

## **Special Human Resources Committee**

**October 7, 2025**

A meeting of the Human Resources Committee was held on this date, beginning at 4:06 p.m. in person in the Council Chambers at 80 Broad Street and over Zoom.

**Committee Members:** Councilmember William Tinkler, Councilmember Robert Mitchell, Councilmember Stephen Bowden, and Mayor Cogswell

**Also Present:** Tammy O'Berry - Director,

Councilmember Tinkler called the meeting to order.

### **Invocation:**

The meeting was opened with a moment of silence led by Councilmember Tinkler

### **Approval of the August 21, 2025, minutes**

On a motion by Mayor Cogswell, seconded by Councilmember Bowden, the Committee voted unanimously to approve the August 21, 2025, Human Resources meeting minutes.

### **Old Business**

#### **a. Approval of amendments to the 2026 Healthcare Budget**

Ms. O'Berry said that after they presented the proposal for next year's healthcare budget, they conducted a thorough review of the healthcare insurance plan, which could significantly impact future costs. Their goal was to provide employees with timely and affordable access to care, helping them stay healthy and productive. By reducing long-term healthcare expenses, prioritizing early intervention and preventive measures, and aligning their benefit offerings with a broader HR strategy, they aimed to improve access and promote preventive health initiatives. They also sought to enhance talent recruitment and retention by offering competitive, high-value employee benefits. Two areas they thought could make a difference were decreasing their specialist office visit co-pay from \$75 to \$50 and their telemedicine co-pay from \$25 to \$10. The estimated cost was \$125,000, which the City covered for both, but they did not see any benefit from making those changes. Among the 257 comparators across the Southeast region, the median co-pay for a specialist was \$50, compared to \$75, which was high for seeing a specialist. They needed to align more with the market so those with chronic and complex health conditions could see their specialists and avoid ending up in the ER. The second request was for affordable telemedicine. From January to June 2025, there were 66 visits to MD Live in the City. With the right efforts, they could increase those numbers and reduce employees going to the ER and urgent care, which is more expensive.

Councilmember Mitchell said that normally, going to the specialist costs \$50, but it was changed to \$75. This would be a great savings and help people who need to see a specialist now and would be able to afford the co-pay. Reducing some of this cost would help employees pay for healthcare because it is expensive.

Councilmember Tinkler asked whether the approved \$26,227,000 included the \$125,000 increase.

The clerk said that the healthcare budget had been deferred at Ways and Means, and the budget approved by Human Resources was from their previous meeting. The \$125,000 would be an addition to that.

Councilmember Bowden said this was easy compared to what they voted on since the last time.

Councilmember Tinkler asked whether this would not alter the premiums for the employees, which the committee had previously approved.

Ms. O'Berry said this raised the City's budget cost by \$125,000.

On a motion by Councilmember Mitchell, seconded by Mayor Cogswell, the Committee voted unanimously to approve the amendments to the 2026 Healthcare Budget.

### **New Business**

#### **b. Presentation of City of Charleston Mission, Vision, and Values**

Ms. O'Berry said the Mayor and Ms. Dieck collaborated on the City's new Mission, Vision, and Values. They responded to the community's changing needs and emerging opportunities, ensuring their actions remained relevant and impactful. They shared a vision and unified purpose across all departments, encouraging collaboration and alignment toward common goals while demonstrating a strong commitment to transparency. They aimed to build trust, create long-term, sustainable impact, and establish a solid foundation for strategic planning and service excellence. Their mission was to provide exceptional public service and vital community infrastructure while maintaining a commitment to people and place. For their vision, they envisioned a vibrant, livable, resilient community guided by civility and service. Their core values included accountability, collaboration, excellence, stewardship, and service. These core values would influence Human Resources' upcoming initiatives related to performance management, disciplinary actions, and hiring. They planned to implement their mission, vision, and values as a foundation for departmental planning, goal setting, and decision-making. Their commitment would stay rooted in transparency, trust, continuous improvement, and service to their community.

Mayor Cogswell said this was a result of a lot of thought that went into this with the executive staff. The purpose was to determine how they could provide the best customer service to their constituents.

Councilmember Mitchell said that, as a City, they were always proud to be an equal opportunity employer. He emphasized the importance of considering current employees who are qualified and can advance within the departments before hiring outside staff. The focus should be on promoting from within and supporting those who have already contributed and have the necessary credentials and education, rather than leaving the same staff in place.

Mayor Cogswell said they planned to present this as a whole to the council and invite people's input and thoughts.

Ms. Dieck said they spent two days with the executive leadership at the City, which included the police chief, fire chief, the Mayor, and all the department heads. The goal is to reinvigorate the staff and instill their core values, vision, and mission of what they were doing there as a City, and what their expectations were, so they could articulate those to the staff and come up with a strategy across the board for every division for all employees. This relates to customer service in a way that has not been a priority in the past, but would want to take this and make it a priority for

every day, and how they did business in the City for residents, businesses, and for all those who live and work here.

Councilmember Tinkler said this was a refreshing look at how everything should be operating in the City, and that he had conversations with Ms. Dieck about the departments and some ideas that he had. This was something he looked forward to having more future conversations on.

With there being no further business, the Committee adjourned the meeting at 4:29 p.m.

Clerk of Council's Office

Donna Constance