

City of Hickory Travel Policy and Procedure

This policy establishes criteria for payment and reimbursement of travel expenses incurred by the Mayor, City Council members, City Attorney, board and commission members, and employees of the City of Hickory on official City business. Official City business shall be defined as job related training, work on behalf of the City of Hickory or travel to officially represent the City of Hickory. Travel that does not directly benefit the City of Hickory will not be reimbursable.

It is inherently understood in this policy that an individual traveling on official City business is expected to exercise the same care in incurring expenses that a prudent person would exercise if traveling on personal business and expending personal funds. Excess costs, services and luxury accommodations solely for the convenience or personal preference of the traveler in the performance of official City business are not acceptable under this policy and travelers will be held responsible for any and all unauthorized costs and additional expenses incurred.

Additional details and instructions are located on the City's Travel Request and Travel Expense report forms which must be submitted along with travel on official City business. The City of Hickory Personnel Ordinance and other approved policies may apply.

I. Procedures:

- A. **Forms:** All City travel, whether travel expenses are requested or not, must be preapproved by filling out a Travel Request form. City employees must obtain the signature of their supervisor and department head before submitting the travel request form to the finance division. Local travel for the purposes of a business meeting only does not require a travel request form. (See II.C.).
- B. **Emergency Travel:** It is understood that there are occasions for travel that cannot be planned for. On those occasions, a travel request and a travel expense form may be submitted at the same time. The approval process is the same as for planned travel. (See IV.G.).
- C. **Credit Cards:** The preferred method for paying all travel related expenses is with a municipal credit card. Whenever the municipal credit card is used, all receipts should be retained and returned with the Travel Expense report within the time frame allowed, in addition to returning copies of receipts with the credit card invoice.
- D. **Advance Payment:** Travel advances may be issued based on the per diem rates for the location of the event. Whenever possible, expenses should be prepaid rather than seeking reimbursement.
- E. **Fuel:** Within City limits and the local area, fuel must be obtained from Public Services. For out-of-town travel, a city issued fuel card must be obtained from the finance division. The original fuel receipt must be returned to Finance with the fuel card and a copy must also be attached to the travel expense report. Even if no fueling is foreseen, it is recommended to take a City-issued fuel card for unforeseen needs to fuel. Paying with the fuel card saves the City in taxes.
- F. **Per Diem rates:** Meals for in-state travel will be reimbursed as established by the State of North Carolina for state employees. Out-of-state travel will be reimbursed at rates established by the federal government. In-state rates are listed on the travel request form and out-of-state rates may be found at www.qsa.gov. Partial day travel will be

reimbursed per the following schedule. Exact time of departure and arrival must be listed on the travel request form.

1. Breakfast: 25% of the daily subsistence rate. Traveler must depart prior to 7:00 a.m.
 2. Lunch: 25% of the daily subsistence rate. Traveler must be traveling or attending a training/meeting between the hours of 11:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m. to receive this subsistence rate.
 3. Dinner: 50% of the daily subsistence rate. Traveler must return after 7:00 p.m. to receive dinner subsistence rate.
- G. Receipts for per diem expenses: Receipts are not required for meals when the per diem method is used. At rare times, the cost of meals may exceed the allowance. City Council must approve the request for excess costs in the case of elected officials, the City Attorney, boards and commission members and the City Manager. The City Manager must approve same for department heads. Department heads must approve requests for excess costs for coworkers.
- H. A written justification and receipt must accompany the travel expense report if the cost of meals exceeded the allowed per diem authorized on the travel form.
- I. Alcoholic Beverages: No alcoholic beverages may be included in the request for reimbursement or charged on a municipal credit card.

