



# County of San Mateo

## Inter-Departmental Correspondence

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**Department:** BOARD OF SUPERVISORS  
DISTRICT 4  
**File #:** 22-097

Board Meeting Date: 2/8/2022

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**Special Notice / Hearing:** None  
**Vote Required:** Majority

**To:** Honorable Board of Supervisors

**From:** Supervisor Warren Slocum, District 4  
Supervisor and Don Horsley, District 3

**Subject:** Authorization to use alternate titles "County Executive Officer" and "County Attorney"

### **RECOMMENDATION:**

Introduction of an ordinance adding Section 2.10.090 of Chapter 2.10 and Section 2.14.110 of Chapter 2.14 of Title 2 of the San Mateo County Ordinance Code authorizing the use of the titles "County Executive Officer" and "County Attorney," and waive reading of the ordinance in its entirety.

### **BACKGROUND:**

The title of the County's chief administrative officer is currently "County Manager," as set forth in Ordinance Code Chapter 2.10. However, the County Manager title has become outdated and does not allow members of the public to quickly understand the duties of the position. Throughout the Bay Area, other clearer titles are used, including County Administrator and County Executive Officer.

The County Counsel provides legal advice and representation to the Board of Supervisors, County departments, and various other public offices and agencies, as set forth in Ordinance Code Chapter 2.14. While the title "County Counsel" is used throughout California, it is rarely used in other states throughout the nation, and the title "County Attorney" is used for similar positions in the vast majority of states. Similarly, attorneys for cities and towns are most often referred to as "city attorneys" or "town attorneys," and the term "County Attorney" would provide consistency that would aid in public understanding of the role. In addition, the term "counsel" is frequently mistaken for "council," which typically refers to an elected or appointed legislative or advisory body in the government context. In contrast, "attorney" is unambiguous and clear.

### **DISCUSSION:**

Adoption of the proposed ordinance would allow the County Manager and County Counsel to, in their discretion, use the alternate titles of County Executive Officer and County Attorney.

Due to the various locations in which these positions are identified, including state law, County

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Charter, ordinances, Board resolutions, County policies, and other official records, it may be impractical to make changes in order to utilize a uniform title for these positions in all such references. Therefore, the respective titles shall be synonymous with one another, and reference to County Manager shall equally apply to County Executive Officer and reference to County Counsel shall equally apply to County Attorney.

**FISCAL IMPACT:**

There is no fiscal impact associated with adoption of the ordinance.