

**City Clerk: Supplemental to Municipal Matters Item 14-D
“CITY MANAGER CONTRACT AMENDMENT
AND AWARD OF PERFORMANCE BONUS”.**

For Hermosa Beach City Council Meeting of January 23, 2024 Agenda.

From: Howard L. – Ancient Resident

To: Hermosa Beach City Council

All comments herein, excluding the copied and referenced e-Comments of the prior 10/25/2022 HB CC meeting are my views.

Included at the end of these comments are all of the e-Comments submitted and as attached within the current staff report’s attached prior October 25, 2022 council meeting agenda, but however without all of the extraneous blank pages that got added when those e-Comments were attached to that prior “Obscene City Manager Agreement’s” agenda item, which itself was “railroaded-through” just before the Council election of November 2022.

There were additional comments submitted by email and posted with the October 25, 2022 HB CC meeting, but which are not included further below.

For the current “Obscene Contract Amendments” these prior included e-Comments still say a lot.

City Manager Suja Lowenthal and her proponent / tag-team member Councilman Justin Massey both should be run out of town; the sooner the better.

They are wrecking the City of Hermosa Beach day-by-day and have been for the period of their tenures as City Manager and City Councilman respectively. They now evidently even have the young “City Attorney”, Patrick Donegan, working for them as clearly an absolute puppet-stooge, as they obviously have had Councilman Raymond Jackson, notwithstanding that he remains the “The Clown-King of Pomposity”.

Even former City Attorney Michael Jenkins would never have tolerated being a puppet-stooge to either Lowenthal, or Massey. Possibly expedited his retirement dealing with them.

By the way, at this very moment the City’s Website still displays Michael Jenkins as also being the City Attorney of Hermosa Beach. Lowenthal’s incompetence seems to keep the city’s website fully posted with Massey and Suja Lowenthal nonsense stuff, however other more important information is routinely messed up or left off. Question: Is Jenkins still actually a City Attorney too, along with the young Patrick Donegan? The City’s Website is a disastrous maze, but nonetheless all kinds of inconsistencies seem designed for hidden sneaky purposes.

See the snag image following, regarding more of Lowenthal’s sloppy cell-phone/Zoom city-management from high in the hills of Rancho Palos Verdes over-looking Terminal

Island and Long Beach, or other locals, dress shops(?), far from actually being within Hermosa Beach (God forbid) with an open door policy to the Council's constituents as every other city Manager before control-freak Lowenthal was so stupidly hired by primarily milquetoast Councilmembers Duclos and Armato, but really the other control-freak Justin Massey.

Never forget how many people Lowenthal "the Queen Bee" has working directly under her now in her "**Bloated City Manager's**" **absolutely inefficient top heavy department**. It's no wonder she wants a Taj Mahal city hall. She longs to be in Long Beach, a city that's become a dangerous toilet in the last 40 years, due to its politicians and their own personal agendas screwing-over their own residents, much like what's now going on here in Hermosa Beach. I recall Long Beach as a one wonderful city. No more.

Our Government Our Community Enjoying Hermosa Doing Business Services I Want To...

Calendar of Events
+ City Council
City Directory
Contact the City
+ Coronavirus (COVID-19) Updates from the City of Hermosa Beach
- City Departments
City Attorney / City Prosecutor
+ City Clerk
+ City Manager
City Treasurer
+ Community Development
+ Community Resources - Parks & Recreation
+ Finance
Fire Services - Los Angeles County
+ Human Resources
+ Police
+ Public Works

Our Government » City Departments » **Screenshot 1/23/2024 12:18 PM**

City Attorney / City Prosecutor

Font Size: + - Share & Bookmark Feedback Print

City Attorney

- **General Information:** (310) 318-0216
- **Address:** 1315 Valley Drive, 2nd Floor, Hermosa Beach, CA 90254
- **Office Hours:** The City Attorney does not maintain regular office hours at City Hall.

CITY ATTORNEY
Patrick Donegan
CITY PROSECUTOR
Melanie Chavira

Appointed by the Hermosa Beach City Council, the City Attorney functions as legal counsel for civil matters, providing legal advice to the City Council and operating departments. ~~The City of Hermosa Beach contracts with the law firm of Best, Best & Krieger for City Attorney legal services; Michael Jenkins serves as the City Attorney.~~

To file a claim against the City, please visit the City Clerk's [webpage](#) for instructions on downloading and submitting a form.

The City Attorney does not provide legal advice, referrals or representation for the general public. For low or no-cost legal assistance or dispute resolution services, please visit:

Btw additionally, why was only Massey allowed to negotiate with Lowenthal in private? Seems I recall that in the past, before Massey, it was always a sub-committee of two councilmembers who negotiated with a city manager regarding a C.M. contract.

Pardon any typos or sentence structure errors within. So much was put on this agenda by Suja and no doubt Massey too, that in three or so days both the public and the Council itself are overwhelmed and there's no time to process anything well.

And why was there only one meeting in December, then only one meeting in January, and then next to be only one meeting in February? Answer, lazy councilmembers with other more important stuff to do, but of course so Massey and Lowenthal are able to overload the agenda and thusly be able to railroad-through everything. It's called Filthy

Rotten, Slimy and likely corrupt government, worth no doubt of an FBI investigation and sting as they often do with become-corrupt small town governments.

