



AGENCY: City Council

MEETING DATE: November 13, 2023

DEPARTMENT: City Manager/Administration

PRESENTED BY: Peggy Ducey

AGENDA ITEM SUMMARY

TITLE:

Receive Report Regarding Revisions to the City's Catastrophic Leave Program and Consider Adoption of Revised Catastrophic Leave Program

ISSUE:

The City's Personnel Rules and Regulations include Section 18: Catastrophic Leave Program, which permits City employees to voluntarily donate sick and vacation leave to a fellow employee who has a catastrophic illness or injury. In cases where it takes longer than usual to receive disability benefits, donation of leave will help the disabled employee recipient to remain on a paid status for a longer period, until the employee receives short or long-term disability.

ANALYSIS:

On January 11, 2021, the City Council approved the most recent updates to the City's Personnel Rules and Regulations, which includes Section 18: Catastrophic Leave Program. This program is designed to assist regular employees who have exhausted all forms of paid leave due to a serious, catastrophic illness or injury. The Catastrophic Leave Program allows other City employees to voluntarily donate sick and vacation leave to an employee who meets the eligibility requirements so that the recipient will be able to remain on a paid status for a longer period, or until the employee receives short or long-term disability.

Staff is recommending a change based on recent experience applying this program to a City employee. The challenging event occurred when a City employee was diagnosed with a catastrophic illness in April 2023. Upon receiving the diagnosis, the employee applied for State Disability Insurance but SDI did not approve the application until late September. However, by late August the employee's leave bank was exhausted. Human Resources coordinated leave donations from City employees, based on the current Catastrophic Leave Program, so the employee could receive a full City paycheck until SDI was finally approved. Because SDI approval took so long, staff determined that a few program changes were needed.

Attached is a redline version of the proposed changes to the Catastrophic Leave Program. The proposed changes include the following:

- All employees are eligible, including probationary employees. Sworn officers currently have 18 months and civilian employees have 12 months of probation.
- Staff deleted the requirement that there is a reasonable expectation that the employee will return to duty within 6 months.
- The employee cannot be receiving any disability benefits, including State Disability Insurance.
- Employees who wish to donate leave must have been employed for 6 months, rather than 18 months.
- Employees can donate vacation or sick leave, rather than only sick leave.

- Employees who are donating leave must retain a balance of 80 hours in sick leave and 40 hours in vacation.
- The amount of hours an employee can donate is increased from 80 to 100 hours.
- The maximum of donated hours an employee may receive is increased from 160 to 520 hours.

Thankfully, the City's Catastrophic Leave Program has not been used frequently. However, in cases of serious illness or injury, City employees want to support fellow employees experiencing health challenges.

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

Staff recommends the City Council approve the proposed revisions to the Fort Bragg Catastrophic Leave Program.

ALTERNATIVE ACTION(S):

Provide staff with further policy direction.

ATTACHMENTS:

Exhibit A – Catastrophic Leave Program Redline

IMPLEMENTATION/TIMEFRAMES:

Program revisions are effective upon approval of City Council.

NOTIFICATION:

None.