

ADMINISTRATIVE/BUDGET COMMITTEE

Hilton Palacio Riverwalk

San Antonio, Texas

August 25, 2025

**VOTING MEMBERS**

- 10 Joe Spraggins.....Mississippi
- 11 Billy Broussard.....Louisiana
- 12 Dave Donaldson.....GSMFC
- 13 Jason Osborne.....Louisiana
- 14 John Sanchez.....Florida
- 15 Chris Schieble (designee for Ryan Montegut).....Louisiana

**NON-VOTING MEMBERS**

- 18 Mike Allen.....Florida
- 19 Kevin Anson (designee for Scott Bannon).....Alabama
- 20 Brenda Ballard.....Texas
- 21 Kesley Banks.....Texas
- 22 J.D. Dugas.....Louisiana
- 23 Troy Frady.....Alabama
- 24 Dakus Geeslin (designee for Robin Riechers).....Texas
- 25 John Marquez.....Louisiana
- 26 LT Jackson Morton.....USCG
- 27 Anthony Overton.....Alabama
- 28 Andy Strelcheck.....NMFS
- 29 C.J. Sweetman.....Florida
- 30 Ed Walker.....Florida

**STAFF**

- 33 Assane Diagne.....Economist
- 34 Matt Freeman.....Economist
- 35 John Froeschke.....Deputy Director
- 36 Sarah Gardiner.....Fishery Biologist
- 37 Beth Hager.....Administrative Officer
- 38 Lisa Hollensead.....Fishery Biologist
- 39 Mara Levy.....NOAA General Counsel
- 40 Jessica Matos.....Administrative Document Editor & IT Coordinator
- 41 Emily Muehlstein.....Public Information Officer
- 42 Ryan Rindone.....Lead Fishery Biologist/SEDAR Liaison
- 43 Bernadine Roy.....Office Manager
- 44 Carrie Simmons.....Executive Director

**OTHER PARTICIPANTS**

- 47 Frank Helies.....NOAA
- 48 Jimmy Hull.....SAFMC

1 John Walter.....SEFSC

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1 The Administrative/Budget Committee of the Gulf Council convened  
2 at Hilton Palacio Riverwalk in San Antonio, Texas on Monday  
3 morning, August 25, 2025, and was called to order by Chairman Joe  
4 Spraggins.

5  
6 **ADOPTION OF AGENDA**  
7 **APPROVAL OF JANUARY 2025 MINUTES**  
8 **ACTION GUIDE AND NEXT STEPS**  
9

10 **CHAIRMAN JOE SPRAGGINS:** We have the Administrative Budget  
11 Committee, and, first off, we have the agenda, and, in the agenda,  
12 the members are myself, Mr. Donaldson, Mr. Broussard, Mr. Sanchez,  
13 and Mr. Schieble, and, if I could, could I get an adoption of the  
14 agenda?

15  
16 **MR. DAVE DONALDSON:** So moved.

17  
18 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** Do I have a second?

19  
20 **MR. CHRIS SCHIEBLE:** Second.

21  
22 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** Any questions? The agenda is adopted. All  
23 right, and we have Approval for the January 2025 minutes. Could  
24 I get approval for that?

25  
26 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** So moved.

27  
28 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** Can I get a second?

29  
30 **MR. JOHN SANCHEZ:** Second.

31  
32 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** Second by Sanchez. All right. Any  
33 discussion? Then the minutes are approved, and, with that, I'll  
34 turn it over to Dr. Simmons.

35  
36 **PRESENTATION OF THE 2023-2024 AUDIT REPORT**  
37

38 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR CARRIE SIMMONS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Good  
39 morning, everyone. What I would like to do for the action guide  
40 is just take it item-by-item, since we have several items on the  
41 agenda.

