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Aguirre speaks out about water agency pensions

News in brief of countywide interest

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San Diego Mayor Jerry Sanders' public fight against a pension hike for employees of the region's water agency has drawn out an old adversary.

Former City Attorney Michael Aguirre has laid low since leaving office last December. But Aguirre is incensed by Sanders' opposition to the pension formula proposed for the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California — because Sanders benefits from the same formula.

“My point is this: How can he have any credibility by claiming that somebody else shouldn't get what he's getting?” Aguirre said.

The MWD board had planned to decide on the pension issue at its meeting in Los Angeles today, but the item was postponed amid growing opposition.

Under the proposal, retiring employees would receive 2.5 percent of their final compensation multiplied by their years of service when they reach 55. For example, an employee who makes $100,000 and has 30 years of service would receive an annual pension of $75,000. That's up from $60,000 under the current formula.

Sanders' pension as a 26-year San Diego police veteran was calculated using the same 2.5 percent multiplier, though he was eligible at age 50 as a public-safety employee. He receives an annual pension of $92,682 and earns $100,464 a year as mayor.

Sanders' spokesman Darren Pudgil noted that the mayor is forgoing retirement benefits he could accrue as mayor.

“He is giving up thousands of dollars in pension that he has rightfully earned,” Pudgil said.

James Edwards, an MWD board member, said he doesn't think any less of Sanders' criticism of the MWD pension deal.

“If he was in law enforcement, they had their own negotiation,” Edwards said. “That's his own pension that he qualified for.”

MWD says the pension increase will be more than paid for by other employee concessions.

— H.G