

# MEMORANDUM



## **EQUAL OPPORTUNITY OFFICE**

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**DATE:** September 15, 2016

**FROM:** Juan P. Rodriguez, Interim Equal Opportunity Officer

**SUBJECT:** Equal Opportunity Office Third Quarter Summary Report for 2016

### **Equal Opportunity Office**

#### **- Equal Opportunity Officer**

The Board of Supervisors recently appointed me, Juan P. Rodriguez, as Interim Equal Opportunity Officer, beginning July 2, 2016. I was appointed to fill the position left vacant by the County's former Equal Opportunity Officer, now current Director of Human Resources, Irma Ramirez-Bough. Ms. Ramirez-Bough served the County as the Equal Opportunity Officer for almost six years, a tenure that saw the Equal Opportunity Office grow in responsibilities, professionalism, and trust earned from County employees. I look forward to serving the County, the Board of Supervisors, and the County's employees in this capacity and hope to continue the excellent work of my predecessor.

A lawyer by training, I earned law degrees from the Autonomous University of Baja California and from the University of San Francisco School of Law, in addition to recently earning a Masters in History from San Jose State University. Before serving as the County's Interim Equal Opportunity Officer, I served as a Deputy County Counsel for almost five years, with one of my assignments being advising the Equal Opportunity Office.

#### **- Equal Opportunity Complaints**

The Equal Opportunity Office is also working on streamlining the processing of complaints in order to meet the deadlines established by the County's Discrimination Complaint Procedures. Additionally, the Office is very conscious of the fiscal necessities of the County and is mindful when hiring outside investigators. We are exploring the possibility of hiring an experienced investigator to conduct investigations internally.

In order to reduce costs, we are testing the use of video-conferencing technology to conduct investigations in a more timely and economically-efficient manner. This is especially important when the Equal Opportunity Office has hired investigators that are outside of the area.

#### **- Equal Opportunity Plan**

On June 28, 2016, the Board of Supervisors approved and adopted the County of Monterey 2015-2017 Equal Opportunity Plan. The Equal Opportunity Office has distributed the Plan to all County Department Heads. The Plan demonstrates an improvement for minorities and women in our underutilized job groups since the previous period.

## **- Outreach**

I have begun the process of introducing myself to County employees by attending employee meetings, speaking with Department Heads, and attending new employee orientation. We have revised the brochure presented to new employees to give them a more accurate picture of what the Equal Opportunity Office does; we expect to provide it to the next cohort of new employees next week.

In an effort to continue with a smooth transition, I have met and introduced myself to the Board of SEIU Local 521. The Equal Opportunity Office anticipates a good working relationship with the SEIU, its members, and its leadership. Additionally, I also met and introduced myself at a meeting of the County's Management Council. The Equal Opportunity Office also anticipates a productive working relationship with the County's managers.

### **Trainings:**

We continue with the Equal Opportunity Non-Discrimination and Diversity Training implemented by Ms. Ramirez-Bough. Our surveys show the training is well-received. Unfortunately, the EOO does not have sufficient money in its coffers to maintain the training. However, we will approach the County Administrative Office with a proposal to continue the training at a lesser cost to the County. Some of the ideas we will propose is holding the training on a quarterly basis, reducing the training from four two hours, using an associate instead of a partner to provide the training, etc.

In conjunction with another County department, we will be providing a mandatory Prevention of Sexual Harassment training for all of the department's supervisors and line-staff, based on recent developments in the department. It is always positive to remind employees of their rights and obligations.

### **Settlement / Conciliation:**

Pursuant to the Discrimination Complaint Procedures, we continue to labor to negotiate settlements of pending complaints of discrimination, harassment, and retaliation. Although we recognize that attempting to reach a settlement takes a larger investment of time and resources, we recognize that even if we fail to reach an ideal settlement of a complaint, the parties' participation in conciliation aids in their understanding of each other's positions, ultimately helping the healing process once the investigation is complete.

We intend to continue attempts at settlement or conciliation where the law permits.

### **Commissions and Committee:**

The Equal Opportunity Advisory Commission met on June 15 and July 20, 2016. The Human Resources Department and the County Administrative Office presented their Equal Opportunity Plan and I had an opportunity to introduce myself as the County's Interim Equal Opportunity Officer.

The Commission on Disabilities met on July 25. I also had an opportunity to introduce myself as the Interim Equal Opportunity Officer. This Commission's website, as well as the Equal Opportunity Office's website, was updated during this quarter.