42  
43 Your first item is the Presentation of the 2023 and 2024 Audit  
44 Report, and Ms. Hager is going to go through that. This is really  
45 just for your information, and the public's information, as far as  
46 how the funds were spent the last two years. This is a biennial  
47 fiscal audit for those years, and it was completed August of this  
48 year, 2025, and we held a meeting with our council leadership, our

1 NOAA program officer and General Spraggins, the chair of the  
2 Admin/Budget Committee, to review and discuss this audit with our  
3 firm that conducted it.  
4

5 At this meeting, the independent audit firm issued an unqualified  
6 opinion, that is also outlined in our summary report. The final  
7 summary report is presented here for the committee's review, and  
8 this item is really for your information, but please feel free to  
9 ask any questions, Mr. Chair.

10  
11 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** Okay. Are there any questions? All right.  
12 Do we need to get a motion to accept the audit report?  
13

14 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** I don't think so, because we had the  
15 review, but I would just -- You know, we can go through it, if the  
16 committee would like, or if there's any questions.  
17

18 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** Yes, and would you like to go through the  
19 audit, anybody? Any questions? Go ahead, Beth, and go through  
20 it.  
21

22 **MS. BETH HAGER:** Okay. Bernie, go ahead and scroll down, please.  
23 There are a lot of notes, in the first several pages, that just  
24 basically state that this is using Generally Accepted Accounting  
25 Principles, and that everything appears to be reasonable, and we  
26 don't appear to have any issues, and it's basically an unqualified  
27 opinion.  
28

29 There is a schedule, if we want to scroll down a few more pages,  
30 of the total outlays. This is an aggregate of all of the awards  
31 during these periods, and the only thing in here that is even  
32 somewhat -- The only thing that we had a question about, as we  
33 were going through it, and I went back and absolutely verified,  
34 was that the 2022 audit covers a period that included the no-cost  
35 extension from 2020 and from the 2019 ending period.  
36

37 That non-federal contract, that contract line, included several  
38 contracts that were approved by the council, and that we were just  
39 basically paying out and finishing up at that time, and so it just  
40 looks a little weird, but there were about \$600,000 worth of  
41 contracts in that period that were research things, and were  
42 getting finished up and paid out between the no-cost, and then, in  
43 the 2020, we had another contract there, and so it's all in line  
44 with exactly where we normally are, and it appears to be perfectly  
45 good for us. It's actually already been uploaded to the Federal  
46 Clearinghouse as well, and they have accepted it, and so that's  
47 what we have.  
48

1 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** Okay. Any questions on the audit report? If  
2 not, okay, Dr. Simmons. Go ahead, sir.

3  
4 **MR. J.D. DUGAS:** Thank you, General Spraggins. I would just like  
5 to make a comment. I was not in the weeds with this process, but  
6 I went through a similar overview with Beth and Carrie and the  
7 staff, and I just commend, and kudos to the staff. There was no  
8 deficiencies found.

9  
10 In my area of expertise, we go through several audits a year, and  
11 there's always deficiencies, and challenges, and things we have to  
12 fix on the backend, and there were none here, and so just kudos to  
13 the staff.

14  
15 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** They always, you know, do a great job, and we  
16 love to get the audit reports the way that we get every year, and  
17 so it tells you the staff is doing something very good, and  
18 managing the funds the way they're supposed to be managed, and  
19 that's what's great, and we appreciate all of you all for that. I  
20 don't know if everybody else is having the same trouble I am, but  
21 I can get nothing to pull up.

22  
23 Even though I own the website, and everything else, nothing wants  
24 to pull up, and Billy is having the same problem over here, and so  
25 I don't know if it's us or whatever, but so it's a hard time for  
26 us to see some of this, but we'll go ahead, and go ahead, Dr.  
27 Simmons. Do you want to go forward with the next?

28  
29 **REVIEW FINAL 2025 FUNDED BUDGET AND ACTIVITIES**

30  
31 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank  
32 you for the accolades. We'll go to Agenda Item V, Review of the  
33 2025 Budget, and this we are asking, you know, after you review  
34 and provide any input, that we consider passing a motion, either  
35 at the committee level or by Full Council.

