authority established by the City Council.

6.7 Use of City Vehicles and Equipment

City vehicles and equipment are provided for official City business only.

Employees operating City vehicles must possess a valid driver's license and comply with all applicable traffic laws and safety requirements.

City vehicles and equipment must be secured when not in use and maintained responsibly.

Personal use of City vehicles or equipment is prohibited unless specifically authorized in writing by the Mayor.

Any accidents, damage, or safety concerns must be reported immediately.

6.8 Travel and Expense Reimbursement

City-related travel must be approved in advance by the Mayor.

Reimbursable expenses may include mileage, lodging, meals, and registration fees associated with approved training, conferences, or official business.

To receive reimbursement, employees must submit receipts and required documentation within ten business days following completion of travel.

Reimbursements must comply with applicable City policies and approved budget limits.

6.9 Communication and Technology Use

City technology resources, including computers, software, and email systems, are provided for official City business.

Employees are expected to use these resources responsibly, safeguard passwords and login credentials, and avoid installing unauthorized software.

Electronic communications created or transmitted in the course of City business may be subject to monitoring and may constitute public records under the Texas Public Information Act.

Confidential or sensitive City information may not be stored or transmitted on personal devices without prior written authorization from the Mayor.

Employees may be required to utilize City-approved technology systems, cloud-based platforms, payroll systems, financial management systems, document repositories, workflow tools, or other technology resources implemented by the City to support operational continuity, records management, financial administration, cybersecurity, and service delivery.

6.10 Regulatory Compliance and Administrative Procedures

Certain operational compliance responsibilities of the City—including environmental reporting, regulatory filings, and recurring administrative deadlines—are maintained in the City's Administrative Procedures and Desk Procedure documents rather than within this Employee Handbook.

These materials include procedures related to environmental compliance, MS4 stormwater program requirements, state reporting obligations, and annual municipal administrative cycles such as budgeting and regulatory filings.

The relocation of these procedures ensures that operational compliance responsibilities remain clearly documented and updated as working administrative guidance while allowing the Employee Handbook to remain focused on employee policies, conduct standards, and organizational structure.

6.11 Cybersecurity and Data Protection

The City of China Grove recognizes that cybersecurity is essential to protecting public information, maintaining operational continuity, and safeguarding City systems from unauthorized access or disruption.

All employees share responsibility for protecting City technology, data, and communications systems.

A. Required Cybersecurity Training

All employees must complete **annual cybersecurity awareness training** as assigned by the City. Training may include topics such as:

- Phishing and email security awareness
- Password and credential protection
- Safe internet and software usage
- Protection of sensitive and confidential information
- Recognition and reporting of suspicious activity

New employees must complete initial cybersecurity training within a reasonable time after hire.

B. Acceptable Security Practices

Employees are expected to:

- Use strong passwords and keep login credentials confidential
- Not share accounts or passwords with others
- Lock or secure devices when unattended
- Avoid accessing City systems on unsecured public networks unless authorized
- Refrain from installing unauthorized software or applications
- Use only approved City systems for conducting official business

C. Device Use and Access Restrictions

City technology systems are intended to be accessed and used within authorized City facilities and through approved City equipment.

- Remote access to City systems is not permitted unless expressly authorized by the Mayor for a specific operational need.
- Employees may not conduct City business using personal email accounts, personal cloud storage, or unauthorized applications.
- Confidential or sensitive City information may not be stored on personal devices, external drives, or unapproved systems.
- Any City-issued device that is lost, stolen, or compromised must be reported immediately.

These requirements are intended to protect City data, ensure compliance with public records laws, and reduce the risk of unauthorized access or data loss.

D. Email and Phishing Awareness

Employees must exercise caution when opening emails, attachments, or links from unknown or unexpected sources.

Suspicious emails, phishing attempts, or unusual system activity must be reported immediately.

E. Data Protection and Confidential Information

Employees must protect all City data, including:

- Personnel records
- Financial information
- Court or legal records
- Sensitive infrastructure or operational information

Confidential information may only be accessed, used, or shared for legitimate City purposes and in accordance with City policy and applicable law.

F. Incident Reporting

Any suspected cybersecurity incident, including but not limited to:

- Phishing attempts
- Unauthorized access
- Lost or stolen devices
- Data breaches or suspected data exposure must be reported immediately to the Mayor or designated technology contact.
- Prompt reporting is critical to protecting City systems and may reduce the impact of a security incident.
- Employees shall also cooperate with authorized technology vendors, cybersecurity consultants, auditors, and other approved service providers responding to cybersecurity incidents, system disruptions, data recovery efforts, or security investigations.

G. Enforcement

Failure to comply with cybersecurity policies or training requirements may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

6.12 Employee Training and Professional Development

The City of China Grove requires employees to complete training necessary to perform their assigned duties safely, effectively, and in compliance with applicable laws and regulations.

Training requirements may be updated administratively as needed to maintain compliance with applicable laws, regulatory requirements, and operational needs without requiring formal amendment to this handbook.

A. General Training Requirements

All employees may be required to complete general training applicable to City operations, including but not limited to:

- Cybersecurity awareness
- Workplace conduct and ethics
- Safety and risk management
- Regulatory compliance (as applicable)
- Operational continuity, records management, or documentation training as assigned

B. Position-Specific Training

Certain positions require specialized training, certifications, or continuing education based on job responsibilities.

