



Staff Report

File #: REPORT 18-0507, Version: 1

**Honorable Mayor and Members of the Hermosa Beach City Council
Regular Meeting of August 28, 2018**

**APPOINTMENT OF CITY MANAGER AND
APPROVAL OF AGREEMENT FOR CITY MANAGER SERVICES**

(Interim City Manager John Jalili)

Recommended Action:

It is recommended that City Council:

1. Appoint Suja Lowenthal as the Hermosa Beach City Manager; and
2. Approve a City Manager Employment Agreement, setting forth the terms and conditions under which Ms. Lowenthal will serve as the City's City Manager.

Background:

Following the resignation of Sergio Gonzalez in March 2018, the City Council directed Avery Associates to conduct a nationwide search to replace him. Avery Associates reviewed 47 applications and presented candidates with the most relevant qualifications to the City Council. The Council, in turn, engaged in its own screening process and interviewed eight candidates; ultimately, the Council directed that an employment agreement be negotiated and brought back for approval with Suja Lowenthal. Ms. Lowenthal has agreed to assume the position of City Manager.

Ms. Lowenthal brings more than 20 years of government, municipal and community engagement experience to the job, having served in leadership positions in Long Beach and Santa Monica City governments and in local water districts. Most recently, she served as Transit Planning and Community Engagement Manager for the City of Santa Monica from 2012-2017. In that role, she was responsible for regional intergovernmental transit planning and all other aspects of transit planning and community engagement for the Big Blue Bus regional transit agency. Since 2017, as senior advisor to the City Manager, Ms. Lowenthal has been responsible for analyzing and addressing high-profile issues surrounding the Santa Monica Airport and has served as co-chair of the City's mobility strategic goal.

Before joining the City of Santa Monica, she served in a variety of positions for the Water Replenishment District in Cerritos, the Central Basin Municipal Water District, the West Basin Municipal Water District, the Los Angeles City Attorney's Office and the Los Angeles City Department of Aging.

Ms. Lowenthal was elected to the Board of Education in the Long Beach Unified School District in 2001 and served until 2006. She then served as a member of the Long Beach City Council from 2006-2016 and as the City's Vice Mayor from 2010-2012 and 2014-2016. In addition, she served as an alternate member of the California Coastal Commission from 2007-2009.

Ms. Lowenthal earned a Bachelor of Economics degree from the University of California, Los Angeles; a Master of Business Administration degree from California State University, Los Angeles, and a Doctorate in Policy, Planning and Development from the University of Southern California.

Ms. Lowenthal will be employed pursuant to the terms and conditions set forth in the attached City Manager Employment Agreement. Ms. Lowenthal will be an at-will employee, meaning that she serves at the pleasure of the City Council. The key terms of the Agreement are summarized as follows:

- **Salary:** Base salary of \$219,000
- **Deferred compensation:** \$8,000/yr., consistent with department head level executives
- **Severance:** Six months' salary for "no-cause" termination

Among the unique features of this Agreement are: (1) the salary does not rise automatically with the cost of living index; (2) earned vacation must be regularly cashed out rather than stored indefinitely; and (3) regular goal-setting during annual performance evaluations.

Upon approval of the Agreement, Ms. Lowenthal will formally give notice to her current employer and will commence her service with the City on September 17, 2018.

Fiscal Implications:

The costs associated with the Employment Agreement are within the Council-approved budget for the City Manager position.

Attachments:

1. City Manager Employment Agreement between the City of Hermosa Beach and Suja Lowenthal

Respectfully Submitted by: Mike Jenkins, City Attorney

Approved: John Jalili, Interim City Manager