



DIGEST

Around and About

FIVE VETERANS of the fire department will take the civil service examination next Wednesday (May 28) to choose the successor to retiring forester-fire warden Keith Klinger. Candidates are Everett Doe, chief, fire prevention and training division; Richard Houts, services division head; Ben Matthews, assistant division chief of fire fighting services; Walter Meagher, chief of fire fighting services; and Robert Parsons, assistant chief of fire fighting services.

FOUR CHANGES in civil service commission rules have gone into effect. Rule 17.02 now includes "or employment by a labor union or an employee organization" among the purposes for which an employee may be granted leave without pay. The decision as to granting leave remains with each department head. Rule 19.01, following requests from several employee organizations, has been

Continued on page 2

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Volume 2 Number 10

BOARD ORDERS PAY ORDINANCE

THE BOARD of Supervisors last Tuesday (May 20) ordered County counsel John Maharg to prepare a 1969-70 salary ordinance including the pay increases that Gordon Nesvig, director of personnel, recommended to the Board May 2. Those increases will be 5.5 percent for nearly three-fourths of the County work force and 8.25 percent for most of the remainder. Details appeared in the May 2 DIGEST. Board members indicated, however, that when the ordinance comes back to them next

Tuesday (May 27) for final action, the Board may change some of the salaries recommended for 113 department heads and chief deputies.

Supervisors Ernest Debs and Kenneth Hahn indicated they believe department heads should not receive automatic increases as a group, but that pay boosts should go to department heads on the basis of individual competence.

Assuming Board approval of the salary ordinance May 27, the higher pay will become effective July 1.

The Board last Tuesday also took the following actions:

MINIMUM WAGE. The Board voted to increase the County's present minimum wage from \$385 a month to \$417 a month, beginning July 1.

SHOOTING BONUS. The Supervisors voted a "shooting bonus" to the 270 County guards who carry guns. The bonus, similar to that given deputy sheriffs, will be \$2, \$4, \$8 or \$16 a month, depending upon the expertness in marksmanship a guard attains.

FIREMEN'S WORK WEEK. The Board shortened County firemen's work week from the present 59 hours to 56 hours, beginning

Kaiser Ups Rates

THE KAISER Foundation health plan has notified the County that rising medical and hospital costs will force an increase averaging \$2.45 a month in the premiums beginning July 1.

Kaiser, with approximately 15,000 County employee subscribers, is the most popular of the four County-sponsored health plans. It has 42 percent of the total enrolled in the four plans.

The present and new rates are shown below. In addition to the amounts shown, the County contributes \$8 a month to Kaiser:

FOR EMPLOYEE ONLY. Now \$2.41 a month. After July 1, \$3.70 a month. Increase \$1.29.

EMPLOYEE AND ONE DEPENDENT. Now \$12.82 a month. After July 1, \$15.40 a month. Increase \$2.58.

EMPLOYEE AND TWO OR MORE DEPENDENTS. Now \$21.88 a month. After July 1, \$25.50 a month. Increase \$3.62.

The increased payroll deductions for the Kaiser premium will be made beginning with the June 10 paycheck. Director of personnel Gordon Nesvig said the changes will be effected automatically, requiring no action by subscribers.

Carl E. Berner, Jr., Southern California manager for Kaiser

Continued on page 2

Continued on page 2

Around and About

Continued from page 1

revised so that an employee who is suspended more than *five* days may appeal his suspension to the civil service commission. Formerly he could appeal only a suspension of more than *ten* days. Rule 21.15 now grants an employee the right to see file material relating to his work performance, or he may give written authorization to a representative to scrutinize the file. A change in rule 21.12 permits an employee dissatisfied with his performance rating to appeal the rating through his department's grievance procedure. Until now his only recourse has been to apply to his department head for reconsideration.

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ONE OF the best known employees in County history was laid to rest last Tuesday afternoon (May 20) in Santa Monica's Woodlawn cemetery. "Sheriff Emeritus" Eugene Biscailuz had died at age 86 after a long illness. He joined the sheriff's department in 1907 when it numbered 27 men, became sheriff in 1932 and retired in 1958 after 51 years with the department. By then his sombrero, silver-decked saddle and warm grin were familiar to people in all parts of the country. Survivors include his son Warren, a deputy city attorney.

Continued on page 3

Strike Penalties and Bonus Are Upheld

THE CALIFORNIA supreme court, by refusing to review a lower court decision in a suit brought by Social Workers Union local 535, has upheld in effect the County's right to withhold certain salary, sick leave and vacation benefits from employees who go on strike.