II. Travel

- A. Automobile Travel: A city vehicle must be used for approved travel except as noted. If a City vehicle is not available, a personal vehicle may be used and mileage will be reimbursed at the current federal rate. (www.irs.gov). This must be preapproved on the travel request form whenever possible.
- B. When using a City vehicle it is expected the vehicle is left in clean condition and with at least one-half ($\frac{1}{2}$) tank of fuel for the next traveler.
- C. Individuals receiving a travel allowance shall use their personal vehicles for local travel (defined as within 75 miles of the City of Hickory city limits) and will not be reimbursed for mileage or travel expenses when traveling within these limits.
- D. Reasonable parking fees, tolls, taxi charges and car rentals, when appropriate to the travel, are reimbursable upon submission of appropriate documentation and receipts.
- E. Common carrier: All air, rail and bus transportation shall be reimbursable at business or coach fare, substantiated by appropriate documentation and receipts. Quotes must be obtained from more than one (1) common carrier and documentation that the lowest fare available and/or the most efficient travel method is that which is being used must be submitted with the travel request form. The City will pay for one checked bag only. Additional luggage fees are the responsibility of the coworker/traveler.
- F. The preferred method for paying all travel related expenses is with a municipal credit card.

III. Lodging

- A. Lodging necessary for overnight travel is reimbursable to the traveler when the appropriate approval is obtained using the travel request form. Lodging will be reimbursed up to the amount of the federal allowable rate, unless otherwise authorized. If an event is held at a hotel or other facility offering accommodations, that facility may be selected even if the price of a single occupancy room exceeds the amount established herein. In the event that there is no lodging available at the conference hotel, an amount up to the cost of lodging in the conference hotel is authorized. Only the lesser of the amount authorized or the expense actually incurred will be paid by the City.
- B. When making reservations for lodging for City business, travelers should request the "government" or "discounted" rate most hotels and conference centers offer.
- C. Incidental Expenses: Charges billed to the traveler's hotel room that have no bearing on the legitimate business nature of the travel are the responsibility of the traveler and will not be reimbursed by the City.

IV. Other

- A. The cost of meals and beverages purchased for existing or potential contracted agencies and other individuals and their employees will be reimbursed. The amount must be reasonable and for bona fide business-related meetings. Under these circumstances, the cost of meals and beverages for the employee, as well as the contracted agencies' personnel or other individuals, will be reimbursed. In order to obtain reimbursement, a detailed receipt, outlining all individual purchases, must be submitted along with the names of the persons to whom the meal was served, the location, the name of the restaurant, the business topic(s) discussed and the date. If the business contact with whom the meeting is held is a representative for an entity under which N.C.G.S. 143-318.11 (4) would allow discussion of the location or expansion of an industry to be held in closed session, or under which N.C.G.S. 158-7.1 would allow negotiation of economic development incentives, the required information regarding the business contact need not be disclosed until otherwise required by law.
- B. Individuals other than elected officials and coworkers may not accompany coworkers in City vehicles unless they have a business interest in the purpose of the trip. Business partners attending the same meeting or conference may ride in the City vehicle with City staff.
- C. Spouses, family members, or other guests may accompany City Officials and coworkers to seminars, meetings, and other gatherings, at their own expense. If a coworker traveling on City business chooses to take a spouse or family member to a business conference, he or she must use his or her private vehicle.
- D. Attendants for physically challenged employees may accompany City coworkers and their travel and subsistence expenses may be reimbursed per this policy. Advance approval from the City Manager or his designee is required.

- E. At functions where attendance by a spouse or companion is appropriate, such as banquets held in conjunction with conferences, the City will reimburse the actual cost of the individual attending with the City Official, exclusive of travel expenses by common carrier. Subsistence allowance for travelling companions will only occur at those particular functions at a conference where it is customary for the traveling individual to bring an escort, such as at a banquet. Travelling companions will not receive subsistence allowance for "working meals" or events, nor will "spousal events" be paid or reimbursed from City resources.
- F. Submission of Information: A fully completed and signed travel request form must be submitted to the finance division prior to departure on official city business. A completed and signed travel expense report must be submitted to the finance division within ten (10) days of the return from the trip. With the exception of meals, original receipts must be attached to support all expenses listed.
- G. Approvals: The City Manager will approve requests of those who report directly to him. The Assistant City Managers will approve department head requests. Department heads will approve all other requests. Travel expenses for the City Manager and City Council members are reported on the City Council Agenda.



Mick W. Berry
City Manager

Reissued: September 2012