

## TOWN OF LUNENBURG

### SEXUAL HARASSMENT: POLICY AND PROCEDURES

#### I. POLICY

##### A. Introduction

The Town of Lunenburg (the "Town") depends upon a work environment of tolerance and respect for the achievement of its goals. The Town is committed to providing a working environment that is free of all forms of abuse or harassment. The Town recognizes the right of all employees to be treated with respect and dignity.

Sexual harassment is a form of behavior that adversely affects the employment relationship. State and Federal law prohibit such behavior. Sexual harassment of individuals occurring in the workplace or in other settings in which individuals of the Town may find themselves in connection with their employment is unlawful and will not be tolerated by the Town. The Town also condemns and prohibits sexual or other harassment by any applicant, client, vendor or visitor.

Because the Town takes allegations of sexual harassment seriously, we will respond promptly to complaints of sexual harassment and where it is determined that inappropriate conduct has occurred, we will act promptly to eliminate the conduct and impose such corrective action as is necessary, including disciplinary action where appropriate, including discharge.

It is important to note that while this policy sets forth our goals of promoting a workplace that is free of sexual harassment, the policy is not designed or intended to limit our authority to discipline or take remedial action for workplace conduct which we deem unacceptable, regardless of whether that conduct satisfies the definition of sexual harassment.

##### B. Definition of Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment does not refer to purely voluntary social activities. It refers to behavior which is not welcomed by the employee, which is personally offensive to him or her, and which undermines morale and/or interferes with the ability of the employee to work effectively. While it is not possible to list all of the circumstances that may constitute sexual harassment, depending upon the totality of the facts, including the severity of the conduct and its pervasiveness, following is a list of situations that could constitute sexual harassment.

- verbal abuse of a sexual nature;
- use of sexually degrading words;
- jokes or language of a sexual nature;
- conversation or gossip with sexual overtones;
- obscene or suggestive gestures or sounds;

- sexually-oriented teasing;
- verbal comments of a sexual nature about an individual's appearance or sexual terms used to describe an individual;
- inquiries into one's sexual experiences;
- discussion of one's sexual activities;
- comments, jokes or threats directed at a person because of his/her sexual preference;
- unwelcome and repeated invitations (for lunch, dinner, drinks, dates, sexual relations);
- demand for sexual favors accompanied by an implied or overt threat concerning an individual's employment status or promises of preferential treatment;
- physical contact such as touching, hugging, kissing, stroking, fondling, patting, pinching or repeated brushing up against one's body;
- deliberate bumping, cornering, mauling, grabbing;
- assaults, molestations or coerced sexual acts;
- posting or distributing sexually suggestive objects, pictures, cartoons or other materials;
- sexually-oriented letters or notes;
- sending offensive or discriminatory messages or materials through the use of electronic communications (e.g., electronic mail, including the Internet, voice mail and facsimile) which contain overt sexual language, sexual implications or innuendo, or comments that offensively address someone's sexual orientation;
- staring at parts of a person's body;
- sexually suggestive gestures, leering; and
- condoning sexual harassment.

Sexual harassment is not limited to prohibited behavior by a male employee toward a female employee. Sexual harassment can occur in a variety of circumstances. Here are some things to remember.

- A man as well as a woman may be the victim of sexual harassment, and a woman as well as a man may be the harasser;
- The harasser does not have to be the victim's supervisor;
- The victim does not have to be of the opposite sex from the harasser;

- The victim does not have to be the person at whom the unwelcome sexual conduct is directed. The victim may be someone who is affected by the harassing conduct, even when it is directed toward another person, if the conduct creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment for the co-worker or interferes with the co-worker's work performance.

**C. Individual Responsibilities**

Each individual of the Town is personally responsible for:

- ensuring that his/her conduct does not sexually harass any other employee or person with whom the employee comes in contact on the job, such as an outside vendor;
- cooperating in any investigation of alleged sexual harassment by providing any information he/she possesses concerning the matter being investigated;
- actively participating in efforts to prevent and eliminate sexual harassment and to maintain a working environment free from such discrimination; and
- ensuring that an employee who files a sexual harassment claim or cooperates in an investigation may do so without fear of retaliation or reprisal.

**D. The Rule**

It is, therefore, against the policy of the Town for any individual, male or female, to harass another individual sexually, that is, by making unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, or other uninvited verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature when:

- submission to such conduct is made either implicitly or explicitly a term or condition of an employee's employment;
- submission to, or rejection of, such conduct by an individual is made the basis for employment decisions affecting the employee;
- such conduct has the purpose of interfering with an individual's work performance; or
- a hostile or intimidating work environment is created for the employee.

