

1 GULF OF MEXICO FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

2
3 ADMINISTRATIVE/BUDGET COMMITTEE

4
5 Embassy Suites Panama City Beach, Florida

6
7 October 25, 2023

8
9 **VOTING MEMBERS**

- 10 Rick Burris (designee for Joe Spraggins).....Mississippi
- 11 Jonathan Dugas.....Louisiana
- 12 Bob Gill.....Florida
- 13 Dale Diaz.....Mississippi
- 14 Dave Donaldson.....GSMFC
- 15 Anthony Overton.....Alabama
- 16 Troy Williamson.....Texas

17
18 **NON-VOTING MEMBERS**

- 19 Kevin Anson (designee for Scott Bannon).....Alabama
- 20 Kesley Banks.....Texas
- 21 Susan Boggs.....Alabama
- 22 Billy Broussard.....Louisiana
- 23 Tom Frazer.....Florida
- 24 Dakus Geeslin (designee for Robin Riechers).....Texas
- 25 Michael McDermott.....Mississippi
- 26 Chris Schieble (designee for Patrick Banks).....Louisiana
- 27 Andy Strelcheck.....NMFS
- 28 C.J. Sweetman (designee for Jessica McCawley).....Florida
- 29 Ed Walker.....Florida

30
31 **STAFF**

- 32 Assane Diagne.....Economist
- 33 Matt Freeman.....Economist
- 34 John Froeschke.....Deputy Director
- 35 Beth Hager.....Administrative Officer
- 36 Lisa Hollensead.....Fishery Biologist
- 37 Mary Levy.....NOAA General Counsel
- 38 Natasha Mendez-Ferrer.....Fishery Biologist
- 39 Emily Muehlstein.....Public Information Officer
- 40 Ryan Rindone.....Lead Fishery Biologist/SEDAR Liaison
- 41 Bernadine Roy.....Office Manager
- 42 Carrie Simmons.....Executive Director
- 43 Camilla Shireman.....Administrative & Communications Assistant
- 44 Carly Somerset.....Fisheries Outreach Specialist

45
46 **OTHER PARTICIPANTS**

- 47 Peter Hood.....NMFS
- 48 Tim Griner.....SAFMC
- 49 Mandy Karnauskas.....NMFS

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PAGE 15: Motion that the council move forward with the process proposed regarding the recreational initiative. The motion carried on page 15.

PAGE 23: Motion that the council implement the proposal to hire a staffer for two years as use of Phase I IRA funding, as outlined in Tab G-5(a) of the briefing book. The motion carried on page 23.

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1 The Administrative/Budget Committee of the Gulf of Mexico
2 Fishery Management Council convened at The Embassy Suites in
3 Panama City Beach, Florida on Wednesday morning, October 25,
4 2023, and was called to order by Chairman Rick Burris.

5
6 **ADOPTION OF AGENDA**
7 **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**
8 **ACTION GUIDE AND NEXT STEPS**
9

10 **CHAIRMAN RICK BURRIS:** Before we get into the agenda, I will go
11 over the members. They are myself, Mr. Dugas, Mr. Diaz, Mr.
12 Donaldson, Mr. Gill, Dr. Overton, and Mr. Williamson. First up,
13 we have the Adoption of the Agenda. Does anybody have any
14 changes to the agenda that they would like to make? Seeing
15 none, is there any opposition to approving the agenda as
16 written? All right.

17
18 Next up is the Approval of the Minutes from the August 2023
19 Meeting. Has everybody had a chance to look at those? Is there
20 any changes that anyone would like to make? Is there any
21 opposition to approving the minutes as written? Seeing none,
22 we'll move on to Item Number III, which is the Action Guide and
23 Next Steps. Dr. Simmons.

24
25 **DRAFT ACTIVITIES FOR PROPOSED USE OF ADMINISTRATIVE AWARD**
26 **CARRYOVER FUNDS**
27 **PROPOSED APPROACH FOR FULFILLING THE RECREATIONAL INITIATIVE**
28

29 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR CARRIE SIMMONS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and so
30 we have several items to cover, and so I would like to go
31 through the action guide for each of those items before we get
32 into them, if that's okay, and I will go ahead and start with
33 Action Item Number G-4(a).

34
35 At the August council meeting, the council directed staff to
36 work with NMFS to develop an outline, an estimated schedule, and
37 deliverables for pursuing the recreational initiative. The
38 recreational initiative is being undertaken to engage the
39 recreational anglers and associated industry members to review
40 and evaluate past and current management strategies and explore
41 potential innovative management strategies that can inform
42 future council recreational management measures.

43
44 The funding for this initiative would be drawn from the existing
45 five-year administrative award carryover, which is from our
46 earlier part of the award during the COVID time, when we had
47 less travel and meeting costs, and a proposed project plan and
48 budget. We developed this process, and we're going to walk you

1 through that, and that's going to be in Tab G, Number 4(a), and
2 we would like a lot of feedback on this, and, if you're
3 comfortable with it, probably moving forward, we would need a
4 motion, and at least, if not at committee, by Full Council.

5
6 This is essentially a process document that staff has tried to
7 put together, and we've had some feedback, and assistance, from
8 the Regional Office staff on this process document, and so we're
9 tried to flesh out some background, a project description and
10 purpose, the members, or committees, and working groups, that
11 would be involved, the various anticipated work and activities
12 of each of those groups for this process, a timeline, and a
13 proposed budget, and so those are the main things that we've
14 tried to capture in this tab.

15
16 Just a reminder that this recreational initiative is being
17 considered to engage recreational anglers and associated
18 industry members to review and evaluate those past and current
19 management strategies and to work on potential innovative
20 management strategies that could be applied in the future.

21
22 Also, just to remind everyone, this effort is just focused on
23 the recreational sector, as the council is working on many other
24 documents, and actions, that are applicable to the commercial
25 fishery, and so we have some background in here, trying to set
26 up the timeline of what the council's decision had been made,
27 and so, if you go down, Bernie, to page 2, please.

28
29 Where we are currently with the management in the recreational
30 sector is, over time, the recreational sector has grown, in both
31 participation and efficiency, and these gains in efficiency are
32 not limited to just the number of anglers, but there are larger
33 boats, more motors, better technology, and so, you know, where
34 the council is currently with some of their recreational
35 management strategies.

