

City Council Agenda Report

Meeting Date: January 7, 2025
From: Daniel Calleros, Interim City Administrator
Department: City Administration
Submitted by: Lilia Hernandez, Assistant to the City Administrator

Subject

Appointment of Brian Saeki to serve as City Administrator

Recommendation

Adopt Resolution No. 2025-001 appointing Brian Saeki to serve as the City Administrator of the City of Vernon, effective February 24, 2025, and approving and authorizing the execution of a related at-will employment agreement.

Background

Following the retirement of the former City Administrator in July 2024, the City Council appointed Daniel E. Calleros, a retired annuitant, to serve as Interim City Administrator on a temporary basis while a recruitment process could be conducted to fill the vacancy on a permanent basis. Subsequently, a request for proposals (RFP) for executive recruitment services was issued and on August 21, 2024 the City contracted with the recruitment firm, Bob Murray & Associates, to conduct several executive recruitments including a recruitment for the position of City Administrator.

Recruitment Summary

Bob Murray & Associates conducted a broad and extensive recruitment of candidates with the necessary skills and public sector experience appropriate for the position of City Administrator. A total of 85 applications were received and screened by the firm. On November 19, 2024, twelve (12) qualified candidates were presented to City Council for evaluation and subsequently, six (6) candidates were invited to participate in a first-round interview conducted by the City Council on December 3, 2024. Following the first-round interviews, two (2) highly qualified candidates were invited for a second-round interview conducted by a combined internal/external panel and final interview with City Council on December 17, 2024. The combined interview panel consisted of Vernon's Interim City Administrator, City Attorney, two board members from the Vernon Chamber of Commerce, one retired City Manager and one current City Manager. After consideration of the feedback received from the second-round interview panel and deliberation, the City Council unanimously determined Brian Saeki to be the best-qualified candidate to meet the needs of the City and serve as the next City Administrator.

At-Will Employment Agreement

The At-Will Employment Agreement for City Administrator has been presented to Mr. Saeki and is included as Exhibit B to Resolution No. 2025-001 for City Council's approval. The agreement establishes an effective date of February 24, 2025, and a starting salary of \$357,489 per year, plus all benefits provided to executive personnel.

The proposed agreement is consistent with other City of Vernon executive employment agreements, with the exception of the following:

- Added language to Section 4 indicating Employee shall receive cost of living adjustments that are received by executive staff.

- Added language to Section 5B indicating the benefits set forth in the Citywide Fringe Benefits Policy, adopted November 19, 2024, shall be the minimum benefits provided to the Employee, subject to any future enhancement or increase as may be approved and adopted by the City Council.
- Added language to Section 5B regarding credit for all previous full-time years of service in other CalPERS public agencies being used for purposes of determining Employee's eligibility for Retiree Medical benefits and accrual rate and eligibility for Sick Leave and Vacation time.
- Added language to Section 5B indicating Employee shall receive an initial balance of 100 hours of Vacation time and 100 hours of Sick Leave during his first year of City employment, which cannot be cashed out and shall not carry over to the next calendar year.
- Revision to Section 6B indicating the City agrees to pay the Employee a severance amount equal to six (6) months of base salary. Starting in Employee's third year of City employment, such severance pay amount shall be increased by one (1) month of base salary for each year Employee is employed by the City, up to a combined maximum of twelve (12) months.
- Adding Conflict of Interest Prohibition (Section 8) to prohibit Employee investment or financial interests in business or projects within City limits or on any property owned by the City.

Candidate Summary

Brian Saeki currently serves as the City Manager of the City of Whittier. In this role, his responsibilities include implementing council policies, supervising and coordinating city department activities, and focusing on identifying and addressing key problems and areas of interest within the community. Mr. Saeki's career in the public sector spans over 28 years as he has worked for several cities across California, including Arcadia, Downey, and Rosemead. In addition to Whittier, Mr. Saeki has also served as the City Manager in the cities of Covina and San Fernando.

Mr. Saeki has a Bachelor of Science Degree in Urban and Regional Planning from California State Polytechnic University, Pomona and a Master's Degree in Public Administration from California State University Northridge.

Given Mr. Saeki's qualifications and extensive experience in public administration, he is well suited to meet the needs of the City and lead the City's executive team.

At its regular City Council meeting on January 7, 2025, prior to taking final action to approve this resolution, the City Council received an oral report summarizing the recommended appointment and compensation, in accordance with Government Code Section 54953(c)(3).

Fiscal Impact

The estimated annual cost for City Administrator is approximately \$440,525 including salary, taxes and benefits (\$357,489 base salary and \$83,036 in taxes and benefit costs). Sufficient funds are available in the General Fund, City Administration Department, Salaries, Taxes and Benefit Accounts for the current fiscal year and will be budgeted in subsequent fiscal years.

Attachments

1. Resolution No. 2025-001