Examples may include:

- **Municipal Court Personnel:** Court clerk certification, judicial process training
- **Permitting / Code Compliance:** Building codes, zoning, and enforcement training
- **Animal Control:** State-required Animal Control Officer (ACO) training
- **Financial Roles (City Secretary / Investment Officer):** Public Funds Investment Act training
- **Field Staff:** Safety, equipment operation, or environmental compliance (e.g., MS4)

Specific training requirements are defined in:

- Official job descriptions (Appendix B), and/or

- Applicable state law or regulatory requirements

C. Assignment and Approval of Training

The Mayor is responsible for:

- Assigning required training
- Approving training attendance
- Ensuring training aligns with operational needs and budget

D. Documentation and Recordkeeping

All required training must be documented using the City's Training and Compliance Log.

Training records shall:

- Be maintained in the employee's personnel file or designated system
- Be available for audit, compliance review, or Council reporting if required

E. Failure to Complete Required Training

Failure to complete assigned or required training may result in:

- Removal from certain duties
- Disciplinary action, up to and including termination

Section 7 – Departmental Roles and Responsibilities

This section provides a general overview of key staff roles within the City of China Grove. Detailed duties, qualifications, and training requirements for each position are contained in the official job descriptions approved by the City.

Assignment of duties and organizational responsibilities remains under the administrative direction of the Mayor. The descriptions contained in this section are intended to provide general guidance and do not limit the Mayor's authority to assign duties, coordinate workloads, or adjust operational responsibilities as necessary for the efficient operation of City government.

The City may utilize contractors, consultants, professional service providers, and other authorized resources to support municipal operations. Employees are expected to cooperate with these resources when assigned responsibilities require such coordination.

7.1 City Secretary

The City Secretary serves as the official records custodian for the City and provides administrative support to the Mayor and City Council.

Responsibilities include maintaining official municipal records, coordinating City elections, administering records retention requirements, managing public information requests, and maintaining official documentation of City Council actions.

The City Secretary posts City Council meeting agendas in compliance with the Texas Open Meetings Act and maintains official minutes, ordinances, and resolutions.

The City Secretary also coordinates personnel documentation, financial recordkeeping support, audit documentation, communications with authorized service providers, and supports transparency through proper filing and publication of municipal records.

7.2 Municipal Court Administration

Municipal Court operations are managed by the **Chief Municipal Court Clerk**, who oversees court records, case processing, docket preparation, and reporting requirements required by state law.

The Chief Clerk also serves as the **Juvenile Case Manager**, coordinating juvenile case monitoring, compliance programs, and related reporting in accordance with state law.

Court personnel coordinate with the Presiding Municipal Judge, Mayor, law enforcement, and other agencies to ensure the fair and efficient administration of justice.

7.3 Deputy Municipal Clerk & Administrative Assistant

The Deputy Municipal Clerk & Administrative Assistant provides cross-departmental administrative support for City Hall operations.

This position assists with Municipal Court administrative tasks, supports records and ordinance organization, and provides general administrative assistance to the Mayor, City Secretary, and department heads.

The position also serves as a public interface for City Hall by assisting residents, answering phones, greeting visitors, and coordinating with vendors supporting the City website and official message board.

The Deputy Municipal Clerk & Administrative Assistant reports to the Mayor for supervision and workload coordination. Functional direction may be provided by department heads depending on the task being performed.

This position provides administrative and coordination support only and does not exercise supervisory or statutory authority over court operations, records custody, or enforcement activities.

The Deputy Municipal Clerk & Administrative Assistant may also support continuity planning, records organization, documentation projects, training initiatives, and temporary operational assignments necessary to maintain uninterrupted municipal services during staffing transitions, employee absences, or other operational needs.

7.4 Permitting and Code Compliance

The Permitting and Code Compliance function administers the City's permitting processes and enforces municipal ordinances related to zoning, signage, development, and property maintenance.

The Permitting & Code Compliance Officer processes permit applications, conducts inspections, investigates complaints, and works with residents and contractors to ensure compliance with City ordinances and applicable regulations.

The officer may provide periodic activity updates to the Mayor to support communication with City Council regarding development trends and compliance matters.

7.5 Animal Control

Animal Control services are responsible for enforcing City ordinances related to animal welfare, public safety, and responsible animal ownership.

The Animal Control Officer responds to service calls, investigates complaints, safely captures and transports animals when necessary, and works with shelters, veterinarians, and other organizations to ensure humane treatment of animals.

The officer also maintains records of service calls, citations, and animal dispositions and may provide periodic reports regarding animal control activity.

Section 8: Safety and Risk Management

8.1 General Workplace Safety

The City of China Grove, Tx is committed to providing a safe and healthy work environment for all employees. Staff are expected to:

- Follow all safety guidelines and training procedures
- Use protective equipment when required
- Report unsafe conditions or hazards immediately
- Operate vehicles, tools, and equipment responsibly

Department heads may provide job-specific safety instructions, especially for field roles such as Animal Control and Code Compliance.

8.2 Reporting Injuries and Incidents

All work-related injuries, accidents, or near misses must be reported immediately to the Mayor regardless of severity. A written incident report must be completed within 24 hours.