36
37 You will recall, at the beginning of this year, in January of
38 2023, during that meeting, there was a motion passed to try to
39 look at starting to go through some of these and develop this
40 initiative, and the goals of this initiative, and so that's
41 largely what this tab tries to do, and so that's kind of the
42 chronological order of events, to remind everybody, and so
43 there's the motion that was passed in January, and then it was
44 amended, during the April council meeting, slightly, with a
45 change to the Number 7 initiative.

46
47 Let's keep going down to page 3, and so we'll start with the
48 consultant, and so we need some help, and so I think that was

1 one of the things that staff realized, in reading the motion
2 many, many times, and talking about it, and how are we going to
3 even start to begin to accomplish this and operationalize any,
4 or all, aspects of it, and so what we tried to do is we tried to
5 lay out what we thought this consultant could help us accomplish
6 and what we would be looking for regarding their expertise and
7 experience.

8
9 That's laid out on page 3, what the tasks would be that they
10 would help us with, and then some of the desired experience and
11 skills the council and staff would be looking for to move this
12 forward.

13
14 Next, we'll talk about the steering committee, and so the
15 purpose of the steering committee would be to have a core group
16 of individuals that would work closely with the consultants to
17 direct work on this initiative, through the working group and
18 through coordination with the council and agency staff.

19
20 Then we proposed a makeup of the steering committee, if we go
21 down a little bit, and we were thinking that it would be six
22 members, appointed by the council. Members could be comprised
23 of two NOAA Fisheries staff, and we have some suggestions there,
24 a Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission staff member, two
25 council members that represent the recreational sector, and
26 myself, and so, again, this is just the proposed makeup.

27
28 This group, we're anticipating, if you keep going down to the
29 steering committee, has a large scope of work, and that's laid
30 out on page 5. One of the first things for this group to do
31 would be to select a consultant, and so, after that consultant
32 is selected, through a competitive application process, and this
33 is what we're proposing here, the steering committee would
34 probably have to have like monthly meetings, to be virtual, to
35 really try to flesh out, with the consultant, what these
36 meetings would look like.

37
38 We think they could be one-and-a-half to three days, and we're
39 anticipating, you know, three meetings of the working group, and
40 so here's kind of the anticipated scope of work for the steering
41 committee, and so a heavy workload in the beginning, to try to
42 set all of this up and bring this information to the council,
43 and so let's keep going down.

44
45 Our next players are going to be the working group, and so the
46 purpose of the working group is to have a group that is a set of
47 knowledgeable individuals with recreational fishing interests
48 who will review current and historical management successes and

1 failures and advise the council on potential novel management
2 measures. The working group will focus on the exploration of
3 ideas, rather than reacting to proposed regulatory decisions
4 from the council, and our thinking is we would strive for
5 consensus-based recommendations from this group, and, of course,
6 the consultant would help us with that, and develop the meeting
7 kind of framework and materials and all that kind of stuff.

8
9 The proposed makeup of the working group would be twelve to
10 sixteen members, appointed by the council through an open
11 application process, and we would hope that that membership
12 would reflect a diverse group of interests and geographic range
13 and experiences in recreational fisheries that the council
14 manages.

15
16 Right now, we are trying -- We're thinking that we're going to
17 follow the Marine Recreational Education kind of program
18 concept, which is where we have the steering committee that
19 would work -- Would meet, based on those meetings we're
20 proposing, with the working group, but they would not -- They
21 may present materials, or provide feedback, but they wouldn't
22 necessarily be engaged. They would be there as observers during
23 those meetings, is what we're suggesting.

24
25 The next thing we tried to come up with, if we keep going to
26 page 7, is some type of timeline, or proposed schedule, to
27 accomplish this, if the council likes it, and so I won't read
28 all of this, but you can kind of read through it yourself and
29 provide us feedback on where you see, you know, some gaps in our
30 thinking here.

31
32 The next thing we did is we came up with a draft budget and
33 anticipated project cost, and these are likely on the high end,
34 and it would depend on the memberships, numbers of members, who
35 you appoint to the working group, the number of members that you
36 appoint to the steering committee that would be eligible for
37 salary, all those type of things, where you hold the meetings,
38 and we're proposing having -- Of the three meetings, two of them
39 would be in our council office, and one would be some other
40 location, and so that would impact these projected costs as
41 well, and so these, again, are probably more maximum high side,
42 but, again, all those players contribute to the final cost
43 projection. Anything else? Ms. Muehlstein, is there any
44 feedback, or information, that you would like to fill in the
45 gaps for me, and then I will send it over to Andy.

46
47 **MS. EMILY MUEHLSTEIN:** The only thing that I think I wanted to
48 clarify is, you know, in looking at hiring the consultant, some

1 of the feedback that we've already gotten from the industry that
2 was supportive of this initial motion is I think it's really
3 important for us to use a consultant, because we don't want to
4 create an environment where participants in the working group,
5 who are doing the evaluation of the management strategies, are
6 feeling like whatever they say is going to immediately enter the
7 council regulatory pipeline.

8
9 I think the idea of hiring a consultant to help us do this is
10 going to be a way to sort of help remove this group's work from
11 immediately feeling like there might be some punitive regulation
12 that happens just because they decided to have some exploratory
13 conversation, and so I think that's something that I just really
14 wanted to stress, that, throughout this process, I think it's
15 going to be the steering committee's responsibility, and the
16 consultant's responsibility, to make sure that, when we
17 communicate to the council, and when you guys hear what's coming
18 out of this group, that you understand that what we're trying to
19 do is really facilitate an environment where people are not
20 afraid to have a discussion about something because it might end
21 up in, you know, a closure of the fishery or something, and so,
22 really, I think the idea here is that, overall, in general, this
23 initiative looks so much different than just having an ad hoc AP
24 on purpose.

25
26 It does that because I think that the body of information that
27 comes out of this working group ultimately is something that can
28 inform council decisions in perpetuity, something that we don't
29 have to just act on immediately, but that we can draw upon five
30 years from now, when we are facing a new management challenge,
31 right, and so I guess I just wanted to sort of ground this whole
32 pitch here in the idea that this isn't just going to be an AP.