36  
37 In January of 2025, the committee reviewed our draft activities  
38 schedule, and a draft budget, based on our 2024 funding level.  
39 All administrative funds have been received from NOAA for the 2025  
40 year now, and that totaled a little over \$4.2 million. This is a  
41 1 percent reduction from what we got last year, 2024, and so we  
42 have revised the original budget, taking year-to-date activity  
43 into our accounting, and the committee should review and revise  
44 the final 2025 budget, ask any questions, and consider passing a  
45 motion, as I said, and so we could pull that up, please, Bernie.

46  
47 **MS. HAGER:** As we look at the comparison here between what was the  
48 proposed initial amount, and then what we actually received funded,

1 we've made a few tweaks within the line items, partially to make  
2 sure that we were in line with the total funding, but also in  
3 reference to some activity that we've already had, and we have  
4 some no-cost carryover that's helped us defray some of those  
5 meeting costs, because some of the meetings that we've held were  
6 about the no-cost activity.

7  
8 Within travel, basically, we had a minor net increase, because of  
9 the SSC needing a little bit more funding. If we scroll down, you  
10 can see that council salaries were unchanged. We've added a little  
11 bit extra for SSC salaries. Staff salaries were decreased, due to  
12 some changes in staffing. We have had a gap in staffing for a few  
13 months, but that will hopefully be refilled, and so we didn't  
14 completely remove that line.

15  
16 Then if we go down, Bernie, and you can see the meeting room costs.  
17 That was helped significantly by having the June meeting in Tampa,  
18 so that we were able to save \$34,000 in that line, which wound up  
19 getting us to our 1 percent reduction, which was very, very  
20 helpful, and that's it, basically. It's very similar to what you  
21 all saw before. Most lines are about the same.

22  
23 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** Okay. Any questions on our budget? Mr.  
24 Schieble.

25  
26 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. What constitutes other  
27 travel, in that category right below SSC travel? What is that?

28  
29 **MS. HAGER:** Those are people that may not be council members, SSC  
30 members, or AP members. It also will account for potential moving  
31 costs.

32  
33 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** Any other questions? If not, if I could get  
34 a motion to accept the budget.

35  
36 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** So moved. Motion to accept.

37  
38 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** All right, and Mr. Sanchez seconds. Any  
39 discussion? **Then the budget is passed.** All right, and do you  
40 want to talk about the 2026 at all now, or just --

41  
42 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Well, I think we can just let the  
43 committee know that we'll try to bring some plans back hopefully  
44 in November, if we have some idea of what we might be budgeting  
45 for in 2026. We have potentially a lot of changes, as far as, you  
46 know, we'll need to find a new office space by the end of 2026,  
47 and so that is going to be kind of a big unknown for us. Then I'm  
48 hoping, by the end of this meeting, we can give you an update on

1 our locations for 2026.

2  
3 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** Okay, and, you know, everything is going to  
4 be fluid until we get something from the federal government to  
5 come back, and hopefully, by October, we'll have something for the  
6 next meeting, but I understand that, you know, at least they didn't  
7 give you a week. They gave me a week to move out of my building,  
8 and, you know, we got said -- Last week, we got a notice to move  
9 out, because of mold in the building. We had to move everybody  
10 out in a week's time, but that's okay. We'll make it. All right,  
11 and so, moving right along, Dr. Simmons, would you like to go  
12 through the SOPS next? I'm sorry. Yes, sir, Mr. Sanchez.

13  
14 **MR. SANCHEZ:** With the hunt for a new office, are you going to try  
15 to find something as accommodating as that office, in terms of we  
16 just had a meeting there, and it dramatically helped the budget  
17 get to our 1 percent, and that was -- It was very accommodating,  
18 the setup that you guys have in the office, not only with the  
19 seating for the public, but a big, you know, horseshoe like this  
20 there, and I thought that was dynamite, and so hopefully be able  
21 to recreate that.

