Section One: Policy Statement

The City of Norwich is dedicated to a policy of equal employment opportunity and affirmative action. The success of the City of Norwich depends on employing productive workers of diverse backgrounds and eliminating historic barriers to employment. To fulfill our policy, we are committed to the recruitment, training and promotion of qualified individuals without regard to race, color, ancestry, religion, national origin, marital status, gender, sexual orientation, disabilities, age or veteran status.

Our obligation as both an affirmative action and equal opportunity employer directs all personnel actions. The City is committed to enforcing equal employment opportunity and affirmative action beginning with the application process and on through every step of the employment process. In addition to hiring and promoting employees, other personnel actions such as compensation, benefits, transfers, layoffs, rehires, training, education and social activities are conducted without regard to race, color, ancestry, religion, national origin, marital status, gender, sexual orientation, disabilities, age or veteran status.

Since the adoption of the City's original affirmative action program in 1976, the City has made efforts to recruit and employ minorities and women. This restatement of policy is intended to confirm our continuing commitment to provide the residents of the City with a local government workforce that reflects the demographic diversity of our community. We strive to ensure our employees have the skills, abilities and knowledge necessary to make Norwich a great place to live, work and visit. The Director of Human Resources will make every effort to pursue affirmative action. The City firmly maintains that it is the responsibility of every department head, supervisor, and employee to comply with the spirit and intent of this policy.

As City Manager, I believe that every candidate for employment and every employee should be treated with respect and deserves to be evaluated solely on the basis of character and ability. I pledge my full support in addressing the objectives of the City's Affirmative Action Policy.

Signed: _____ Date: 2-24-15
John Bilda, Acting City Manager

Section Two: Dissemination of Policy

A. Internal

The City of Norwich acknowledges the importance of communicating its affirmative action objectives, policies and procedures to its employees. To ensure the proper distribution of our policies, the City:

1. Posts the City's affirmative action policy statement on all employee bulletin boards at each facility.

2. Posts all relevant employment posters as required by the state and federal governments.

3. Provides each new employee with a copy of the City's affirmative action policy statement. Each time the policy statement is revised it is sent to all employees.

4. Reinforces and discusses the City's commitment to affirmative action on a quarterly basis at department head/staff meetings.

5. Includes a non-discrimination clause in all union contracts and/or the City's Merit System Rules.

Any communication received from employees regarding the City's affirmative action plan is maintained in a central file by the Affirmative Action Officer. The Affirmative Action Officer is responsible for ensuring a response is communicated to employees within ten working days and that a copy of all correspondence to the employee is retained.

B. External

To ensure the community is informed of the City's recruitment efforts and commitment to affirmative action and equal employment, the following steps are adhered to:

1. Recruitment sources are requested to post job announcements and refer applicants.

2. A list of minority and female organizations is maintained and reviewed annually to ensure applications are secured from the local community groups.

3. The City displays "AA/EEO" in all employment advertisements.

4. Job announcements delineating the essential functions, experience, and educational requirements are forwarded to community groups serving the female and minority population as well as educational institutions. Job announcements are distributed for each competitive exam open to the general public.

5. Job descriptions, titles, and announcements are updated as vacancies occur to ensure no reference is made to gender or age unless either is bona fide occupational qualification.

6. Bidders, contractors, and subcontractors will be informed of the City's commitment to affirmative action. The City does not engage businesses who willingly and knowingly violate antidiscrimination laws.

Through our external communications, the City continues to pursue and maintain relationships with outside parties which are mutually beneficial. Strong relationship forged with minority and women recruitment sources provide the City with new opportunities and ensures our affirmative action message is communicated to all each time the City initiates the hiring process.

Section Three: Assignment of Responsibility

A. City Manager

The City Manager has the ultimate authority for the implementation of the affirmative action plan, and appoints the Affirmative Action Officer. The Affirmative Action Officer has the complete support of the City Manager for the proactive enforcement of this plan.

