**SECTION IX – POLITICAL ACTIVITIES/PROTECTED SPEECH**

**A. POLITICAL PARTICIPATION**

The City of Kingston encourages all City employees to participate in the political process by registering and voting in each election. However, it is necessary to implement some policies to avoid conflict of interest between political activity and public employment in a City Position.

**B. CAMPAIGNING**

City employees, whether on or off duty; in or out of uniform; and whether on or off city property, shall not, at any time or any place, become a candidate for an elected city office. The city will not compensate employees for time when the employee is not performing work for the local government. Any time off from work used by the employee for participation in political activities will be limited to earned day off, vacation days, or by any other arrangement worked out between the employee and the City.

In all other elections for public office, city employees may enjoy the rights of any other citizen of the State of Tennessee to be a candidate for any local political office; the right to participate in political activities by supporting or opposing political parties, political candidates, and petitions to governmental entities. The city will not compensate employees for time when the employee is not performing work for the City.

Nothing in this section is intended to prohibit any employee from privately expressing his/her political views or from casting his/her vote in all elections.

**C.** **MEETING TO DISCUSS CANDIDACY / OFFICE**

An employee who becomes a candidate for any elective office shall, within fifteen (15) days meet with the department head and the city manager to discuss the candidacy and its potential effect on the employee's position. If after consultation with the department head, the city manager determines that the employee's candidacy has caused or has the potential to cause a conflict with the employee's regular position, or that the employee is not meeting the work obligations of the City position in full, the employee may be required to take accumulated vacation or personal leave for the remainder of the campaign.

**D. PERMITTED POLITICAL ACTIVITIES**

A City employee may exercise his/her rights when acting as a private citizen to engage in political activity not affecting an elective City office, including but not limited to:

1. Form, join or possess membership in a political party, club or other political organization
2. Run for office in the organization (unless prohibited by ordinance) and take an active role in the management of the organization.
3. Attend meetings.
4. Vote on the positions of the organization candidates and issues.

**E. PROHIBITED POLITICAL ACTIVITIES**

Employees may not:

1. Use or permit others to use authority of their position with the City to endorse or actively support a candidate for any political office, including the use of any City property, uniforms, vehicles, equipment, resources, facilities, or other deemed the property and or resources of the City.
2. Employees may not represent themselves, nor knowingly permit themselves to be represented, as City employees while engaging in any form of political activity.
3. City employees, individually, or collectively, are prohibited from endorsing or actively working for the election of, recall of, or opposing, or working for, the defeat of any candidate for City office while actively on duty.
4. An employee of the City may not directly, or indirectly, coerce attempt to coerce, command or advise another City employee to pay, lend, or contribute anything of value to a party, committee, organization, agency or person for political purposes, or to campaign for or support any political candidate, or to refrain from any political activities except as provided in the Charter or this personnel document.
5. No solicitations of signatures for political petitions will be allowed, nor shall anyone seeking political office actively engage employees for political positions while City employees are on active duty.
6. Employees who are candidates for or elected to a political position or who are appointed to a City board, are required to fulfill their job responsibilities and duties under their employment with the City of Kingston.

**F. COMMUNICATION WITH ELECTED PUBLIC OFFICIALS**

An employee of the City of Kingston has a right to communicate with Elected Public Officials under the Employee Political Freedom Act (PEPFA) T.C.A §-50-601-604. The city will not discipline, threaten to discipline, or discriminate against any employee for communication with an Elected Public Official unless the statement to the Elected Public Official is untrue.