



COUNTY OF HUMBOLDT

For the meeting of: 4/26/2022

File #: 22-528

To: Board of Supervisors

From: Supervisor Virginia Bass and Supervisor Michelle Bushnell

Agenda Section: Initiated by Board Member

SUBJECT:

Memo from County Department Heads and Recommendations from the Workforce Development Board related to the duties and responsibilities of the Auditor Controller (Supervisor Bushnell and Supervisor Bass)

RECOMMENDATION(S):

That the Board of Supervisors:

1. Consider the letter from County Department Heads and the recommendations from the Workforce Development Board from their meeting of April 1, 2022, and take appropriate action as necessary.

SOURCE OF FUNDING:

N/A

DISCUSSION:

Today's agenda item is coming before the Board based on new important information and newly received documentation. A memo signed by department heads representing more than 90% of county employees was submitted to the Board on April 4, 2022, stating that, despite department heads' efforts to support the Auditor-Controller, she has failed to fulfill the duties and responsibilities of her position and as a result has put the county in a financial crisis. While the Board has received similar letters from outside agencies in education, local municipal government, workforce development, public safety and the private sector, as well as letters from individuals within the county, the attached memo is the first time that a majority of department heads have submitted such documentation to the Board. The memo is sent from department leadership, both elected and appointed, expressing that their departments cannot collaborate with the one department through which all financial transactions must be recorded, and as a result they are facing dangerous financial challenges which must be fixed.

The Board is charged with ensuring that county government functions properly and has delegated responsibilities for functions such as health and human services, roads, agriculture, planning and building, library services and others to officers who lead departments to carry out those services. Such an expression from department heads represents a threat to county services.

As stated in the memo, departments have attempted to support the Auditor-Controller's Office, and the Board has allocated substantial resources to assist the Auditor-Controller, to no avail. These resources included consultants to assist with year-end and payroll process, additional staffing, and leadership training and coaching. At this point, department heads have seen no indication that the Auditor-Controller is willing to take the steps needed to remedy the issues at hand.

The Auditor-Controller is an elected county official. Government Code Section §26881 provides that the county auditor, or in counties that have the office of controller, the auditor-controller shall be the chief accounting officer of the county. Upon order of the Board of Supervisors, the auditor or auditor-controller shall prescribe, and shall exercise a general supervision, including the ability to review departmental and countywide internal controls, over the accounting forms and the method of keeping the accounts of all offices, departments, and institutions under the control of the Board of Supervisors and of all districts whose funds are kept in the county treasury.

As the Board is aware, on Nov. 22, 2021, the Board heard an agenda item similar to today's regarding a Vote of No Confidence. That item was a result of delayed financial reporting and other deficiencies, and it passed with a 3-2 vote. That item highlighted the attached list (Attachment C) of deficiencies.

In support of the Board of Supervisors' action taken on Nov. 22, 2021 regarding a vote of no confidence in the Auditor Controller, the WDB is in full support of the Board's action and is recommending the matter be referred to the California Fair Political Practices Commission, Office of the State of California Attorney General and the State of California Department of Justice for appropriate action.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

N/A

STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK:

This action supports your Board's Strategic Framework by providing community-appropriate levels of service .

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT:

N/A

ALTERNATIVES TO STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS:

Board discretion

ATTACHMENTS:

- A.. Memo from County Department Heads
- B. Workforce Development Board Agenda from April 1, 2022
- C. Auditor Controller Deficiencies Fact Sheet

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PREVIOUS ACTION/REFERRAL:

Board Order No.: NA

Meeting of: NA

File No.: NA