



TACOMA HOUSING AUTHORITY

RESOLUTION 2020-10-28 (3)

Date: October 28, 2020
To: THA Board of Commissioners
From: Michael Mirra
Executive Director
Re: Agency-wide Special Recognition Award, Additional Holiday and Vacation Cash-Out Exception

This resolution would authorize Tacoma Housing Authority's (THA) Executive Director (ED) to recognize the exceptionally hard work and additional personal cost of maintaining THA operations through the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic. This recognition would issue a \$1,000 one-time Special Recognition Award (SRA) to all eligible staff, declare October 30, 2020 as an additional paid holiday, and provide staff temporary through June 2021 with a more flexible option to cash out their accrued vacation time.

Background

The past seven months of 2020 have been exceptionally trying for THA staff and their families. We have had to rewire THA to function in a pandemic, something that we had to learn how to do. THA has required many staff to work from-home while requiring others to work on-site to better serve THA clients. Asking this of staff has required staff to set up offices in their homes, increase their internet and cell phone plans, and equip themselves to safely enter the office. Staff are experiencing the strain and additional expense of having spouses or partners lose income from job loss, limited day care, having to be their children's in-home teacher, and caring for aging parents and relatives. All this is on top of the stress of living and working through a respiratory contagion that has grown into a world-wide pandemic.

Through all of this, THA's staff have performed wonderfully. They are getting the work done. As the monthly department reports show, they are doing it up to their usual high standards of stewardship. They can do this because they bring to the work what they always have brought: a focus on the mission of serving others, a flexibility, and a good humor. For these reasons, and as an acknowledgement the Board can offer of the excellent work our team continues to do every day, we are recommending the Board approve three actions:

1. provide all eligible staff with a one-time \$1,000 Special Recognition Award;
2. declare October 30, 2020 as an additional paid THA holiday; and,
3. provide a temporary exception to our vacation cash-out rules to allow staff to cash-out more of their accrued vacation hours.

Details of each recommendation are as follows:

Special Recognition Award

This resolution would grant a one-time \$1,000 Special Recognition Award to every eligible staff person. The eligibility rules show in Section 7.2.3 (c) of THA policy HR-20.35 Variable Pay. It authorizes the Executive Director to make one-time Special Recognition Awards. Eligible employees are those who meet the following criteria at the time of the award payment:

- Have successfully passed Probation; and
- Must be a currently employed, regular status employee; and
- Must not have received a formal disciplinary notice in the past six (6) months; and
- Temporary and new hire probationary employees are ineligible.

The Variable Pay policy allows for Special Executive Director discretion to award SRAs as the ED determines are warranted. Annually, the Board sets a budget for these Special Awards. The SRA payments of \$1,000 to every eligible staff person that we recommend will exceed that budget. So the Board's formal approval is necessary. Board approval is also a way to make clear to staff that the award denotes the appreciation of the Commissioners. Even with these payments THA remains within the overall 2020 budgeted amount for salaries.

Additional Paid Holiday

This resolution would approve an additional paid holiday on October 30th

We are requesting this holiday because we care about our employees and we are concerned about them and their families. While we cannot solve for the stress that people are facing, we can close for a day and allow people to recharge without worrying about how taking time off would burden their co-workers.

Even if the Executive Director has the authority to do this, the Board's approval lets staff know the acknowledgement of their work is coming from the Commissioners. The Board Chair and Vice Chair allowed the Executive Director to inform staff of this holiday. He did that on October 17th. That advanced notice allowed staff and THA to plan for it.

In response to that advanced notice, staff have already expressed their appreciation. Here is a sample of their reply emails:

"Much appreciated Michael. Thank you and thanks to the board for understanding the challenges and struggles that THA is facing during this time."

"I just want to personally say thank you! I am beyond grateful to work for an organization that truly cares for the wellbeing of not only our clients and residents, but us as staff. Thank you kindly Michael!!"

"Good morning Sir, I appreciate you, April and our board for always thinking of us!"

"Thank you Michael and Board! You're kindness is appreciated!!"

"Thank you so much. This is greatly appreciated. Gratefully,"

"Thanks to you and the board Michael. I know our family is much appreciative of the extra time."

