

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item G-7
May 23, 2023
City Commission Chambers
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL

City Commission

Mayor Vince Lago

Vice Mayor Rhonda Anderson

Commissioner Melissa Castro

Commissioner Ariel Fernandez

Commissioner Kirk Menendez

City Staff

City Attorney, Cristina Suárez

City Manager, Peter Iglesias

City Clerk, Billy Urquia

HR Director, Raquel Elejabarrieta

Public Speaker(s)

Agenda Item G-7 [5:25 p.m.]

Discussion regarding Executive Benefits.
(Sponsored by Commissioner Fernandez)

Mayor Lago: Moving onto G-7; G-7, correct.

Commissioner Fernandez: Discussion on executive benefits. This topic came up last year and the Commission had said that we were going to have a Sunshine meeting on it, never happened. So, it was a topic of conversation in a lot of households during the campaign. People wanted to understand what the executive benefits package was and for it to be explained to residents. I don't know if staff brought that information today.

HR Director Elejabarrieta: I actually do have a slide. Oh, there we go. These benefits, they are basically enhanced benefits. So obviously, all employees have a benefit package. So, in 2017, there were some enhancements made to the executives and so, this chart sort of, not sort of, this chart shows what the benefits were prior to 2017, and what the benefits or the changes were made to what we decided to call back in 2017, the executive group. And so, annual accruals prior to 2017, twelve days during the first year, obviously these are pro-rated, you don't get the twelve days the

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first year of employment; and then 15 to 29 days per year during subsequent years, depending on your years of service. The more years of service you have, the quicker you accrue those days. It was changed to 15 days during the first year and then 19 to 31 days per year during subsequent years. So that was the enhancement for annual leave accruals. That was similar to what the shift firefighters have, not similar, that is what the shift firefighters have in terms of accrual. Annual leave cap, we can accrue 300 hours or prior to 2017 we could accrue 300 hours. We are now eligible to accrue up to 400 hours of annual leave. Sale of annual leave, prior to 2017, we were allowed to sell 60 hours annually, now we are allowed to sell 120, and if you are in your last fiscal year of employment, meaning you are about to retire or leave the city, you are allowed to sell 160 hours. This is also similar to what the firefighters currently have in their CVA. Cellular telephone – this is sort of a moot point right now. Prior to 2017, we were issued a city issued phone and then if we wanted to use it for personal usage, so that we didn't have to carry two phones, we would pay \$20 per month; and then, after 2017, we were given two options. The prior option or we'll be given \$100 monthly stipend in lieu of the actual city phone. Currently, we just get a city issued phone, no personal usage and no stipend. So that's a moot point. Annual health screening, we currently do not have any annual health screening, If not, in 2017. After 2017, the executives were allowed to have an annual physical which is something similar to what police and fire have in their CVAs. Floating holidays, prior to 2017, we had 3, we now have 5. Most employment health, the city prior to 2017, put \$950 annually into our PEP plan. They now put \$1,200. Sick leave transfer, this is also a little bit of a moot point. Sick leave transfer, when you retire, you are allowed to, prior to 2017, you were paid out your sick leave. So whatever sick leave amount you had, it was paid out to you. After 2017, it was decided that it would be rolled over to the PEP, instead of paid to the employee. It's also a little bit of a savings actually for the city, because there is no FICA and taxes paid on that when you roll over. It is no longer rolled over to the employee; it is reverted back to the employee getting it paid out when they retired or left the city. You had to be eligible. Like if I leave the city today, if I'm not eligible to retire, I'm not eligible to receive those sick leave hours. Access sick leave bank – these are all hours in excess of your sick leave bank. I believe we are allowed to accrue 512 hours of sick leave. If you accrue more than 512 hours, the value of that excess sick leave is captured by the Finance Department in the excel sheet, and upon retirement you get that money paid out. So after 2017, we were trying to get rid of or diminish that excel sheet and try to minimize the number of hours or the value of the hours in that excel sheet, so we gave everyone a onetime option, everyone who was eligible, meaning if you were eligible to retire, you would be able within 30 days to cash that out, to cash out that sick leave, the value of that sick leave that was in that excel sheet, and then going forward everything is automatically rolled over into your PEP. Tuition reimbursement – prior to 2017, we received \$6,000 per year for an actual accredited program, Bachelors and Associates. We expanded that, not only for an accredited educational program, but for any job-related certifications in a professional job-related program. This is something we offer, basically to all our employees, every department has a tuition line item that they can use for their employees, so most of the employees do take advantage of this. And our

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monthly vehicle allowance did increase from \$225 to \$300, for assistant directors. Actually, it's a little bit more, this is an older version, and \$450 to \$500 for directors and \$650 for special operations assignments. The \$300 for assistant directors and the \$500, it's really \$325 for the assistant directors and \$540 for directors. So that's it.

Commissioner Fernandez: Present day.

HR Director Elejabarrieta: The \$300 and \$500 is after tax.

Commissioner Fernandez: Got it. Okay. Can you put that up one more time. What is the current cost of the executive benefits package?

HR Director Elejabarrieta: I do not have the current cost of the executive benefits.

Commissioner Fernandez: That's what I would like to know. What the cost is of each one of these categories? – because I think that's one of the questions that residents had, what this is costing. I know some of these things are not really a tangible number, because when you are talking about hours of annual leave, it does have a value, because that's hours that we don't have an employee working, so that's the breakdown that I would like to see, and I'll open it up to the rest of the Commission.

Commissioner Menendez: I just have a quick question, or comment/question. Put that up again, I guess it's a very popular screen.

HR Director Elejabarrieta: Just really quickly to address Commissioner Fernandez. These benefits have been in place, obviously, since 2017, those with a direct cause, right. So, our auto allowance, our increase contribution into the PEP Plan, its easy to cost, just multiply that times the number of employees and those have been budgeted for, have been approved in the budget since 2017, every year since 2017. On the sale of leave, that is also budgeted during the budgeted process; annual, like you said, that's a little bit more difficult. It depends on the number of days that an employee takes time off. So those are not, usually there is not a direct cost associated with that, but we can come up with.

Commissioner Fernandez: But there is a value, because it's based on your hourly rate.

HR Director Elejabarrieta: Correct.

Commissioner Menendez: So, in regard to the benefit types that were on the screen that's there now again. Having worked in local government before, those things that are listed on the left side,
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those are pretty much standard benefits that you find in other full-service cities in Miami-Dade County and in South Florida. It's not an aberration, it's not something we invented, but that's standard, those are standard benefits in the industry.

HR Director Elejabarrieta: So, the column on the left, I would say are standard benefits. I would say that the column on the right are also standard benefits, but the column on the left are standard benefits in 2017, they are the benefits that the majority of our employees have; the column on the right are just some enhancements made to upper management employees. That's the only difference.

Commissioner Menendez: Like I said, the years I was at City of Miami recognized a lot of those benefits that were made available to assistant directors and directors.

Mayor Lago: Any comments?

Vice Mayor Anderson: Through the Mayor. As some of you may know, my husband used to work for the county, for Metro Mover in a lower-level position, not in a director position and a lot of these accruals of leave and so forth were pretty normal. He didn't get the vehicle allowance because again, he wasn't a director or a cell phone allowance, because he wasn't a director, but when you're talking about sick leave and floating days and the remainder of this, very normal.

Mayor Lago: Anything else?

Commissioner Fernandez: Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Thank you very much.