22  
23 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Yes, and we're going to start  
24 researching that. We might have our advocate help us try to figure  
25 out what type of space, how to best utilize the space we have, and  
26 I don't think we can have as big a footprint as we have right now,  
27 which is about 8,300 square feet, and better utilize it.

28  
29 I mean, we have a lot of wasted space, per se, in the current space  
30 we have, but we have some help there, and we're going to start  
31 looking into it, but it is, you know, a big unknown, as far as our  
32 budget in the next year, but our main goal is to stay close to the  
33 airport and the hotels and restaurants, so folks can walk, and we  
34 may just have to have multiuse offices for staff, and consider  
35 downsizing in that manner, but to be determined, and there's a lot  
36 of things that we can discuss and try to utilize the best we can.

37  
38 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** Okay. Any other questions?

39  
40 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Mr. Chair, we might need to slow down.  
41 Did you guys actually pass the motion for the 2025 budget? Okay.  
42 I'm not sure Bernie captured that.

43  
44 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** Okay. The motion -- Mr. Schieble made the  
45 motion, and Mr. Sanchez was the second. Okay.

46  
47 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** It looks like she did. Thank you.

1 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** Are we good? All right. Let's move on then,  
2 and go to our next item, which is Item VI, which is the SOPPs.

3  
4 **UPDATES TO SOPPS**

5  
6 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and so we have  
7 several proposed changes to the SOPPs for the committee's  
8 consideration, and those are outlined in tracked changes in Tab G,  
9 Number 6, and so we're hoping we can get some feedback from the  
10 committee, and potentially a motion, either at the committee level  
11 or by Full Council.

12  
13 Just a quick overview of some of the proposed changes, and so, in  
14 Section 2.7.3, we made an update to the Ecosystem Technical  
15 Committee; and Section 4.1, the staffing, which we'll go through  
16 that in detail; Section 4.3, Detail of Government Employees;  
17 Section 6.1, Financial Management. We can go through those in  
18 detail now, Mr. Chair, unless you have questions.

19  
20 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** Any questions before we go forward? Let's  
21 move forward with it.

22  
23 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** All right, and so we rebranded  
24 ourselves, and so we need to update our name and our logo, and we  
25 have to update our award number here. We added "doing business as  
26 the Gulf Council", and so that reflects the changes on the cover  
27 page there and the introduction.

28  
29 I guess, just for the new council members, just kind of a high-  
30 level overview, and so the SOPPs is really more about the council's  
31 standard operating procedures. Of course, staff is a little bit  
32 in there, but the admin handbook is more about the staff, and so  
33 just to kind of keep that in mind as a new council member.

34  
35 We just changed this to "Gulf region" here, for the jurisdictional  
36 area, and then, in the footnote, we changed to just "GC". I think  
37 it's 273, Bernie, and sorry for the scrolling.

38  
39 This is in regards to our Ecosystem Technical Committee, and so we  
40 have three technical committees. The Ecosystem is one of them.  
41 We have thirteen people on that committee, and that includes now  
42 four staff from National Marine Fisheries Service, and so one is  
43 from the Atlantic HMS Division and one from the Southeast Fisheries  
44 Science Center. Five members with economic, social, biological,  
45 or ecological expertise from the SSC, and then up to four other  
46 stakeholders.

47  
48 The changes, we just added another NMFS staff on there, and that's

1 Dr. Mandy Karnauskas right now, because she served as the chair,  
2 but, before, she served in the capacity of the Ecosystem SSC, which  
3 she's not on right now, and, you know, as time goes on, that may  
4 change, and so we left it pretty general, but that's to make sure  
5 she's included in this committee, based on the SOPPs, and so any  
6 questions on the makeup of this change?

7  
8 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** Any questions? Okay.

9  
10 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** All right, and so we'll go to 4.1.  
11 Did you want to handle that?