33
34 It's not just to inform something now, and I think the idea here
35 is that we're poised to be less reactionary in the way that we
36 manage our fisheries and that having the support, and this
37 groundwork laid, by evaluating different management strategies,
38 through, you know, this process, is going to allow us to do
39 better in the future, and sort of get ahead of things and maybe
40 just think completely out of the box.

41
42 I think that's the only thing that I really wanted to stress, is
43 the reason this looks so, you know, big and layered and
44 bureaucratic is because we don't want it to look like the
45 council process. We want it to look like something different.

46
47 **CHAIRMAN BURRIS:** Andy, did you have any comments to that?
48

1 **MR. ANDY STRELCHECK:** Yes, and, first, I would just say thank
2 you to Carrie and Emily and the team for the collaboration and
3 working on this. Obviously, when I floated the motion in
4 January, I didn't know what to expect, in terms of how to lay
5 out this process and implement it, and I think this really is
6 very thoughtful, and I think it's strategic, and I think it's an
7 opportunity for us to build communication and trust, and I agree
8 with everything that Emily just stated, right, and talking with
9 stakeholders, and constituents, about the initiative, and we
10 don't want this to look like a typical advisory panel.

11
12 We want it to be different than that, and we want it to be
13 something that can invoke creativity and innovation and kind of
14 the environment where people can freely offer those ideas
15 without the thought that we're going to immediately act on them,
16 or that they're reacting to any sort of regulatory action.

17
18 The other thing that I will add is the steering committee, the
19 idea of the steering committee, and kind of how we compose that,
20 is, in many ways, to just avoid running afoul of the Federal
21 Advisory Committee Act. That wouldn't be a recommending body,
22 and that would just be helping to steer the process, and then
23 it's stated in here, but maybe just to further emphasize it,
24 right, and these are small groups, right, and we know that we're
25 going to have to amplify this, and expand out the communication,
26 and so it's really going to be important to develop that broader
27 stakeholder engagement strategy going forward.

28
29 You will see, in multiple locations, that we've identified that
30 as part of this process, working with a facilitator and working
31 with the working group, in order to make that happen, and so I
32 will stop there.

33
34 **CHAIRMAN BURRIS:** Mr. Gill.

35
36 **MR. BOB GILL:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I echo Andy's
37 thoughts on well done. It's well laid out, and I basically like
38 it. I do have a question on the comment that you made, Dr.
39 Simmons, relative to the steering committee attending the
40 workgroup, and is that on the basis, and I assume it is, on as
41 available, with the intent that at least one steering committee
42 member will be there to facilitate the communication back and
43 forth, but not necessarily all, and they don't -- It's one of
44 those that, if you can make it, great. If you can't, we'll
45 cover you, and is that the thinking?

46
47 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Not really, no, and so I think, if
48 you can't make a monthly-ish meeting that we set up with the

1 consultants, okay, but, for these three in-person meetings, I
2 expect folks to be there, unless they've got illness or some
3 other personal reason, but that would be my thoughts, and maybe
4 others have different ideas.

5
6 **MS. MUEHLSTEIN:** If I can just add, you know, I think that the
7 steering committee is going to be responsible for synthesizing
8 and, you know, working very closely with the consultant, to make
9 sure that the outcomes of those meetings are properly
10 communicated to the council and become a body of literature or
11 whatever that is going to be useful, and so I do think it would
12 be really important for them to be a part of that, because they
13 are kind of the intermediary, right, and so, so, right now, if
14 you think about our AP process, we have a staff member that has
15 to be there, and is writing the summary and then communicating
16 that to the council, or giving it to the AP chair. In this
17 case, that steering committee is kind of playing that IPT/staff
18 role, and so they need to be involved.

19
20 **CHAIRMAN BURRIS:** To that point, you mentioned the facilitation
21 would be done by the consultant and not the steering committee.
22 Mr. Diaz.

23
24 **MR. DALE DIAZ:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and so I like the way this
25 is laid out too, and I think you all put a lot of thought into
26 it, and I like the structure, and, at the end, after everybody
27 gets a chance to talk, I would be willing to make a motion for
28 us to proceed along these lines, unless somebody modifies some
29 stuff.

30
31 I noticed, in the steering committee, we were talking about
32 having two council members, two recreational council members, on
33 it, and so, when I originally thought about this, I was trying
34 to think, you know, we've only got five that are any -- You
35 know, we've got two charter/for-hire, right, and we've got three
36 private recs, and, in my mind, this is a job for the private rec
37 representatives from the council, and is that what you all
38 thought about when you all went through this, or were you all
39 thinking this could cross over to the charter boat folks? I do
40 have another comment.

41
42 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** When we were originally discussing
43 this, I think we were thinking one private representative,
44 private recreational representative, and one with more for-hire
45 experience, and so one of things that has kind of come out in
46 the discussion is, when we get the consultant hired, is the
47 format of these meetings, and, when the council is looking at
48 what that working group is going to actually end up looking

1 like, and so, if you have the for-hire and the private anglers
2 together, you might have separate meetings, and then they come
3 back together, and we're not sure of all that format yet, but
4 this would be both for right now, unless otherwise amended.

5
6 **MR. DIAZ:** I would like to hear if anybody else on the council
7 has got any thoughts on it. I mean, when I think of a
8 recreational initiative, I don't exclude the charter industry,
9 but I think, in my mind, this was -- Andy was the one that came
10 up with the concept, and, I mean, I was thinking that this was
11 driven mostly at the private recs, but, obviously, things that
12 come out of this could affect the charter/for-hire, and so I'm
13 not necessarily opposed to that, but I just want to see if we're
14 thinking on the same lines.

15
16 The other thing is I do like the idea that you all are trying to
17 operate by consensus, and I think that's the best way for this
18 group to operate. Twelve to sixteen is about right, and, the
19 bigger this group gets, the harder it's going to be to get
20 consensus, and so I would say we try to stay on the mid to lower
21 end of that range, if possible. Thank you.

22
23 **CHAIRMAN BURRIS:** Mr. Strelcheck.

24
25 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Just in response to Dale's comments, and when
26 the recreational initiative was floated, my intent was all
27 recreational constituents, right, for-hire and private, and I
28 say that because the same problems that are plaguing the private
29 anglers are also plaguing the for-hire sector, for the most
30 part, and so why separate them out?

