TOWNSHIP OF LOWER MERION

ADMINISTRATIVE & HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 12, 2025
8:00 PM (Approximately)

Chairperson: Jeremiah Woodring

Vice Chairperson: Anthony Stevenson, Andrew Gavrin

AGENDA

1. **APPROVAL OF A PAID PARENTAL LEAVE POLICY FOR ALL ELIGIBLE FULL-TIME EMPLOYEES**

Township of Lower Merion
A FIRST CLASS TOWNSHIP

AGENDA ITEM INFORMATION

COMMITTEE: Administrative & Human Resources

ITEM: **APPROVAL OF A PAID PARENTAL LEAVE POLICY FOR ALL ELIGIBLE FULL-TIME EMPLOYEES**

Approval of a new twelve (12) week Paid Parental Leave Policy for all eligible full-time Township employees effective January 1, 2026 and authorization to execute Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) with both the Fraternal Order of Police (FOP) Lodge #28 and the Lower Merion Township Workers Association accepting the Paid Parental Leave Policy.

PUBLIC COMMENT

ATTACHMENT(S):
11-7-25 Issue Briefing - Parental Leave .docx
Paid Parental Leave Policy 6.16 Effective 1.1.2026 - Final.doc
Parental Leave MOU - FOP - Final 11.5.2025.docx
Parental Leave MOU Workers Association - Final 11.5.2025.docx

TOWNSHIP OF LOWER MERION

Administration & Human Resources Committee

Issue Briefing

Topic: Approval of a Paid Parental Leave Policy for All Eligible Full-Time Employees

Prepared By: Beth Lilick, Director of Human Resources
Brandon Ford, Assistant Township Manager

Date: November 7, 2025

I. Action To Be Considered By The Board:

Approval of a new twelve (12) week Paid Parental Leave Policy for all eligible full-time Township employees effective January 1, 2026 and authorization to execute Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) with both the Fraternal Order of Police (FOP) Lodge #28 and the Lower Merion Township Workers Association accepting the Paid Parental Leave Policy.

II. Why This Issue Requires Board Consideration:

Establishment of new Township-wide personnel policies and collective bargaining agreement modifications requires a Board of Commissioner (BOC) approval.

III. Current Policy or Practice (If Applicable):

With the exception of 80/84 hours of parental leave previously negotiated by the FOP as stipulated in the 2023-2026 collective bargaining agreement, the Township does not currently offer a stand-alone paid parental leave benefit.

IV. Other Relevant Background Information:

Board Commissioners have for some time discussed the need to provide Township employees with parental leave to allow time for bonding with a newly born or adopted child. Staff was charged by the BOC with developing a Parental Leave Policy that would provide up to 12 weeks of paid parental leave.

The attached Parental Leave Policy which provides 12 weeks of parental leave was developed by Township Human Resources staff with the advice of labor counsel. Parental leave policies have become far more common with private employers and Montgomery County also recently adopted a parental leave policy granting 12-16 weeks

of time. Such policies have been found to enhance employee retention and engagement plus serve as an additional inducement for recruitment.

Even granting an additional benefit under Pennsylvania labor law requires negotiation and consent of the collective bargaining units within the workforce. Discussions have been held with both the Lower Merion Fraternal Order of Police (FOP) Lodge #28 and the Lower Merion Township Workers Association. Collective bargaining unit leadership from both unions reviewed the draft Parental Leave Policy and agreed with implementation of the policy. Formal MOU's with both bargaining units are required and have been approved by them. The MOU with the Workers Association just accepts the policy while the MOU with the FOP deletes the 80-hour parental leave policy from their collective bargaining agreement and replaces it with the new Parental Leave Policy effective January 1, 2026.

This policy would also be applicable to all eligible full-time Township employees who are not represented by a union.

The proposed Paid Parental Leave Policy requires an employee to have served the Township for at least one year to be eligible to use the leave. It also requires an employee who has utilized parental leave to remain employed with the Township for one year following use of the leave or be subject to repayment if they leave employment in a voluntary separation.