12  
13 **MS. HAGER:** Sure. In 4.1, there are just some minor changes there  
14 to reflect the current practices, and the citation was incorrect,  
15 and so we had to update that. Throughout, there were a few places  
16 where we might have been missing an "E", or there was a grammatical  
17 correction, and so there were some updates to things like that,  
18 and also to citations.

19  
20 Okay. Let's go to 4.3. Okay, and so this section -- We've never  
21 used this. We've never asked for the transfer of state, local, or  
22 federal employees to the council staff. It was a little squirrely,  
23 the way it was written. This just literally lifts the verbiage  
24 out of Magnuson and puts it in there. In case anybody ever wants  
25 to use it, that's what it says. Then that was the only reason for  
26 this suggestion here.

27  
28 Okay, and you want to go into fiscal management, 6.0? Okay. Now,  
29 in the Financial Management section, this does reflect the changes  
30 that were -- Many of them were recommended from the site visit at  
31 the end of last year, and so these are things that would need to  
32 be formalized, or updated and enhanced, after the site visit. That  
33 was from the Financial Assistance Division at NOAA Fisheries Office  
34 of Management and Budget.

35  
36 We are -- As noted here, detailed task processes and procedures  
37 are located in the council's fiscal procedure manual. That's  
38 intended to be basically a desk reference, and that's not included  
39 as a part of the SOPPs, because it is taking our policies here in  
40 the SOPPs and then putting procedures to them, and so that actually  
41 helps us detail who, what, when, and where we do the things, like  
42 what spreadsheets are we going to use, and what systems are we  
43 going to access to determine how much funds to draw down and to  
44 analyze things, and, because our technology is improving, as we  
45 currently have a new fiscal system, we're actually working with  
46 NXT and their specialists to develop some additional reports to  
47 help improve this.

1 There's a continuous improvement process going on there, and it  
2 didn't seem realistic to put that kind of stuff, that level of  
3 detail, in the SOPPs, because it's constantly improving, and so,  
4 as long as we are supporting the policies and procedures, as we  
5 are supposed to be doing, and that's the intention, that level of  
6 detail is going to be kept in a fiscal procedure manual, which  
7 will, of course, be approved and reviewed by Carrie, the Executive  
8 Director.

9  
10 If we scroll down a little bit more, there are some more things  
11 that are -- The Procurement section here was updated, based on  
12 recommendations from the site visit, and scroll down, please. Then  
13 we also did a little bit of updating here in the Accounting System,  
14 to make it a stronger policy. The added verbiage, we also added  
15 verbiage about funding draws and permissions for budgetary  
16 realignment, if necessary. That's a little further down. We'll  
17 go down just a little bit. There you go.

18  
19 Financial reporting, and then the budgetary realignment, if  
20 necessary. Those are also straight from the site visit. Those  
21 are recommendations, and that's fine. You know, our SOPPs were  
22 designed, particularly this section, many, many years ago, based  
23 on a recommendation of a framework that came out from NMFS, and  
24 so, you know, it was time. These needed to be updated, and  
25 strengthened, and so that's basically all, I think, of the changes  
26 that we have in the SOPP, and so does anybody have any questions?

27  
28 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** Any questions on that? All of it, I think,  
29 is just there to make it a little bit -- To make it more aligned  
30 with what the federal government is asking for, and more aligned  
31 to make it a little easier for everybody to understand, and do we  
32 need a motion to accept that? Okay. Could I get a motion? Mr.  
33 Donaldson. Could I get a second?

34  
35 **MR. JASON OSBORNE:** I'll second.

36  
37 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** All right. Mr. Osbourne seconds. Any  
38 discussion? Okay. **The motion carries.** All right. Moving right  
39 along, I think we can go to the handbook, Dr. Simmons.

40  
41 **UPDATES TO ADMINISTRATIVE HANDBOOK**

42  
43 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Okay. Thank you, Mr. Chair, and so  
44 this is Item Number VII, updates to the admin handbook, and so,  
45 often, we just handle changes for the admin handbook for staff  
46 with the chair and vice chair, but, because this has some fiscal  
47 implications, we needed to bring it to the Full Council.

