



COUNTY OF HUMBOLDT

For the meeting of: 9/23/2025

File #: 25-1094

To: Board of Supervisors

From: County Administrative Office

Agenda Section: Departmental

Vote Requirement: Majority

SUBJECT:

Introduction of Ordinance Amending Sections 241-2 through 241-9 of Chapter 1 of Division 4 of Title II of the Humboldt County Code Relating to the Duties, Responsibilities and Authorities of the County Administrative Officer and Employment Agreement Regarding Appointment of the County Administrative Officer

RECOMMENDATION(S):

That the Board of Supervisors:

1. Introduce, and waive the first reading of, the attached ordinance amending Sections 241-2 through 241-9 of Chapter 1 of Division 4 of Title II of the Humboldt County Code relating to the duties, responsibilities and authorities of the County Administrative Officer; and
2. Find that the attached ordinance is exempt from environmental review pursuant to Section 15061(b)(3) of the California Environmental Quality Act Guidelines; and
3. Set the attached ordinance for adoption on October 7, 2025 or at least one (1) week away from the date of the Board of Supervisors meeting at which the ordinance is first introduced;
4. Direct the Clerk of the Board of Supervisors to publish the pre-adoption summary of the attached ordinance and to post a certified copy of the full text of the ordinance in the office of the Clerk of the Board of Supervisors at least five (5) days prior to the Board of Supervisors meeting at which the ordinance will be adopted (California Government Code Section 25124(b)(1)); and
5. Direct the Clerk of the Board of Supervisors, within fifteen (15) days after adoption of the attached ordinance, to publish a post-adoption summary of the ordinance with the names of the Supervisors voting for and against the ordinance, and post in the office of the Clerk of the Board of Supervisors a certified copy of the full text of the adopted ordinance along with the names of those Supervisors voting for and against the ordinance [California Government Code Section 25124(b)(1)]; and
6. Approve, and authorize the Chair of the Board to execute, the attached employment agreement regarding the reappointment of Elishia Hayes as the County Administrative Officer

effective September 23, 2025 through September 22, 2029.

STRATEGIC PLAN:

The recommended actions support the following areas of the Board of Supervisors' Strategic Plan:

Area of Focus: Core Services/Other

Strategic Plan Category: 9999 - Core Services/Other

DISCUSSION:

County Code Revisions

On June 3, 2024, the Board directed staff to explore options for modification of the County Administrative Officer's role and to report back on shifting direct supervision of certain departments to the County Administrative Officer. The attached ordinance amends Sections 241-2 through 241-9 of Chapter 1 of Division 4 of Title II of the Humboldt County Code to modernize and clarify the roles and responsibilities of the County Administrative Officer. Key revisions include, without limitation, all of the following:

- Establishing clearer oversight authority of the Agricultural Commissioner, Public Defender, Director of Child Support Services and Library Director, including performance evaluations and administration of discipline short of appointment or termination.
- Strengthening agenda management responsibilities in coordination with the Board Chair.
- Requiring quarterly reporting to the Board on departmental performance, including budget management, operational effectiveness and personnel administration.
- Explicit recognition of the CAO's role in emergency management, intergovernmental affairs and public information dissemination.

These updates align the County of Humboldt's governance structure with best practices utilized by peer counties and provide consistency in the administration of county operations.

The proposed amendments to Sections 241-2 through 241-9 of Chapter 1 of Division 4 of Title II of the Humboldt County Code are exempt from environmental review pursuant to Section 15061(b)(3) of the California Environmental Quality Act Guidelines since it can be determined with certainty that there is no possibility that the proposed amendments will have a significant effect on the environment.

Employment Agreement

The proposed Employment Agreement formalizes the continued appointment of Elishia Hayes as the County Administrative Officer effective September 23, 2025. The agreement remains unchanged except for the following:

- Establishes a four-year term, expiring September 22, 2029, subject to early termination

provisions.

- Includes severance provisions in the event of termination without cause that have been increased from six (6) months to nine (9) months of base salary.

Together, these actions provide the legal and administrative framework necessary to ensure effective county governance and a stable employment relationship with the County Administrative Officer.

SOURCE OF FUNDING:

General Fund (1100)

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

The existing salary and benefits associated with the position of the County Administrative Officer are accounted for within the adopted fiscal year 2025-2026 budget for County Administrative Office budget unit 1100-103 and do not require additional appropriations at this time. The salary and benefits associated with the position of the County Administrative Officer will be included in the annual budget cycle.

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT:

None

ALTERNATIVES TO STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS:

Board discretion.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Ordinance Amending Sections 241-2 through 241-9 of Chapter 1 of Division 4 of Title II of the Humboldt County Code Relating to the Duties, Responsibilities and Authorities of the County Administrative Officer
2. Pre-Adoption Summary
3. Post-Adoption Summary
4. Employment Agreement - County Administrative Officer

PREVIOUS ACTION/REFERRAL:

Meeting of: June 3, 2024

File No.: 24-875