V. Impact On Township Finances:

While the cost of employee salaries is accommodated in the annual budget the cost of parental leave time utilized will vary depending on the number of births or adoptions that occur each year. Some leave in some departments when utilized could result in the need for additional overtime while in some departments it may just be accommodated like vacation, sick or personal leave time, therefore the financial impact is hard to estimate.

The FOP which has an existing 80/84 hours parental leave benefit has averaged 7 utilizations each year over the past several years while totals for new children from all other non-uniform employees have generally averaged less than the FOP despite having more than twice the number of employees.

VI. Staff Recommendation:

Staff recommends that the Board of Commissioners approve the Paid Parental Leave Policy for all full-time employees as drafted effective January 1, 2026 and authorize execution of Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) with both the Fraternal Order of Police (FOP) Lodge #28 and the Lower Merion Township Workers Association accepting the Paid Parental Leave Policy.

Policy: **PAID PARENTAL LEAVE POLICY (ALL FULL-TIME EMPLOYEES)**

Effective Date: **January 1, 2026** Policy Number: 6.16

Purpose: To establish a Paid Parental Leave benefit and establish guidelines for eligible employees.

The Township of Lower Merion will provide up to twelve (12) weeks of paid parental leave to eligible employees subject to the terms, conditions and requirements outlined below.

I. Eligibility

Employees are eligible for paid parental leave if the individual:

A. Works at least thirty-seven and one-half hours (37.5) per week

B. Has been employed by the Township as a full-time employee for at least twelve (12) months

II. Duration and Usage Terms and Conditions of Paid Parental Leave:

A. Eligible employees may use paid parental leave for:

1. The care and bonding of the employee's child who was born on or after January 1, 2026

2. The placement of a child age 17 years or younger with the employee for adoption or foster care that occurred on or after January 1, 2026. (The term placement excludes the adoption of a stepchild or a foster child who has already been a member of the employee's household and has an existing parent-child relationship with the adopting parent.)

B. Prior to the use of paid parental leave:

1. A birth mother must use accrued sick leave, personal holiday, vacation and short-term disability benefits for childbirth and recovery. Any paid leave used for childbirth and recovery will run concurrently with and reduce the eligible employee's Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA)

entitlement. A birth mother may use paid parental leave after their physician certifies that they have been released from their own incapacity.

2. If a spouse requires time off to care for a birth mother prior to the birth of the child, they must use medical permission, personal holiday, vacation and unpaid leave. Both paid and unpaid leave for the spouse will run concurrently with and reduce the eligible employee's Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) entitlement. A spouse may use paid parental leave beginning on the date of the child's birth.

C. Eligible employees will receive a maximum of twelve (12) weeks of paid parental leave in a rolling twelve (12) month period to use for one of the reasons in Section II.A. The rolling twelve (12) month period begins on the date of the birth or placement of a child.

D. Eligible employees shall not receive more than twelve (12) weeks of paid parental leave in a rolling twelve (12) month period, regardless of whether more than one birth, adoption or foster care placement event occurs within that twelve (12) month time frame.

E. Paid parental leave will run concurrently with and reduce the eligible employee's Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) entitlement. In no event shall the use of other paid leave extend the twelve (12) week FMLA entitlement.

F. Paid parental leave may only be utilized in the twelve (12) months immediately following the birth or placement of a child.

G. Paid parental leave may be taken in a continuous period of time or intermittently as needed. Intermittent periods must be used in a minimum of two (2) week increments and no more than three (3) intermittent periods will be permitted for each leave, unless otherwise approved by Human Resources and the Township Manager.

H. If the eligible employee previously exhausted their twelve (12) week FMLA entitlement prior to or during the use of paid parental leave, intermittent paid parental leave will be subject to operational feasibility and may be denied for legitimate operational reasons. If the eligible employee previously exhausted both their twelve (12) week FMLA entitlement and all other paid leave, they are not permitted to take unpaid leave.

I. Eligible employees who work alternate work schedules shall revert to a standard Monday through Friday workweek during the time period(s) in which paid parental leave is utilized.

J. Eligible employees shall not be permitted to return to work during any work shift, for overtime or special duty detail, while on prescheduled paid parental

leave unless otherwise approved by Human Resources and the Township Manager for emergent needs.

