



Promoting Wildfire Safety Through Education and Action

**Santa Barbara County Fire Safe Council  
Executive Committee Meeting  
December 27th, 2023**

**Executive Committee Directors Present:** Paul Van Leer, Kevin Varga, Victoria Cooper, Rob Hazard, Nic Elmquist

**Executive Committee Directors Absent:**

**Others Present:** A. Parkinson, C. Harris, M. Moritz, S. Coffman, P. Seymour, T. Adams

**1. Trace's Contract**

- a. Plan is to extend the contract, but not increase pay.
- b. *Motion to ask the board to extend Trace's contract to September 30th of 2024 with no extension in hours. Director Cooper firsts, Director Varga seconds. All in favor.*

**2. New Health Insurance Terms - QSEHRA**

- a. AMP has been exploring alternative health care options. She recommends a QSEHRA (Qualified Small Employer HRA) that reimburses staff for health care premiums and out of pocket expenses allowed by the IRS. Staff also support this decision.
- b. QSEHRA administrative costs will be approx. \$1,000 for the first year including a one time setup fee. After the first year the annual rate goes down to approx. \$610 (if we maintain 5 employees).
- c. EC recommends reimbursing up to \$6,150 in health care costs, which is the 2024 maximum allowed reimbursement, for all employees even though employees with families have a higher cap. Kevin and AMP want to better assess finances in 2024 to determine the sustainability of increasing the amount for employees with families.
- d. AMP and Charles Harris will move to this system in the new year. However, the other staff have a guaranteed stipend amount written into their contracts. They may voluntarily switch over to this new process, but we do not believe we can mandate that they do. AMP is checking with the employment lawyer. However, since employees are on contracts, we will move all employees over to the QSEHRA once their contracts expire.
- e. Maximum total cost per year for this plan does not exceed \$45,000 for our current 5 full-time staff.



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- f. No discretionary expenses are expected to be used to cover health care since grant funding will cover health insurance.
- g. *Motion: EC recommends to the BOD to implement a QSEHRA with a \$6,150 cap for full-time employees for the new insurance plan. Director Varga firsts, Director Cooper seconds. All in favor*
  - i. After board approval in January, AMP and Charles will switch over to this new method starting Feb 1.

**3. Cal Fire Wildfire Prevention Grant**

- a. Letter of support for this project
  - i. Do community members support this project?
    1. T. Adams can confirm at least part of the community is in favor
    2. WRA is submitting letter of support for the project
    3. In our letter of support we will specifically mention the CWPP and conform to that language
- b. Application
  - i. R. Hazard found issues with overlapping projects. County Fire has already mapped roads in their unit fire plan and receives funding to do that work, so CalFire won't like FSC being involved in assisting with roadside clearance. Since County Fire and LPNF are putting in for acres treated with grant asks under the typical recommended County wide ask, we should be okay to submit a grant with a lot of staff time (for staff involved in Firewise) and also include some acres treated to further strengthen our application.
  - ii. R. Hazard believes it is a good idea to add in some acres treated in north county near Cebada Canyon, Orcutt, Rice Ranch, and Santa Ynez in addition to doing chipping for some communities.
  - iii. If we can get 2-3 firewise communities in north county this will strengthen our foothold and make our application stronger.

**4. Moore Foundation**

- a. M. Moritz has been in contact with the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation
  - i. Foundation has a Wildfire Resilience Initiative
    1. They are running pilot programs in the western U.S.
    2. The foundation wants to choose SBCFSC using our RWMP framework to be one of their pilot programs! FSC's strategic plan includes expanding the RWMP to north County by 2025, so this is the funding opportunity needed to achieve that goal.
      - a. 5-10 year commitment
      - b. Could be approx. \$375,000 per year



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- ii. Foundation wants us to write them a mini proposal on our funding needs / strategic plan
- iii. They want all of their pilot programs to eventually follow the RWMP framework

**5. EC meeting times**

- a. Normal meeting time on Wednesday's 10-11 am still works for everyone

**Motions:**

- *Motion to ask the board to extend Trace's contract to September 30th of 2024 with no extension in hours. Director Cooper firsts, Director Varga seconds. All in favor.*
- *Motion: EC recommends to the BOD to implement a QSEHRA with a \$6,150 cap for full-time employees for the new insurance plan. Director Varga firsts, Director Cooper seconds. All in favor.*

**Minutes Submitted Respectfully:** Charles Harris