



MEMORANDUM

DATE: September 5, 2013

TO: Governing Board
San Francisco Bay Restoration Authority

FROM: Melanie Denninger
Project Specialist
State Coastal Conservancy

SUBJECT: Two Additional Appointments to the Advisory Committee

This memo is to present two more candidates recommended for appointment to the Restoration Authority's Advisory Committee. The candidates are Ben Field, Executive Director of the South Bay Labor Council and Mitch Avalon, Contra Costa County Deputy Public Works Director (retired, but still active with the County) and founder of the Bay Area Flood Protection Agencies Association. Mr. Field would step into the Advisory Committee role once filled by Cindy Chavez, who was formerly Executive Director of the South Bay Labor Council and was recently elected to the Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors. Mr. Avalon would expand the reach of the Advisory Committee to include flood management agencies. The Governing Board's Committee on the Advisory Committee, comprised of Councilmember Faust and Supervisor Gioia, has agreed that these two candidates be considered for appointment.

The following are brief biographies of the two candidates:

Ben Field

Ben Field was elected to the post of Executive Officer of the south Bay Labor Council in December 2012. He is responsible for running the largest, most sophisticated grassroots political campaign operation in the South Bay. He oversees political campaign work carried out by the Labor Council's Committee on Political Education (COPE) advocating for candidates and public policies that are good for working families.

Advisory Committee Appointment

September 5, 2013

2

During the 2012 election cycle, Ben was in charge of several successful campaigns. Among them were three critical local measures including the significant increase in San Jose's minimum wage, Santa Clara County's sales tax for healthcare and public safety, and continued funding for a safe, clean water supply, and the election of two candidates to replace under-performing board members of the El Camino Hospital District. He supervised hundreds of volunteers and hired staff to carry out the campaign work, which also included dozens of other successful candidate races. Before his election as Executive Officer, Ben served as Chief of Staff for the Labor Council from 2009-2012.

Prior to joining the Labor Council, Ben served as a Deputy District Attorney in Santa Clara County for 15 years, where he prosecuted a variety of cases including murders, sexual assaults, gang offenses, and white collar crimes. He is also an adjunct professor at San Jose State University, where he has taught courses on the U.S. presidency, constitutional law, judicial politics, law and society, and political history. Ben has served as the co-chair of the Friends of PAT, a faith-based group that supports community organizing and social justice activities, the Chair of the Cardozo Society, and is a member of the Jewish Community Relations Council. He is also a volunteer leader with Habitat for Humanity and a senior fellow of the American Leadership Forum.

After graduating with a degree in Political Science from Columbia University in 1986, Ben worked as a legislative aide to Congressman Don Edwards and later on the United States Senate Subcommittee on Housing and Urban Development. He earned a law degree and a PhD in American History from the University of California at Berkeley and served in the U.S. Naval Reserve from 1988-1998. He has authored several articles and a book on history and the law.

Ben is an avid runner, having competed in numerous 100-mile races and plays the harmonica in a garage band known as "The Retribution Blues Band."

Mitch Avalon

Mitch Avalon is a graduate of the University of California, Berkeley where he received his Bachelor of Science Degree in Civil Engineering. He joined Contra Costa County Public Works Department in 1979 after working with Bechtel for a year. Mr. Avalon has worked in many areas of Public Works, including transportation engineering, development engineering, design, and construction.

Mr. Avalon was appointed Deputy Public Works Director and Deputy Chief Engineer for the Flood Control and Water Conservation District in 1998, overseeing the development of regional management plans for flood protection and enhancement of the environmental resources in the District's 75 miles of creeks and 30 basins. He is also responsible for overseeing the County's Clean Water Program, Real Estate Division and Environmental Division. Mr. Avalon spent one year as Acting Deputy Director at the Community Development Department, managing their current planning program.

Mitch is currently retired but still working with the County Public Works Department.

Mitch has been chair of the Alhambra Watershed Council since its founding in 1997. The Council produced a Watershed Management Plan in 2004 through a community based planning process and is now working on implementation projects. Mitch is also on the Board of Directors of the Friends of the San Francisco Estuary, the San Francisco Estuary Institute and the California Central Valley Flood Control Association, past Chair of the Flood Control and Water Resources Policy Committee for the County Engineers Association of California, past Chair of the Contra Costa City-County Engineering Advisory Committee and founding Chair of the Bay Area Flood Protection Agencies Association.

On the human interest side, Mitch has climbed Mount Kilimanjaro in Africa and Mount Tyndal in the Whitney range, and bicycled across the United States.