

**CITY OF OAKLAND**  
**OFFICE OF THE CITY ADMINISTRATOR**  
**MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** Mayor Sheng Thao, Council President Nikki Fortunato Bas, Members of the City Council, City Attorney Barbara J. Parker, City Clerk Asha Reed, City Auditor Courtney Ruby, City Employees and Members of the Public

**FROM:** City Administrator Jestin D. Johnson

**DATE:** June 26, 2023

**RE:** Councilmember's Comments and Questions During the Council's June 14, 2023 Special Budget Meeting Regarding the Fiscal Year 2023-2025 Proposed Budget

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During the Council's June 14, 2023 special budget meeting a Councilmember made comments and asked me questions regarding whether the City Administration would conduct a competitive process to fill a department head position. The Councilmember referenced written communications, such as online postings, that the Councilmember believed suggested that a particular City employee had already been identified, and/or may have been holding themselves out, as the presumptive head of that department. The Councilmember referenced a specific employee by name in their comments.

I am issuing this memorandum to be crystal clear that there will be a competitive process to fill the department head position in question, and that no one has suggested to me that I take any other approach. I also am issuing this memorandum to underscore the importance of respecting the dignity and rights of City employees and residents, and the importance of addressing questions and concerns regarding specific City employees outside of a public meeting.

The City of Oakland is undoubtedly a tapestry of diversity in thought, people, ideas, perspectives, and energy. With that, our organizational Mission Statement set a framework by which I will lead this organization: "The City of Oakland is committed to the delivery of effective, courteous, and responsive services. Citizens and employees are treated with fairness, dignity, and respect..."

Local government service delivery is arguably one of the most fulfilling professions one can choose, and choosing a career in public service, in any capacity, should be applauded. As thousands of employees show up to serve our community daily, employees and the community should expect that they will always be provided with dignity, respect, and grace, even if we do not agree.

When the authors of the City of Oakland Charter outlined the duties and responsibilities of the City Administrator in Section 504 of the Charter, it made clear that one of the specifically identified duties is to “investigate the affairs of the City under the City Administrator’s supervision, or any franchise or contract for the proper performance of any obligation running to the City within the City Administrator’s jurisdiction.” As our collective team delivers services to our community, I take this responsibility very seriously and appreciate the layers of checks and balances that exist to ensure fiscal stewardship in providing public services.

Oakland Municipal Code section 2.29.120-Human Resources, r also outlines that Human Resources Management's responsibility falls under the City Administrator's control. I call this out as the public needs to know that all recruitments for positions that fall under my purview will be filled with equity in mind and with the most qualified candidates. However, it is essential to note that our team will ensure that our recruitments will remain open and competitive for all to apply, including existing employees within the organization.

In closing, the challenges with recruitment and retention in the public sector are not lost on me. I welcome the opportunity to have open and constructive dialogue, where appropriate. However, employees and prospective employees need to reasonably expect to be treated with “...fairness, dignity, and respect.”

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