The City will ensure appropriate follow-up, medical care, and reporting to the Texas Department of Insurance (if applicable).

8.3 Emergency Procedures

Employees must be familiar with basic emergency procedures for:

- Fire evacuation
- Severe weather or shelter-in-place
- Medical emergencies
- Workplace violence or active threat

The City will conduct periodic drills and ensure that emergency contact numbers and exit plans are posted in each facility.

8.4 Incident and Complaint Reporting

Employees are encouraged to report to the Mayor any unsafe behavior, threats, or potential risks they observe— whether physical, environmental, or behavioral — as soon as possible. Reports may be made confidentially and without fear of retaliation.

If the issue involves the Mayor, the reporting individual may utilize the complaint procedures established in Section 5.10 of this handbook.

Section 9: Complaint and Grievance Procedures

9.1 Employee Complaint Process

The City encourages open communication and resolution of concerns at the lowest level possible. If an employee has a workplace concern or disagreement, the following steps should be taken:

- Informal Discussion: Discuss the concern directly with the Mayor, if appropriate.

- Written Complaint: If the issue is not resolved, submit a written complaint outlining the concern and desired resolution to the Mayor.
- Review and Follow-Up: The Mayor will review the complaint and respond within a reasonable time, typically within 10 business days. In some cases, an outside party may be consulted.
- If the complaint involves the Mayor, the procedures established in Section 5.10 shall apply.

9.2 Harassment Complaint Process

Harassment of any kind is strictly prohibited. Employees who believe they have been subjected to harassment, discrimination, or retaliation should report the behavior immediately.

Reports may be made verbally or in writing in accordance with the reporting procedures established in Section 5.10 and other applicable City policies. All complaints will be taken seriously and investigated promptly and confidentially to the extent possible. Retaliation against employees who file complaints or participate in investigations is strictly prohibited.

The City also maintains a zero-tolerance stance toward knowingly false or malicious complaints of harassment, discrimination, or retaliation. While good-faith complaints are always protected, making a deliberately false or malicious complaint undermines this process and may itself result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

Appropriate corrective action will be taken if a violation is found.

9.3 Appeals and Disciplinary Review

Employees who wish to appeal disciplinary actions (such as written reprimands, suspensions, or termination) may submit a written appeal to the Mayor within five (5) business days of receiving the action. The Mayor will review the appeal and provide a written response. Personnel actions requiring City Council involvement under applicable law, ordinance, or City policy shall be processed in accordance with those requirements. In cases involving significant disputes or potential legal concerns, the City Council may review the matter in executive session (See Appendix J: Texas Government Code § 551.074), in accordance with the Texas Open Meetings Act (See Appendix J: Texas Government Code § 551.005).

Section 10: Disciplinary Action

10.1 Grounds for Disciplinary Action

Disciplinary action may be taken for violations of City policy, failure to perform duties, or misconduct. Examples include, but are not limited to:

- Repeated tardiness or unexcused absences
- Insubordination or refusal to follow instructions
- Violation of safety protocols
- Misuse of City equipment or resources
- Breach of confidentiality
- Theft or dishonesty
- Harassment or discriminatory behavior
- Failure to comply with required documentation, records management, cybersecurity, continuity, or training requirements
- Substance abuse while on duty

The severity of the disciplinary response will depend on the nature of the offense and the employee's history.

10.2 Progressive Discipline Policy

The City generally follows a progressive discipline process to address performance or conduct issues, which may include:

- Verbal Warning – Informal notice of concern, documented for reference.
- Written Warning – Formal notice placed in the employee's personnel file.
- Suspension Without Pay – Temporary removal from duties, duration based on severity.
- Termination – Permanent separation from employment.
- However, depending on the circumstances, the City reserves the right to bypass steps and move directly to more serious actions when warranted.

10.3 Immediate Termination Situations

Some actions may result in immediate termination without prior warnings, including:

- Theft or fraud
- Workplace violence or threats
- Possession or use of illegal substances on City property
- Gross insubordination
- Serious safety violations
- Willful misconduct or criminal behavior
- Deliberate destruction, concealment, or unauthorized removal of City records

The Mayor is responsible for administering disciplinary actions in accordance with City policy, applicable law, and City Council direction. Personnel actions requiring City Council involvement shall be processed in accordance with applicable ordinances, policies, and legal requirements.

Section 11: Acknowledgments and Forms

11.1 Employee Acknowledgment of Receipt

Each employee must sign an acknowledgment form confirming receipt of this handbook. This form will be kept in the employee's personnel file and states that the employee:

Has received a copy of the Employee Handbook

Understands that it is their responsibility to read and follow all policies

Acknowledges that employment is at-will (unless otherwise specified by law)

Understands that the handbook is subject to change at the discretion of the City

11.2 Confidentiality Policy

Certain City positions require access to sensitive, private, or legally protected information. Employees in these roles may be required to sign a confidentiality agreement appropriate to the level of access and responsibility associated with their position.