B. Equal Employment Opportunity/Affirmative Action Officer

The Director of Human Resources is the designated Equal Employment Opportunity/Affirmative Action Officer for the City of Norwich, and has the responsibility to implement and execute the Affirmative Action Plan of the City. Specifically:

1. Developing policy statements, affirmative action programs, and internal/external communications.

2. Identifying problem areas.

3. Reviewing job descriptions to identify race and gender neutral alternatives to increase minority and female recruitment and representation.

4. Reviewing and updating the Affirmative Action Plan.

5. Educating management on affirmative action.

6. Monitor training, education, benefits and other opportunities to ensure EEO/AA policies are not violated.

7. Monitor hiring, recruitment classification, layoffs, promotions, and terminations to ensure compliance with employment laws.

8. Serve as a liaison with employment agencies and conduct all investigations due to formal charges.

9. Prepare all government reports.

10. Act as the liaison with recruiting sources serving women and minorities.

C. Department Heads, Division Heads and Supervisors

Managerial and supervisory personnel make many of the decisions regarding hiring, promotions, transfers, and terminations. Therefore, they play an integral role in the progress the City makes towards the achievement of its affirmative action goals. Annually, the narrative of the City's affirmative action plan is distributed and discussed at a staff meeting to keep Department Heads apprised of the City's goals. Responsibilities of department heads, division heads, and supervisors under the plan include:

1. Identifying problem areas and assisting with the solution to rectify disparities within their department/divisions.

2. Actively promoting the City's message to community groups, minority groups and women's organizations.

3. Reviewing and updating job specifications as openings occur to ensure women and minorities have an equal opportunity for securing employment.

4. Supporting diversity in the work force and preventing harassment and/or discrimination of employees based on race, sexual orientation, gender, etc.

5. Displaying required employment postings.

6. Ensuring that their employees support and comply with the spirit and intent of the City's affirmative action plan.

7. Activities may include: serving as a board member, participation in career days, and employing individuals from these groups as work interns or seasonals.

Section Four: Development of Action Oriented and Innovative Programs

The City of Norwich continues to address hiring and promotion issues of women and minorities using the following plan:

1. Minorities and women are invited to contact the Director of Human Resources or Assistant Director of Human Resources to discuss their career progression within the City. The Human Resources Department is responsible for providing information regarding educational opportunities and requirements, job requirements, and in-house training which may increase opportunity for promotion.

2. The City educates its managerial and supervisory staff regarding diversity in the workplace.

3. The City takes advantage of opportunities to promote itself as an employer by seeking press coverage, participating in job fairs, and civic activities such as United Way.

4. The City's affirmative action plan is applied to seasonal and temporary employment to develop the skills of minorities and females within our workforce and to acquaint these groups with City employment.

All programs of the City are reviewed to ensure the City continues to move toward its goal of fair utilization and to ensure women and minorities have the opportunity to advance.

Section Five: Internal Auditing and Reporting Requirements

The Affirmative Action Officer has the responsibility for preparing the documents of our Equal Employment Opportunity/Affirmative Action program. To ensure the City is moving toward its goal, the following steps will be taken:

1. All records related to the affirmative action program shall be retained for a minimum of two years.

2. Hiring data will be completed for each position.

3. All hiring decisions will be discussed with the Affirmative Action Officer before an appointment is made.

The Affirmative Action Officer reviews these records at least annually to assure compliance with the affirmative action plan.

Section Six: Identification of Problem Areas

The City's employment policies are reviewed periodically and revised if necessary to prevent a continuance of artificial barriers to employment.

The most significant problem identified thus far is the lack of applicants from the minority groups. The number of minority applicants applying for positions is insignificant when compared to the number of applications received for each position. To correct this problem, the City of Norwich needs to review the announcement distribution list periodically and advertise in minority publications.