Here follow those e-Comments from the October 25, 2024 Council meeting, which are as relevant now as they were then for this item's "Obscene City Manager Contract Revisions".

- [maria haase](#) about 1 year ago
Oppose

With all due respect, I do not understand why are we proposing this issue.



- [Ann Gotthoffer](#) about 1 year ago
Support

I believe in participatory democracy and agree all resident opinions are important for consideration. However, I also believe that we elect leaders to lead, and they should be in a better position to understand the nuances of city management. They are not a "lame duck" council or part of a nefarious conspiracy. I suspect there may be a reason to seek decision now due to private personnel issues - vs. a "corrupt agenda" to rush something before an election.

The salary increase (which looks to be about 25K for past year and also for next year if I'm reading correctly, or about a 10% increase) does not appear unreasonable compared to other city managers receive in the area with my brief search. It is more difficult to find the contract durations - but I assume the city has that data when proposing this. I noticed 1 year (some with auto renewal terms), up to a 5 year term. Newport Beach did just renew their manager for a 5 year contract -- so it's not unprecedented - and no, I'm not saying Hb is the same as Newport Beach. <https://www.latimes.com/socal/daily-pilot/news/story/2022-01-27/newport-beach-city-manager-contract-extended-by-five-years> .

My impression of Suja at council meetings and at in person meetings I've attended, is that she is extremely competent and cares about the city and doing a good job. I do appreciate the concerns of many regarding changing the standard to fire her from simple majority to 4/5 vote. However, one would think if there was an objective just cause to do so, it would not be difficult to achieve that vote. I have my own assumptions why our manager may feel she needs that level of security, but look forward to hearing the discussion of our representatives as to why that may be appropriate - if in fact they do agree it is.

To summarize - I am 95% in SUPPORT, but I do want to hear staff and council discussion re: reasons for the extended term and change in termination criteria. Maintaining good management and the stability of our city administration is what is most important to me.



• [Hany Fangary](#) about 1 year ago

Oppose

It is outrageous what the three outgoing councilmembers (Ray, Stacey and Mary) are doing by usurping the decision-making power of the three new councilmembers that will be elected in about 2 weeks before they even get elected. There is no basis for the existing city council to agree to a 5 year contract with the city manager, raising her salary and bonus, and for the next 5 years, she can only be fired by a 4 out of 5 majority. Interestingly, the existing city council only NEEDS THREE VOTES to pass this to make this the new rule for the next five years. Imagine this, only three votes can force all future decisions about the city manager to require four votes. In my opinion, there is absolutely no reason to basically make the decision for the city and for the next three new councilmembers who the city manager is going to be for the next 5 years when they have 2 weeks left on their terms.



• [Traudl Weber](#) about 1 year ago

Oppose

You All do not seem to have Any concerns for Hermosa Beach! Otherwise you would not want to vote for such an Extreme and COSTLY contract package for the City Manager w/ No Benefit for Hermosa Beach! And make it very difficult to fire her as well, if the need arises.

And that right before the Election and new council members!

I can see the vote: Outgoing Council members Armato and Campbell BOTH YES, Council member Massey YES! And being 'transparent' voting it in very late at night!

This IS Dirty Politics!



• [Douglas Blackmer](#) about 1 year ago

Oppose

Corruption alert!



• [Kent allen](#) about 1 year ago

Oppose

Oppose this back room deal that Justin put together.



• [Rizza Coquilla](#) about 1 year ago
Oppose

Why propose an amendment just two weeks before the election? Plus with two council members that will no longer be part of the City Council? This is ridiculous and should be postponed to after the newly elects are in place. Shame on you!



• [Dianne Staso](#) about 1 year ago
Oppose

The new city council should make the decision to retain the city manager's position - or not!



• [Heidi J Swan](#) about 1 year ago
Oppose

I think the new city council should have the power to make this decision.



• [Chuck Gronbach](#) about 1 year ago
Oppose

Of course I oppose this "back room" maneuver to lock in the current City Manager for an additional 5-years. Worse yet is the underhanded strategy to "tie the hands" of the newly elected councilmembers with the proposed supermajority vote. And putting this very sensitive issue last on the agenda

Of course I strongly oppose this "back room" maneuver to lock in the current City Manager's contract for another 5-years. Her contract is up in August 2023 and it should be the newly elected Council's job to renegotiate the terms of her employment then. Secondly, the underhanded strategy to vote in a proposed super majority vote for termination is just wrong. It will "tie the

hands" of the incoming councilmembers. Also putting this very sensitive issue last on the agenda late in the night smells a little off.



• [Laura Pena](#) about 1 year ago

Oppose

Dear Mayor, Council Members, and Staff – I have noticed a substantial amount of community interest (53 written comments) unlike the other items regarding the City Manager Contract Agreement that is currently listed as the last item under Municipal Matters. I would like for you to consider moving this item to earlier in the evening so more community members could participate in this very important agenda item.

After reviewing the Staff Report, I have questions regarding the rationale for changing the voting requirements for the removal of our City Manager to 4/5 Supermajority. According to our Municipal Code 2.12.110 under City Manager, the “Removal – Vote Required – Notice of Intention to Remove” shall be only upon a three-member vote of the whole council. With this agreement change, are you revising our Municipal Code to reflect this amendment? If our Municipal Code is not being modified, what are examples to demonstrate the difference in voting procedures? Without understanding the rationale behind this change I cannot support this provision in the agreement.

