

City of Waukegan

# Travel, Meeting & Vehicle Use Policy

Effective May 1, 2019

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## Contents

<b>1. Travel Authorization</b> .....	2
a. In State, No Overnight Stay .....	2
b. Out-of-State, and / or In State Overnight Stay .....	2
<b>2. Travel Arrangements</b> .....	2
<b>3. Air Travel</b> .....	3
<b>4. Ground Transportation</b> .....	3
a. Taxi and Airport Transportation .....	3
b. Rental Automobiles .....	3
c. Personal Vehicles .....	3
e. Vehicle Allowance.....	4
<b>5. Registration Fees</b> .....	4
<b>6. Meals</b> .....	4
<b>7. Hotels</b> .....	4
<b>8. Accompaniment by an Immediate Family Member</b> .....	5
<b>10. Non-Allowable Expenses</b> .....	5
<b>11. Approved Forms of Payment</b> .....	5
<b>12. Advances</b> .....	6
<b>13. Expense Reporting</b> .....	6
<b>14. Elected Official Expense Allowance</b> .....	6
<b>15. Quarterly Reporting</b> .....	6
<b>16. Contact</b> .....	6

Travel can play an important role in accomplishing the City’s mission to provide superior and responsive governmental services to the people of Waukegan. When conducting business on behalf of the City, employees are expected to use good quality services and accommodations appropriate for the business to be conducted. Good judgment and ethical practices on the part of each traveler remain the most important factors in controlling travel expenses.

Control of travel authorization is the responsibility of each department head. Travel authorization is a two-part process including: 1) approval of all travel in advance of the trip, and 2) expense reporting following completion of the trip. Approval of expense reports and / or travel advance requests indicate that expenses submitted have been reviewed by the department head and have been found to comply with city policies regarding travel and authorized business expenses.

All city personnel traveling or incurring business expenses on behalf of the city and those responsible for the approval of these expenses are expected to use these measures to assist in maintaining control over travel expenditures. The policies detailed here apply to all funds under city control and are superseded only in those instances where funding agencies apply specific and more restrictive rules and rates.

**1. Travel Authorization**

a. In State, No Overnight Stay

The employee’s supervisor and department head must provide approval in advance for same day travel that does not require an overnight stay. When a department head travels, approval from the Mayor is required.

b. Out-of-State, and / or In State Overnight Stay

Travel out-of-state, or travel in- or out-of-state requiring an overnight stay, must have the advance written approval of the employee’s supervisor, department head and Mayor.

Requests for expense reimbursement or travel advance shall be submitted using forms provided by the finance department. Documentation indicating proper approvals must be provided in order for any employee reimbursement or travel advance to be processed. ***Failure to obtain proper approval may result in the denial of employee reimbursement or advance.***

**2. Travel Arrangements**

To reduce travel costs, city employees are encouraged to seek the assistance of a travel agent or discount travel web site when purchasing air travel and reserving cars and hotel rooms, and to use governmental discounts, when available. Whenever possible, travel should be arranged using the least expensive means possible. Employees shall use good judgment to determine logical routes for arriving at the intended destination.

### **3. Air Travel**

Employees are required to request flights according to approximate arrival and departure time, rather than by specific carrier or flight number, in order to obtain the lowest available fare with logical routing for all trips. In order to take advantage of available discounted fares, travelers shall make reasonable adjustments in their travel plans.

Employees shall make travel arrangements as far in advance as possible to take advantage of special fare savings. Travelers should be aware that some discounts have travel restrictions and cancellation penalties, and therefore good business judgment should be exercised.

All travel at city expense must be coach class. Upgrades to business or first class may be made at the employee's sole expense.

### **4. Ground Transportation**

It is expected that employees use the most efficient ground transportation available, considering cost, time, availability, and scheduling. First consideration should be made to using City-owned vehicles where they are available, particularly for travel within a 100 mile radius of Waukegan.

The cost of public transportation is reimbursable. A receipt is preferred, unless it is not possible to obtain one.

#### **a. Taxi and Airport Transportation**

Whenever practical, airport or hotel ground transportation should be the preferred method of transportation to hotels or meeting sites. Taxis may be used as necessary taking into consideration the cost of other means of transportation. A receipt is required for reimbursement of the expenses.

#### **b. Rental Automobiles**

Rental automobiles may be used as necessary but must be approved in advance by the supervisor and department head. Receipts are required for reimbursement of all expenses related to rental automobile use. Arrangements for rental automobiles should be made through the most economical means possible.

#### **c. Personal Vehicles**

Travel by personal automobile is reimbursable at the IRS authorized rate. Employees using personal vehicles on city business must have at a minimum the State of Illinois required automobile insurance coverage. The mileage reimbursement allowance covers all automobile related costs; gasoline, insurance, maintenance, etc. Toll charges and parking fees when supported by receipts, are reimbursable in addition to mileage allowance. The total personal automobile expenses shall not exceed the lowest available air fare. There will

be no mileage reimbursement for travel for leisure or recreation purposes once at the conference site unless such activities are sponsored by the conference.

d. City Vehicles

City vehicles are used for official business and may be kept overnight when authorized in writing by the Mayor. No employee may operate a city vehicle without having in his/her possession a valid driver's license. All accidents involving city vehicles must be reported in writing to the employee's supervisor, department head, and finance department within twenty-four (24) hours of the accident. The report shall include the names and addresses of available witnesses and principals. All accidents involving city vehicles are to be reported to the police immediately and at the site of the accident. A police report must be submitted to the finance department as soon as available from the police department in order to submit claims to the insurance company. City vehicles shall not be used to transport unauthorized passengers.

e. Vehicle Allowance

In certain instances, the city may provide a fixed car allowance on a monthly basis. All staff personnel assigned in writing by the Mayor to receive a car allowance shall be subject to the non-cash wage provisions of the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) Code that apply to commuting use of a business vehicle.