31
32 Yes, there is maybe differences in how we could manage them, and
33 that's where Carrie and myself and others have talked about, you
34 know, how does that get handled with a facilitator, but,
35 ultimately, at the end of the day, I think we do need to
36 incorporate the for-hire sector into this initiative and move
37 that forward.

38
39 **CHAIRMAN BURRIS:** Mr. Anson.

40
41 **MR. KEVIN ANSON:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm not on your
42 committee, but I was just wondering and, Emily, or certainly
43 Andy, relative to the communication aspect of this, as we go
44 through time, have you given much thought to how much you will
45 kind of build up, if you will, this group, as it comes -- Is it
46 going to be basically looking at the schedule sometime in June,
47 and the council may settle on membership, and so, at that time,
48 you will say get the word out of, hey, if you want to apply to

1 this new group that's being formed, or are you going to have a
2 longer -- You know, several months out, will you be kind of
3 talking about the process, and talking about the purpose of the
4 group, in advance? I'm just curious.

5
6 **MS. MUEHLSTEIN:** I'm going to be completely honest with you and
7 tell you that I haven't really put that much thought into the
8 communications side of it, because I've been more focused on the
9 actual logistics. However, I think you bring up a really great
10 point, and I love the idea of getting ahead of this, and sort of
11 talking about this process early on, and, ultimately, I will
12 defer to what you guys think that I should do.

13
14 You know, typically, when we create an ad hoc AP or something,
15 we have a very short window, where we're like apply now and
16 let's do it, and I think it would be very appropriate, if we
17 wanted to make sure that we were tapping into a portion of the
18 recreational sector that we don't maybe typically do, that this
19 is something that we do a special communications campaign with.
20 That would hopefully get to some of those constituents that
21 aren't, you know, the ones that are completely dialed-in at this
22 point.

23
24 I would happily take any feedback, and we do have an O&E
25 Committee coming up in December, and at the council table in
26 January, and so I do think we actually have some pretty good
27 timing for us to be strategic about this, if you want.

28
29 **CHAIRMAN BURRIS:** Mr. Williamson, did you have a comment?

30
31 **MR. TROY WILLIAMSON:** Yes, and I would support Dale's idea, and
32 I think this is, or should be, a representation of the private
33 recreational angler, and excluding the charter/for-hire folks I
34 don't think is discriminating against them, but there's a
35 diversion of ideas.

36
37 I mean, those folks -- Let's face it. They're commercial, and
38 so, you know, without belaboring the point, I think strictly
39 private recreational anglers should be on this committee, and I
40 reflect back to the committee that Bob set up recently, and
41 those were all composed of shareholders, and so let's keep it
42 all private recreational anglers, and get their input, and
43 that's a big, big underrepresented sector of this fishery, and
44 this is an opportunity for them to get in and share their views
45 with us. Thank you.

46
47 **CHAIRMAN BURRIS:** Mr. Geeslin.

48

1 **MR. DAKUS GEESLIN:** I've got to weigh-in on this one too, and I
2 do support the notion of including private rec on the steering
3 committee, and I found it somewhat odd that Andy mentioned, or
4 asked, about separating the two, when in fact we have very
5 different management structures, and we in fact have sector
6 separation that has -- That governs the two sectors, and I think
7 you would get more meaningful input from having a couple of
8 private rec sector perspectives, and probably geographically
9 distributed across the Gulf, on the steering committee.

10
11 **CHAIRMAN BURRIS:** Mr. Strelcheck.

12
13 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Just in response to that, remember this is not
14 a red snapper recreational initiative. This is a recreational
15 fisheries initiative, and red snapper is the only fishery
16 managed that actually has sector separation currently.

17
18 **CHAIRMAN BURRIS:** Ms. Susan.

19
20 **MS. SUSAN BOGGS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and I'm not on your
21 committee, and I am asking just for clarification, but, if I'm
22 not mistaken, the MSA lumps recreational and charter/for-hire
23 all together, and we are not separated. You have commercial and
24 recreational, and I just wanted to put that out there, while you
25 all are having this discussion, and thank you for recognizing
26 me.

27
28 **CHAIRMAN BURRIS:** Mr. Diaz.

29
30 **MR. DIAZ:** I just want to kind of go on the record, and I was
31 posing the question earlier because I'm trying to get it
32 straight in mind how we're going to handle this, but the thing
33 that I was most excited about this thing going forward is I'm
34 hoping that some creative new ideas come out with anything we
35 can do to help with dead discards. You know, dead discards is a
36 problem in the charter/for-hire and the recreational, and so,
37 anyway, I just wanted to put that on the record. Thank you.

38
39 **CHAIRMAN BURRIS:** Is there any other feedback, or discussion, on
40 this initiative? Mr. Diaz, did you have a motion prepared, as
41 you mentioned earlier?

42
43 **MR. DIAZ:** I don't know that I'm ready to put a motion forward
44 yet, and it sounds like there's some disagreement amongst the
45 members about how this should go forward, and I'm not trying to
46 force one thing or the other on that, and so, if there's more
47 discussion to be had, or we might even make the motion at Full
48 Council, and I'm not sure how I want to handle it, but I'm not

1 prepared to make a motion right now.

2
3 **CHAIRMAN BURRIS:** Ms. Muehlstein.

4
5 **MS. MUEHLSTEIN:** I think, as written, the plan right now, and
6 correct me if I'm wrong, but, when it's talking about the makeup
7 of the steering committee, it notes that it could be, and it
8 says two members of the council, and it doesn't specify a for-
9 hire and a rec, and the makeup, whether you decide to put two
10 private or one of each, is not specified, and it is at the
11 council's discretion, right, and so I think moving forward, and
12 approving this document, doesn't actually put us in conflict
13 with what sounds like might need to be a negotiation, as we
14 start to form the steering committee, and so I just wanted to
15 put that out there. I think, the way that it's written, we
16 still have the leeway to go either way, and so, if you did want
17 to say, hey, let's move forward with this, then the actual
18 makeup of the steering committee is something that we could
19 still discuss down the line.

20
21 **CHAIRMAN BURRIS:** Mr. Dugas.

22
23 **MR. J.D. DUGAS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Also, to add to that, I
24 think what we're seeing on the schedule is that the council is
25 going to appoint the steering committee in January, and so we
26 have some time.