In order to adhere to PLAN Hermosa's Governance Element providing a high degree of transparency and integrity in the decision-making process we need to understand how this change will provide a long-term community benefit while representing our entire residential community.

As always, I appreciate your thoughtful consideration.

Laura Pena



• [Robert Aronoff](#) about 1 year ago

Oppose

This is a power grab by the City Manager. She is concerned that most the candidates running in November want to reexamine the City's relationship with her. This issue should wait until the new council is in place. This should not be decided by a lame duck session.



• [Andrea Jacobsson](#) about 1 year ago

Oppose

Please postpone the salary and contract vote until after the election. The optics and timing of don't look good on the current city council. Additionally, if a contract is approved council should OPPOSE a 4/5 vote to terminate this contract. This is not necessary, If the city manager is doing a good job, she shouldn't need additional security, however, if her performance is not good, the new city council should be allowed to cancel her contract with a 3/5 vote. Thank you.



• [Todd Morin](#) about 1 year ago

Oppose

This is outrageous! Shame on you, city council.



• [Gaye Simmons](#) about 1 year ago

Oppose

Firmly oppose the contract for our current Hermosa Beach City Manager. She is the only City Manager ever provided with a five year contract, which she's not deserving of. Manhattan Beach and Redondo Beach City Managers aren't supported with the amount of costly support staff. If you surveyed Hermosa's community most would request she be removed from office. She's not visible in our community, all city projects are behind schedule and it's not Covid related.



• [Jeff Raedy](#) about 1 year ago

Oppose

The City Council is once again forgetting or willfully ignoring that the residents of Hermosa Beach rightfully occupy the top of the City's organizational chart.

Our residents elect the City Council to represent the interests of the electorate, the chief of those interests being that the City is well-managed. If the City ceases to be well-managed, the residents must have an assurance that their elected officials can make a change.

This contract extension undermines the ability of the City Council to represent our electorate. To enact a supermajority requirement severely disenfranchises residents who must rely on the City Council to take actions that are in line with the voice of the people.

I ask the City Council to reduce the term of this extension to two years at most and remove the simple majority requirement for removal.



• [Tammy Pao](#) about 1 year ago
Oppose

I oppose both the proposed term and proposed termination clause for this amendment. Any type of specified term agreement is a disincentive for performance (just look at the current two year tenure policy for public school teachers as a glaring example of lack of performance). Also, to require a 4/5 vote to terminate this contract ties the hands of the city council who are supposed to represent the voice of our community.



• [maureen anderson](#) about 1 year ago
Oppose

Changing the city manager's employment contract to lock her in for 5 years, etc., is NOT a good deal for the residents of our town OR for the incoming city council. I've heard many people are not happy with her, and many people, including myself, wonder why she needs a staff to accomplish her job when no prior city manager did.

Don't overstep your boundaries; let the new council decide if this is good for the city or not.



• [Elizabeth Welch](#) about 1 year ago
Oppose

For all the reasons listed by others here, I strongly oppose. At the very least, this issue should be tabled until the new city council is seated. There is no reason for this rush job! Who does it benefit?



• [Robert Devers](#) about 1 year ago

Oppose

Councilmember Friends,

Looks like you're in for an interesting evening. I'm sure you're all aware of how bad the optics are with the current city manager contract proposal. I realize these things are often more complex than they appear on the surface, but it's hard to understand the rationale behind much of this proposal.

How about this, here's a playbook of the questions that many people are trying to understand. Perhaps if these questions are addressed tonight, things will make sense.

Q: For city manager positions, what is the benchmark (median for similar cities) for:

- Contract length
- Pay
- Severance amount
- Vote percentage needed to dismiss

Q: If there is a difference, which can be OK, what is the rationale?

Q: For materially new, non-recurring contracts with Total Contract Value (TCV) over \$1 million (CapEx or OpEx), wouldn't a better practice be to give the constituents a few weeks to digest the components, understand, and buy-in? What is the rush here?

Note, I am marking "oppose" because I oppose with my current understanding. I would be glad to change to support with reasonable answers to the above.

• [KE Walker](#) about 1 year ago

Oppose

I want to add my voice to others that oppose this sneaky thing the current city council is trying to put through on the city by trying to make sure that the current city manager stays in office past her usefulness to the city.

The worst thing to happen is when good people don't do something when bad things happen. You are the bad guys kind of like when the city council voted to allow fracking in our tiny city. Look how much it cost us to stop the deal many years later!!
I am completely against this 5 year thing the city council wants to push through. NO!



•

[Kieran Harrington](#) about 1 year ago

Oppose

I strongly disagree with this power grab weeks away from an election. This seems to be very suspicious.

Why is there a need to go from a simple majority 3 of 5 vote to Super majority vote of 4 of 5 vote. Why NOW are we going from a year to year contract to a 5 year Sweetheart deal seems very convenient with the timing. Why are we letting the current council make the decisions for the new council members for the next 3 elections. This will be a \$1.3M contract deal for the city manager this ties the hands of the future council members who would be unable to terminate her without a 4/5 vote. Also adding this last to the agenda to ensure that many will not make it till 1:00am is another dirty play by all involved. I strongly urge the current city council to reject this proposal.

