

CITY OF SANTA ROSA
CITY COUNCIL

TO: MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL
FROM: DOMINIQUE BLANQUIE, HUMAN RESOURCES DIRECTOR
SUBJECT: APPOINTMENT OF INTERIM CITY MANAGER, APPROVAL OF
EMPLOYMENT AGREEMENT AND INTRODUCTION OF AN
ORDINANCE ADOPTING SALARY OF THE INTERIM CITY
MANAGER

AGENDA ACTION: RESOLUTION AND ORDINANCE INTRODUCTION

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council, by resolution, appoint Lori Ann Farrell as Interim City Manager effective January 2, 2026, and approve an Employment Agreement with Ms. Farrell. It is further recommended that Council introduce an ordinance entitled ORDINANCE OF THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF SANTA ROSA ESTABLISHING MONTHLY SALARY OF \$24,266.66 (\$291,200 ANNUALLY) AND OTHER COMPENSATION AND BENEFITS FOR THE INTERIM CITY MANAGER EFFECTIVE JANUARY 2, 2026.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

City Manager Maraskeshia Smith has announced her resignation setting January 2, 2026 as her last day with the City. Starting in early 2026, the City will be conducting an extensive open recruitment for her replacement. It is anticipated that the recruitment and hiring processes could take six months or more. To ensure a smooth transition and continued City operations, the City Council seeks to appoint an Interim City Manager to start on January 2, 2026 and continue until a new permanent City Manager is appointed and onboards.

GOAL

This item relates to Council core services and is integral to uninterrupted City operations.

BACKGROUND/PRIOR COUNCIL REVIEW

In late September 2025, City Manager Maraskeshia Smith announced she is leaving Santa Rosa to become the City Manager for the City of Sacramento. Her last day with Santa Rosa will be January 2, 2026.

APPOINTMENT OF INTERIM CITY MANAGER, APPROVAL OF INTERIM CITY MANAGER
EMPLOYMENT AGREEMENT AND INTRODUCTION OF AN ORDINANCE ADOPTING
SALARY OF THE INTERIM CITY MANAGER
PAGE 2 OF 3

To ensure continued operations and a smooth transition, the City Council seeks to appoint an Interim City Manager to serve while the City conducts an open recruitment for the permanent City Manager position.

ANALYSIS

As allowed under the Brown Act, the City Council has held discussions and interviews for the Interim City Manager position in closed sessions over the past several weeks. The City was fortunate to have a number of highly qualified applicants.

Following direction provided by Council in closed session, staff brings forward this item for Council to adopt a resolution (1) appointing Lori Ann Ferrell as Interim City Manager effective January 2, 2026, City Manager Smith's last day, and (2) approving an employment agreement with Ms. Farrell which takes effect on January 2, 2026 and continues until terminated as provided in the agreement.

The following is a summary of the compensation and benefits Ms. Farrell will receive for her service as Interim City Manager under the terms of the proposed employment agreement:

- **Salary:** Ms. Farrell's salary will be \$291,200 annually with no merit or cost of living salary increases unless otherwise expressly approved at a future time by the City Council (which would require a public approval process like this one).
- **Temporary Housing Allowance:** Ms. Farrell will receive \$3,000 per month for temporary housing assistance, provided she establishes and maintains temporary or permanent housing within Sonoma County or Marin County.
- **Auto Allowance:** Ms. Farrell will receive the same \$500 per month automobile allowance provided to Executive Management employees (Unit 10) for use of her personal car for City business.
- **Vacation Leave, Sick Leave and Holidays:** Ms. Farrell will accrue vacation and sick leave, and receive the same holidays, under the same terms provided to Executive Management employees (Unit 10)
- **Administrative Leave:** Ms. Farrell will receive a bank of 80 hours of administrative leave when she begins employment with the City, and will receive an additional 80 hour of administrative leave each year fiscal on July 1 in accordance with the administrative leave policy provided to Executive Management employees (Unit 10).
- **Wellness Incentive:** Like members of Executive Management employees (Unit 10), Ms. Farrell will receive \$500 annually as a wellness incentive, payable in January each year.
- **Other Benefits:** Ms. Farrell will receive other benefits provided to Executive Management employees (Unit 10). These benefits include most significantly health, dental and vision insurance, life insurance, long term disability insurance, participation in Cal PERS pension program, and participation in a retiree health savings plan.

APPOINTMENT OF INTERIM CITY MANAGER, APPROVAL OF INTERIM CITY MANAGER
EMPLOYMENT AGREEMENT AND INTRODUCTION OF AN ORDINANCE ADOPTING
SALARY OF THE INTERIM CITY MANAGER
PAGE 3 OF 3

The City Charter requires that the compensation of the Interim City Manager be established by ordinance. For that reason, a Proposed Ordinance establishing the compensation for the Interim City Manager is also included for introduction by the Council.

FISCAL IMPACT

The Interim City Manager's salary and benefits are identified in the City Manager's Office budget. This item has no impact on FY 2025-2026 budget as the current appropriated budget within City Manager's Office is sufficient to cover these costs.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

Pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15378, the recommended action is not a "project" subject to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) because it does not have a potential for resulting in either a direct physical change in the environment or a reasonably foreseeable indirect physical change in the environment. In the alternative, the recommended action is exempt from CEQA pursuant to CEQA Guidelines section 15061(b)(3) because it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that the recommended action may have a significant effect on the environment.

BOARD/COMMISSION/COMMITTEE REVIEW AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Not applicable.

NOTIFICATION

Not applicable.

ATTACHMENTS

- Resolution/Exhibit A (Employment Agreement)
- Ordinance

PRESENTERS

Dominique Blanquie, Human Resources Director