**24.4 Sabbatical Leave**

After ~~eight (8)~~ five (5) consecutive years of employment with the City, an employee may apply for a sabbatical leave without pay of up to six (6) months. Sabbatical leave is not intended to be used for the six-month period immediately prior to retirement. Such leave may be granted by the appropriate authority upon the recommendation of the employee’s department head but such leave shall not be unreasonably denied. However, the department head will deny sabbatical leave requests for the period immediately prior to retirement. There shall be no requirement that the employee exhaust paid leave balances prior to such sabbatical leave. Life, Dental, and Health insurance and/or Cash-in-Lieu shall be paid by the City for the duration of an approved Sabbatical Leave. For employees who fail to return to work at the expiration of the approved Sabbatical Leave or fail to return for the equivalent amount of time he or she was approved for Sabbatical Leave, such employee shall reimburse the City or the City may deduct the cost of the Health, Dental, and Life insurance premiums and/or Cash-in-Lieu paid by the City on behalf of the employee from the employee’s payout of their accrued leave balance due at termination.