

New Energy and Sustainability Services Manager begins role at City Hall

Salem Afeworki, the city's new Energy and Sustainability Services Manager and a 15-year veteran of providing sustainability, climate change and community engagement consulting services for multiple clients, began her new role in Costa Mesa on Tuesday Jan. 7, 2020.

"We are very pleased to have Ms. Afeworki join our city team to advance the City Council goals on energy efficiency and sustainability," Mayor Katrina Foley said. "This work is critical as we strive to make the city more energy efficient and deal with the emergency of climate change."

Before accepting the job in Costa Mesa, Afeworki was the Principal at Value Sustainability, a boutique-consulting firm that provides advisory services in sustainable business practices, clean energy and climate change based in Orange County. Afeworki started her career at the United Nations as a Communication officer and later worked for top management consulting and engineering firms as a sustainability leader and practitioner.

"We welcome Salem to our team and look forward to her considerable knowledge in this industry as the city looks to be more efficient in energy and all areas of government," City Manager Lori Farrell Harrison said.

In addition to consulting, she he served as a primary council member at Los Angeles Metro Sustainability Council and also at the City of Irvine Green Ribbon Committee. In this capacity, she has advised cities, counties and transportation agencies in Southern California on how to best address their environmental and social challenges.

“Globally cities are now leading the way in sustainability and in reducing carbon pollution,” Afeworki said. “I am grateful for the opportunity to join City of Costa Mesa to advance local climate action and deliver on the City’s ambitious goals. I applaud the City’s Council members and senior leadership’s vision for making sustainability a priority and for allocating the right resources to make it happen. We want the City of Costa Mesa to be a leader in sustainability in Orange County, and I commit to working with diverse stakeholders to develop bold strategies and programs that leaves no one behind and creates stronger, livable and equitable City for all residents.”

Afeworki is passionate about climate change, renewable energy technologies and local community empowerment. She has conducted strategic sustainability and climate action planning as well as workshop facilitation, and program evaluation projects in multi-disciplinary setting for a range of clients, including Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority, Los Angeles County Public Works, City of Long Beach, City of Irvine and Port of Long Beach.

She has a multitude of specialized fellowships and training and has received numerous awards for her work including the 2019 Energy Executive by National Renewable Energy Laboratory, a 2017 Eco Leader by U.S Green Building Council Orange County, a Certificate of Recognition by the County of Orange for the 2016 Engineering Award and the 2016 Urban Land Institute OC/IE Emergent Leadership Award for the category of Engineering.

Afeworki has her bachelor’s degree in journalism and communication from the University of Asmara, Eritrea, a master’s degree in Environmental Management & Auditing, specialized in Renewable Energy, from the Universidad de Leon, Spain. She also have completed highly specialized leadership programs including a Climate Change Science and Solutions certificate from MIT and a Sustainable Environmental Management certificate from UC Berkeley.

She will report to Director of Public Services Raja
Sethuraman.