Temporary Vacation Cash-Out Exception

This resolution would allow staff to cash-out more of their accrued vacation leave than the regular rules allow. THA's current vacation cash-out policy allows staff to cash out up to 40 hours of vacation leave per year as long as 160 hours remain available for use. Below is an excerpt from THA Policy HR-35.01 Time Away From THA:

7.3.2 Carry-over and Cash-Out

Employees may not carry over more than forty (40) days (320 hours) of vacation time from one calendar year to the next. In the event that unforeseen circumstances beyond the employee's control prevented him or her from taking vacation during the year, accrued time in excess of forty (40) days (320 hours) up to a maximum of five (5) days shall be cashed out as of December 31st of each year.

We are not proposing to change this policy. Instead, we propose a temporary exception until June 30, 2021. It would become an adjunct to the existing policy. It would also show in Executive Action #13. (The Board has allowed the Executive Director to issue Executive Actions for changes or decisions we need to adopt quickly during the pandemic, including those that would otherwise require Board approval.) These Executive Actions have also become a useful way to memorialize changes, including those that the Board has approved.

The exception to the vacation cash-out policy would read substantially as follows:

1. PURPOSE

Tacoma Housing Authority (THA) will allow eligible staff to cash out up to 50% of their accrued but unused vacation balance to help pay for unforeseen expenses during this time.

2. ELIGIBLE STAFF

All Regular full-time THA employees are eligible. New hire probationary employees are ineligible.

3. EFFECTIVE DATE AND DURATION

This Executive Action #13 is effective immediately. It will continue through June 30, 2021.

4. ELIGIBILITY AND LIMITS

Vacation Cash-Out Guidelines

- *Vacation cash-outs during the Vacation Cash-Out Exception period are limited to one (1) per employee*
- *Employees may cash out up to 50% of their accrued vacation balance, less any future pending vacation requests.*

- *A maximum of 100 accrued vacation hours may be cashed out under this Executive Action.*
- *A remaining balance after cash-out is a minimum of 40 hours.*
- *In addition to the Vacation Cash-out Exception, employees remain eligible to use the regular vacation cash-out option. See regular policy below.*

5. PROCEDURE FOR REQUESTING CASH-OUT

- *The "Vacation Cash-Out Policy Exception Request" form is available on the share drive T:\Department Material\HR\Benefits\30.3.15 Vacation Cash-Out\Vacation Cash Out Exception form. Complete and submit the form to the HR Analyst.*
- *To ensure guidelines are followed, the HR Analyst must approve the cash out request.*

Recommendation

Authorize THA's Executive Director to provide a \$1,000 one-time Special Recognition Award to all eligible staff, declare October 30, 2020 as an additional paid holiday, and provide staff with a more flexible vacation cash out exception through June 2021, all as described above.



TACOMA HOUSING AUTHORITY

RESOLUTION 2020-10-28 (3)

(Agency-wide Special Recognition Award, Additional Holiday and Vacation Cash Out Exception)

WHEREAS, The agency has an established and defined Variable Pay policy; and

WHEREAS, Section 7.2.3 (c) of the Variable Pay policy authorizes the Executive Director to provide an agency-wide Special Recognition Award; and

WHEREAS, The agency has an established and defined holiday policy; and

WHEREAS, In recognition of great work done by staff in 2020, one extra paid holiday would be appropriate; and

WHEREAS, There are additional personal costs employees are incurring in reporting to work and/or equipping their homes to conduct THA work from home; and

WHEREAS, It is more difficult for staff to take accrued leave during this time and some employees have accrued more leave than they are eligible to carry over into 2021; and

WHEREAS, In response to these greater expenses and large accrued annual leave balances, an additional flexible vacation cash-out option is necessary; now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Board of Commissioners of the Housing Authority of the City of Tacoma, Washington, that:

THA's Executive Director is authorized to provide a \$1,000 one-time Special Recognition Award to all eligible staff, declare October 30, 2020 as an additional paid holiday, and provide staff with a more flexible vacation cash-out option through June 2021, all as described above.

Approved: October 28, 2020



Stanley Rumbaugh, Chair