



# Santa Clara Valley Water District

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**File No.:** 22-1306

**Agenda Date:** 11/22/2022

**Item No.:** 4.1.

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## BOARD AGENDA MEMORANDUM

### **SUBJECT:**

Consider the October 27, 2022, Diversity and Inclusion Ad Hoc Committee Recommendations to Revise the Board Governance Ends Policy E-4, Water Resources Stewardship, and Address Support for Affordable Housing.

### **RECOMMENDATION:**

Consider recommendations resulting from the October 27, 2022, Diversity and Inclusion Ad Hoc Committee meeting to:

- A. Revise the Board Governance Ends Policy E-4, Water Resources Stewardship; and address support for affordable housing; and
- B. Adopt the proposed modifications to the Board Governance Ends Policy E-4.

### **SUMMARY:**

At its March 22, 2022 regular meeting, the Board discussed housing affordability as it relates to environmental justice, the related unhoused-population crisis, and the potential role of the One Water watershed plans in impeding the construction of new housing. The Board referred this topic to the Diversity and Inclusion Ad Hoc Committee for further discussion and updates.

Although Valley Water does not have land use authority, and therefore lacks the jurisdiction to directly influence the availability of affordable housing, the Board has previously expressed concern about the cost of housing in our region and impacts on the unhoused. Valley Water efforts that are currently underway that are related to and seek to address the Board's concerns, to the extent that Valley Water is able, are described below.

Under the 15-year Safe, Clean Water and Natural Flood Protection Program, Valley Water has dedicated over \$38.7 million to continue the ongoing coordination with local cities and agencies to clean up trash and contaminants associated with large creekside encampments. This cooperative effort includes working with local municipalities, social services, and nonprofit advocacy groups which help provide housing alternatives to the unsheltered population, including a \$500,000 per year cost-share agreement with other agencies for services related to encampment cleanups, regardless of who owns the property.

Additionally, Valley Water supports and advocates for state and federal legislation and budget appropriations that seek to address the lack of affordable housing, the unhoused populations, and

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encampment cleanup. To the degree that the unhoused population along the creeks in Santa Clara County can be reduced, these state and federal efforts may reduce Valley Water's encampment cleanup costs and provide better outcomes for individuals who are unhoused.

Finally, Valley Water provides input to the cities and the county during the planning and development phases for new housing. This input focuses on minimizing impacts to water resources through protecting and restoring floodplains, planting native vegetation, and requiring water-efficient features in new developments.

In light of Valley Water's indirect influence on the provision of new affordable housing as described above, the Diversity and Inclusion Ad Hoc Committee recommends revising Board Ends Policy E-4, Water Resources Stewardship, to clarify Valley Water's role in supporting housing affordability as part of collaboration with other agencies to address homelessness. Objective 4.4.3 of the draft revised policy would read: Collaborate with agencies and nonprofits to address homelessness, including supporting the provision of affordable housing by these agencies and nonprofits, and its impacts to Santa Clara County Waterways. The full Ends Policy E-4, with this revision reflected, is provided as Attachment 1.

**ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE IMPACT:**

Revising Ends Policy E-4 would not directly impact any specific community. However, the shortage of affordable housing results in housing inequality and insecurity, increasing a household's risk of living in unsafe and unhealthy conditions and their risk of being displaced. The recommended action, therefore, contributes to the fair treatment of all people with respect to the implementation of Valley Water policy.

**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 the potential for resulting in direct or reasonably foreseeable indirect physical change in the environment.

**ATTACHMENTS:**

Attachment 1: Draft Board Governance Policy E-4

**UNCLASSIFIED MANAGER:**

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