

Proposed City of Burlington Relocation Policy for Department Head Appointees

CONTEXT

The recent hiring of the new Police Chief and Fire Chief demonstrated the need to have a clear City policy on City payment of relocation expenses for Department Heads who are required, as a condition of their position, to establish residency in the City of Burlington. The City appears to have followed different approaches at different times under different administrations, so the relocation policy detailed below is meant to clarify the City's protocols and standards for future Department Head appointments and will not apply retroactively to any prior appointments. The proposed policy draws from the State of Vermont's standards for employee travel and expenses.¹

EMPLOYEE ELIGIBILITY

With the prior written approval of the Mayor and the Human Resources Director, Departments may pay or reimburse the moving expenses of new Department Heads who are required to be residents to the City of Burlington, subject to the following requirements:

- The Mayor and Director of Human Resources may jointly authorize payment or reimbursement, up to a maximum of \$5,000 in FY17, for moving expenses. The maximum reimbursement will increase (or decrease) each year July 1 by the amount of the CPI-U for the previous 12 months.
- Written approval to extend this offer to a qualified candidate must be obtained from the Mayor and Director of Human Resources after completion of the recruitment and interview process but PRIOR to an offer being made.
- Sufficient funding to cover the expenses must be within the Department's current budget or the requisite budget amendment must be obtained before the expenses are committed.

ELIGIBLE EXPENSES

Moving expenses are defined as those expenses actually incurred for transporting household goods and personal possessions (may include one automobile if move is of substantial distance) from the employee's former residence to their new residence.

- Typical allowable expenses, include bills from a moving company, truck or trailer rental company, gasoline to power a rental truck or an automobile towing a trailer, labor for professional movers, and miscellaneous expenses such as packing cartons, tape and materials.
- No expense will be paid or reimbursed without a detailed invoice or receipt from the service provider.

¹ This draft relocation policy draws on "STATE OF VERMONT, AGENCY OF ADMINISTRATION, BULLETIN No. 34, EMPLOYEE TRAVEL AND EXPENSE POLICY" from June 2014 and in particular pp. 29 – 30, http://aoa.vermont.gov/sites/aoa/files/Bulletins/AOA-Bulletin3_4-June2014%20%282%29.pdf.

- An employee who is mistakenly paid or reimbursed more than the actual expenses must return any excess amount in a reasonable time.
- The City does not reimburse claims for connection, stopover, second pick up or delivery, storage, or special packing or handling charges.
- House-hunting trips, temporary housing, storage unit rentals, real estate fees, travel expenses of the employee or family members separate from the moving vehicle, loss on the sale of a home or personal possessions, and the labor of those not directly employed in the moving industry (i.e. friends and family) are not allowable expenses and shall not be paid or reimbursed.
- Three bids (estimates of moving costs – for example, by a moving company or by the employee’s renting equipment) must be provided in advance to the Director of Human Resources to substantiate the reasonableness of the proposed expense. The lowest bid need not be selected if it can be shown the rates are reasonable and justification is provided for the selection.
- Departments are advised to contact the CAO’s Office with any questions pertaining to the tax treatment of moving expenses before incurring any costs.
- Should the Department Head elect to voluntarily leave employment with the City of Burlington after less than 24 months of employment, the Department Head will be responsible for refunding the full amount of relocation expenses paid by the City.