

Published November 24th, 2021

Moraga approves employment agreement for interim position as MPD Chief King retires

By Vera Kochan



Moraga Police Chief Jon King Lamo archive

To the surprise and chagrin of many within the town, Moraga Police Chief Jon King will officially retire effective Dec. 17. The good news is that King will continue in the position of Interim Police Chief until the town is able to fill his "hard act to follow" shoes. In doing so, it is hoped that a seamless transition for his replacement will ensure an uninterrupted level of service for the community.

Town Manager Cynthia Battenberg's staff report stated, "Chief King has worked for the Town since 2014, and has valuable institutional knowledge as well as strong relationships with outside agencies and Town staff. Chief King's continued employment will ensure continuity of leadership in the Police Department, which is especially important in light of the recent death of Detective (Kevin) Mooney. Chief King will continue to lead Moraga's Police Department with the support of Lieutenant (Brian) South and his transition to Interim Police Chief should be invisible to the public."

California Public Employees' Retirement Systems (CalPERS) has requirements regarding retired personnel working in vacant managerial positions, which allows for King's hiring as a retired annuitant. In doing so, he fills a

void while recruitment begins to permanently fill the vacancy and in the event of an emergency to prevent an obstruction to public business.

The town council unanimously authorized an employment agreement with King during its Nov. 10 meeting effective until June 30, 2022, or until a permanent replacement is hired, whichever comes first. He will be paid at the top step of the hourly rate for his service, which is currently \$105.23. Assuming that King serves the full designated period, the town's projected savings will be \$60,000. The Fiscal Year 2021-22 Budget includes \$286,927 for the fully burdened Police Chief position.

According to Government Code Section 21221 (h): "A retired person appointed to a vacant position pursuant to this subdivision shall not receive any benefits, incentives, compensation in lieu of benefits, or any other forms of compensation in addition to the hourly rate." However, King is entitled to Workers' Compensation through the town.

During the council meeting, King expressed his feelings regarding his impending retirement. "I truly have mixed emotions about this, but it's for my family's stability; that's why I've chosen to retire at this point. I love this community. I have an incredible team who works with me. It's been an honor to serve our community, and I'm in many, many ways not ready to go. This actually provides me with some extra time."

King also acknowledged how important it is for him to "turn the reigns over to the right person" in order to "maintain the excellence we have in our department and maintain the level of service that we provide to our community."

Reach the reporter at: vera@lamorindaweekly.com

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