Positions such as the City Secretary and Municipal Court Clerk will be required to sign an Enhanced Confidentiality Agreement, which includes more detailed provisions regarding the handling of legal, personnel, or court-related records. Other employees may be required to sign a General Confidentiality Agreement based

on their access to financial records, personnel data, or other protected information. (see Appendix C and the City website for Confidentiality Agreements)

All confidentiality agreements will outline:

- The categories of information considered confidential
- Restrictions on disclosure or misuse of that information

Legal and disciplinary consequences for violations

These agreements are binding for the duration of employment and, in some cases, may continue beyond separation from City service, as specified in the agreement. Violation of confidentiality obligations may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

Employees may also be required to maintain confidentiality regarding information obtained through interactions with authorized contractors, consultants, auditors, attorneys, technology providers, and other service providers supporting City operations.

11.3 Vehicle/Equipment Use Agreement (If Applicable)

Employees assigned to operate City vehicles or equipment may be required to sign a separate agreement acknowledging responsibility for:

- Safe operation and maintenance
- Restrictions on personal use
- Reporting accidents or mechanical issues

Returning equipment in good condition

Section 12: Environmental Compliance and MS4 Responsibilities

As a regulated Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) under the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ), the City of China Grove is required to comply with the Texas Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (TPDES) General Permit for Phase II MS4s.

City employees have specific responsibilities to support MS4 compliance, including:

12.1 Stormwater Pollution Prevention (REQUIRED for City of China Grove)

Employees shall take reasonable steps to prevent pollution from entering storm drains, ditches, and natural drainage systems during their work activities. Examples of prohibited discharges include:

- Dumping chemicals, paint, or wash water into storm drains- Allowing sediment, trash, or oil to enter stormwater outfalls- Disposing of grass clippings, soil, or animal waste into ditches

12.2 Minimum Control Measures (MCMs)

The City's MS4 program must address the following six categories, which may involve staff duties:

- Public Education and Outreach
- Public Involvement and Participation
- Illicit Discharge Detection and Elimination (IDDE)
- Construction Site Runoff Control
- Post-Construction Stormwater Management

- Pollution Prevention and Good Housekeeping for Municipal Operations

City employees, particularly those in permitting, code enforcement, and public works, may have assigned responsibilities within these categories.

12.3 Training and Reporting

Employees whose duties affect stormwater (e.g., field staff, permitting) must complete annual training as required by the TCEQ MS4 permit. This includes identifying and reporting:

- Illicit discharges- Spills or dumping into storm drains- Erosion or sediment control failures at construction sites

Reports must be submitted to the Mayor or the designated MS4 Coordinator.

12.4 Documentation and Recordkeeping

The City must maintain documentation of its MS4 program, including inspection reports, public education activities, training logs, and enforcement records, in accordance with TCEQ requirements and the Texas State Library and Archives Commission (TSLAC) retention schedules.

Applicable References

- Texas Water Code Chapter 26- 30 Texas Administrative Code § 281 & § 319- TPDES General Permit TXR040000 (Small MS4 General Permit)

12.5 Local Pollution Risk Area – City Hall/Firehouse Site

The City Hall/Firehouse complex is located in an area identified by the San Antonio River Authority (SARA) as a region of concern for localized pollution runoff, especially during periods of heavy rainfall. In coordination with TCEQ and in support of our MS4 (Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System) responsibilities, all employees are expected to follow enhanced environmental protection practices at or near this site.

Spill Prevention

- All chemicals, fuels, and other hazardous materials must be stored in properly labeled, sealed containers.
- Spills of oil, fuel, paint, or cleaning agents must be reported immediately to the Mayor or MS4 Coordinator and cleaned up using absorbent materials; never hose or wash spills into drains or ditches.
- Equipment must be inspected for leaks or deterioration before use on City Hall premises.

Pest Control

- Pesticides, rodenticides, and herbicides must only be applied by trained personnel using approved products and techniques that minimize runoff.
- Employees must avoid over-application near drains, curbs, or landscaping that slopes toward stormwater inlets.
- Food waste and trash should be sealed and properly disposed of to avoid attracting pests.

Waste Handling

- Waste materials, including trash, debris, used oil, paint cans, and cleaning rags, must be stored under cover and disposed of using approved City or contractor services.
- Dumping of any waste into the storm drain system is strictly prohibited under federal and state law.
- Recyclables and solid waste must be segregated and stored in designated bins with lids.

Employee Responsibilities- All staff working on or around the City Hall/Firehouse area must complete annual training on pollution prevention and MS4 compliance. - If an employee observes illegal dumping, leaks, or any discharge to storm drains or surface water, they must immediately report the issue to the Mayor or designated MS4 Coordinator.

Reference Resource: Employees are encouraged to review additional pollution prevention resources on the San Antonio River Authority website at: <https://www.sariverauthority.org> This policy helps the City meet its obligations under the Texas Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (TPDES) and supports the health of the San Antonio River Basin ecosystem.

12.6 Quarterly Council MS4 Compliance to Council

The Mayor will ensure that the Permitting Officer prepares and delivers reporting during the second month of each Fiscal Year quarter end

Q1 Reporting Ending in December is delivered at the February Council Meeting

Q2 Reporting Ending in March is delivered at the May Council Meeting

Q3 Reporting Ending in June is delivered at the August Council Meeting

Q4 Reporting Ending in August is delivered at the October Council Meeting

12.7 State Energy Report Compliance (SECO)

In accordance with Texas Health & Safety Code §388.005, the City of China Grove must submit an annual energy usage report to the State Energy Conservation Office (SECO) no later than ****March 1**** each year. The City Secretary shall serve as the ****primary point of contact**** for gathering electricity usage data, organizing the required reporting materials, and coordinating with the Mayor and Investment Officer for review and assistance. While the City Secretary oversees submission, this is a collaborative process requiring support from multiple departments to ensure full compliance.