It is also against the policy of the Town for an individual to sexually harass any person with whom the employee comes in contact on the job or to engage in any harassment or inappropriate or unprofessional conduct in the workplace.

**E. Retaliation**

Retaliation against an individual for filing a complaint of sexual harassment or against any individual for cooperating in an investigation of a sexual harassment complaint is against the law.

## **II. VIOLATION OF POLICY**

Any individual violating this policy will be subject to appropriate discipline, including possible discharge.

## **III. PROCEDURES FOR COMPLAINTS**

### **A. Complaint**

The Town has designated a Sexual Harassment Grievance Officer. The current Sexual Harassment Grievance Officer is Heather Lemieux, Town Manager. She can be reached Town Hall, 17 Main Street, 2<sup>nd</sup> floor, Lunenburg, MA 01462, and her telephone number is (978) 582-4144. If you would prefer, you may contact Nancy Forest, Payroll and Benefits Coordinator & Risk Manager, who has been designated as the Alternate Sexual Harassment Grievance Officer. She can be reached at Town Hall, 17 Main Street, 1<sup>st</sup> floor, Lunenburg, MA 01462, and her telephone number is (978) 582-4134.

If any individual believes he or she has been subjected to sexual harassment, the individual should initiate a complaint by contacting the Sexual Harassment Grievance Officer as soon as possible. The individual should file the complaint promptly following any incident of alleged harassment. The individual should be aware that the longer the period of time between the event giving rise to the complaint and the filing, the more difficult it will be for the Sexual Harassment Grievance Officer to investigate what occurred. The individual will be requested to write out his or her complaint to document the charge.

If an employee prefers to discuss a possible sexual harassment problem with his or her supervisor, the employee may always do so, but employees do not have to go through the regular chain of supervision when reporting sexual harassment and may go directly to the Grievance Officer.

### **B. Investigation**

Upon receiving the complaint, the Sexual Harassment Grievance Officer or the Alternate Sexual Harassment Grievance Officer will promptly undertake an investigation of the matter. The investigation may include private interviews with the employee making the complaint, with witnesses, and with the person accused of sexual harassment. The investigation will be conducted in such a way as to maintain confidentiality to the extent practicable under the circumstances.

### **C. Decision**

After the response of the charged individual has been made, and any further investigation that may be warranted has been carried out, the Town will make a final decision. If the Town finds that the allegations in the complaint have been established by the investigation, the Town will initiate discipline of the charged individual. Discipline will be appropriate to the offense and employees involved, and may include discharge subject to the Town's at-will employment policy.<sup>1</sup>

The complainant will be notified of the disposition of the investigation.

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<sup>1</sup> Employees of the Town that are members of a bargaining unit shall be subject to discipline in accordance with the terms of the applicable Collective Bargaining Agreement.

**IV. STATE AND FEDERAL AGENCIES**

The Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination (“MCAD”), with offices at 484 Main Street, Suite 320, Worcester, MA 01608, 436 Dwight Street, Springfield, MA 01103, and One Ashburton Place, Boston, MA 02108, is responsible for enforcing the Massachusetts sexual harassment law, and the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (“EEOC”) is responsible for enforcing the federal law prohibiting sexual harassment. The EEOC is located at JFK Federal Office Building, Government Center, Room 475, Boston, MA 02203. They may be contacted at the above addresses. A complaint to the MCAD must be filed within 300 days. A complaint under the federal law should be filed within 180 days, but under certain circumstances, a federal complaint may be filed within 300 days.

**V. ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF RECEIPT OF POLICY**

I acknowledge receipt of this Sexual Harassment Policy from the Town, and I have read its contents.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Employee Name (Print)

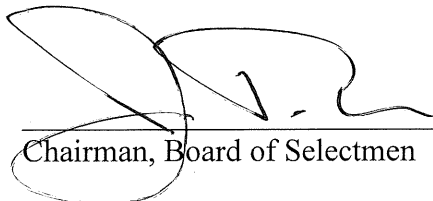
\_\_\_\_\_  
Employee Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Witness

**VI. ADOPTION BY BOARD OF SELECTMEN**

This policy was adopted by the Board of Selectmen on July 18, 2017.

  
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Chairman, Board of Selectmen