

May 19, 2025

Board of Retirement

Ventura County Employees' Retirement Association 1190 South Victoria Avenue, Suite 200  
Ventura, CA 93003

**SUBJECT: Renewal of Hearing Officer Contracts for Fiscal Year 2025-2026**

Dear Board Members:

Staff is requesting Board approval for the **renewal of hearing officer contracts** that govern the provision of services for evidentiary hearings on disability retirement applications. VCERA also utilizes this contract when the Board directs administrative appeal matters to a hearing officer. The contracts for VCERA's existing hearing officer panel will expire on June 30, 2025. Below is a list of VCERA's current hearing officers, all of whom have heard disability cases on VCERA's behalf:

- Irene Ayala
- Humberto Flores
- Catherine Harris
- Robert Klepa
- John Rosenthal

Staff recommend that the Board **approve a hearing officer panel** of these five members in order to provide VCERA with available options in managing the caseload when a Hearing Officer is required. Hearing officers will continue to be assigned on an objective rotating basis. Historically, each hearing officer conducted an average of one disability hearing for VCERA per year. More recently, there has been an increase in caseload and staff foresee some hearing officers taking on more than one case. Staff believe this will still be manageable with the current caseload based on past experience.

Staff recommend minor changes to paragraphs 2, 4, and 6 for clarification and process efficiency. Staff also recommend changes to paragraphs 3 and 7a to **allow the Retirement Administrator to authorize Hearing Officer extension requests** to the 90-day reporting requirement. This recommendation facilitates a faster turnaround on extension requests under the contract and is commensurate with the Retirement Administrator's authority under the Service Provider Selection Policy, as well as the Board's aim under the Governance Committee charter to become a more policy-driven Board as opposed to an administrative body.

A pro-forma hearing officer contract is provided for your review. Staff have prepared contracts for the individuals named above, pending Board approval. With the noted exceptions described above, the contract terms, including the hourly compensation rate, remain unchanged from the prior fiscal year.

**RECOMMENDATION: Approve the Renewal of and Authorize the Retirement Administrator to Execute Fiscal Year 2025-2026 Contracts for the Five Listed Members of VCERA's Hearing Officer Panel**

Staff would be happy to answer any questions you may have at the May 19, 2025, meeting.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Amy Herron".

Amy Herron, CPA, CPFO, PMP  
Retirement Administrator