1 Council staff will provide an overview of the policy updates  
2 proposed for the admin handbook. The primary changes are Sections  
3 4.2, Sick Leave, and 5.3, Retirement Plan.

4  
5 The current council plan includes a clause for employees that have  
6 reached age fifty-five and have twenty years years of service to  
7 qualify for the council to pay 75 percent of their health insurance  
8 premium until they reach the age of sixty-five. Even though the  
9 scope of the policy is such that no one has been able to take  
10 advantage of it, if left in place, the policy could create  
11 untenable costs for the council to support. Staff are suggesting  
12 an alternative policy that would allow a more fiscal responsible  
13 payout of earned sick leave, with specific caps.

14  
15 The net effect of this policy change is projected to save the  
16 council \$2.6 million, if all staff work until they qualify for  
17 this benefit, and there's some other minor changes we have in the  
18 handbook as well for consideration, and so we are seeking feedback  
19 and a motion at committee or Full Council, Mr. Chair.

20  
21 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** Okay. Any questions? This is basically just  
22 realigning, and, obviously, not being able to understand what could  
23 be the future, the cost that something would be, and it's  
24 impossible almost for the agency to be able to do that. They are  
25 able to put back money for different things, but you don't know  
26 how many people are going to do it, and there was no cost as to  
27 how much the insurance could be, and so it was very important for  
28 us to look at that. We don't need a motion here, or we do need a  
29 motion, and then we'll take it to Full Council?

30  
31 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Well, you can consider a motion here.  
32 I don't know if you want us to go actually through the tracked  
33 changes in here.

34  
35 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** Why don't we do it, because there's two or  
36 three things in it, and why don't we go through that?

37  
38 **MS. HAGER:** Okay, and so, on the cover page, we have the title  
39 change, of course, and then we have name changes. We have the  
40 citations change down here. Can we go down to 2.1, Staffing, and  
41 so this was, again, a correction of a citation and to reflect  
42 current practices. Can we scroll down?

43  
44 We took out that authority for temporary transfer, because it's in  
45 the SOPPs. There was no reason to have it over here additionally.  
46 Okay. Can we scroll down? Here we go, and so we didn't think that  
47 a reference to NOAA's credit time was really necessary here anymore  
48 either, as it's a council policy. It's inconsequential here.

1  
2 Okay, and 4.2 I think is where we're down to. Okay, and this was  
3 just a little bit of verbiage, and then scroll down a little bit  
4 further. There we go. Here's where we are suggesting the change  
5 to the leave payout policy.

6  
7 The idea here is to pay out 50 percent of your sick leave, just as  
8 the policy has always been, if you retire early, and it would  
9 change the amount of payout here to 1,040 hours instead of 1,200.  
10 1,040 is literally half of the 2,080, which is -- 2,080 is the  
11 maximum amount of hours of just sick leave that employees could  
12 accrue if they started and never took sick leave for twenty years,  
13 and so that also seemed like an intuitive cap to put in there, if  
14 they were to work for twenty years of service.

15  
16 At their retirement or death, after twenty years of service, we  
17 would have 100 percent sick leave payout, up to a cap, and so it  
18 gives us the ability to plan for this, potentially. Annual leave  
19 and sick leave are two of the line items that we are allowed to  
20 accrue for and save for, based on Magnuson. It's actually in the  
21 statute that we're allowed to save for these, and so it would allow  
22 us to prepare for this, and we actually already have a position  
23 that has an account partially funded for this, and so it's not  
24 nearly as heavy a lift for us as it would be to try and pay out  
25 someone under the other policy, under the retirement plan for  
26 health insurance, because we can't save for health insurance. It's  
27 not a line item that we're allowed to fund for.