Section 13: Additional State Compliance and Reporting Requirements

13.1 Municipal Solid Waste (MSW) Reporting (N/A to China Grove at this time)

If the City operates solid waste activities regulated by the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ), an annual Municipal Solid Waste (MSW) report must be submitted by November 10 each year for the prior fiscal period. This report must be filed through the TCEQ STEERS system. See Appendix J: TCEQ Reporting Deadlines.

13.2 Air Emissions and Chemical Storage Reporting (N/A to China Grove at this time)

City operations such as vehicle maintenance may trigger air quality or chemical storage reporting. If applicable, an annual Emissions Inventory Report and Tier II hazardous chemical inventory must be filed. Reporting is mandated under the Texas Health and Safety Code and federal EPCRA regulations. See Appendix J: Tier II Reporting & Air Compliance.

13.3 TCEQ Permit Renewal and Fee Compliance

The City must ensure timely renewal of all environmental permits and payment of associated fees (e.g., stormwater, wastewater, MS4). A compliance calendar should be maintained through the City's administrative procedures, continuity planning processes, and designated staff assignments.

13.4 Labor Law Posting and Distribution Requirements

The City must ensure that mandatory labor law notices are posted in visible locations or distributed to employees. These include notices under the Texas Payday Law (Labor Code Chapter 61), Workers' Compensation (Chapter 401), and Unemployment Insurance programs. See Section 5.1 and Appendix J: Required Workplace Postings.

13.5 Take-Home Vehicle Policy and Usage Tracking

If employees are assigned City-owned vehicles for use beyond work hours, the City shall document eligibility, vehicle assignment, and usage policies annually. Accident reporting and IRS mileage documentation (if applicable) must be maintained. See Section 6.3 and Appendix J: Vehicle Use Reporting Policy.

Section 14 – Annual Budget Timeline Overview for Department Heads

Department heads play a central role in preparing, refining, and presenting the City's annual budget and tax rate proposals. While the Mayor and Aldermen make the final policy decisions, City staff, contracted service providers, consultants, and other authorized resources may assist in ensuring compliance with state law, preparing supporting documents, and providing accurate information for Council review. This section outlines the employee responsibilities in the timeline below, which runs from May through September and aligns with the Texas Local Government Code (Chapter 102) and the Texas Tax Code (Chapter 26).

Annual Budget & Tax Rate Adoption Timeline

Budget Process (LGC Chapter 102)	Tax Rate Process (Tax Code Chapter 26)
May 1–15 – Mayor, City Secretary, and authorized financial support resources begin planning; review actuals; update templates; and prepare the First Draft Budget.	*(No Tax Rate steps in May) *
May 15–31 – Dept. Heads submit requests; Mayor & City Secretary prepare First Draft; salary tables prepared; First Draft Budget Workbook posted before June Council Meeting.	*(No Tax Rate steps in May) *
June Council Meeting Budget discussion No Action. <i>*Optional Council Workshop for continued budget review and adjustments (commonly scheduled).*</i>	*(No Tax Rate steps in June) *
Post June meetings – Mayor revises draft using Workshop Template; updates from Dept. Heads; numbers verified with the City Secretary, Investment Officer, and other authorized financial support resources as applicable; Updated Budget posted before July Meeting; Mayor files Proposed Budget with City Secretary (LGC §102.005).	*(No Tax Rate steps in June) *
<i>Early July – no later than the 1st Monday: Final Proposed Budget posted on City website (30-day rule); July Council Meeting: budget discussion only.</i>	*(No Tax Rate steps in July) *

Mid-July – Submit Budget Public Hearing Notice to Wilson County News (17 days before August meeting; LGC §102.006).	*(Tax Rate notice not yet required) *
August Council Meeting – First Thursday: Budget Public Hearing (LGC §102.006) and Budget Adoption (LGC §102.009(a)). - Quorum of 3 → all 3 must vote yes - Quorum of 4 → 3-to-1 vote carries (60%).	*(Tax Rate notice step is next) * *Optional Council Workshop to review tax rate scenarios and worksheets (commonly scheduled). *
Mid-August – (No budget steps)	Submit Tax Rate Public Hearing Notice to Wilson County News (17 days before September meeting; Tax Code §26.05).
September Council Meeting – (No budget steps)	First Thursday: Tax Rate Public Hearing and Tax Rate Adoption (Tax Code §26.05(c)). - Quorum of 4 required - 3-to-1 vote carries (60%) - If adopted rate > voter-approval rate, election required.
Post-Adoption – Upload adopted budget to website; notify Bexar County & Appraisal District; update internal systems.	Same post-adoption tasks: upload adopted tax rate; notify Bexar County & Appraisal District; update systems.