Kieran Harrington



• [Matt McCool](#) about 1 year ago

Oppose

As a City Council candidate, this is the type of corruption that has gone on for the last five years with the 5-0 voting. There is no justification for changing to a 4/5 City Council termination vote other than some sort of payoff. Furthermore, this item is at the end of the agenda. If this City Council has any integrity or respect for the people, this item should be moved before the public hearings, so the people can speak.

www.McCoolForHermosa.com



• [Maddie OConnor](#) about 1 year ago

Oppose

Hermosa Beach Residents: Just ask yourself what does this sound and smell like to you?:..... Exactly 2 weeks before 3 (out of 5) new city council members are voted in by Hermosa Beach residents, 25 Year (?.....still looking for contract) Contract City Attorney Mike Jenkins and 4 Year (year to year contract) City Manager Suja Lowenthal present recommendations (at midnight) to current 5 city councilmembers Armato, Campbell, DeToy, Jackson & Massey recommending that they approve a FIVE YEAR contract (instead of current yearly) with Ms Lowenthal AND revise future city council member's ability to terminate her contract from currently requiring ONLY 3 out of 5 votes (think new councilmembers) to requiring 4 out of 5 votes when the new 3 city councilmembers are voted in? What one might ask are Contract City Attorney Jenkins and CM Lowenthal so terribly afraid??



• [David Grethen](#) about 1 year ago

Oppose

There are two conditions of the proposed City Manager contract that undermine the leverage of City Council to assure and incentivize City Manager performance and responsiveness to the entire Council and the people of Hermosa they represent. They must be changed as follows.

- 1) The length of the contract should be appreciably less than the proposed 5 years, to expire roughly mid-way through the next Council term, which is about 2 years from now.
- 2) A simple 3-2 Council majority should be retained, instead of the proposed 4-1 supermajority, as the hurdle for Council to terminate the City Manager without cause.

Regarding contract length, the incoming City Council must be afforded an opportunity within their term to re-evaluate City Manager with the option to retain or dismiss without the prospect of severe contract penalties and constraints looming. Lack of such opportunity would be inconsistent with the principle that the City Manager works for, and reports directly to, City Council (and by extension is also accountable to the people).

The proposed 4-1 supermajority to terminate without cause violates the democratic principle of majority rule since only two City Council votes to retain the City Manager would be needed to avoid termination. Furthermore, a mere 40% “customer satisfaction” rating (2 of 5) is a very low standard for anyone to keep their job. The goal should be 100% here, with perhaps 80% more realistic in some cases. But even 60% is quite low, let alone 40%.

(Note also that a supermajority scenario whereby 3 out of 5 votes lose is effectively equivalent to a simple majority scenario where 3 votes out of 7 lose. It is as if there was a 4-3 majority to retain, where the City Manager has the additional 2 votes (in addition to 2 Council votes to retain), twice as many as any one Council member.)

The two proposed conditions could significantly upset the balance of power between the City Manager and Council, and even within the Council. For example, if two Council members were to align with each other (and the City Mgr) and assure the City Manager no threat of termination without cause, this minority could wield undue influence within our City government (despite the need for three votes to approve formal Council motions).

It is the City Manager, not City Council, who has direct control over the entire City Staff, runs day to day operations, and approves the Council meeting agenda Staff reports whose input and recommendations significantly drive the resulting actions and approved motions of Council. For these reasons and others, a proper balance must be maintained.

I appreciate the continuity of service provided by the current City Manager to date, and the desire to maintain such continuity and stability, given our recent history with City Manager retention. But this does not outweigh my concerns otherwise. We must adhere to our principles.

So please heed my two recommendations above.

David Grethen
Hermosa Beach Resident



• [Erika Moore](#) about 1 year ago
Oppose

Oppose



• [David Unangst](#) about 1 year ago
Oppose

The proposed changes to the City Manager's contract to extend the term for 5 more years, and to require 4 out of 5 votes to terminate the contract is a despicable and desperate attempt to enshrine the current manager in an unassailable position of power, by hobbling and limiting the power of future council members. With 3 out of 5 seats to be determined during the upcoming election, this is also clearly an attempt to disenfranchise Hermosa's voters and to prevent them from being heard. It boggles my mind to find that this is even being attempted, while fearing it will succeed. One can only wonder at the possible motives of the current council. Is this some sort of revenge on the city by members who either are, or fear they may be, outgoing? Don't do this.



• [Gleb Gofin](#) about 1 year ago
Oppose

What a gross, disgusting, corrupt perversion of our local governance! I can't believe the nerve of the current city council's attempt to so blatantly deny the city voters their voice by handicapping the ability of our soon-to-be-chosen elected officials to run Hermosa the way the voters see fit. The current city council has just completely aligned themselves with the likes of Newsom and Biden - not because of their political affiliations but because we all see what California and the United States has turned into under their governance. And it has all been done with shady, corrupt, unscrupulous dealings with those more concerned about lining their pockets than bettering their constituencies. This amendment should not even have been whispered about much less brought forth for a vote! If the city council moves forward with this amendment, I truly hope

our newly elected officials (who, I assure you, will be wholeheartedly opposed to such corruption) and the residents of this city come together and gather donations for a fund to hire lawyers to investigate these actions for both civil and criminal malfeasance and prosecute all those involved in this despicable, corrupt act to the full extent of the law!