Local 535 brought suit to regain the lost benefits. Superior judge Bernard Jefferson ruled in favor of local 535 but he was overruled by the court of appeal last February.

The supreme court announced April 23 that it would let stand a court of appeal ruling that CAO Lin Hollinger acted properly in 1966 when he warned striking social workers that the County salary ordinance made certain penalties mandatory for an employee who broke his continuous County service by an unauthorized absence from his duties for more than three consecutive days.

When the approximately 1,600 social workers returned to their jobs June 20, 1966, after an 18-day walkout, the penalties were assessed automatically. They included loss of previous time earned toward the next step advance in pay, loss of sick leave earned that year, loss of earned vacation for employees hired less than a year, and—if the striker had a previous break in service—loss of credit toward a third and fourth week of vacation.

Bonus to be paid

The state supreme court's action April 23 also in effect gave the County a long delayed go-ahead to pay a bonus to the 4,675 welfare workers who stayed at their desks during the 1966 stoppage. The Board of Supervisors, during the strike, voted them a bonus averaging approximately \$30 apiece for the extra work load during the walkout.

Social Workers Union local 535 in its suit had challenged the legality of paying the bonus.

Auditor-controller Mark Bloodgood told The DIGEST his office has begun processing the bonus payments—a task complicated be-

KAISER RATES

Continued from page 1

Foundation health plan, explained the need for higher premiums in these words:

"Basically, health care costs are rising because of substantially increased wages, salaries and other remuneration of all categories of health care personnel; increased costs of equipment and supplies; expensive innovations in diagnosis, treatment, and other care services; as well as the ever increasing demand for more and better health care. . . ."

Berner said that because of rising costs, Kaiser also is doubling its coverage to subscribers for emergency care they may need while traveling outside the Kaiser service area. This coverage is designed for the subscriber who may be hurt or taken ill while more than 30 air miles from his home and from the nearest Kaiser medical facility. At present Kaiser will cover up to \$1,000 of the cost of such care. After July 1, the ceiling will be \$2,000.

PAY ORDINANCE

Continued from page 1

July 1. The Board directed, however, that there be no change in computing firemen's accrued vacation until Jan. 1, 1971.

Supervisor Burton Chace raised the possibility of submitting a County charter amendment to the voters, asking whether the "prevailing wage" section of the charter should be repealed. This is section 47 specifying that the County shall pay salaries "at least equal" to those prevailing in private industry wherever that can be ascertained. The Board took no action on Chace's suggestion.

cause since 1966 some 25 percent of the bonus earners have left County service, others have transferred to different departments, and many women who earned bonuses have married, thus changing their names.

Bloodgood said the bonus checks should be ready some time during June.

ERCOM SETS TWO ELECTIONS

THE EMPLOYEE relations commission (ERCOM) will hold its second and third elections to choose possible negotiating representatives within the next two weeks.

Next Wednesday (May 28) the 57 pharmacists in County hospitals, the sheriff and probation departments will vote on whether they want to be represented by County Employees Union local 434, by Los Angeles County Employees association, or neither. ERCOM will have ballot boxes for secret voting at County-USC Medical center and at Harbor General hospital. Pharmacists at other work places will ballot by mail.

The following week on Thursday, June 5, the biggest ERCOM election yet held will find some 2,000 probation department employees choosing between AFSCME (American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, AFL-CIO) and LACEA. As usual there also will be a "Neither of these representatives" choice on the ballot.

The proposed negotiating unit includes deputy probation officers, group supervisors I and II, transportation deputies, nurse counselors and probation trainees. About half the 2,000 employees involved will ballot in boxes at most probation area offices and suboffices. The remaining 1,000 at camps, Antelope Valley and Mira Loma suboffices, juvenile halls and other institutions will use mail-in ballots.

ERCOM executive secretary Les Rothenberg said any eligible voter who will be absent from his work place on voting day may apply in writing to ERCOM in room B-93, Hall of Administration, for an absentee ballot.

Following each election, ERCOM will certify the winning organization (if any) as being the majority representative for the employees in the unit, and authorized to negotiate with County management as to pay and working conditions.

To win, an organization must receive either a majority of all employees eligible to vote in the unit—or it must receive a majority of the votes cast with at least 60 percent of the eligible employees voting.

Four latest petitions

The four latest petitions filed with ERCOM for representation units are:

Petition No. 89—filed by County Employees Union local 434 for 410 medical case workers, medical social workers in the hospitals, DPSS, health and mental health departments.

Petition No. 90 — filed by AFSCME for 214 housekeepers, cooks, food service workers and others, all in the probation department.

Petition No. 91 — filed by the bookbinders local 43 (AFL-CIO) for 20 bindery workers in purchasing and stores.