27
28 **CHAIRMAN BURRIS:** Mr. Anson.

29
30 **MR. ANSON:** Thank you. Again, not on your committee, but so
31 just to Emily's point, and to some of the discussion here, and,
32 yes, I recognize about the composition of the steering
33 committee, but there is references to the makeup of the actual
34 group, or there is a reference to for-hire, and there are pros
35 and cons certainly, you know, to this.

36
37 Andy described how he envisioned this recreational initiative,
38 but, you know, if the intention is a consensus vote,
39 potentially, things might -- You know, the divergence of needs
40 between the two sectors may kind of, you know, not be there, and
41 it may kind of come more to the middle of the road, and so
42 that's just something to consider. Thank you.

43
44 **CHAIRMAN BURRIS:** Dr. Porch.

45
46 **DR. CLAY PORCH:** Thank you, and I just wanted to come out
47 strongly supporting this, and, yes, there's some details that
48 could be ironed out, but I wouldn't want to see this get

1 derailed.

2
3 As Mr. Diaz mentioned, it's a critical problem right now to
4 figure out how we can reduce the discards, which turns into
5 longer seasons, but the other side of it, that we've talked
6 about before, is how to manage in the face of the uncertainty
7 with the recreational statistics, because there is not going to
8 be the resources in the system to get perfectly precise and
9 accurate recreational statistics, and it would just take far
10 more resources than what the states and the feds have combined
11 to do that, and so there will always be uncertainty, and we need
12 to start managing these recreational fisheries in a bit
13 different way, whether it's multiyear ACLs or other techniques,
14 like conservation equivalency, and we really need to take a hard
15 look at it now. We can't keep doing the same thing over and
16 over again, and we've got to look at some new ways of doing
17 business. Thanks.

18
19 **CHAIRMAN BURRIS:** Mr. Williamson.

20
21 **MR. WILLIAMSON:** I just want to clarify my position, and I
22 thought that we were discussing the makeup of the steering
23 committee, and I'm not opposed to the process at all.

24
25 **CHAIRMAN BURRIS:** What I'm hearing is that we don't have to
26 really get into the weeds of the committee yet, and that we
27 could potentially move this document forward as a committee, if
28 you wish to do so.

29
30 **MR. DIAZ:** **That being the case, I will make a motion that we**
31 **move forward with this process and -- To move forward with the**
32 **process proposed by staff for the recreational initiative.**

33
34 **CHAIRMAN BURRIS:** It's seconded by Mr. Dugas. While the motion
35 is being typed up on the screen, do we have any discussion on
36 the motion? Is there any -- I will go ahead and read it into
37 the record. **The motion is to move forward with the process**
38 **proposed regarding the recreational initiative.** Okay. **Is there**
39 **any opposition to the motion? The motion carries.** Dr. Simmons.

40
41 **OTHER ACTIVITIES**

42
43 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Okay. Thank you, Mr. Chair. Now
44 there's a second part of Agenda Item IV, and so we'll go through
45 the action guide for that, and so, as we're approaching our
46 final year of the administrative award, the 2024 cycle, staff
47 has prepared a list of activities, and it's in Tab G, Number
48 4(b), for the council to consider. This is a draft list of

1 projects, and it's not exhaustive, or inclusive, but suggestions
2 for work that could be completed with funds unspent to date
3 within our existing grant scope. Staff plans to bring back, and
4 I'm going to amend the action guide a little bit, a more fully
5 fleshed-out list, and not a final list, and proposed budget back
6 to the council in January for further discussion and approval.

7
8 What we're seeing right now is some feedback, and perhaps a
9 ranking or priority, of the draft list that we have in the
10 briefing book, and, again, it is very much a draft list, and Dr.
11 Froeschke worked on this with technical staff, and so I will go
12 through it briefly, but that's what we're looking for right now.
13 Just to -- I will stop there, and let's open up that tab. Thank
14 you, Mr. Chair.

15
16 Just to -- This is for Tab G, Number 4(b), the draft activities
17 list, and so, right now, if the council moves forward with the
18 recreational initiative, what we're anticipating we would have
19 available to work with, and try to get ahead of, is around
20 \$275,000 to \$500,000.

21
22 What we want to avoid doing is waiting until the end of our
23 grant cycle to consider these funds, and so that's what we're
24 trying to do here, and so things to keep in mind, as we're
25 discussing these projects, is these projects will need to be
26 carried out over a twelve to fourteen-month period and will have
27 to be consistent with the council's current award,
28 administrative award, and, again, this is not an exhaustive
29 list, but specific tasks were developed in an effort to fill
30 data gaps for current or anticipated management needs, as well
31 as outreach and education activities.

32
33 We do have a broad brush estimate of costs for each of these
34 items, under the management ideas and under the outreach and
35 education ideas. Again, this is a draft list, and we would like
36 to kind of rank it a little bit, and hone-in a little bit more,
37 and bring something more fully fleshed out to the council in
38 January. Dr. Froeschke, do you have anything else that you want
39 to add to that?

40
41 **CHAIRMAN BURRIS:** Mr. Gill.

42
43 **MR. GILL:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and so I have several items,
44 but the question I have for Clay is there's one here for
45 alternatives for estimating recruitment in stock assessments,
46 and I seem to recall, hopefully correctly, that you all had a
47 workgroup, a year or two ago, that was looking at how you might
48 do better on estimating recruitment, and is that correct? If

1 so, how does this relate to that, or are we plowing the same
2 ground?

3
4 **DR. PORCH:** Thank you for the question. We have had some
5 working groups talking about that and how we project
6 recruitment, and, in fact, we're still working on it and
7 thinking about how we do things more consistent with the level
8 of information we actually have. As many of you know, in many
9 cases, we're moving away from parameterizing a spawner-recruit
10 relationship explicitly.

11
12 If you don't know what that means, don't worry about it, and it
13 means we're moving away from making less assumptions and just
14 moving forward with the data consistent with how much
15 information is actually in it, and so we are already kind of
16 moving along those lines.

17
18 Having said that, having some more folks thinking about it
19 wouldn't hurt. This particular one wouldn't be my highest
20 priority of things to be done, but it's not that it's not
21 useful, but does that answer your question?

