



Santa Clara Valley Water District

File No.: 21-0848

Agenda Date: 9/14/2021

Item No.: 8.1.

BOARD AGENDA MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT:

Office of Racial Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (REDI) Annual Board Update 2021.

RECOMMENDATION:

Receive the annual update on activities in the Office of Racial Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (REDI).

SUMMARY:

The Office of REDI was created in July 2020 under the External Affairs Division and includes the integration of the previous Diversity and Inclusion Program. All efforts of the Office of REDI are designed to advance diversity, equity, and inclusion in partnership with staff and external stakeholders, consistent with Santa Clara Valley Water District's (Valley Water) core values and the principles used in accomplishing Valley Water's mission. The new office's expanded goal includes strengthening and expanding Valley Water's ability to effectively deliver equitable services and to attract, retain and promote a diverse and talented workforce. The Office of REDI works to ensure that racial equity, diversity, and inclusion practices are all equally reflected both internally and externally to better serve all communities that Valley Water serves.

This first annual report on activities in the Office of REDI highlights efforts taken over the last year, since the inception of the Office of REDI in July 2020, within six major categories: Resolutions and Statements, Environmental Justice, Cultural Events/Speakers Panels, ERG Guidance and Support, Trainings in Diversity and Inclusion and Unconscious Bias, and the Equity Assessment and Strategic Master Plan.

RESOLUTIONS AND STATEMENTS:

Since the Office of REDI was created, REDI staff developed several resolutions and statements to establish a new framework for Valley Water's response to individual and systemic racism and its commitment to taking meaningful action, internally and externally, to address the impacts of acts of prejudice, abuse of power, racial bias, gender or gender identity bias, racism, and barriers to diversity, equity, and inclusion.

On September 22, 2020, the Board approved the Resolution "Addressing Systematic Racism and Promoting Equity," to ensure that diversity, equity, and inclusion are principles that are interwoven

into all existing policies, programs, and practices and extends through an interpersonal level, organizational, and community engagement levels. The Board also adopted in September a Resolution Recognizing Senator Kamala Harris as the First Women of Color to be Selected as a Vice Presidential candidate on a Major Political Party ticket.

On March 26, 2021, the Board approved the Resolution “Addressing Violence and Racism Against the Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) Community.” The Office of REDI and the Asian Pacific Resource Group (APRG) ERG collaborated on drafting this resolution, in response to the national surge in violence against the AAPI community.

On May 17, 2021, Chair Estremera issued a statement opposing Armenian genocide, following President Biden’s acknowledgement, the first ever for a sitting president.

On July 13, 2021, the Board adopted a Resolution to formally add Juneteenth, the date marking the end of slavery in the United States, as an annual Valley Water holiday in accordance with the newly adopted, federally-recognized holiday.

On August 10, 2021, the Board approved a Voting Rights Resolution, to support every American’s right to vote and the participation of every eligible Santa Clara County resident to take an active role in the voting process for measures that impact their local community.

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE:

Building upon efforts begun two years ago, the Office of REDI continues to work on various efforts to promote environmental justice, in collaboration with other divisions. This effort is in keeping with the Board-adopted Resolution “Addressing Systematic Racism and Promoting Equity,” that called for the creation of an Ends Policy relative to environmental justice.

On February 23, 2021, the Board approved adding Environmental Justice language into Valley Water’s Board Governance Ends Policy (E1) and updated the Glossary of Definitions to include a localized disadvantaged communities’ definition. The Office of REDI also continues to work with other units in incorporating Environmental Justice language into other Ends Policies.

To advance environmental justice, REDI is developing an environmental justice program that will help inform policies that address low-income and disadvantaged communities, as well as ensure effective outreach to these communities as projects are proposed, and during emergencies. REDI will also be actively engaging with tribal leaders in Santa Clara County to build and strengthen the relationship between local tribes and Valley Water.

CULTURAL EVENTS/ SPEAKER’S PANEL:

To promote organizational culture and broaden understanding of diversity, equity and inclusion issues, the Office of REDI has hosted various external and internal events in collaboration with Community Based Organizations and Valley Water Employee Resource Groups (ERGs). In October 2020, the Office of REDI co-hosted the National Association on the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP): Sea Level Rise and Flood Management Training for communities of color. The two-day

workshop covered policies, protocols, programs, and practices that can be implemented to help empower and protect our communities of color from the devastating effects of sea-level rise and flood events. Attendees included over 50 community members participating in the training, with over 20 staff and subject matter expert volunteers throughout California presenting and assisting.

The Office of REDI also hosted two events in the Cultural Panel Speakers Series, the first on the Asian American Pacific Islander Community on May 25, 2021 with 136 attendees, and the second on the African American Community on August 5, 2021 with 83 attendees.

ERG GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT:

The Office of REDI continues to guide, support, and collaborate with all twelve of our Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) to help them achieve their respective mission to enhance the experience of their members. The Office of REDI supported our ERGs in their various virtual cultural and professional development efforts and events throughout the year, for a total of 35 activities, which included 24 events, and four resolutions of acknowledgment. The Cultural Panel Speaker Series continues, with the next one planned in October, to coincide with and celebrate National Hispanic Heritage Month.

On June 15, 2021, the Office of REDI also collaborated with many ERGs and staff on our first virtual “Taste of Inclusion” event to celebrate the many culinary, social, and cultural perspectives that make up our Valley Water community, with 178 attendees¹.

TRAININGS IN DIVERSITY, INCLUSION AND UNCONSCIOUS BIAS:

The Office of REDI continues to coordinate training efforts in partnership with Human Resources staff in diversity, inclusion, and unconscious bias. We piloted a “Diversity Uncovered,” training on July 20, 2021 for managers on the topics of unconscious bias and inclusive leadership, with 33 participants. The Office of REDI is now working to make diversity, inclusion and equity training mandatory for all staff and managers, and the training will also be offered to all Board members to participate if they desire.

EQUITY ASSESSMENT AND STRATEGIC MASTER PLAN:

Cultural change of this scope is a multi-year task that encompasses creating methods to periodically assess racial equity, diversity, and inclusion climates of the organization. Valley Water’s first organizational equity assessment effort was undertaken in February and concluded in August 2021. From this assessment, the Office of REDI will advance the development of a multi-year Strategic Master Plan that will form the basis to create and modify policies and procedures to ensure that equity and fairness are embedded into Valley Water’s organizational structure. Efforts will also include racial equity action plans for various divisions and exploration of the formation of an equity council or similar structure in fiscal year 2022.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

There is no financial impact associated with this item.

CEQA:

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

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment 1: PowerPoint

UNCLASSIFIED MANAGER:

Marta Lugo, 408-630-2237