In addition, the City's Merit Systems Rules can be restrictive; however, the rules are consistent with civil service hiring practices. The rules dictate the method of hiring which includes testing, ranking, and interviewing. Through the testing process applicants are eliminated who do not meet the passing score. However, those meeting the passing score may not have an opportunity to proceed further if they are not within the top five or ten candidates based on the number of applicants passing the exam.

Previously, certified candidates were ranked from highest to lowest and the department head was asked to justify his/her hiring decision if the highest achiever was not selected for the job. Very recently the rules were redesigned in this area to eliminate any preconceived notion a department head may have about a candidate and to allow the top candidates to be judged equally at the onset of the interview process.

Employment applications are designed to provide for statistical information regarding race and gender. The information on race and gender has always been detached from the application so the employee in the Human Resources Department reviewing the applications screens each applicant objectively.

Employment practices are reviewed continuously to ensure the City is proactive. Practices reviewed on a routine basis include:

1. The procedures by which job descriptions and minimum qualifications are established.

2. The recruitment system including the procedures which assure affirmative action.

3. All application forms and related documents.

4. All written pre-employment and promotional examinations.

5. All criteria which may have be applied as disqualifying factors for employment.

To ensure affirmative action and equal employment opportunities are fulfilled, the Affirmative Action Officer reviews all hiring decisions which affect our utilization prior to a conditional offer of employment.

Section Seven: Grievance Procedure

Step #1
If an employee feels he/she has been discriminated against, he/she should bring their complaint in writing to his/her immediate supervisor or Affirmative Action Officer within ten working days of the alleged discrimination. In the event the immediate supervisor is a department head, the complaint should be filed with the department head within ten working days of its occurrence and shall be processed in accordance with Step 4.

Step #2
The supervisor has ten working days in which to investigate the complaint and issue a written reply.

Step #3
If the grievant is not satisfied with the reply, he/she should present the complaint in writing to the department head who will have ten working days in which to respond. All correspondence will be in writing.

Step #4
If the complaint is not resolved at this point, the grievant may present the matter in writing to the Affirmative Action Officer. The Affirmative Action Officer shall schedule a hearing at which both parties have the right to appear and present evidence. The Affirmative Action Officer shall have ten days from the date of the hearing in which to issue a written decision. At the grievant's option, the grievance may be heard by a hearing officer, designated by the City Manager. The hearing officer shall make a recommendation to the Affirmative Action Officer, who shall respond in writing to the grievant.

Step #5
The grievant has the right to appeal the decision to the Chief Executive Officer whose decision shall be final.

At any time during the grievance procedure, the grievant may file a complaint with an external agency. Any employee who feels he/she has been discriminated against has the right to file a complaint with the Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities, U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, U.S. Department of Labor, and any other agency that enforces laws which prevent discrimination in the workplace.

Nothing in this procedure shall supersede grievance procedures included in collective bargaining agreements.

If any action by an official or employee designated in the above steps is the subject of a grievance, the grievant will bring the grievance to the next step in the process. If an action by the Affirmative Action Officer is the subject of a grievance, the City Manager may assign a hearing officer to hear the grievance and make a recommendation to the City Manager.

Section Eight: Hiring/Promotion

The long-term goal of the City is to employ minorities and women in percentages proportionate to the surrounding labor market. The City is committed to hiring and promoting females and minorities to fulfill its affirmative action goals.

It is be the goal of the Affirmative Action Officer to ensure that the hiring process results in qualified minorities and women are hired within the City of Norwich.

Section Nine: Program Goals and Timetables

Problem areas identified as part of this affirmative action plan will be addressed on an on-going basis. The City will continuously seek to increase our applicant pool, will review each test for relevancy to the job, and will ensure the screening process does not have an adverse impact on minority and female candidates.

Section Ten: Concluding Statement

The success of the City's affirmative action plan is dependent on the number of employment opportunities during the plan year. The City Manager is committed to affirmative action and equal employment opportunity and supports increasing the City's recruitment efforts to bring the workforce into parity with the surrounding labor market. During the course of the plan year, the City of Norwich will continue to seek qualified minorities for employment.