28  
29 If you want to scroll down a little bit, to getting into that  
30 retirement plan section. As we mentioned in the action guide  
31 there, the idea here is to take out this policy, that no one has  
32 ever been able to take advantage of, that could potentially leave  
33 us in -- I mean, we have no way to control what someone else would  
34 choose to have for their health insurance plan after they leave  
35 our service, and so the way this was written was really leaving us  
36 kind of in the wind.

37  
38 The goal here is, you know, we're looking to the long-term fiscal  
39 health of the council and to provide some conservative economic  
40 stability. This is also a plan that most staff can't take, or  
41 many staff would never be able to take, advantage of.

42  
43 Then we want to try and have something that's, A, more fiscally  
44 responsible, and, B, more consistently could be applied to all  
45 staff, so more people could actually take advantage, at a much  
46 lower cost of the other policy.

47  
48 We also looked at other councils and what they have for both sick

1 leave payout and post-retirement health insurance and their  
2 retirement plans. Basically, of course, we know all councils are  
3 created differently, have developed differently, and so like their  
4 post-retirement health insurance is kind of all over the map.

5  
6 Some of them have policies for continuation to retirement age.  
7 Some offer long-term care policies, or you can buy into a public  
8 plan to continue your health insurance, but one council has  
9 recently actually changed their post-retirement health benefits,  
10 because it became unaffordable, and I could very easily, based on  
11 the projections that we saw, see us being in that same boat, and  
12 then we would have been promising a benefit that we could never  
13 actually provide. That just doesn't seem -- It seems a little  
14 disingenuous.

15  
16 The sick leave payout for councils varies from 400 to 2,000 hours.  
17 Some folks even have a grandfathered plan with no cap of a sick  
18 leave payout, and so, if you take what we have, or what we're  
19 proposing, and the other councils, and kind of look on the balance,  
20 we are very in line, and actually on the more conservative end, of  
21 what we're suggesting, versus what some of the other councils are  
22 somehow being able to afford. Part of that is due to structure,  
23 you know. Some of them are non-profits, and some of them are,  
24 like I said, able to buy into state health plans. We can't, and  
25 we need to be able to support our staff, and our benefits, and so  
26 that's the reason for the suggestion.

27  
28 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** You know, obviously, I think the South  
29 Atlantic Council did change theirs. I was told that they changed  
30 a lot of the stuff on it, and some others, and I think, by making  
31 it up to where you can go up to the 2,080 hours that you're paid  
32 out, that would -- If you have twenty years, and that will help  
33 offset some of this, but, you know, as far as a person being able  
34 to take advantage of it.

35  
36 It also gives the council a chance to plan for it. That's something  
37 that -- You know, you can't plan for something you don't know  
38 what's going to happen, and the bad part about it is, even if we  
39 took a little bit of the money, and put it back, you can't draw  
40 interest on it, because it's federal money, and so you can't do  
41 anything with it. It's just sitting there wasted, and in a holding  
42 pattern, and so I think -- Is there any discussion on this, before  
43 we go any further? Any questions? Okay. Let's go forward then.  
44 We're good? All right. Let's go forward. Nothing else on the  
45 SOPPs?

46  
47 **MS. HAGER:** No, sir.

48

1 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** Okay, and so, right now, if that -- Then I  
2 would accept a motion to accept the handbook, the changes to the  
3 handbook. Can I get a motion?  
4

5 **MS. OSBORNE:** So moved.  
6

7 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** All right. Mr. Osborne. Do we have a second?  
8

9 **MR. DONALDSON:** Second.  
10

11 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** All right. Any discussion? **In that case,**  
12 **then it passes.** I think that brings us to the point of Other  
13 Business. Is there any other business to be brought up to the  
14 Administrative/Budget Committee? We're going to set a precedent.  
15 We're going to give you back a whole lot of time. All right. Mr.  
16 Chairman. I think that concludes the meeting.  
17

18 (Whereupon, the meeting adjourned on August 25, 2025.)  
19  
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