• [Christy Robinson](#) about 1 year ago
Oppose

I oppose this amendment!



• [Scott S](#) about 1 year ago
Oppose

I think it's time we look at eliminating all of these overpaid BS city offices and digitize everything! Measure D coming soon let's have our taxes go down for once instead of going up for substandard service. Coyotes homeless and trash filling our city it's disgusting we deserve better for what we pay! Expect more not learn to live with garbage . Literally flies in all of our restaurants due to a poorly planned recycling program as well! Please make the city stop this illegal pay raise we cannot be burned with owing over \$1 million plus. Especially when we plan to eliminate these positions in the near future. We cannot keep over paying for garbage! We have all the technology needed to run a town 100% more efficiently than its being run now. The city is so slow when real problems happen they can't even deal with it takes months and months . Can't even deal with coyotes in this town sad. The green way needs to be trimmed back to keep the coyotes down, so they add even more plants what is wrong with the city??? In tough times they spend money like it's water. I say no fix our city up wash the streets clean the trash cans fix the flies!

Allowing a small group of individuals to vote on everything for the town is ridiculous! We need to have everyone's emails, phone numbers and SMS messaging this way everyone truly does run their town instead of a few select people. Old-school politics are ruining our country and city. Contact me for more information on how to help get measure D written and passed in Hermosa Beach. Then we can work on fixing the other Beach cities surrounding us too. The fact that we have to make up signs, flyers and more just to stop things that outsiders are trying to do in our city is disgusting! It cost all of us thousands of dollars just to get rid of Starbucks Drive thru. now thousands of dollars more to get rid of Measure M??? This would not happen with a digital program in place. Save our city and our dollars help me develop and get measured the past in the city stop the waste lower taxes and raise our expectations. Trust me California can be the greatest state ever but we all need to work together and try something new.



• [HowardL HowardL](#) about 1 year ago

Oppose

Wow, I thought I might be the only one seeing through all the wrong that's been going on in tiny 1.3 square mile Hermosa Beach during the past four years since the Massey-Armato-Lowenthal Troika assembled to mess over the entire city. _____NP_____

There's nothing like proof positive coming right from the own City Councilmember hands of their own wheeling-and-dealing right upstairs in the City Hall's little conference room, just outside the City Manager's office, and inside their little Closed Sessions secret society. Wow, that room must smell awful when they're in there with the City Manager and the City Attorney. _____NP_____

Absolutely incredible! They truly are now scraping the bottom of the barrel with this incredible bald-faced, proposed City Manager contract. Absolutely unbelievable! In the past they did this all via their obvious simple 'Ralph M. Brown' Act-violating serial-cell-phone meetings. _____NP_____

Now they've stepped boldly-up to use closed sessions and then print it all out for the world to see precisely why the Massey-puppet-no-action-Jackson and non-Massey-puppet-Realtor-Rita-Gerace should not be elected, but instead three of the six honorable council-candidates also running. No Jackson! No Gerace! _____NP_____

And; ! _____NP_____

1- No 5-year contract! _____NP_____

2- No 4/5 council-vote (illegal specification) to fire the City Manager without cause. It's always been 3/5 council-vote in all honorable and to simply pay her the 6-months-salary, i.e., the get-out-here pronto, de facto extortion. _____NP_____

3- And the salary adjustment should only go back to this year's review date. The report comment regarding that the adjustment was forgotten last year is just so incredibly bogus, and disingenuous! Who is fooling whom with that statement! _____NP_____

My views of course! _____NP_____

Howard L.



•

[Dean Francois](#) about 1 year ago

Oppose

As a city council candidate, I am absolutely opposed to this proposal for the city managers contract renewal.

It is the wrong thing to do and the wrong time to do it.

This has nothing to do with the city manager's performance. Her performance is not on the agenda and we have yet to hear from the city council on her performance .

With regards to the supermajority 4/5 vote to terminate her contract, I am opposed to this and would be opposed to any such supermajority firing in the future. The city manager performance must be based on a simple majority satisfaction of a city council.

5 years is too long for an extension renewal, especially when implemented just weeks before an election .

A suggested solution to this dilemma would

be to extend the contract for one year and then allow the newly elected council members to weigh in on the future negotiations of the City Manager compensation after they have had some inside experience with performance.



•

[Randy Balik](#) about 1 year ago

Oppose

First, to clarify, my opposition has nothing to do with our current City Manager, but rather about the long term management and oversight of the position itself. I cannot speak to competitiveness of the employment contract value itself (salary, benefits, 5-year guaranteed term) - it seems a bit rich to me, but I do not know enough about the "going rate" for a job position like this so I'll leave that part to others. But I am **STRONGLY** opposed to the change from a 3-2 majority Council vote to a 4-1 supermajority vote for non-causal termination. It is the City Council's job to review and evaluate the City Manager's position and if a majority feel it's time for a change via non-causal termination, then so be it, that's the way it should work...with the currently existing 3-2 majority vote design. There is simply no logical reason to make an at-will employment position subject to a supermajority vote for non-causal termination. This change, and frankly the timing of this change, are likely why so many are in an uproar - it's just bad optics, and it's bad policy. I imagine a lot of the discussion about this issue has been in closed-session, so I sincerely hope our Council gives these opposing views some serious consideration in open session now that so many have spoken out.



