



THE METROPOLITAN WATER DISTRICT
OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

Office of the Board of Directors

VIA EMAIL

March 16, 2021

The Honorable City Council
c/o Office of the City Clerk
Room 395, City Hall
Los Angeles, CA 90012

RE: Motions Regarding the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California: Council Files #21-0002-S60 and 21-0203

I want to take this opportunity to provide you with additional information and my direct input as the Los Angeles City Council considers two motions related to the Metropolitan Water District. First and foremost, I want to reassure you that, as Chairwoman of the Board, I have no tolerance for sexual harassment or discrimination in any form, which is why I have been adamant about my commitment to enforcing Metropolitan's policies prohibiting sexual harassment, discrimination, and retaliation. I am pleased to see in General Manager Martin Adams' report to your Council that, "A comparison of MWD's EEO-policies with those of Los Angeles and LADWP's policies determined that they are substantially similar." Mr. Adams' report summarized many of the issues at Metropolitan Water District. However, it did not provide a complete picture of the overarching commitment by our Board and management to investigate and address allegations raised recently by some of our employees. As you consider the motions before the Council, I believe it is important to have additional information.

To further our progress in the area of equal opportunity, Metropolitan created a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Council (DE&I) in July 2020. The LADWP report notes concern about a lack of public trust in the Council's mission "due to some groups opting out." I am pleased to tell you that both AFSCME, Local 1902 and the Black Employees Association have rejoined the DE&I Council in recent weeks, and we look forward to their participation and the important contributions they will make to this employee-led group that is working to advance a more inclusive culture and work environment for all Metropolitan employees.

Under my leadership, Metropolitan's Board and executive management are fully committed to taking all steps necessary to foster and ensure a workplace that values equity, inclusion, and diversity – both in policy and in practice. We are advancing several efforts to assess Metropolitan's cultural climate, open lines of communication, and promote transparency in our actions and help us all recognize our own biases and perceptions, so we are receptive, tolerant, and supportive of each other's ideas.

In November 2020, our Board unanimously directed an independent review of our policies and practices due to concerns raised about harassment, abuse, and retaliation. In taking that action, the full Board unanimously made clear that we take these matters very seriously and will work together in our resolve to respond to employee complaints about sexual harassment and other misconduct in our workforce. The independent review will dig deeper beyond just the public comments made by three employees and provide the Board with the facts and circumstances surrounding their experiences in the workplace. The review will help ensure any further appropriate actions are taken so that female employees and transgender employees in the skilled trades are professionally treated and respected.

The Shaw Law Group, a certified women-owned business enterprise with extensive expertise in EEO issues, under the direction of Metropolitan's Ethics Officer, is performing this thorough review, which includes allegations of systemic Equal Employment Opportunity-related discrimination, harassment, retaliation, and related concerns. If this review identifies our procedures or actions have fallen short of our ethics and core values, you can be assured our Board and management will take immediate and decisive action to resolve those issues. Our employees and the customers we serve deserve no less.

Finally, the LADWP report to your Council provides an overview of our work to recruit a new General Manager. We are pleased to be working with The Hawkins Group, a firm that has a distinguished record of diversity recruiting to meet this goal. In recent months, this has incorporated input from a broad range of stakeholders, and clear direction from our Board in order to identify the necessary skills that will be needed for the next generation of leadership at Metropolitan.

I hope this additional information is helpful to demonstrate that Metropolitan is invested in creating a workplace where every employee is treated with respect and dignity. If you have any additional questions, please contact me at 213-217-7727.

Sincerely,



Gloria D. Gray
Chairwoman of the Board

cc: Metropolitan Water District Board of Directors
Martin L. Adams, General Manager of LADWP
Jeffrey Kightlinger, General Manager
Abel Salinas, Ethics Officer
Marcia Scully, General Counsel



Metropolitan's Board Responds to Allegations of Discrimination, Safety Issues and Harassment in the Workplace

“Under my leadership, Metropolitan’s Board has been unequivocal that we will not tolerate sexual harassment, discrimination, retaliation and other forms of misconduct towards or among our employees. If it is found that our practices and policies have fallen short of this goal, we are prepared to act swiftly and decisively.

- Chairwoman Gloria D. Gray

- The Board responded to employee comments alleging systemic harassment by authorizing Metropolitan’s Ethics Officer in November 2020 to enter into a contract with Shaw Law Group, a certified women-owned business enterprise with extensive expertise in EEO issues. The firm is currently conducting **an independent and thorough review** of allegations of systemic Equal Employment Opportunity-related discrimination, harassment, retaliation and related concerns. To date the firm has:
 - Conducted over 50 hours of interviews and reviewed documents regarding policies and prior investigations of EEO complaints
 - Issued a climate assessment survey taken by more than 80% of employees
 - Begun interviews with more than 125 employees who requested to speak to the firm and additional interviews with other staff and management
- Metropolitan is developing a new education campaign aimed at **raising awareness of the rights employees have** when it comes to issues of discrimination and harassment, and how to take action to defend those rights should it become necessary.
- A February 23, 2021 letter was sent to the Joint Legislative Audit Committee pledging Metropolitan’s **support and full cooperation** with an audit should the State deem it necessary.
- Metropolitan’s **Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Council** was created in 2020. The Chairwoman and executive management attend meetings of the Council, which is comprised of leadership from employee resource groups and employee bargaining units. Actions of the Council so far include:
 - Providing mandatory training on unconscious bias to supplement existing mandatory training on sexual harassment prevention and other workplace conduct
 - Retaining the services of an independent Diversity, Equity and Inclusion consulting firm to perform a thorough culture assessment and provide a roadmap for improvement
 - Taking steps for greater diversity, equity and inclusion in Metropolitan’s business practices to improve opportunities for underserved and underrepresented communities
- To ensure **greater transparency** as employee issues are being reviewed, a new [web page](#) on Metropolitan’s website provides resources and documents related to the independent review.
- Metropolitan has **fully cooperated** with the Los Angeles Times in response to Public Records Act requests for information about employee issues and District responses.