

July 1, 2025

Board of Directors
Ventura Regional Sanitation District
Ventura, California

CONSIDER CHANGING THE POSITION TITLE OF MR. PETE CHARTIER FROM WATER/WASTEWATER SUPERINTENDENT TO WATER/WASTEWATER OPERATOR IV WITH NO REDUCTION IN SALARY OR BENEFITS; AND APPROVE RECRUITING A WATER/WASTEWATER SUPERINTENDENT.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- A. Approve changing the position title of Mr. Pete Chartier from Water/Wastewater Superintendent to Water/Wastewater Operator IV with no reduction in pay or benefits.
- B. Approve recruiting a Water/Wastewater Superintendent.

FISCAL IMPACT

There is no fiscal impact associated with the approval of this recommendation.

BACKGROUND

VRSD has had limited success recently in generating interest in many of its recruitments. There are a myriad of possible factors that could be contributing to this lack of interest in VRSD employment, some of which might be a general aversion to public employment stemming from the emotional sentiments following the Great Recession, overblown concerns about VRSD's general financial viability, and the simple fact that VRSD salaries have not kept pace with inflation since they were established through the last compensation study completed in early 2016.

The District is currently undertaking classification and compensation studies with the consultant CPS HR, and this should ultimately assist the District to evaluate whether salary levels of VRSD classifications are a major impediment to our recruiting efforts. In the interim, VRSD staff has come up with other strategies to enhance or improve our recruiting efforts.

The District has been unable to conduct a successful recruitment for the position of Water/Wastewater Treatment Operator IV after several attempts. Most recently, a recruitment was undertaken with a \$50,000 incentive payment included, and that recruitment period just ended with no applicants.

Because this important position requires a Grade IV Wastewater Treatment Plant Operator Certificate issued by the California State Water Resource Control Board (SWRCB), there is a limited pool of qualified applicants statewide, and there is an even

more limited pool of applicants living in close proximity to VRSD jobsites or in Ventura County.

The position of Water/Wastewater Treatment Operator IV is an important position for VRSD's Water/Wastewater Division because of the key operational role this position plays in monitoring and performing water distribution and wastewater treatment plant processes. A SWRCB-Grade IV certified VRSD employee is legally required for VRSD to operate certain wastewater plants for which SWRCB requires the written designation of a Chief Plant Operator (CPO).

Currently, the District only has one employee who possesses the Grade IV certificate and that is the current Water/Wastewater Superintendent, Mr. Pete Chartier.

PROPOSAL

Due to the critical nature of current and impending job vacancies in the District and the recently-completed, but unsuccessful, recruitments, which included a \$50,000 incentive payment—VRSD staff brainstormed solutions and came up with a plan that might solve the District's problem in filling the important Water/Wastewater Treatment Operator IV position.

The current Water/Wastewater Superintendent, Mr. Chartier, has indicated his intent to retire by the end of December 2025 after 31 dedicated years of service to the District. VRSD Management approached Mr. Chartier with an offer for him to step down in the last six months or so of his employment with the District to the position of Water/Wastewater Treatment Operator IV, but with his salary maintained at the Superintendent level, so it does not affect his current or retirement compensation. This plan would allow VRSD to maintain and operate certain wastewater plants for which SWRCB requires SWRCB-Grade IV certified VRSD employees and also recruit for the higher-compensated Water/Wastewater Superintendent instead of a Water/Wastewater Treatment Operator IV. As predicted based on Mr. Chartier's longstanding dedication to VRSD, he has indicated that he is amenable to this plan.

Staff thinks it will be significantly easier to recruit a Water/Wastewater Superintendent, which also requires a Grade IV Certificate, than an Water/Wastewater Operator IV due to the higher visibility and marketability of the Superintendent classification title. If this recruitment is successful, the District will have achieved its goal of having both of these important Water/Wastewater positions filled. Further, it will allow several months for Mr. Chartier to train the new Superintendent regarding the various duties required and the various systems that the District operates and maintains. Once Mr. Chartier retires, the District will undertake a recruitment for a new Water/Wastewater Treatment Operator to replace him, and it is hoped by then that the compensation study report will be completed and approved by the Board and that it will illuminate any issues that need to be addressed in order to effectively recruit this position.

Therefore, VRSD staff recommends that the Board approve the recommendations to recruit a Water/Wastewater Superintendent and to allow Mr. Chartier to assume the position of Water/Wastewater Treatment Operator IV with his salary still set at the Superintendent level.

This letter has been reviewed by Legal Counsel as to form.

If you should have any questions or need additional information, please contact me by phone at (805) 658-4600 or email at ChrisTheisen@vrzd.com.

Chris Theisen, General Manager

APPROVED FOR FISCAL IMPACT:



Tina Rivera, Director of Finance

APPROVED FOR AGENDA:



Chris Theisen, General Manager

Attachments: None.