K. While on prescheduled paid parental leave, employees shall not work any secondary employment during regular scheduled working hours.

L. Paid parental leave may not be used for unscheduled absences (call out, lateness, no show, etc.)

M. Employees whose child was born prior to January 1, 2026 or who had a child age 17 years or younger placed with them for adoption or foster care prior to January 1, 2026 are not eligible for retroactive paid parental leave.

N. Employees who have a child born after January 1, 2026 or have a child age 17 years or younger placed with them for adoption or foster care after January 1, 2026, but have not completed twelve (12) months of employment will become eligible for paid parental leave and FMLA on the date in which they complete twelve (12) months of employment. Said employees will only be permitted to use the maximum of twelve (12) weeks of paid leave through twelve (12) months immediately following the date of the birth or placement of a child.

Example:

Date of Hire:	October 31, 2025
Date of Child's Birth or Placement:	March 30, 2026
Date Employee becomes eligible for paid parental leave:	October 31, 2026
Date Employee may use paid parental leave through:	March 30, 2027

O. When both parents are eligible employees, each employee may receive the full paid parental leave entitlement. Both parents may take the leave simultaneously or at different times, provided that leave taken by each parent commences and is completed within twelve (12) months of the birth or placement of a child.

P. The employee must serve a continuous one (1) year employment obligation to the Township effective with the completion of paid parental leave (last workday paid parental leave is used). Employees who have taken paid parental leave under this policy who fail to return to work or serve this continuous one (1) year obligation will be required to reimburse the Township. See Section V.A., Failure to Return to Work/Serve One (1) Year Employment Obligation.

Q. Paid parental leave may be terminated by the Township if the employee informs the Township during the leave that they do not intend to return to work at the conclusion of the leave. The employee will be required to

reimburse the Township for any paid parental leave payments received prior to the termination of this benefit as well as the health insurance premiums which the Township paid to maintain the employee's coverage while the employee was on paid parental leave. See Section V.A.1, Failure to Return to Work/Serve One (1) Year Employment Obligation.

R. Any paid parental leave that is not used in the twelve (12) months following the birth or placement of a child will be forfeited, will not be available for future use and will not be payable upon separation from employment.

III. Compensation and Benefits During Paid Parental Leave

A. Paid parental leave is compensated at one hundred (100%) percent of the employee's regular, straight-time hourly rate of pay.

B. Use of paid parental leave in a given year does not change Township policy and/or collective bargaining agreement regulations of accrual and carryover of other paid leave.

C. Eligible employees can request to use sick leave while using intermittent paid parental leave, however, they will need to provide medical documentation to support the request.

D. Eligible employees who wish to extend a continuous absence beyond the twelve (12) weeks of paid parental leave for additional baby bonding can request to use personal holiday or vacation time; however, approval of personal holiday and vacation time will be subject to operational feasibility. Such requests will be reviewed by the Departmental Director and Human Resources.

E. If a holiday occurs while the employee is on paid parental leave, such day will be charged to holiday pay.

F. If an emergency closure occurs while the employee is on paid parental leave, such day will be charged to paid parental leave.

G. While on paid parental leave, an employee's health insurance benefits will continue under the same terms and conditions as prior to the paid parental leave, including continuing responsibility for any applicable employee premiums through payroll deduction.

H. Applicable taxes, employee contributions to the pension plan, employee contributions to voluntary benefit plans and employee contributions to the voluntary 457 Deferred Compensation Plan will continue to be deducted from paid parental leave pay.

IV. Notice and Certification Requirements

A. Eligible employees are required to provide notice of their intent to use paid parental leave to Human Resources a minimum of thirty (30) days prior to the usage of paid parental leave. Notice requirements include a *Paid Parental Leave Request Form* completed by the employee and FMLA paperwork completed by both the employe and treating medical provider (provided FMLA entitlement was not previously exhausted). While a minimum of thirty (30) days' notice is required, advance notice of ninety (90) days is preferred to allow for operational planning. The anticipated usage dates, duration, and intermittent periods must be defined and approved in advance. As birth, adoption, and placement dates often are not exact, the eligible employee is permitted to revise their request based on the actual date of event.