• [Ira Ellman](#) about 1 year ago

Support

The furor over the City Manager's new contract is completely ill conceived and illogical (some are mean spirited!). From a total compensation perspective, the new contract in Hermosa averages about \$360K. By comparison, following are City Manager total compensation averages from 2020 or 2021: Manhattan Beach \$385K, Redondo Beach \$363K, El Segundo \$416K. Note that these will likely increase, perhaps substantially, over the next five years.

As far as waiting for the new members of the City Council to be in place to approve the new contract, it makes sense to have current Council members who have worked with Suja over the last number of years to vote, rather than those who know nothing about her value or skills.



• [Brian Ledermann](#) about 1 year ago

Oppose

I strongly oppose the city council discussing this matter when Suja's contract doesn't come due until August 2023. This topic should be considered in 2023. This effort by the current council and the ramification to make it more difficult to remove the city manager for the next city council smells like political favors are in play.



• [Linda Gamero](#) about 1 year ago

Oppose

I do not support this amendment. This is completely unethical.



• [Linda Gamero](#) about 1 year ago

Oppose

This is



- [Nancy Nguyen](#) about 1 year ago

Oppose

My family fled a communist country to get away from these kinds of overt display of government greed and abuse. A FIVE year contract quarter million dollar a year contract for a “public servant”? If, Ms. Suja Lowenthal really felt she is doing a phenomenal job, why does she feel the need to lock the city of Hermosa Beach in a 5 year contract for more than a million dollars? If she were doing a great job, why not just have a year to year review - of which I'm sure the residents will support if the results supports it. Maybe this kind of tactics may or have worked in other places, like Santa Monica or Long Beach, where residents may not have been paying attention - but I'm confident and hopeful that the residents of Hermosa Beach will see right through this for what it is: abuse of power. Stop it! It's not a good look for some people's long term political career. **STRONGLY OPPOSE** to this amendment.



- [Elizabeth Klein](#) about 1 year ago

Oppose

I strongly oppose this amendment!



- [Megg Sulzinger](#) about 1 year ago

Oppose

I strongly oppose this amendment. There is absolutely no reason to push this through 2 weeks before an election that will have 3 new council members. This is a ploy by the current council to lock in Suja's contract for longer than this newly elected council's terms. This is completely unethical. Also why also to make it more difficult increasing the number of votes from 3 to 4 to be able to remove the city manager. There is no guarantee that the city manager will do a good job for the next 5 years when there has already been questionable decisions made by her office. This should be brought to the newly elected council after the November 8th. The arrogance of the current council to make decisions for for future council members is totally wrong.

- [Katie Pilot](#) about 1 year ago

Oppose

Please refrain from changing the voting process on the contract from a simple majority to a super majority. If last practice dictates simple majority, I suggest it is left alone. Making any changes at this point in time may seem suspicious given the current state of the races and our community elects it's leadership to have a say in things like the city manager employment agreement. Thanks again.



• [Raymond Dussault](#) about 1 year ago
Oppose

Suja has been, at best, controversial since she was hired. She has shown hostility to any resident or business owner that challenges her on even the most simple of topics. Immediately on her arrival, she made changes to long held city processes to make it more difficult for residents to speak up on agenda items. She is never available in City Hall. She seems unable to manage her office or contractors, just look at how long it has taken - still not completely fixed - just to make recorded meetings and debates available to the public. She mis-managed the already expensive bathroom projects to the point they are now stalled indefinitely and subject to expensive lawsuits. Her misdeeds are myriad.

I ABSOLUTELY OPPOSE USURPING THE RESIDENTS POWER 2 WEEKS BEFORE AN ELECTION BY CHANGING OVERSIGHT OF SUJA TO A SUPER MAJORITY. It is wrong to do this period, even more unsavory on the eve of an election that could bring 3 new voices to the council chambers. But perhaps that's the point?



• [Blake Dolton](#) about 1 year ago
Oppose

Strongly Oppose



• [Kilty Cleary](#) about 1 year ago
Oppose

I oppose this measure and would hope the city of Hermosa is better than this.



• [William Bleecker](#) about 1 year ago

Oppose

I strongly oppose giving a five year contract to the city manager. This is not in the best interests of the city and gives far too much power to one person. A year to year contract is not a problem if you are doing a good job.



• [Greg Ladanyi](#) about 1 year ago

Oppose

I oppose giving special powers to 1 person that would diminish the City Council members that are voted in BY THE HERMOSA CITIZENS FOR THIER CONCERNS!



• [Ken Hartley](#) about 1 year ago

Oppose

I oppose any long-term contracts like this so close to an election. The electorate is voting now, and the Council should wait until the new members are seated before this is done.



• [Andrea Trozak](#) about 1 year ago

Oppose

I do not support a contract amendment to the City Manager contract. The contract term of 5 years and termination requirement of 4/5 vote needs to be further assessed by the new city council. Making this long-term decision at this point in the current Council's tenure is not necessary. If the new City Council members deem the City Manager contract to be extended with these termination requirements then let them make this important decision since this will be in effect during their term.



• [Dan Inskeep](#) about 1 year ago

Oppose

Hermosa City Council members:

Please vote no on the imposition of a 5 year contract for the City Manager. There are more appropriate ways to reward City employees for a job well-done (if that is in-fact the case). Also, an action like this does nothing to reduce the potential for voluntary termination on the part of the City Manager.

