

July 16, 2024

Honorable Mayor and City Council
City of Long Beach
California

RECOMMENDATION:

Recommendation to authorize a salary for Christopher J. Garner, General Manager, Long Beach Utilities Department, at an amount equal to \$334,813.06, effective the pay period inclusive of October 1, 2023, with the subsequent application of economic benefits for all management employees as described by the 2023-2026 Long Beach Management Association (LBMA) Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), retroactive to the dates of each economic benefit indicated in the MOU.

DISCUSSION

On August 9, 2022, the Long Beach City Council approved Resolution No. RES-22-0139 to place Measure BB on the November 8, 2022 election. Measure BB asked voters:

“Shall the City Charter be amended to merge the existing water, sewer, and gas utilities into a single publicly-owned utility, governed by the existing independent Water/Utility Commission; eliminate duplicative costs by consolidating like operations, improve customer service efficiency with increased flexibility in sharing of staffing/equipment, reduce impacts to streets through coordinated utility pipeline street repairs; and achieve cost savings through greater economies of scale?”

On November 8, 2022, Long Beach voters approved Measure BB with 63.9% of voters casting ballots in favor of the proposal. On December 13, 2022, the Long Beach City Council certified the election with the adoption of Resolution No. RES-22-0209. In accordance with California Government Code Section 54957 and Long Beach City Charter Article IIX Section 1403(2), on December 19, 2022, the Long Beach Board of Public Utilities Commissioners (Board) formally confirmed the appointment of Christopher J. Garner, formerly General Manager of the Long Beach Water Department, as General Manager of the newly merged Long Beach Public Utilities Department without an increase in salary, but with an understanding that Mr. Garner’s performance would be evaluated in a year and adjusted accordingly.

Honorable Mayor and City Council

July 16, 2024

Page 2

On January 4 and 18, the Board met in closed session to conduct a performance evaluation of the General Manager. As a part of this action, the Board recognized the number of employees within the newly merged Utilities Department and annual budget overseen by the Board and administered by the General Manager had increased to 500 employees and \$335 million, respectively; whereas prior to the merger, the General Manager was responsible for 275 water and sewer employees and a \$170 million annual budget.

With consideration to a salary analysis of utility general managers, increased scope of responsibilities, job performance, qualifying experience, education, and peer equity, the Board on February 1, 2024 formally adopted Resolution No. UT-1508 to establish Christopher J. Garner's salary at an amount equal to \$334,813.06 (or 10% increase), effective the pay period inclusive of October 1, 2023 and prior to application of benefits afforded by the 2023 LBMA MOU.

Christopher J. Garner has been a Department Director for 26 years, hold a Master's Degree in Business Administration from Loyola Marymount University, and has led industry groups including the California Municipal Utilities Association (CMUA) as President from 2020-2022. The Board found the doubling of Mr. Garner's scope of responsibilities and job performance to merit the approved salary increase.

This matter was reviewed by City Attorney Dawn McIntosh on June 6, 2024.

TIMING CONSIDERATIONS

City Council action is requested on July 16, 2024 to allow implementation of the General Manager's salary and applicable LBMA economic benefits, as approved by the Board.

FISCAL IMPACT

The fiscal impact of this action has been approved as part of the Utilities Department FY 24 budget and will be distributed across the Water, Sewer, and Gas Funds. There is no fiscal impact to the General Fund.

SUGGESTED ACTION:

Approve recommendation.

Respectfully submitted,



Naomi Rainey
President
Board of Utilities Commissioners

Attachments: 1 – GM Confirmation of Appointment
2 – GM Compensation