



City of Stanwood

Meals or Light Refreshments with Meetings Policy And Procedures

June, 2017

This policy is based on Washington State Attorney General opinion, which states, in part: “The consumption of nourishment is perhaps the classic example of what is ordinarily to be regarded as a private, personal and not public activity.” And, “Thus, to pay for food and drink with public money is very much the exception rather than the rule.”

This policy does not supersede applicable RCW’s.

This policy does not obligate the City to provide meals under any circumstances.

Payment may be authorized for the actual cost of meals for elective and appointed officials and city employees, regardless of travel status, for business meetings or training sessions where attendance is advantageous to the city, and where ALL of the following requirements are met:

1. The purpose of the meeting is to conduct official city business or to provide training to city employees or city officials; AND
2. The meals are an integral part of the business meeting or training session. Integral is defined as: “essential to completeness; part of the curriculum; formed as a unit with another part.” AND
3. The meeting or training is a special situation or occasion outside of the normal daily business of city employees. City funds may not be used to provide meals for staff parties, routine staff meetings, routine departmental meetings, or any event deemed to be social in nature; AND
4. Approval is obtained prior to the meeting, as documented by a properly completed Request for Approval – Meals with Meetings form signed by the department director; AND
5. The amount paid for each individual meal, including tax and gratuity, does not exceed the applicable meal allowance for the location of the meeting as provided under “per diem” on the General Services Administration web site at <http://www.gsa.gov>; AND
6. Any added tip may not exceed 15% of the cost of the food and tax; AND
7. The city obtains an itemized receipt for the actual cost of the meals; AND

Exceptions to these guidelines must be pre-approved by the Mayor, City Administrator or Finance Director.

Note: Under no circumstances may alcohol be provided at city expense.

The following are examples of when a meal MAY be provided using City funds:

An employee attends a meeting of a local professional organization that meets once monthly for a seminar at a local restaurant. A registration fee is paid to the professional organization, which includes a meal.

Department heads have been working on the new budget all day, and due to difficulties, several hours of work remain before they are done. There is little time available in the coming week that allows for completion of the budget. The City Administrator offers to have dinner delivered if staff remains at work through the evening in order to complete the budget.

A natural disaster occurs which results in activation of the Emergency Operations Center. Staff are required to be at the center around-the-clock. Meals are brought in to the EOC for those on duty.

An annual recognition event is held in which Councilmembers, the Mayor, and City employees are invited to celebrate the outstanding contributions and accomplishments of staff, volunteers or other members of the Stanwood community.

The following are examples of when meals MAY NOT be provided using City funds:

A department has a meeting from 11:30 – 1:00 on the first Tuesday of every month. Pizza is provided to encourage all staff to attend.

A staff member who has been with the City for 30 years is retiring and a dinner party is held in their honor.

A manager takes an employee to lunch at a local restaurant in order to discuss recent developments in the department and develop a plan on how to handle added responsibilities.