Please also vote no on the proposed change to require more than a simple majority vote for City Manager termination.

There is no justification from the citizen's viewpoint to provide either of these proposed protections to the City Manager.



• [Lourdes Garcia](#) about 1 year ago

Oppose

I do NOT support amending the City manager's contract. The proposed amendment should be evaluated by the newly-elected City Council members.



• [Bette Mower](#) about 1 year ago

Oppose

This issue needs to be held off until a new council has been elected. Putting this up at such a late date right before the election shows a complete disrespect for the citizens of Hermosa Beach. How dare you.



• [David Caponio](#) about 1 year ago

Oppose

Let the newly elected Council Members have a say in this matter.



• [Lee Schantz](#) about 1 year ago

Oppose

I strongly oppose this new contract amendment for the City Manager. It's not needed. These efforts to push such an action through ahead of the elections is very troubling. It demonstrates a complete disregard for serving in the best interests of Hermosa Beach residents.



• [Marie OBrien](#) about 1 year ago

Oppose

I oppose any changes to the city manager contract. No city Council should make amendments as they are outgoing.



• [Douglas Blackmer](#) about 1 year ago

Oppose

The opposite of democracy? No thanks.



• [Karynne Thim](#) about 1 year ago

Oppose

The length of the extension and new terms of the employment agreement are not acceptable and inappropriate for an outgoing council to push through. This item should be tabled for a later date after the new council is in place.



• [Cecilia Hansen](#) about 1 year ago

Oppose

These proposed changes only benefit the City Manager and hurt an incoming City Council by locking them into an agreement that cannot be changed for 5 years - unless there's a 4/5 vote? Do you think the citizens are stupid? A neighbor below stated it well, "It is really a fundamental attack on the representative democratic process. What public interest is served by this change and how did it come to be?"



• [Leslie Mohr](#) about 1 year ago
Oppose

I do not support a contract amendment to the City Manager contract. The contract term of 5 years and termination requirement of 4/5 vote needs to be further assessed by the new city council. Making this long-term decision at this point in the current Council's tenure is not necessary. If the new City Council members deem the City Manager contract to be extended with these termination requirements then let them make this important decision since this will be in effect during their term.



• [Yulissa Ramos](#) about 1 year ago
Oppose

This proposal is extremely biased and a last-minute attempt by the city to void the upcoming City Council election. If this passes, it would severely hinder newly elected City Councilmembers and their ability to manage Hermosa Beach adequately. Please do the right thing and reject this proposal.



• [Cammie Herbert](#) about 1 year ago
Oppose

Esteemed City Council Members,

I am dismayed to read that a City Manager contract decision is being made right before new council members arrive.

This has nothing to do with Ms. Lowenthal personally, just that long term staff decisions should not be made when (potentially) over half the council could change. The council people voted in in Nov should decide as that's who the community feels they want to make decisions for the city. I also disagree strongly that a City Manager contract is longer than the majority of the council members will be on it—thus actually affecting two cycles of council people.

Please do not vote for a 5 year contract.

- [William Gulliver](#) about 1 year ago
Oppose

I am new to Hermosa Beach. Love it here, but a power grab from anyone is just wrong. I love the caring of the Community. All decisions in our LAND OF THE FREE should be made by it's people. The elected should follow what its people want. This is why you are elected. Keep the peace in our Community.



- [Darlene Dirstine](#) about 1 year ago
Oppose

I strongly oppose the changes to the city manager's contract. This reeks of corruption in this council's final few weeks in power. Changing from a simple majority to a 4/5 vote to remove the city manager undermines future councils and has no true basis to be changed other than for the current council to cement the contact in their final days of 5/0 votes. If Suja is doing such a great job, why such extreme measures to make it so hard to remove her if she fails to meet the needs of our city?

I strongly oppose the 5 yr extension and the change of the vote to remove the city manager.



- [Michael Treidl](#) about 1 year ago
Oppose

There are clearly other, more democratic ways, of retaining talent for the position of city manager than what has been proposed here. The timing of this proposal, the 4/5 termination vote, and 5 year extension reflect poorly on any council members that support or vote for this.



- [Claudia Berman](#) about 1 year ago
Support

Suja has brought stability to city management. Since 2012 to 2018 there have been 4 city managers: 2 permanent and 2 interim terms. Neither of the previous two city managers lasted more than 4 years.

Tom Bakaly 2012 - 2016
John Jalily Interim
Sergio Gonzalez 2017-2018
John Jalily Interim
Suja Lowenthal 2018 - Present

In her 4 years she has made some incredible department head hires with police Chief Paul LeBaron, Deputy City Manager Angela Crespi, Public Works Director Joe SanClemente, Community Development Director Jeannie Naughton and made a terrific promotion of Lisa Nichols to Community Resources Manager. She led the city through the pandemic with the downtown configurations for dining decks, pivoted to online city services, and did all this while freezing 12 open positions.

Her contract was up in August, it seems reasonable to have a 5 year contract to continue the city's path of stability and growth. There's a new council every 2 years. It makes no sense to only do employment contracts every other year to avoid an election year. The current council knows her performance the best.

After 4 years of stellar performance in Hermosa Beach, Suja can work anywhere. We need to retain talent. We don't want to become the city who can't retain a city manager for more than 4 years. Then we'll have a very real hiring problem for the next city manager.



