



# Santa Clara Valley Water District

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**File No.:** 20-0885

**Agenda Date:** 10/13/2020

**Item No.:** 9.1.

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## BOARD AGENDA MEMORANDUM

### **SUBJECT:**

Board Confirmation of the Chief Operating Officer, Water Utility Enterprise.

### **RECOMMENDATION:**

Confirm the appointment of Aaron Baker as the Chief Operating Officer of Water Utility Enterprise for the Santa Clara Valley Water District.

### **SUMMARY:**

Board Governance Policy Executive Limitation 3.8 states that a “Board Appointed Officer (BAO) shall present an appointment of a Chief-level position to the Board for Confirmation.”

Following a competitive open recruitment process, the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) has selected a candidate for the position of Chief Operating Officer, Water Utility Enterprise (WUE), and recommends that the Board confirm the appointment.

### POSITION SUMMARY

The Chief Operating Officer, WUE is a key member of the executive leadership team and has oversight over Valley Water’s largest business area that includes the divisions of Water Utility Capital, Raw Water, Water Supply, and Treated Water. The Chief Operating Officer, WUE is responsible for overseeing the operations, maintenance, and capital improvements for the entirety of Valley Water’s water utility infrastructure, from surface water reservoirs to pipeline delivery systems. The position must also manage relationships with water wholesalers, water retailers, local, state and federal agencies, elected officials, and other external stakeholders. The Chief Operating Officer, WUE, must have current knowledge of local, regional, and state-wide water issues, as well as provide leadership in short- and long-term strategic planning for the business area.

The Chief Operating Officer, WUE reports to the Assistant Chief Executive Officer (ACEO), serves at the will of the CEO, and is accordingly employed in Valley Water’s unclassified service. The Chief Operating Officer, WUE is a key member of the executive leadership team and represents the CEO and Valley Water in interactions

### SELECTION PROCESS

The Chief Operating Officer, WUE position was a competitive opportunity that included internal and external candidates. Qualified candidates were evaluated in multiple rounds by interview panels

consisting of an external subject matter expert, employees, labor union representatives, mid-managers, and executives from across the organization, as well as a final interview with the CEO and ACEO. Diversity in race, gender, work area, and classification were all considered in the makeup of each of the interview panels.

#### CANDIDATE

The selected candidate is Aaron Baker, who has over 20 years of progressively broadening experience and responsibility in the Water Utility Enterprise. He began his career at Valley Water in 1999 as an Assistant Engineer and then took on incrementally greater roles as Associate Engineer, Engineering Unit Manager, Assistant Operating Officer, and most recently, as Deputy Operating Officer.

As the Deputy Operating Officer of the Raw Water Division since September 2019, Mr. Baker oversees an approximate annual budget of \$45M and 93 full-time employees. He has a decade or more of experience in key areas such as operations and maintenance, the Capital Improvement Program (CIP), raw water, and treatment plant oversight. He has earned respect at Valley Water with his proven track record of project completion and collaborative problem solving. Mr. Baker is already familiar with most major stakeholders and has existing relationships with Valley Water's water retailers, imported water suppliers, and environmental regulators.

Mr. Baker holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Civil Engineering from the University of Southern California and certification as a Professional Engineer.

Mr. Baker has demonstrated key leadership, sound judgement, critical thinking, and collaborative management throughout his career. His extensive knowledge and understanding of the organization, broad water utility experience, and ability to successfully move Valley Water projects to completion uniquely qualify him for the role of Chief Operating Officer, Water Utility Enterprise.

#### **FINANCIAL IMPACT:**

Aaron Baker will assume the position of Chief Operating Officer, Water Utility Enterprise on October 14, 2020 with an annual starting salary of \$289,515.20. The salary has been budgeted for in the Office of the Chief Operating Officer, Water Utility Enterprise Project No. 95061038 (WUE Administration).

#### **CEQA:**

The recommended action does not constitute a project under CEQA because it does not have the potential for resulting in direct or reasonably foreseeable indirect physical change in the environment.

#### **ATTACHMENTS:**

Attachment 1: Recruitment Brochure

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**UNCLASSIFIED MANAGER:**  
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