**Note: Workshops are optional but commonly scheduled to allow additional Council discussion of the budget (July) and tax rate (August).*

14.1 Post-Budget Staff Activity (October–December)

- Conduct a **post-budget debrief** with department heads
 - to evaluate what worked well and where processes can improve.
 - ensure they understand **budget line items affecting daily operations**.
- Compile a **lessons-learned summary** for discussion with Council.
- Begin **tracking budget implementation** (e.g., major purchases, new hires, capital projects) to ensure Council decisions are carried out.
- Start **early planning for capital projects** and upcoming grant cycles; coordinate with external partners if needed.
- Update **internal procedures and templates** for the next budget cycle (agenda forms, budget request templates, fund balance reports).
- Confirm that the **final adopted budget and tax rate** are posted on the City’s website and available in the City Secretary’s office for public access.
- Provide any required **budget copies or certifications** to the County Clerk, Appraisal District, and other authorities.

14.2 Budget Legal Support References

- **LGC §22.039** – Quorum for governing body is majority of full membership, including vacancies.
- **LGC §102.005** – Proposed budget must be filed with the City Secretary.
- **LGC §102.006** – Budget hearing and 10-day notice requirement in newspaper of general circulation.
- **LGC §102.009(a)** – Budget must be adopted before start of fiscal year (October 1).
- **Tax Code §26.05** – Tax rate adoption, notice, and hearing requirements.

- **Election Code §41.001** – Uniform election dates if quorum is lost and a special election is required.
- **LGC §102.008** – Amendments to the budget are allowed by Council ordinance; staff must prepare supporting documentation.
- **Tax Code §26.04** – County appraisal district’s role in certifying tax rolls; staff must monitor deadlines to ensure compliance.

Appendices

Appendix A: Department Head Meeting Procedures

The Mayor works closely with each Department Head to ensure city operations are responsive, efficient, and aligned with the priorities set by the City Council and the needs of our community. To support that goal, we will adopt a structured meeting process designed to foster communication, encourage collaboration, and maintain clarity in decision-making.

1. Monthly Department Head Meetings

Purpose: To debrief following City Council meetings and to assess and assign any new work required based on Council direction.

These meetings will be held monthly, immediately following the City Council meeting. All department heads are expected to attend. The agenda will focus on action items resulting from Council discussions, as well as updates from each department.

2. One-on-One Meetings with the Mayor

Purpose: To prepare for upcoming City Council meetings and ensure each department is ready to present or respond to inquiries.

Each department head will meet with the Mayor once per month during the week before the Council meeting. These meetings are an opportunity to review ongoing work, preview upcoming items, and address any departmental needs or concerns.

3. Ad Hoc Meetings

Purpose: To provide focused attention on specific issues as they arise.

These meetings will be scheduled by the Mayor as needed. Participants will be limited to the relevant staff or departments required to address the matter at hand. Occasionally, these meetings may involve multiple departments when cross-functional input is needed.

Important Note: If you are not invited to an ad hoc meeting, please do not attend unless you have first spoken with the Mayor. This helps maintain the focus and scope of the meeting. If your participation would be valuable, the Mayor will either invite you or schedule a separate follow-up meeting.

4. Department Head-Initiated Meetings

You are encouraged to request a meeting with the Mayor at any time for guidance, support, or to raise emerging issues. These requests are always welcome and help ensure open communication.

5. Department Head Collaboration

To maintain alignment and accountability, Department heads may not meet with one another without the Mayor present to chair the meeting. This ensures consistent direction and avoids duplication or miscommunication. Department heads are always free to meet with their own team or direct reports without the Mayor's involvement.

6. Final Notes

These procedures are designed to create a shared rhythm and clarity around communication. The Mayor values the contributions each department head brings to the table and supports and encourages staff to work together in a focused, respectful, and productive way.

Appendix B: Job Descriptions

The official job descriptions for the following positions are maintained on the City of China Grove website and may be updated from time to time as approved by Council:

- City Secretary
- Chief Municipal Court Clerk / Juvenile Case Manager
- Deputy Municipal Clerk & Administrative Assistant
- Permitting and Code Compliance Officer
- Animal Control Officer

The version posted on the City of China Grove website is the official and current version. Employees are responsible for reviewing the posted version when needed. Job descriptions should be read in conjunction with applicable City ordinances, administrative procedures, continuity planning requirements, training requirements, and other duties reasonably assigned to support municipal operations.

Appendix C: Required Employee Forms

The City uses a number of standardized forms, including:

- Employee Handbook Acknowledgment Form
- Employee Self-Assessment
- Annual Performance Review Form
- Exit Interview Template
- Confidentiality Agreements (Standard and Enhanced Versions)
- Vehicle/Equipment Use Agreement
- Technology Use and Security Policy Acknowledgment

Official versions of these forms are available on the City of China Grove website. The version posted online is the official and current version. Some forms (such as performance reviews, acknowledgments, or exit interviews) will be distributed directly by the Mayor or City Secretary to the employee at the time they are required.

