RISK AUDIT | JURISDICTION: MUNICIPAL / PUBLIC SECTOR (TEXAS) | VERSION 2026.1

Municipal HR Risk Audit Checklist

An HR risk sweep for cities and districts: authority, policies, records, discipline, public safety, public works, pay, and vacancies.

WHAT THIS HELPS YOU DO

Use this audit to sweep the eight HR risk zones of a Texas municipality — surfacing the authority confusion, stale policies, records exposure, and vacancy risks that become council agenda items when ignored.

WHEN TO USE THIS DOCUMENT

- When a new city manager, administrator, or HR director takes over
- Annually, before budget season prices the findings
- After any HR-related council controversy or grievance
- When one person wears HR, payroll, and records hats
- Before an interim vacancy becomes a standing crisis

WHAT THIS DOCUMENT HELPS PREVENT

- Personnel decisions made by whoever spoke last, without authority
- Policy manuals contradicting actual practice — and both contradicting the law
- Records requests that expose files nobody organized
- Public safety and public works HR risks maturing into litigation
- Council learning about problems from the newspaper

Faulkner HR Solutions focuses on the system behind the people problem. This tool is designed to help employers slow down the decision, identify the risk, and create proof before the issue becomes a claim, complaint, turnover event, or credibility problem.

BEFORE YOU START: READINESS CHECKLIST

Gather the following before working through this document. Incomplete inputs are one of the most common reasons employer decisions fail under later scrutiny.

Have it	Input	Notes / location
☐	Employee name and role	
☐	Date of incident, request, or separation	

Have it	Input	Notes / location
☐	Supervisor involved	
☐	Policy or handbook section that applies	
☐	Prior documentation on file	
☐	Pay records, if applicable	
☐	Relevant emails, texts, notes, or complaints	
☐	Decision-maker name	
☐	Deadline, if applicable	

EIGHT-ZONE RISK AUDIT

Score each zone: 2 = documented and working, 1 = partial or informal, 0 = absent or unknown. Zones scoring 0-1 go on the corrective plan with an owner and date.

Zone 1 — Governance and Authority

Score	Check	Notes
☐	Charter/ordinances define who hires, disciplines, and fires — and practice matches	
☐	Council/manager/department head lanes are written and observed	
☐	Individual council members do not direct staff or intervene in personnel matters	
☐	Delegations of authority are current and signed	

Zone 2 — Personnel Policies

Score	Check	Notes
☐	Personnel manual updated within 3 years and legally reviewed	
☐	Policies match actual practice (test three: discipline, leave, overtime)	
☐	Employees acknowledged the current version, not a 2015 photocopy	
☐	Chapter 143/174 (civil service / collective bargaining) applicability confirmed, if relevant	

Zone 3 — Records and Requests

Score	Check	Notes
☐	Personnel files structured with confidential material separated (medical, protected data)	
☐	Public Information Act request process has an owner and deadlines	
☐	Records retention follows the state schedule; destruction is logged	
☐	Payroll, leave, and discipline records reconcile with each other	

Zone 4 — Discipline and Grievances

Score	Check	Notes
☐	Discipline follows the written procedure — verified against the last five actions	

Score	Check	Notes
☐	Due process provided where property interests exist (civil service, contracts)	
☐	Grievance path exists, is used, and doesn't dead-end at the person complained about	
☐	Documentation standard applied consistently across departments	

Zone 5 — Public Safety HR

Score	Check	Notes
☐	Police/fire hiring, discipline, and promotion follow applicable civil service rules	
☐	FLSA 207(k) work periods documented for public safety scheduling	
☐	Fitness-for-duty and critical-incident procedures exist	
☐	TCOLE (or equivalent) licensing and training records current	

Zone 6 — Public Works and Field Operations

Score	Check	Notes
☐	On-call and call-back rules written and paid correctly (see On-Call Policy Template)	
☐	CDL, licensing, and DOT compliance tracked with expirations	
☐	Safety program active: training records, incident response, OSHA-equivalent standards	
☐	Working foremen's pay and classification reviewed	

Zone 7 — Pay and Classification

Score	Check	Notes
☐	Pay plan adopted, published, and actually followed	
☐	FLSA exemptions tested per position, not per title	
☐	Overtime, comp time, and 207(k) calculations verified	
☐	Longevity, certification, and premium pays documented and consistent	

Zone 8 — Vacancies and Continuity

Score	Check	Notes
☐	Critical roles identified with succession or coverage plans	
☐	Standing vacancies priced (overtime, burnout, service impact) — see Critical Vacancy Worksheet	
☐	Institutional knowledge documented for single-point-of-failure roles	
☐	Recruiting timelines tracked against service risk	

Corrective Action Plan

Zone	Finding	Action	Owner	Due

Role	Name / signature	Date
Audited by		
Reviewed with (manager/council)		

STOP AND REVIEW BEFORE ACTING

If any statement below is true, pause. Get the decision reviewed by HR, counsel, or Faulkner HR Solutions before you act.

- ☐ A council member is directing day-to-day personnel decisions.
- ☐ The personnel manual predates the current administration by a decade.
- ☐ Nobody can produce the last three discipline files in under a day.
- ☐ Public safety overtime is calculated on a 40-hour week with no 207(k) documentation.
- ☐ One retirement away from losing payroll, records, and HR simultaneously.
- ☐ The same grievance theme has appeared three times in two years.

MINIMUM DOCUMENTATION STANDARD

Before this file is closed, the employer should be able to answer every question below and point to where the proof lives.

Question	Your answer / where the proof is stored
What happened?	
When did it happen?	
Who observed or reported it?	
What policy, standard, deadline, or expectation applies?	
What decision was made?	
Who had authority to make the decision?	
What alternatives were considered?	
What risk was reviewed?	
What follow-up is required?	
Where is the proof stored?	

COMMON MISTAKES

1. Auditing policies without testing whether practice matches them.
2. Treating public safety HR as the chief's private domain until a lawsuit arrives.
3. Letting records requests be handled ad hoc by whoever answers the phone.
4. Scoring everything 'fine' because nothing has blown up yet.
5. Filing the audit instead of funding the corrective plan.
6. Assuming small-city informality is a defense — courts and the AG's office don't.

WHAT TO DO NEXT

Brief the city manager (and council, as appropriate) on zone scores, fund the corrective plan through the budget process, and re-audit annually. Zones scoring zero deserve outside review — the cheapest time to fix a municipal HR failure is before it has a docket number.

> **Before you terminate, deduct, discipline, classify, or respond, get the decision reviewed.**
> Call 210.446.8730 or email thomas@faulknerhrsolutions.info.

Public-sector HR decisions have to survive more than internal disagreement. They have to survive records requests, council questions, budget scrutiny, and public trust.

Need help applying this to a real workplace decision?

Faulkner HR Solutions helps Texas employers, nonprofits, municipalities, and growing businesses fix the people systems behind recurring workplace problems.

If this document raised a risk flag, do not guess your way through the next step.

Call: **210.446.8730**
Email: thomas@faulknerhrsolutions.info
Website: faulknerhrsolutions.info

DISCLAIMER

This resource is provided for general employer education and planning purposes. It is not legal advice and does not create an attorney-client relationship. Employment laws, agency guidance, and local requirements may change. Employers should review the facts of each situation before acting and consult appropriate HR or legal counsel when needed.