**Objective:** The City of Stow wishes to create a tool for its employees to help reduce costs, while maintaining the employee’s benefits, by allowing its employees the opportunity to take voluntary unpaid leave.

**Overview and Introduction:** To accomplish the forgoing objective, the City of Stow is creating a Voluntary Furlough Leave Program (VFLP), which will establish definitions and rules for voluntary unpaid leave by its employees. Any employee, when deciding whether to participate and take time off in accordance with this program, should take into account his/her own individual circumstances. It is the intent of this policy to allow interested employees voluntarily help create budgetary savings for the City of Stow, while minimizing the impact on City services. Participation in the VFLP is completely voluntary.

1. **“Voluntary Furlough Savings Leave” is:**
   - defined as a reduction in an employee’s schedule (hours) and/or be in a no pay status (unpaid) for a period of time without reducing certain benefits or requiring them to exhaust paid leave.
   - be at the request of the employee.
   - subject to the approval of management.

2. **Eligibility**
   - A full-time or part-time permanent employee of the City of Stow and who has successfully completed an initial or promotional probationary period shall be eligible to take Voluntary Furlough Leave.
   - Seasonal, temporary, and part-time employees are not eligible to take Voluntary Furlough Leave.

3. **Leave/Reduction of Hours**
   - A full-time permanent employee may reduce their hours worked pursuant to the VFLP by no less than one (1) hour and no more than forty (40) hours per pay period.
   - Voluntary Furlough Leave shall be used in minimum one (1) hour increments.
   - An eligible employee may take Voluntary Furlough Leave (take an unpaid leave of absence) for two to thirteen week periods within a fiscal year.
   - The maximum amount of time an employee may use this option is for five hundred twenty (520) hours in any rolling calendar year.
   - **Averaging:** An employee may choose to average an agreed amount of Voluntary Furlough Leave during a fiscal year, subject to the approval of the Finance Department. Said employee shall have their pay reduced by a fixed amount of hours, averaged over a fixed number of payroll periods in the fiscal year.
   - **Accelerated Averaging:** An employee may choose to average on an accelerated schedule, subject to the approval of the Finance Department, their Voluntary Furlough Leave for the remainder any fiscal year. Said employee shall have their pay reduced by a fixed amount of hours over a fixed number of payroll periods in that fiscal year.
   - **Effect of Averaging:** Any employee who chooses to average furlough leave shall take the total number of hours averaged off during the same fiscal year, without respect to when the payroll deduction is actually made.

4. **Benefit Accrual Impact**
   - An employee’s accruals of vacation, sick, or personal leave shall not be impacted by the employee’s taking Voluntary Furlough Leave.
   - Employees shall accrue benefits as if they were working a full week.
   - Any other benefits shall not be reduced as a result of an employee taking Voluntary Furlough Leave.

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5. **Health Insurance**
   An employee who reduces hours worked pursuant by taking Voluntary Furlough Leave shall maintain full-time status for purposes of health insurance premiums.

6. **Service Credit**
   - An employee who reduces hours worked by taking Voluntary Furlough Leave shall not incur a break in service, provided the employee returns to employment, and provided that this does not conflict with any Collective Bargaining Agreement.
   - An employee’s service date shall not be adjusted as a result of their taking Voluntary Furlough Leave.

7. **Retention Points**
   Should the City of Stow proceed with layoffs in the future, and should the City of Stow use “retention points” or a similar method to determine the order of layoff, then an employee who takes Voluntary Furlough Leave (takes an unpaid leave of absence or absences) pursuant to this policy will have their “retention points” calculated in accordance with the employee’s regular appointment (no reduction due to Voluntary Furlough Leave), provided the employee returns to employment.