## 5. Registration Fees

All registration fees for conferences will normally be paid by the city prior to the actual event. A copy of the registration form with a check request must be forwarded to the finance department for check processing with all prior approvals for the travel authorization obtained in writing.

## 6. Meals

When traveling on City business, employees shall select restaurants that are reasonably priced for the locality. ***The City does not reimburse the cost of alcoholic beverages.*** Receipts are required for meals purchased during the course of the business trip. In lieu of receipts, the current U.S. General Services Administration per diem rates may be applied. If the cost of a meal is included in the registration for a seminar or conference, no reimbursement will be made.

## 7. Hotels

Employees shall use reasonably priced, comfortable lodging within a 60-mile radius of their conference or meeting. When making reservations or registering, the employee shall ask for and use the government or corporate rate, or the lowest rate that is available to them (senior, travel club, etc.). Reimbursement of lodging expenses shall be limited to the minimum number of nights required to conduct the assigned city business.

No lodging expense shall be reimbursed for meetings or conferences held in the Chicago metropolitan area unless prior approval is obtained from the Mayor.

## **8. Accompaniment by an Immediate Family Member**

The City will not reimburse employees for travel costs of immediate family members traveling with employees on official City business. Should a family member accompany the employee for personal reasons, only those costs related to the employee's travel may be reimbursed.

## **9. Combined Business/Personal Travel**

Whenever an employee, for his/her convenience, travels by an indirect route or interrupts city travel for personal travel, the additional expenses related to the personal travel are the responsibility of the employee.

## **10. Non-Allowable Expenses**

The City's policy is to reimburse its employees for all reasonable and necessary expenses incurred while transacting the affairs of the city. However, there are specific types of expenses which are considered to be personal and are, therefore, not reimbursable. These include but are not limited to:

- ✓ Cleaning, pressing, and laundry
- ✓ Personal entertainment including movies, videos or pay-per-view services in a hotel room;
- ✓ Airline and other trip insurance;
- ✓ Beautician, barber, manicurist and shoe shine;
- ✓ Personal telephone calls except to report changes in schedule, or to talk with family members once per day (15 minute per day maximum);
- ✓ Repairs on personal automobiles damaged while on city business;
- ✓ Traffic violations and court costs;
- ✓ Membership fees in airline clubs.

## **11. Approved Forms of Payment**

The City prefers that reservations booked through travel agencies be paid by issuing a purchase order to the travel agent. Payments will be made after a copy of the confirmation statement has been submitted to the finance department. Payments will be made to the travel agent in accordance with the city's accounts payable schedule. Payments will not be made unless a travel expense report or travel advance has been properly completed and submitted timely to the finance department.

Employees may use their personal credit cards to pay for travel related expenses. Employees shall be responsible for obtaining receipts and submitting and completing a travel expense report when the travel has been completed. Late fees and interest charges are not reimbursable to the employee.

## **12. Advances**

The advance will be established at an amount that is reasonable and should be substantiated in writing. All travel advances are issued and maintained subject to timely reporting of all travel expenses. A travel advance will be remitted to the traveler via paycheck and upon receipt of a completed travel advance form. Employees are responsible for ensuring that the completed travel advance form including proper approvals is received by finance prior to payroll processing deadlines for the date the funds will be needed.

Travel advances must be settled within five (5) days after completion of the travel. Any unused travel advance money must be reported and will be deducted from the employee's subsequent paycheck. A travel advance will not be issued if any settlement for a prior advance is outstanding

## **13. Expense Reporting**

The employee expense report should be filled out in accordance with the instructions noted on the form. Travelers should provide as much detailed information of all expenses on the statement as possible, including the cost of registration, books, meals, hotel, airfare, etc... Original receipts must be included except when it is impractical to do so or when specifically exempted by this policy (e.g. cost of public transportation, tips, parking meters, etc.). A copy of the expense report shall be submitted to the finance department within one (1) week following completion of the trip. A copy shall be retained by the department.

## **14. Elected Official Expense Allowance**

The Mayor, City Clerk, and Aldermen are granted a monthly expense account as follows: Mayor \$1,500; City Clerk \$400; City Treasurer \$250; Alderman \$250; Committee Chairman \$75; and Labor Relations Committee Member \$75. The amounts are paid to the elected official on a monthly basis via payroll. The expense allowances are deemed a "non-accountable" plan under Internal Revenue Service (IRS) regulations. The non-accountable designation means that the full amount of the allowances are paid on a monthly basis whether or not the elected official has any business expenses.

On a form provided by the finance department, the elected official may submit documentation of business expenses made in order for that equal portion of the allowance funds to be treated as non-taxable at calendar year end.

In the event an elected official requests a payment be made directly by the city on their behalf, that amount will be deducted from the monthly allowance payment via payroll. Any amount paid for an elected official training or travel that is not to be deducted from the monthly allowance amount must be approved in writing, and in advance by the Mayor

## **15. Quarterly Reporting**

At least quarterly, travel and entertainment expenses paid will be reported to the appropriate Committee of the City Council.

## **16. Contact**

Questions regarding any aspect of this policy shall be directed to the finance department.