22
23 **MR. GILL:** Yes, sir. Thank you. If I might, Mr. Chairman, and
24 so the other question I had was the first one under Management
25 Ideas, estimating recreational discards, how is that interfaced
26 with the recreational initiative that we're talking about, since
27 that will surely be a topic in that? Is this one that might be
28 better to wait until the initiative working group meets and does
29 their thing or no?

30
31 **DR. JOHN FROESCHKE:** I don't know that the pathway of this was
32 worked out. You know, it's obviously a problem, and something
33 we're trying to figure out, and, I mean, the obvious thing, in
34 my mind, when I was thinking about this, is this idea that
35 recreational discards are scaled to the landings. When you have
36 stocks that are in rebuilding plans, and you drive down the
37 landings, it seems intuitive that you're not driving those
38 discards in the same way, and so we need some way to decouple
39 that process. I don't know what that is, but it would be nice
40 to think about that from a higher level, and that was my
41 thinking.

42
43 **CHAIRMAN BURRIS:** Dr. Porch.

44
45 **DR. PORCH:** This is an important issue, and, in fact, we're
46 actually internally moving more towards modeling the discards
47 and the landings separately, recognizing that, when you have a
48 closed season, and you make the closed season longer, you're

1 probably going to have, you know, more discards, and certainly
2 they're not going to go down, and so, yes, we're actually moving
3 in that direction, and having a group that wants to talk about
4 this could be helpful, sponsoring some workshops, et cetera,
5 but, yes, that's a high priority as well for us, modeling
6 discards better, and particularly in projections.

7

8 **CHAIRMAN BURRIS:** Mr. Gill.

9

10 **MR. GILL:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and, finally, I have a
11 suggestion on an addition. One of the things, the way this
12 process works, is we're linear, and, you know, we do our little
13 thing, and it results in, but, from a control system point of
14 view, there's no feedback about how well did we do and what
15 could we do to make it better, from that aspect, and it may be a
16 combination with the science, and not just management, and I
17 don't know the answer to that, and there are some papers out on
18 this consideration, but I'm thinking that it would be worthwhile
19 to consider looking into developing a feedback mechanism to
20 assess our performance, and that's my suggestion.

21

22 **CHAIRMAN BURRIS:** Dr. Simmons.

23

24 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and so you
25 mean performance on specific regulatory actions, after some time
26 period?

27

28 **MR. GILL:** So we make management plans to address issues in the
29 fisheries, but we don't go back to assess on was that the right
30 way to go, is there a better way to go, and how you separate it
31 out from the science at this point, I don't know. Some of the
32 papers suggest that you assess the new science versus the old
33 science, and, well, it's a mixed bag, right, because management
34 affects the result, and so I'm not quite sure how we go about
35 that, but I think there's merit to considering that, all right,
36 we did this, and was that the right action, and was there
37 something better that we could have, should have, done, so that
38 we learn from what we've done and to try to do better in the
39 future.

40

41 **CHAIRMAN BURRIS:** Dr. Froeschke.

42

43 **DR. FROESCHKE:** So I've thought a little bit about this, and I
44 don't know if it's exactly, but one example is this idea of
45 projections of season lengths, and we make a projection a priori
46 for some species, and it was fifty days, and we actually closed
47 in thirty days, or seventy days, or something like that, and, if
48 you looked over these for a period of stocks, and years, you

1 could see is there a bias in the way that you're doing it, and
2 is that something that could be addressed, or is it a precision,
3 and that's one thing that you could look at that I've thought
4 about.

5
6 The other thing that I've thought about looking into is, for
7 example, bag limits and size limits and things, and perhaps even
8 broader than the Gulf Council, and are these -- In general,
9 those management actions have been put in place to reduce
10 harvest rates, or some predictable kind of management, and, over
11 the long term, how effective are they at achieving that goal or
12 not. Those are a little bit more nebulous, but is that along
13 the lines of what you're thinking?

14
15 **MR. GILL:** Yes, and that's -- You're picking out particular
16 examples, and I think that's part of it. There's a paper that
17 tried to address it in the Northeast, on assessing the efficacy
18 of -- They called it management, but it really was management
19 and science, and the answer is that what we intended to -- I am
20 speaking "we" in the generic Northeast sense here, but what we
21 intended to do isn't quite the result we got, and so the
22 question then becomes, well, okay, what could we, should we,
23 have done differently that might have gotten us closer to the
24 goal that we were trying to achieve, and so, yes, you're on the
25 right path, but I think some effort at getting at that would be
26 helpful to the process.

27
28 **CHAIRMAN BURRIS:** Dr. Simmons.

29
30 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and so I'm
31 sorry that I'm going backwards a little bit, but I think there
32 was a little bit of confusion about what we were proposing for
33 the estimate on recreational discards, and then Mr. Gill asked
34 about how it relates to the initiative that the committee just
35 discussed.

36
37 I think what we were proposing here is not workshops, or
38 anything like that, and it would be an academic review exercise
39 of going in and looking at this and try to at least qualify some
40 of these conservation and management measures, and not workshops
41 and engagements, and Return 'Em Right is doing all of that, and
42 so that's not what we were proposing here, just to make sure
43 that's clear.

44
45 **CHAIRMAN BURRIS:** So not quantitative assessments of the data
46 that's available. So we've been asked to sort of prioritize, or
47 rank, some of these projects, and does anybody have -- Dr. Porch
48 mentioned the discard project as being a priority for the

1 Science Center. Does anyone have any other lists, or projects,
2 that they would like to bump-up, or prioritize, above any other?
3 Dr. Porch.

4
5 **DR. PORCH:** I will start with a question, and is this the final
6 list? I thought I heard Dr. Simmons say that this isn't meant
7 to be exhaustive, and it's just a chance to review some ideas
8 that were put out, because we would definitely like to work with
9 council staff, and maybe elaborate on some of these, and suggest
10 some other ideas.

11
12 **CHAIRMAN BURRIS:** I think you mentioned the final list we will
13 get out in January, correct, and so that's obviously a
14 possibility. Mr. Strelcheck.

