



Clerk of the Board of Supervisors
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BOARD OF SUPERVISORS AGENDA LETTER

Department Name:

Human Resources

Department Number:

064

Agenda Date:

June 9, 2026

Placement:

Administrative Agenda

Estimated Time:

N/A

Continued Item:

No

If Yes, date from:

Vote Required:

Majority

TO: Board of Supervisors

FROM: Department Director: Kristine Schmidt, Human Resources Director

CONTACT: Erin Jeffery, Fiscal & Workforce Planning Division Chief

SUBJECT: Performance-Based Salary Adjustment for the County Counsel

Concurrences:

County Counsel Concurrence:

As to form: Yes

Auditor-Controller Concurrence:

As to form: Yes

Other Concurrence:

As to form: N/A

Recommended Actions:

That the Board of Supervisors:

- a) Approve a 4.97% performance-based salary adjustment for the County Counsel effective June 22, 2026, for an annual salary of approximately \$341,833, based on the performance review of the County Counsel completed by the Board of Supervisors on May 12, 2026; and

- b) Determine that the above action is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 17578(b)(4), because it consists of government funding mechanisms and/or other government fiscal activities, which do not involve any commitment to any specific project which may result in a potentially significant physical impact on the environment.

Summary Text:

Upon adopting this recommendation, the Board of Supervisors will approve an annual salary of approximately \$341,833 for the County Counsel, which represents a performance-based merit increase of approximately 4.97% over her present salary, to be effective June 22, 2026.

Discussion:

On May 12, 2026, the Board of Supervisors reviewed the performance of the County Counsel. Under the Compensation and Benefits Plan for Management, Appointed Executives, and Confidential-Unrepresented Employees adopted by the Board on April 23, 2024, and subsequently amended, the Board can approve an annual merit increase for the County Counsel anywhere between 0% - 7.5%, not to exceed the top of the approved salary range. The recommended action authorizes the annual performance-based increase for the County Counsel.

Performance-based increases do not affect the salary range for a classification, only the incumbent's placement within the range. The recommended 4.97% increase will not adjust the existing salary range, which is currently \$256,090 to \$341,833.

Background:

Per Section 27641 of the California Government Code, the County Counsel shall serve for a period of four years from the time of their appointment. On May 12, 2026, the Board voted unanimously to reappoint Rachel Van Mullem to another four-year term with annual performance reviews. On May 12, 2026, the Board reviewed the performance of the County Counsel, and a 4.97% performance-based salary increase is consistent with the Compensation and Benefits Plan for Management, Appointed Executives, and Confidential-Unrepresented Employees.

Fiscal Analysis:

Budgeted: Partially; funding for this position is included in the FY 2026-27 Recommended Budget. The fully loaded cost of implementing the recommended performance-based salary increase is approximately \$23,000. It is anticipated the department will absorb this increase within its FY 2026-27 budget, however, the department will work with the County Executive Office later in the fiscal year regarding any portion of this cost increase that cannot be absorbed.

Impacts of "funding status" of pension fund: Santa Barbara County Employees' Retirement System (SBCERS) makes certain actuarial assumptions regarding salaries in determining the funding status of the retirement plan. SBCERS estimates a general wage inflation component of 3.00% per year, plus a longevity and promotion component of between 0.38% - 4.75% for General employees and between 0.75% and 6% for safety members, depending on years of service. It is not expected that increases will exactly meet these assumptions in any one year. Rather, these assumptions represent the net effect over long stretches of time (20 – 30 years). Variation from one year to another can have an impact to the overall plan funding.

Provided actual salary growth does not exceed SBCERS assumptions over the long term and, the County makes regular pension contributions on the actual salaries granted, absent other negative factors, the County should continue to see progress towards fully funding the plan. SBCERS conducts a review of its salary assumptions every three years as part of an actuarial experience study. The study and resulting assumption changes adopted by SBCERS serve as a control that ensures the wage growth assumptions used to value the plan does not materially differ from actual wage growth over time.

The increase proposed herein will, in the aggregate with the 2.5% general wage increase applied to appointed executives in PP2026-15 in accordance with the Management, Appointed Executive, and Confidential-Unrepresented Compensation and Benefits Resolution, exceed this actuarial assumed increase of 3% per year (compounded annually) resulting in actuarial losses to the funding status of the plan that will be netted against possible future year losses and a variety of other factors including investment results, general inflation, and changes in member population demographics like mortality and gender.

Funding Source	FY 2026-27	Total
General Fund	\$23,000	\$23,000
State		
Federal		
Fees		
[<i>Other Source</i>]		
Total	\$23,000	\$23,000

Special Instructions:

Please provide a copy of the signed Minute Order to County Human Resources, County Counsel, County Executive Officer, and Auditor-Controller, and a copy to HRBLCoordinator@countyofsb.org

Contact Information:

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