Watershed Agricultural Council
Agriculture ◆ Forestry ◆ Conservation Easements ◆ Economic Viability
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Executive Committee *Motion Request* Minutes
September 29, 2026
(**via E-mail Correspondence*)

Committee Members:	Wayland "Bud" Gladstone, *Chair*	Fred Huneke
	Tom Hutson	Jennifer Grossman
	Karl Gockel	Michael Vander Werff, *NYC DEP*
	Marilyn Wyman	
Others:	Ryan Naatz	Amy Faulkner
	Carol Bishop	Kayla Henderson
	Steve Reed	

I. WAC Employee Handbook Modification Request

A. Summary of Proposed Modification

Upon reviewing healthcare coverage plan renewals, WAC's healthcare coverage is projected to see a net plan increase of 11.5+ percent into the foreseeable future. The cost of WAC's healthcare is outpacing the 10-year SWP-117 budget to where WAC may be unable to provide current levels of coverage in outlier years of the contract (**Seven years, nine months remaining*).

After considerable time analyzing liquidity, individual employee coverage needs, assumed increases, and employee hire obligations/expectations, senior leadership has been determined to move to a *Health Reimbursement Arrangement* (HRA), a monthly financial strategy that deducts actual service expenditure against the cumulative healthcare funds vs the current in-full premiums. The result is an opportunity to keep the same level of coverage and cost shares employees expect but, more significantly, yield a projected net savings and conform to total contract budget. Significant increases in new plan rates are still expected; however, the net savings realized should afford continued coverage with little to no modifications required otherwise.

To align WAC's employee handbook language with the upcoming change noted above, Ryan Naatz, Executive Director, proposed and received authorization from the Executive Committee to incorporate the following modifications to the WAC employee handbook:

1. **Section 7.3 – Insurance**
   - Health Insurance
     - For regular full-time employees, the WAC will pay 95% of the cost of the plan ~~**premiums**~~ and the employee shall pay the remaining 5% of the cost of the premiums. If an employee elects not to participate in the medical plan, *they will be reimbursed at an amount determined annually at the discretion of the Executive Director, but not to exceed, the FY26 individual premium of $15,464.54* ~~**the 'single rate' less the employee cost share of premiums**~~, referred to as a "buy out". Regular part-time employees who work a minimum of 20 hours a week shall be eligible to obtain group insurance. Regular part-time employees will share the cost of insurance with the WAC on a percentage basis calculated by the percentage of hours worked. Single, Single plus Child, Single plus Partner, and Family coverage is available.

- Dental Insurance
    - For regular full-time employees, the WAC will pay 95% of the cost of the plan ~~**premiums**~~ and the employee shall pay the remaining 5% of the cost ~~**of the premiums**~~. *There is no "buy out" option available* ~~**There is**~~ if an employee elects not to participate in the dental plan. ~~**They will be reimbursed at the 'single rate' less the employee cost share of premiums, referred to as "buy out"**~~. Regular part-time employees that work a minimum of 20 hours a week shall be eligible to obtain group insurance. Regular part-time employees will share the cost of insurance with the WAC on a percentage basis calculated by the percentage of hours worked. 'Single' and 'Family' coverage is available.

- Vision Insurance
    - For regular full-time employees, the WAC will pay 95% of the cost of the plan ~~**premiums**~~ and the employee shall pay the remaining 5% of the cost ~~**of the premiums**~~. *There is no "buy out" available* if an employee elects not to participate in the vision plan. ~~**they will be reimbursed at the 'single rate' less the employee cost share of premiums, referred to as a "buy out"**~~. Regular part-time employees that work a minimum of 20 hours a week shall be eligible to obtain group insurance. Regular part-time employees will share the cost of insurance with the WAC on a percentage calculated by the percentage of hours worked. 'Single' and 'Family' coverage is available.

II. Discussion

A proposal was recommended to include a reimbursement cap within the language in Section 7.3, Insurance, under Health Insurance. Year-to-year decisions will remain Ryan's purview and relative to ensuring healthcare is funded first but this will provide peace of mind to the Board and staff that the buyout would cap at this year's individual single plan participant cost of **$15,464.54**. It was noted the reimbursement is still generous and the change to language also reaffirms the ED's role vs. the function of an oversight board.

Questions proposed by other committee members were discussed.

III. Approval of WAC Employee Handbook Modifications

Motion to approve the proposed revisions as presented via e-mail correspondence.
Motion: Bud Gladstone
Second: Karl Gockel
All in Favor: Jennifer Grossman, Tom Hutson, Fred Huneke, Michael Vander Werff, Steve Reed, and Marilyn Wyman.
Approved