Appendix D: Holidays and Leave Summary

The City of China Grove recognizes the following paid holidays each calendar year:

New Year's Day – January 1

Martin Luther King, Jr. Day – Third Monday in January

Presidents' Day – Third Monday in February

Memorial Day – Last Monday in May

Juneteenth National Independence Day– June 19

Independence Day – July 4

Indigenous Peoples' Day (Columbus Day) — Second Monday in October

Veterans Day – November 11

Thanksgiving – Fourth Thursday in November

Christmas Eve – December 24

Christmas Day – December 25

The City of China Grove observes a four-day workweek, with offices closed on Fridays. When a recognized holiday falls on a Friday, employees will not receive an alternate day off in place of the Friday holiday, since the City is already closed that day. All holidays are subject to change based on City Council action.

The City provides paid vacation after one year of service. Employed 6 months – 1 year receive 4 days of vacation. Employed 1 - 2 years receive 8 days of vacation. Employed 3 – 5 years receive 12 days of vacation. Employed 6 – 10 years receive 16 days of vacation. Employed more than 10 years 20 days of vacation.

Appendix E: Emergency Contacts & Procedures

This appendix provides emergency contact information and general response procedures to be followed in case of fire, weather events, workplace incidents, or other emergencies affecting City facilities or staff. Each department is responsible for reviewing and discussing these procedures during staff meetings.

Emergency Contacts

In the event of an emergency, use the following contacts:

- Mayor: David Johnson 210-854-7728
- City Secretary: Dori Brown 210-648-4923
- Fire/Police/EMS: 911 (for immediate emergencies)
- Bexar County Emergency Management: [County Contact or Hotline]
- City Hall Main Line: [Main Office Number]
- Facilities/Maintenance Emergency: [Insert Name or Vendor Contact]

General Emergency Procedures

Follow these procedures based on the type of incident:

- Fire – Evacuate the building immediately using the nearest exit. Call 911 and notify the Mayor.
- Severe Weather – Follow designated shelter-in-place protocols. Avoid windows. Remain indoors until given all-clear.
- Medical Emergency – Call 911. Provide assistance only if trained. Notify the Mayor immediately.
- Power Outage – Notify City Secretary or the Mayor. Remain in place unless otherwise directed.
- Suspicious Activity or Threats – Report immediately to the Mayor or 911 depending on severity. Do not confront individuals.
- Building Evacuation – Follow posted routes. Assist others as needed. Report to designated assembly area and check in.

Appendix F: Organizational Chart

The official City of China Grove Organizational Chart is maintained on the City website and may be updated as staffing or Council changes occur.

The version posted on the City of China Grove website is the official and current version. Employees and citizens should refer to the posted chart for the most accurate organizational structure.

Appendix G: Technology and Communication Policy

This appendix outlines acceptable use and responsibilities related to City-provided technology and communication tools. All employees issued email accounts, or other digital systems are expected to comply with these standards. Violations may result in loss of privileges and disciplinary action.

1. General Use Policy

Technology and communication systems are provided for official City business. Limited personal use is permitted if it does not interfere with work duties or consume excessive resources. All City-issued technology remains the property of the City of China Grove. Employees must protect passwords and access credentials and may not share them with unauthorized individuals.

Employees are advised that violations of technology or communication policies may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination, and may also subject the employee to personal legal liability if violations involve unlawful activity or disclosure of protected information.

2. Social Media Policy

The City of China Grove recognizes that social media and electronic communication platforms are important tools for conducting City business and communicating with the public. Employees who use City-owned devices, City networks, City email accounts, or official City social media accounts are expected to do so in a professional, ethical, and lawful manner.

Official City social media accounts and electronic communication systems shall be used solely for legitimate governmental purposes. Employees may not use City resources to support or oppose political candidates, political parties, or ballot measures, as prohibited by Texas Election Code § 255.003 (See Appendix J).

Prohibited Activities

Employees shall not:

- Access, create, distribute, or store offensive, illegal, discriminatory, harassing, or otherwise inappropriate content using City resources.
- Use City-owned devices, networks, email accounts, social media accounts, work time, or other City resources for political campaigning, electioneering, personal financial gain, or outside employment activities.
- Install, download, or use unauthorized software, applications, or technology on City-owned equipment without approval.
- Attempt to bypass, disable, or interfere with City security controls, firewalls, content filters, passwords, or other cybersecurity protections.
- Represent personal opinions as official City positions or make unauthorized statements on behalf of the City through social media or other electronic communication platforms.

Employees who maintain personal social media accounts may engage in lawful personal activities on their own time and using their own resources; however, they shall not imply City endorsement of personal views, political positions, or outside activities.

Permitted Activities

Nothing in this policy is intended to prohibit employees from engaging in lawful personal activities on their own time and using their own personal devices and accounts. Employees may:

- Maintain personal social media accounts and online profiles.
- Express personal opinions, including political opinions, in their individual capacity.
- Participate in political campaigns, community organizations, civic groups, or other lawful activities as private citizens.
- Share information about City events, programs, or services that is publicly available, provided they do not represent themselves as speaking on behalf of the City unless authorized to do so.

Employees should make it clear when expressing personal views that they are acting as private individuals and not as representatives of the City of China Grove. Personal social media activity must not interfere with job performance, violate City policies, disclose confidential information, or create the appearance of official City endorsement of personal opinions, political positions, or outside activities.

3. Email and Communication Etiquette

All written communications should be professional, respectful, and free of discriminatory or harassing language. Email messages may be subject to the Texas Public Information Act (See Appendix J: Texas Government Code § 552.012) and should not contain confidential or sensitive content unless protected. City email accounts should not be used for personal subscriptions or unrelated correspondence.