Petition No. 92 — filed by the Association of Psychiatric Social Workers for 135 psychiatric social workers in the hospitals and mental health department.

LACEA has filed as an intervenor to compete for the four proposed units.

Meanwhile, ERCOM is continuing its hearings on whether to approve a large unit of blue-collar workers (see April 4 DIGEST for details).

Unit disapproved

ERCOM, in its first action of the kind, flatly rejected a petition for formation of a representation unit. County Employees Union local 434 had asked ERCOM to approve a unit of some 200 x-ray technicians. The three commissioners ruled May 1 that the proposed unit would be too small, and the x-ray techs could more appropriately be included in a larger unit with other medical technicians.

Around and About

Continued from page 2

OLIVE VIEW hospital's mental health center is getting a sharp jump in staff, 116 positions, to operate a 24-hour emergency service for psychiatric cases. This will take some of the pressure from the psychiatric service at County-USC Medical Center, which now can admit only the most acutely ill or dangerous mental cases. Federal and state funds are paying nearly all of the added staff cost at Olive View.

TOMORROW (Saturday, May 24) will be a let's-get-together day for County recruiters and the cream of the area's high school girl graduates. The girls, who all have passed civil service tests with high scores, will go to five centers to meet interviewers from County departments who are looking for typist clerks, transcriber typists, and stenographers. Girls may be signed up on the spot to begin work by mid-June. Interview centers are at Room 493, Hall of Administration; Municipal Courts building, Long Beach; Municipal Courts building, Pomona; probation office, 14414 Delano street, Van Nuys; and DPSS recipient waiting room, 2615 South Grand avenue, Los Angeles. Carolyn Nicholson (625-3611 extension 64374) is coordinating the program.

Phone-Mail Service to Perk Up

THE BOARD of Supervisors has approved a broad program to improve the County mail service and telephone switchboard operations.

The Board acted last Tuesday (May 20) after receiving recommendations from CAO Lin Hollinger, based on the CAO's year-long management audit of the communications department. The audit report also recommended changes in the department's procedures for installing and maintaining telephone, radio and portable electronic equipment.

The report said the communications department "has been unable to meet what should be its primary goal of assisting other County departments . . ."

Hollinger said the audit crew had interviewed employees in all County departments about their communication services. "In general," Hollinger told the Board, "the smaller departments indicated they were satisfied with the level of service . . . However, many of the larger departments, who rely more heavily on communications services or who have undergone severe growth problems in recent years, indicated many areas where they believed improvements are needed."

The report said the communications department needs to develop more of a "service philosophy." It said: "Employees of County departments feel their ideas and plans are too often met with a negative initial 'it can't be done' attitude by the communications department."

Mail service

The CAO's report said that much criticism of slow mail service was misdirected, that delays often are

the fault of poor delivery within departments after the communications department has made its deliveries to the departmental mail desks.

Hollinger reported several steps already have been taken to speed mail delivery. The hiring of six additional messenger-drivers now permits four deliveries each day instead of two in all Civic Center offices, plus an extra late afternoon mail pickup. Outlying offices now receive at least one pickup and delivery per day (provided the office gets more than ten items for delivery each week). The additional drivers also have virtually eliminated the need to shut down mail routes because of absences; formerly this happened more than 100 times a year.

To insure that no letters get "lost" in the central mail room in the New Hall of Records, the staff there now sets aside a time each day when every sorting bin is emptied of all loose mail.

Hollinger recommended that the communications department make a consultant available to all departments to help them improve their in-office delivery systems.

Telephone switchboards

Hollinger's audit report pointed out that the communications department is primarily responsible for external switchboard communications and other departments are primarily responsible for their own internal receptionist and paging activities.

The report said morale problems were found among switchboard operators, that many operators wanted a new training program, and that "many employees have observed areas where switchboard im-

provements could be made but feel suggestions made by them are not encouraged by management."

Hollinger said two studies are under way—one to develop ways of controlling excessive message unit costs from the Hall of Administration telephones, the other to find better methods for updating the County telephone directory.

Reorganization

The audit report said the communications department staff has almost tripled in size since the department began in 1954 (present budgeted positions total 476.)

"Rapid growth of the department and technological changes in the communications field," the report continued, "have outmoded the department's present organization and have spread top management too thin."

The CAO recommended that department director Maurice Kennedy be given a chief deputy, that a chief of communications maintenance be hired (maintenance is now combined with engineering), and that the position of chief of communications services be created to supervise the telephone switchboard and mail services.

Hollinger estimated the cost of effecting his recommendations at \$60,000 a year.

County of Los Angeles

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