



OFFICE OF THE COUNTY AUDITOR

Owen Clark, CPA
County Auditor, Acting

MEMORANDUM

February 5, 2024

MEMO TO: Council Members

Calvin Ball
County Executive

FROM: Owen Clark OC
County Auditor, Acting

SUBJECT: Exit Audit – Lonnie Robbins

Pursuant to Section 213 of the Howard County Charter, “upon the death, resignation, removal or expiration of the term of any County administrative officers, the County Auditor shall cause an audit and investigation of the accounts maintained by the officer, and by his or her department, office or agency, to be made.” We have conducted an exit audit for Lonnie Robbins, Chief Administrative Officer, until the end of his employment, effective February 28, 2023.

The objectives of our review were to determine whether:

- The County’s procedures for separation of employment were followed.
- The accounts maintained by the Chief Administrative Officer were in order.
- The Chief Administrative Officer’s access to County systems had been terminated.
- The Chief Administrative Officer’s earnings on his final earnings statement were accurate.

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

We found that County procedures were followed in Chief Administrative Officer Robbins’ separation from County employment. The accounts maintained by the Chief Administrative Officer were in order and expenditures were within reasonable parameters. The Chief Administrative Officer’s access to County systems was terminated in accordance with County procedures. In addition, the Chief Administrative Officer’s earnings on his final earnings statement were accurate.

In reviewing the accuracy of Chief Administrative Officer Robbin’s final earnings statement, we did identify the following issue with the maximum payout of annual leave accrual policy for executive exempt employees.

Finding – Years of Service Duplication Error

To validate the accuracy of the payment made to Mr. Robbins for his unused annual leave, we reviewed the County’s current maximum payout of annual leave accrual policy for executive exempt employees.

The current policy states that:

“Effective November 1, 2021, Executive Exempt Employees are eligible for the following maximum payments for unused annual leave benefits upon separation from County employment:

Years of County Service	Maximum Annual Leave Payout
More than 35 Years of Service	1,600 hours
30 - 35 Years of Service	1,400 hours
25 - 30 Years of Service	1,200 hours
20 - 25 Years of Service	1,000 hours
Less than 20 Years of Service	800 hours

*As established in prior policy, an Executive Exempt Employee whose annual leave accrual on October 1, 2007 was greater than 800 hours may receive a maximum payment of his/her October 1, 2007 balance or his/her final balance, whichever is less.”

As shown in the above table, there is a duplication in years of service at 30 years which corresponds to a maximum annual leave payout of both 1,200 hours and 1,400 hours. An executive exempt employee with 30 years of service could validly claim the higher amount upon separation from County service. The 200 hours difference could have financial implications to the County. To illustrate, if an executive exempt employee with an hourly pay rate of \$108.94¹ separated from the County with 30 years of service and was paid based on 1,400 hours, the County would pay \$21,788 more than the amount for 1,200 hours. This duplication was also noted at the 25 years of service level.

The following table provides a historical perspective of the policy changes for the maximum payout of annual leave for executive exempt employees.

**Accrued Annual Leave Payout upon Separation from Employment
Policy Change Timeline**

Time Period	Accrued Annual Leave Payout
Prior to October 1, 2007	No Cap
October 1, 2007 to October 31, 2021	Cap of 800 Hours (Employees with Over 800 Hours Legacied In)
November 1, 2021 to Present	Capped Based on Years of Service (As Shown in Table Above)

¹ This was the maximum pay rate, at the time of our fieldwork, associated with Grade P on the Howard County General Salary Schedule. Based on a review of Executive Exempt employees listed in Section 1.306 of the Howard County Code and the pay classification schedule from the Office of Human Resources, we determined that Grade P is the most widely assigned pay grade of Executive Exempt employees.

We recommend that the Administration correct the error identified in the County's policy on the maximum payout of accrued annual leave for executive exempt employees upon separation from County employment.

Administration's Response:

We concur. The Administration will make the necessary corrections to the policy by February 1st.

We wish to express our gratitude to the Administration for the cooperation and assistance extended to us during the course of this engagement.

cc: Brandee Ganz, Chief Administrative Officer
Gary Kuc, County Solicitor