• [PETER sidman](#) about 1 year ago
Oppose

Politics at its finest, MONEY, POWER, GREED. The more you have the more you want. I think that's an obsession. Give them this and next election they will want more. Just the fact that they tried to just sneak it in under the radar, should give would some idea of what we now have in the city council.



• [Jan Gottesman](#) about 1 year ago
Oppose

I do not favor The proposed contract term (5 years) and constrictive termination clause. This will tie the cities and residents hands for the next five years regardless of performance which is dangerous to the future of the city and residents. Strongly oppose.



• [Michael Miller](#) about 1 year ago

Oppose

This is wrong on so many levels. The City Manager should remain an at will position.



• [Tony Higgins](#) about 1 year ago

Oppose

Changing the vote required to terminate the city manager contract from 3 of 5 to 4 of 5 is no different than the slimy voter suppression schemes happening all over the country in Republican States and in the Deep South.

Only it's happening right here in Hermosa Beach.

If our electorate chooses 3 council members to represent them and those council members want to terminate the city managers contract by a simple majority like they can do today who are you to undermine the will of the people!



• [Anthony Higgins](#) about 1 year ago

Neutral

Dear City Council

If I got it correct the previous two city manager contracts with Ms. Lowenthal only required a majority of council members to terminate the city manager contract. That would be a 3-2 vote.

It's outrageous that someone is manipulating the process to to require 4 out of 5 council members and not a simple majority (3-2) to terminate the contract.

It is really a fundamental attack on the representative democratic process. What public interest is served by this change and how did it come to be?

I suspect that since this action at the very end of the agenda it won't come up until very late in the night and that's no accident either. It minimizes public participation and scrutiny.

Someone should also ask for the total compensation not just the city manager salary.

It's probably buried somewhere in the supporting documentation but total compensation should be a headline item not a buried byline.

And once again all this goes to a pattern of minimal transparency from our city leaders that has been discussed so often but not addressed

That's why we need new blood on the city council.



• [Douglas Blackmer](#) about 1 year ago

Oppose

Oh my dear corruption.



• [Daniel Godwin](#) about 1 year ago

Oppose

What a slap in the face of Hermosa residents! I cannot believe that the City has come this far to counter the upcoming City Council election and suppress the voice of our voters.

Why is it necessary to extend the City Manager's contract from year-to-year to 5 years!? It is somehow conveniently timed right before election and with a contract duration that exceeds the newly elected Councilmembers' terms (of 4 years). Why is it necessary to change the City Council's ability to terminate such contract from simple majority (3/5) to super majority (4/5)? To my knowledge, super-majority has only applied to tax and fee related matters.

Tenured City Councilmembers and newly elected City Councilmembers are expected to collaborate together to find common-ground on city policy, municipal problems/projects and how to best govern our small-beach city. This proposal can be considered corrupt, unethical and acting in bad faith to our community. I would not be surprised if passed, the City would receive a black eye in its reputation, media scrutiny and litigation. I strongly urge the City Council to reject this proposal.

-Dan Godwin



• [Josh Krasnegor](#) about 1 year ago

Oppose

Quite possibly the dumbest, most unnecessary and corrupt action by the city... I'm speechless. Why is this happening?



•

[Rodger Deuerlein](#) about 1 year ago

Oppose

It smacks of impropriety for the Council, now, on the eve of an election, to hand a friend near-invulnerable status through the next three elections.

Beyond the bad optics, this proposed action ignores the reality that the management of the City, and accordingly, the performance of its City Manager, is rightly a matter up for debate and voters' judgment at every election. A contract that restricts the powers of future councils to carry out their mandate from voters, makes that debate moot. As such, it is contrary to notions of representative democracy and good government.

I urge that the Council not approve the proposed contract amendment for the City Manager.



•

[Carolyn Petty](#) about 1 year ago

Oppose

Never, in my nearly 30 years of living in Hermosa Beach, have I ever witnessed such a corruption of our local government. Hermosa Beach is rapidly emulating the City of Bell, whose corruption extended from the City Councilmembers to the City Manager and the City Attorney. In that instance, they were all in cahoots – doling out pay raises and sweetheart contracts to each other, without a care in the world. How else did the City Council of the City of Bell behave? Dismissive and disinterested in the views of their residents. Sound familiar? As per Justin Massey: “if we had to wait for a vote of the people, we would never get anything done”. Justin Massey regularly disparages and dismisses residents who speak up at council meetings and dare to push back on his agenda. Why would he care now what we think? The idea that you as our Councilmembers plan to lock in the City Manager to a 5 year contract at a total cost of \$1.3M, hamstringing a future City Council who would be unable to terminate her without cause without a 4/5 vote of a City Council is the height of corruption. You all behave with reckless disregard for our interests. Also, you put this last on the city agenda, forcing all of us to sit in chambers until what time – 1am? Again, this has been done purposefully and smacks of corruption. My prediction is that Justin, Stacey and Mary will vote yes. They will give Ray a pass to feign indignation, knowing that a 4th vote is unnecessary. The three are not concerned about Mike Detoy's vote because it is not needed. I advise every resident now: Do not vote for Ray or Rita

when you cast your vote! Rita has been endorsed by every councilmember and will perpetuate our current circumstances. Ray has been complicit in all of the above. Hermosa Beach City Council: you should all be ashamed of yourselves.