B. If the reason for paid parental leave is not foreseeable (e.g., the employee is going through adoption or contacted for an emergent foster care situation), the employee must notify both Human Resources and their direct supervisor as soon as practicable.

C. The Township reserves the right to deny or delay paid parental leave if the employee does not submit the application or notification within the required timeframe.

D. Human Resources will provide final approval/denial of the paid parental leave request and FMLA by written notice to the employee and department supervisor.

V. Failure to Return to Work/Serve One (1) Year Employment Obligation:

A. The employee must serve a continuous one (1) year employment obligation to the Township effective with the completion of paid parental leave (last workday paid parental leave is used), subject to the following:

1. If an employee voluntarily elects not to return from paid parental leave, he/she is required to reimburse both the full amount of paid parental leave payments and the health insurance premiums which the Township paid to maintain the employee's coverage while the employee was on paid parental leave. These payments and premium amounts will be deducted from the employee's final paycheck. If the employee does not have enough earnings to cover the amount owed through payroll deductions, including other accrued paid leave, he/she will be required to reimburse the Township.

2. If the employee returns to work after completion of paid parental leave but voluntarily leaves employment prior to completing one (1) rolling year from such completion, he/she is required to reimburse the full amount of paid parental leave payments which will be deducted from the employee's final

paycheck. If the employee does not have enough earnings to cover the amount owed through payroll deductions, including other accrued paid leave, he/she will be required to reimburse the Township.

B. If the employee is laid off, involuntarily terminated, or their employment ceases due to eligibility for Long Term Disability prior to fulfilling their continuous one (1) year employment obligation to the Township after completion of paid parental leave, they will not be required to reimburse the Township for paid parental paid leave payments or health care premiums.

VI. Miscellaneous

A. A fraudulent request or misinformation provided regarding a request for paid parental leave is grounds for disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

B. Discrimination against, harassment of, or retaliation against any employee for requesting or using paid parental leave will not be tolerated. See Township Policy 4.1, Discrimination/Harassment.

C. This policy cannot anticipate or address every situation that might occur with respect to paid parental leave eligibility and use; therefore, the Township Manager and Director of Human Resources have the authority to interpret this policy consistent with the intent of paid parental leave.

Initial Issue Date: _____

Township Manager Signature: _____ Date: _____

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING
Regarding Lower Merion Township Paid Parental Leave Policy

The Township of Lower Merion ("Township") has proposed, and the Lower Merion Fraternal Order of Police (FOP) Lodge #28 has reviewed and accepted the attached Paid Parental Leave Policy to be effective January 1, 2026.

In accepting the Paid Parental Leave Policy providing up to 12 weeks of paid parental leave the Lower Merion Township Fraternal Order of Police (FOP) Lodge #28 has additionally agreed that the benefit in Article 12 Section 12.1 Parental Leave in the current 2023-2026 Agreement Between The Township of Lower Merion and The Lower Merion Fraternal Order of Police Lodge #28 is no longer available to any Officer who has or adopts a child on or after January 1, 2026.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the parties hereto intending to be legally bound hereby have signed below on this _____ day of _____, 2025.

Township of Lower Merion

_____
Ernie B. McNeely, Township Manager

_____
Witness

Lower Merion FOP Lodge #28

_____
John Iushewitz, President,
FOP Lodge #28

_____
Witness

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING
Regarding Lower Merion Township Paid Parental Leave Policy

The Township of Lower Merion ("Township") has proposed, and the Lower Merion Township Workers Association has reviewed the attached Paid Parental Leave Policy to be effective January 1, 2026.

In accepting the Paid Parental Leave Policy providing up to 12 weeks of Paid Parental Leave the Lower Merion Township Workers Association has agreed to the policies and procedures detailed in the attached Paid Parental Leave Policy.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the parties hereto intending to be legally bound hereby have signed below on this _____ day of _____, 2025.

Township of Lower Merion	**Lower Merion Township Workers Association**
_____	_____
Ernie B. McNeely, Township Manager	Darren Wright, President,
_____	_____
Witness	Witness