4. Monitoring and Records

City communications may be monitored, audited, or accessed as part of open records (See Appendix J: Texas Government Code, Chapter 552) requests or legal compliance. Employees have no expectation of privacy when using City-owned technology or communication systems. All electronic records must be preserved in accordance with the City's records retention policies.

Appendix H: Records Retention and Management Policy

This appendix summarizes the City of China Grove's commitment to proper records retention and outlines key guidelines for managing, storing, and disposing of City records. All employees are responsible for following

applicable state laws and internal procedures, particularly the guidelines set by the Texas State Library and Archives Commission (TSLAC).

1. General Policy

All records, whether physical or digital, must be maintained in accordance with the City's adopted records retention schedule. Records include emails, letters, forms, permits, case files, reports, and any other documentation related to City operations. Employees should not destroy or delete any City record without proper authorization from the City Secretary.

2. Role of the City Secretary

The City Secretary serves as the Records Management Officer and is responsible for implementing and updating the City's retention policy. The City Secretary maintains the master records retention schedule and coordinates destruction of records in compliance with state law.

3. Employee Responsibilities

Employees must store records in designated systems or locations approved by the City Secretary. Retention periods vary depending on the record type and must be followed strictly. Questions about how long to retain a document or where to store it should be directed to the City Secretary.

4. Access and Confidentiality

Records must be protected from unauthorized access, loss, or damage. Public records may be disclosed in response to an official request under the Texas Public Information Act (See Appendix J: Texas Government Code § 552.012). Confidential records must be handled in accordance with applicable privacy laws and internal policies.

Appendix I: Training and Compliance Log

1. Training Requirements Framework

Training requirements for City employees are established through a combination of:

- This Employee Handbook (Section 6)
- Position-specific job descriptions (Appendix B)
- Applicable state and federal laws and regulatory requirements

2. Required Training

All employees are required to complete training applicable to their position and assigned duties.

A. General Training (All Employees)

- Cybersecurity Awareness Training (annual)
- Phishing and Email Security Training
- Technology Use and Data Protection Acknowledgment

B. Position-Specific Training (As Applicable)

Training requirements may vary by position and may include, but are not limited to:

- Environmental and MS4 compliance training
- Public Funds Investment Act (PFIA) training
- Court clerk or judicial process training
- Animal Control Officer (ACO) certification
- Code compliance, permitting, or inspection-related training

- Safety and equipment operation training

Specific requirements are defined in the employee's job description and applicable regulations.

3. Training Completion and Documentation

All required training must be documented using the City's official **Training and Compliance Log**.

- Employees are responsible for completing assigned training in a timely manner
- The Mayor is responsible for assigning and monitoring training
- Completed training records shall be maintained in the employee's personnel file or designated system

The official Training and Compliance Log template is maintained on the City of China Grove website. Employees must use the posted version.

4. Compliance

Failure to complete required training may result in:

- Removal from certain duties, and/or
- Disciplinary action, up to and including termination

Appendix J: Regulatory References and Legal Citations

This appendix lists statutory references supporting this handbook, including:

- Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA)
- Texas Local Government Code
- Texas Election Code
- Texas Government Code (Open Meetings & Public Information Acts)
- Texas Tax Code
- Other applicable state and federal regulations

It also identifies required compliance forms, which are maintained on the City of China Grove Server:

- Annual Environmental Compliance Training Acknowledgment Form
- General Training Acknowledgment Form
- Annual Employee Training Checklist – Personnel File Cover Sheet
- Purchase Order Form
- Invoice Approval Form

The posted versions of these forms are the official and current versions.

Appendix K: Reporting & Compliance Generic Calendar

- The City maintains a master compliance calendar of deadlines, hearings, and reporting requirements.
- Responsibility for Updates: The Mayor is responsible for keeping the calendar current.
- Posting: The City Secretary is responsible for posting the updated calendar to the City website.
- Council Approval: Council approval is not required for this calendar.
- Use of the Calendar: For accuracy, employees, aldermen, and citizens should always rely on the version published on the website rather than printed copies, to ensure they are referencing the most up-to-date information.

Appendix Z: Reference Appendix

The following categories of documents are maintained on the City of China Grove website or the City Server and represent the official, current versions.

City Website:

- Job Descriptions (Appendix B)
- Organizational Chart (Appendix F)
- Reporting & Compliance Generic Calendar (Appendix K)

City Server

- Employee Forms (Appendix C)
- Training and Compliance Logs (Appendix I)
- Compliance Forms and Acknowledgments (Appendix J)

Employees should always refer to the City's website or server for the most up-to-date version of these documents. The handbook provides context and references but does not supersede the posted version.

Administrative Authority: Under Texas Local Government Code §22.042, the Mayor serves as the chief executive officer of the municipality and is responsible for supervising the conduct of municipal officers and employees and ensuring that city ordinances are faithfully executed.

Handbook Not a Contract: This handbook is intended to provide guidance and does not create an employment contract or guarantee of continued employment.

Policy Amendments: Policies in this handbook may be amended by the City Council at any time to ensure compliance with applicable law and operational needs.