



Interoffice Memo

DATE: April 22, 2024

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FROM: Brian Chambers, Lieutenant
Emergency Operations Division - Aviation Unit

TO: Board of Retirement
San Bernardino County Employees' Retirement Association

SUBJECT	Retiree Re-Employment - Charles Abney #A0056
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I am requesting an 18-month extension for returning retiree Charles Abney as a part-time fixed wing and rotorcraft pilot based on the following:

1. The Sheriff's Department utilizes fixed-wing aircraft to provide surveillance, aerial reconnaissance, and downlink (video) communications to ground personnel for a variety of public safety incidents. These aircraft are also utilized to provide transportation to all county personnel for investigations, extraditions, inspections, and meetings. In addition, the Department also utilizes rotorcraft (helicopter) for patrol and search and rescue functions. The Aviation Unit utilizes part-time pilots, like Abney, to supplement during this staffing shortage. Safety Extra Help Pilots generally work 20-24 hours a week.
2. Abney possesses a commercial pilot's license for multi-engine, fixed wing, and rotorcraft. For several years now, The Aviation Unit has had a shortage of pilots due to retirements and Abney has become an asset to help fulfill our daily personnel needs. Our Aviation Unit has historically utilized Safety Extra Help pilots to supplement our pilot vacancies due to resignations, retirement and/or sick/vacation. Abney's ability to work as a fixed-wing pilot and helicopter pilot makes him the only SBCERA retiree able to fill both these positions.
3. Without Abney, some patrol shifts would have to be left vacant, leaving deputies in the field without air support, which also lessens public safety. While we are actively recruiting new pilots, and have several newer pilots in training, we are in direct competition with the airline industry, which is also suffering from a pilot shortage causing recruitment, and even retention issues (a newer pilot in training takes approximately three years before they are qualified to pilot all missions just in the patrol helicopter). Even when we are able to recruit an available pilot for hire, the candidate must complete an in-depth background process that takes months, and then still requires extensive in-house training on the sheriff's mission before they can be put into service. In addition, all Aviation Unit helicopter pilots have always been Deputy Sheriff's, or Reserve Deputy Sheriff's. Because of the vast size and rural areas of our county, it is not uncommon for our helicopters to land off-site to either assist ground units

Exhibit C: Page 2

or detain a suspect. There have been multiple times over the years when only our air crew was in the area and needed to detain a suspect to ensure public safety. Without having a Deputy Sheriff as a pilot, our Tactical Flight Officers, who are also all Deputy Sheriff's, would be without a back-up creating a major safety concern.

4. In addition, that pilot would also need to attend factory training on the aircraft they would be flying prior to, if not rated in that type of aircraft. It would cost approximately \$15,000.00 to qualify that pilot on the airframe they would be piloting. Abney is currently qualified to pilot four different airframes in the Department's fleet of aircraft. Therefore, the re-employment extension for Charles Abney enables us to continue to meet our obligation to public safety.