15
16 **MR. STRELCHECK:** I have a couple of comments. In terms of what
17 is on the list, the coral cover and the spiny lobster closed
18 areas, I view that as an important, and I'm thinking there may
19 be other mechanisms to achieve that that could be more cost-
20 effective, if we maybe reached out to NOS and the Marine
21 Sanctuary, if there's opportunities to partner with them, if
22 that ultimately rose to a priority with the council.

23
24 We talked about, obviously, kind of the efficacy of regulations,
25 and oftentimes what we hear, with shortening seasons, is this
26 idea of the concept of effort shifting, and effort compression,
27 and so research, and information, into understanding that better
28 I think could be informative, as well as the recreational season
29 projections.

30
31 I often get criticized, right, for either being right, or being
32 wrong, or somewhere in between, but any way that we could work
33 with the council, a contractor or others, to improve that
34 process, to make that more informative, and hopefully more
35 accurate, would be ideal as well.

36
37 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Just in response to the coral cover
38 with the spiny lobster closed areas, I mean, these areas have
39 been in place for a long time, and my understanding is that FWC
40 has not been able to assess those, all those areas, nor has the
41 sanctuary, and so I think there is some efforts, from academics,
42 to survey some of those sixty-two areas, but not all of them,
43 and so that -- We can confirm that when we come back, but that
44 is why it is on the list.

45
46 **CHAIRMAN BURRIS:** I think, in the essence of time, and we still
47 have another agenda item to cover, and we've had some good
48 discussion and feedback on this list, and so I think that

1 council staff, and NOAA, can get together and, before the
2 January meeting, come back with a final list for us to go over.
3 Next up would be Item Number V, Information on the Inflation
4 Reduction Act Funding for Regional Management Councils. Dr.
5 Simmons.

6
7 **INFORMATION ON INFLATION REDUCTION ACT FUNDING FOR THE REGIONAL**
8 **MANAGEMENT COUNCILS**
9

10 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and so I
11 suggest that we cover both of these items, and then circle back,
12 if that's okay, just to kind of remind everybody where we are
13 with the regional council management process for this specific
14 pot of Inflation Reduction funding.

15
16 The CCC has been working with NOAA staff to clarify and define
17 the process for funding the regional fishery management councils
18 with funds that are earmarked under the Inflation Reduction Act,
19 and, in September, we were informed that the first notice of
20 funding was in the final stages, and that would be set equally
21 for each of the regional management councils at the \$3 million,
22 and that's divided equally to the \$375,000.

23
24 In preparation for the application of these funds, we're going
25 to review a proposal to hire a staff, with this first initial
26 phase, and that's in Tab G, Number 5(a), and so we're looking
27 for feedback from the committee on that, and then the second
28 piece of the Inflation Reduction Act funding that we've
29 outlined, in Tab G, Number 5(b), is strictly just for your
30 information, but those two are kind of linked together as we
31 move forward in this process.

32
33 We'll open up Tab G, Number 5(a), and so what we have outlined
34 here is that, with this initial funding, we're proposing that we
35 would hire, or fund, one full-time employee, a fisheries
36 biologist or equivalent, and that would cover a two-year period,
37 with Phase I of the Climate Ready Fisheries Program funding, and
38 then we've also outlined, you know, the benefits, as well as
39 travel costs, supplies, and potential contractual costs.

40
41 Some anticipated activities of the new staff for Phase II, and
42 how these are integrated, is they would develop proposals that
43 meet the priorities outlined by NOAA Fisheries, and that can be
44 integrated into the council operations in the future, due to the
45 short-term funding, as well as monitor and execute the project
46 deliverables, draft mid-term reports, and provide summaries to
47 the SSC, technical committees, and the council, as applicable,
48 and they would also be responsible for securing the third year

1 of funding for the position, because we understand this is a
2 three-year funding availability for this specific pot of money.

3
4 After that funding runs out, the council -- We would have to
5 make a decision if that staff member would move under the admin
6 award or if they would have to move on for a different position,
7 and so, Mr. Chair, I would like to go to the presentation, if I
8 could, and then we could circle back for all the agenda items,
9 if that's okay.

10
11 We'll open Tab G, Number 5(b), and so this outlines Phase II,
12 this information that we just recently received during the
13 national meeting, and so our remaining funds are \$17 million for
14 the regional management council funding. We were informed that
15 the proposals for this funding are due on January 31 of next
16 year, and so each council would provide a proposal, and that has
17 to be reviewed and approved by NMFS, and it has to utilize the
18 climate-related management actions and activities that are in
19 this slide.

20
21 We can't use these funds to pay for current staff, unless their
22 responsibilities and time are shifted to these specific climate-
23 ready projects, and proposals can be as small or large, but they
24 want a minimum of \$300,000 in that proposal, and then the
25 actions must be completed, or in the final phases, by 2026.

26
27 We received some information on some updated priorities, and we
28 did provide a letter to Ms. Denit on those draft priorities.
29 Some of those, I think, were accepted and are reflected in these
30 updated priorities that are in the slides, which is much
31 appreciated.

32
33 Again, I've tried to cover some of the anticipated activities we
34 have right now, what we think this hired staff member would do,
35 and they would assist with the writing of the fishery ecosystem
36 plan that we just talked about during the Ecosystem Committee,
37 and, obviously, that's going to require other biologists, and
38 habitat specialists, social scientists, and economists to
39 complete that work, but we think that person could really help
40 us move this project along.

41
42 Then gather and synthesize indicators and update them to inform
43 the fishery ecosystem indicator process and loops and assist
44 staff in the stakeholder engagement workshops, following the
45 education and outreach engagement plan, as well as work on more
46 flexible management options.

47
48 Right now, our plan is to draft a proposal, have it ready for

1 the January council meeting, and we'll pretty much have to
2 submit that in the middle of our January council meeting, and so
3 we'll have to figure out how that's going to work on the agenda,
4 Mr. Chair, and proposals have to demonstrate the link between
5 the projects and NOAA Fisheries' climate-ready priorities.

6
7 We can submit multiple projects, or proposals, but my aim is
8 going to be develop one proposal, using the template that would
9 encompass a multiyear approach, so that we can try to better
10 plan and plan out when our anticipated deliverables would be, as
11 best as we can right now anyway, and we're just looking for the
12 committee to agree with the approach, and we would need a
13 motion, I believe, to move forward with the proposal to hire a
14 staff with that first slug of money, to start trying to address
15 climate-ready fisheries in the Gulf of Mexico.