8. **Payroll Deductions**
   - An employee who reduces hours worked by taking Voluntary Furlough Leave is responsible for all employee deductions, voluntary and involuntary, including but not limited to the employee’s share of insurance premiums for all insurance programs in which the employee is enrolled at the time of the Voluntary Furlough Leave.
   - In the event that an employee does not have sufficient income in any pay period to cover voluntary or involuntary deductions, the employee shall be responsible for said deductions.
   - It is the employee’s responsibility to make payment arrangements with the appropriate payroll officer prior to the Voluntary Furlough Leave commencing.
   - The City of Stow shall maintain the employer’s share of any applicable insurance premiums during utilization by the employee of Voluntary Furlough Leave.

9. **Unemployment Benefits**
   An employee who takes Voluntary Furlough Leave shall not be eligible for unemployment benefits.

10. **Holiday pay**
    An employee who takes Voluntary Furlough Leave on a day contiguous to a holiday is eligible to receive holiday pay.

11. **Other Paid Leave**
    Voluntary Furlough Leave may be combined with other paid leave, including but not limited to personal days and/or vacation days.

12. **Future Employment and/or Discipline**
    - Voluntary Furlough Leave shall not be held against an employee for attendance purposes.
    - Voluntary Furlough Leave shall not be taken into consideration in relation to any employment decision, including but not limited to promotion or any other employee right or benefit.

13. **Overtime**
    Voluntary Furlough Leave shall count as hours worked for the purposes of computing overtime.

14. **Resumption of Work**
    At the conclusion of any Voluntary Furlough Leave, an employee is expected to resume his/her normal work schedule.
15. Voluntary Furlough Leave Approval Process
- **The VFLP creates no entitlement for employees.** An employee request for Voluntary Furlough Leave does not guarantee acceptance.
- An employee seeking to take Voluntary Furlough Leave must complete and submit a signed Voluntary Furlough Leave form to their immediate supervisor, and have it approved by their appointing authority.
- The Voluntary Furlough Leave form shall be submitted at least thirty days prior to commencement of the leave or implementation of a reduced schedule.
- An appointing authority may waive the thirty day notice requirement and authorize a minimum of fewer than thirty days advanced notice.
- Voluntary Furlough Leave shall be approved and/or scheduled on a first come – first serve basis.
- The appointing authority retains the sole discretion to approve or deny an employee’s Voluntary Furlough Leave request.
- **The appointing authority must ensure that any impact on operations as a result of any Voluntary Cost Savings Leave request is minimal and additional costs do not result.**
- If there is a need for overtime which would be created by a request, a disruption in services, or an undue hardship created for other employees, the request should be denied.
- Employees who provide essential services may have requests denied for that reason.
- An employee who has low or no leave balance (vacation, personal days, compensatory or flex time, sick leave, et al) and/or who has a recent history of low or no leave balance may be denied Voluntary Furlough Leave for that reason.
- The appointing authority shall notify an employee of the status of the request no later than seven days before the effective day of the leave of absence or the implementation of the reduced schedule.

16. Termination of Leave
- Voluntary Furlough Leave is not a right or benefit, and may be discontinued at any time.
- The City of Stow may terminate the VFLP in general, or Voluntary Furlough Leave for an individual employee, by providing ten working days notice in writing to the employee(s).
- An employee may terminate their Voluntary Furlough Leave upon ten (10) working days notice in writing to the appointing authority.
- These time limits may be waived if mutually agreed to otherwise by the employee and the appointing authority.
- In the event of an emergency, management has the right to cancel Voluntary Furlough Leave without regard to notice periods.

17. Mandatory Furlough Program
In the event that it is determined to implement a Mandatory Furlough Program, any employee who has already participated in the VFLP shall receive credit for the number of hours they have reduced pursuant to the VFLP on an hour for hour basis, during any applicable calendar year.

18. Voluntary Furlough Leave Program Regulations Prevail
If any provisions of the VFLP are in conflict with another ordinance, the specific provisions of the VFLP shall supersede and prevail over that (those) ordinance(s), including but not limited to Sections 2.02(2) and 2.03(1) of Ordinance 2008-128.