16
17 **CHAIRMAN BURRIS:** Thank you, Dr. Simmons. Does anybody have any
18 discussion on this? Mr. Gill.

19
20 **MR. GILL:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and so I like both the Phase
21 I and the Phase II of the approach that you have, and I agree
22 that, given the timeline that you have to work on, one proposal
23 is more than enough to fill the idle hours that you all have,
24 and considering more than one I think is not reasonable, but,
25 relative to the Phase 1 consideration, I agree with that, and,
26 Bernie, if you would pull up my motion under Phase I.
27 Basically, it just agrees and says to move forward with the
28 Phase I recommendation. I can read it, if you like.

29
30 **CHAIRMAN BURRIS:** Mr. Gill, would you mind reading your motion?

31
32 **MR. GILL:** Not at all, Mr. Chairman. **The motion is that the**
33 **council implement the proposal to hire a staffer for two years**
34 **as use of Phase I IRA funding, as outlined in Tab G-5(a) of the**
35 **briefing book.**

36
37 **MR. DIAZ:** I will second it.

38
39 **CHAIRMAN BURRIS:** It's seconded by Mr. Diaz. Is there any
40 discussion on the motion? **Seeing none, is there any opposition**
41 **to the motion, as written? The motion is approved.**

42
43 I believe that that's it for Agenda Item V, and next up is
44 Agenda Item VI, Other Business. Is there any other business to
45 come before the committee? Mr. Strelcheck.

46
47 **OTHER BUSINESS**

1 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Clay and I wanted to just give you an update
2 today, and we're rolling out the IRA spend plan for the \$20
3 million for the Gulf of Mexico. There are more details,
4 obviously, being shared, and we've been collaborating closely,
5 obviously, with Dave Donaldson and Gulf States, as well as all
6 the Gulf states on this.

7
8 Of the \$20 million, \$2 million is going to go to develop and
9 implement Gulf of Mexico video and acoustic camera surveys, to
10 improve reef fish data timeliness, and generate density
11 estimates, and so that's work that will happen at the Science
12 Center, with Clay's shop and his team.

13
14 \$7.35 million will be collaboratively going to Gulf States
15 Marine Fisheries Commission and state partners to increase
16 accessibility of state survey data and improve the state
17 surveys, and then the remaining \$10.65 million is intended to
18 enhance and estimate recreational fishing effort and discards,
19 and those, obviously, as you well know, represent two of the
20 greatest sources of uncertainty with recreational fisheries, and
21 we intend to work with Gulf States to plan some workshops early
22 next year to help flesh out kind of the more detailed projects
23 and studies that can inform the work that would improve discards
24 and effort estimation, and so we just wanted to update you on
25 that, and I will turn it to Clay, if you want to add anything
26 else, Clay.

27
28 **DR. PORCH:** Not too much to add, but I think the workshops will
29 be key, and that's where we'll get all the engagement from the
30 states, although many of you have been contacted already, and so
31 we don't have a clear plan, moving forward, in terms of the best
32 ways to estimate effort, what would be the gold standard for
33 discards, and so the plans are mutable, in that sense, and the
34 idea was, when we hold these workshops, we get all the relevant
35 experts together and craft that plan, and then that will
36 determine also how much of the funding goes to discards, versus
37 effort, versus potentially some other activities to improve
38 recreational fishing data.

39
40 **CHAIRMAN BURRIS:** Thank you, and I have one, or maybe two,
41 questions. First of all, this is short-term money, correct,
42 from my recollection?

43
44 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Yes, and we have it for four years, and we're
45 already in year-two, and so we have three years left.

46
47 **CHAIRMAN BURRIS:** Then one more, and this money is going to Gulf
48 States, and would it also be able to trickle down to the

1 individual states, if there were programs?

2
3 **DR. PORCH:** Yes, absolutely, and that's been the plan from the
4 beginning. A lot of it is going to go through Gulf States to
5 the states, and some may -- When it comes down to say the effort
6 and discard estimation, we may contract directly with the
7 states, and a lot of it is going to depend on the states
8 interest and, you know, what they're willing to do, what they're
9 able to do, et cetera, and so the reason why we don't have a
10 fully fleshed-out plan is it's only recently that we've gotten
11 final approval to this, which allows us to start talking with
12 our state partners, and so that's why everything is going to
13 hinge on these workshops, in terms of the detailed plan.

14
15 **CHAIRMAN BURRIS:** Thank you for that information. Dr. Simmons.

16
17 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and so did
18 you say that that information would be publicly available when
19 again, and where?

20
21 **MR. STRELCHECK:** So we are rolling out more details today, and I
22 have an email teed-up to send to everyone at ten o'clock this
23 morning, and we'll have a webpage with more information on it,
24 and then, certainly, as the workshops and other information
25 develops we'll continue to inform the council of progress being
26 made, in terms of execution of the funds.

27
28 **CHAIRMAN BURRIS:** Okay. Thank you. Is there any other business
29 for the committee? Mr. Diaz.

30
31 **MR. DIAZ:** We've been talking about discards, and I was actually
32 going to bring this up later in the meeting, but I would like to
33 see, in January, a presentation from the Return 'Em Right people
34 again, if that's okay with the chair and the executive director,
35 and, as we're working through this, I would like to see if
36 there's some tangible results that we can quantify, and
37 hopefully use in our process at some point in time, and so I
38 would like to make sure that's included in the presentation, if
39 that's possible, and I know your agenda -- If not January, and
40 if you have to do it in April, that would be okay, but my
41 preference would be January. Thank you.

42
43 **CHAIRMAN BURRIS:** Mr. Anson.

44
45 **MR. ANSON:** Yes, and certainly there's lots of interest in what
46 they're doing, and, yes, we'll bring it back. The timing of it
47 -- Yes, January might be a little busy, and they may not -- It
48 may be best to wait until April, because they'll be able to look

1 at all the data collected through this year, you know, that kind
2 of stuff, and so yes.

3

4 **CHAIRMAN BURRIS:** All right. If there's no other business, Mr.
5 Chair, I will turn it back over to you, with about eight minutes
6 to spare.

7

8 (Whereupon, the meeting adjourned on October 25, 2023.)

9

10

- - -