



DIGEST

Around and About

THE EMPLOYEE relations commission is back in business. The Board of Supervisors last Tuesday (June 24) appointed arbitrator Lloyd Bailer and attorneys David Ziskind and William Levin to fill vacancies left when ERCOMmissioners Ben Nathanson, Irv Helbling, and Tom Roberts resigned (April 4). Both County management and unions agreed on the nominations, as they had earlier on amending the E-R ordinance to make ERCOM orders binding on the County except in cases where Board action is required (for example, appropriating money or enacting a County ordinance).

THE COUNTY'S first Commission on the Status of Women will begin operations later this summer—15 members to be appointed by the Board of Supervisors, a paid staff of three, and a 1975-76 budget of \$66,000.

NAMES: Bill Prater—the building services director is retiring in August after 40 years County service . . . Herb Kaplan—now chief deputy director of personnel, replacing retired Bob Leonetti.

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SQUEEZE-AND-TRIM TIME COMING

It's THE biggest County budget ever—slightly over \$3 billion, \$196 million more than this year—but it still is such a tight fit that County general fund departments will have to cut their expenses 3½ percent during 1975-76.

That picture emerged as the Board of Supervisors wound up grueling weeks of deliberations and adopted the 1975-76 County budget last Thursday (June 26). It will go into effect July 1.

CAO Harry Hufford told the Board that the 3½ percent cut will require a "managed reduction" of spending in all departments and a phasing-out of employees, but no mass layoffs "or other precipitous action."

The Supervisors directed that the cuts be spread "equitably" throughout County departments, and that no programs be eliminated without

Board approval. A \$20.3 million reserve was set aside to meet "hardships" arising from the 3½ percent cut.

The budget scenario went like this:

April 28—CAO Hufford, warning of the inflationary pressure from higher salaries and other rising costs, recommended to the Board a preliminary budget that cut many County services, but also added 349 positions for the probation department, 224 for DPSS, 207 for communications, 157 for the D-A, and smaller additions to the municipal courts, mechanical, fire, public defender, and 11 other departments. Hufford recommended a cut, however, of 413 jobs in health services.

The Supervisors, in their deliberation, not only restored the 413 positions to health services but

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Paychecks to Grow--Health Rates, Too

THE FIGURES on most County employees' paychecks will take a healthy jump July 25, reflecting two changes that go into effect July 1:

—Salary increases averaging 7 percent, and

—County takeover of nearly half of the retirement contributions each employee has been paying.

Figures detailing these changes will appear on the stub of the Aug. 8 paychecks.

The Aug. 8 checks also will show greater deductions for health insurance for the approximately 33,000 employees who have coverage for

themselves and their dependents in the Blue Cross, Blue Shield, Kaiser, or Ross-Loos health plans. The increases, which are the result of higher rates instituted by the four carriers, will range from \$1.84 a month (for an employee plus one dependent in the Kaiser plan) to \$13.44 a month (for Blue Shield family coverage). The bite on subscribers would have been even heavier—\$4 more—were it not for the increase in the County health plan contribution, from a maximum of \$31 a month to \$35 a month, which was negotiated with a coun-

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BUDGET

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added 847 more, principally for County-USC Medical Center, King, and Harbor General hospitals.

The Board also approved 39 more positions for public guardian Bruce Altman so his staff could make monthly visits to County wards in nursing homes. And the Supervisors created a department of consumer affairs with 22 positions.

Hufford had estimated that his recommended budget would require a rise of 40 cents per \$100 of assessed valuation in the County property tax rate. To reduce this, the Board voted a 3½ percent decrease in the 1975-76 spending of all general fund departments.

This step, plus the Board decision to use \$13.6 million more in federal revenue-sharing funds as general fund money, along with several other actions (such as cutting \$750,000 from the \$5.6 million vehicle purchase fund), reduced the estimated tax rate increase to about 22 cents; that is, \$4.57 per \$100—still a record high. (This estimate assumes assessor Philip Watson will announce a 6 percent increase in the assessed value of taxable property in the county next August.)

As adopted last Thursday, the 1975-76 budget totals \$3.084 billion (up \$195.8 million), with the general fund at \$2.6 billion (up \$318 million), special funds like road and federal revenue sharing at \$203 million (down \$149 million), and special districts at \$255 million (up \$26.6 million).

D-A Busch Dies

District attorney Joseph Busch was found dead in bed at his West Covina home early Friday (June 27). He apparently had died in his sleep. Mr. Busch, 49, had been with his department since 1952. The Board of Supervisors appointed him D-A in December 1970, succeeding Evelle Younger, who had been elected state attorney-general. Mr. Busch was elected to a four-year term in November, 1972.

HEALTH PLANS

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cil of employee organizations and approved by the Board of Supervisors.

The Board agenda for next Tuesday (July 1) includes director of personnel Gordon Nesvig's recommendation that the Board approve the rate readjustment announced by the four health plans. Such readjustments are made each year, effective Sept. 1.

The higher rates will have no effect on employee-only subscribers, whose premiums are fully covered by the County contribution. Other subscribers, however, will have to supplement the County's \$35 a month contribution by the following amounts:

BLUE CROSS. For an employee and one dependent, \$20.02 a month, a rise of \$4.54. For an employee and two or more dependents (family coverage), \$26.36 a month, up \$5.53.

BLUE SHIELD. Employee and one dependent, \$22.16 a month, up \$11.50. Family coverage, \$29.31, up \$13.44.

KAISER. Employee and one dependent, \$14.62 a month, up \$1.84. Family coverage, \$35.32, up \$4.10.

ROSS-LOOS. Employee and one dependent, \$18 a month, up \$2.20. Family coverage, \$39.70, up \$9.67.

Nesvig said the auditor-controller will make the Aug. 8 change in health plan deductions automatically, requiring no action by present subscribers.

The director of personnel said the rising premiums are attributed to (1) more doctor visits, surgery and hospitalization by County subscribers, (2) higher physician fees, hospital charges, malpractice premiums, and other inflationary factors, and (3) use of more advanced and often more expensive medical technology.

Paycheck deductions for health insurance are scheduled to drop sharply in July next year for subscribers with family coverage, and deductions will disappear for those with employee-plus-one-dependent policies. At that time, under the

agreement negotiated with the employee organization council, the County contribution will rise to equal the Blue Cross family-coverage premium—\$61.36 a month. That will leave paycheck deductions for family coverage of zero for Blue Cross, \$2.95 for Blue Shield, \$8.96 for Kaiser, and \$13.34 for Ross-Loos family coverage.

Dental Plan

The County's new dental plan went into effect last Wednesday (June 25) after envelopes containing identification cards and explanatory pamphlets had been distributed to all permanent, fulltime employees at their work places.

The ID cards, issued by Blue Cross, the County's dental plan carrier, bear the words "Dental Only" printed diagonally across the card. At the bottom also appears, in smaller type, the customary wording "Please destroy old identification cards."

County insurance manager Gunther Dumalski said this phrase has led some Blue Cross health plan subscribers to tear up their Blue Cross health plan ID cards.

"The dental plan is completely separate from any health plan," Dumalski said. "Each of the 20,000 employees in the Blue Cross health plan should now have two ID cards—one for the health plan, which is group 85505A and Coverage 8662, and another card for the Blue Cross dental plan, with Group 18220A and Coverage 1987-A."

County of Los Angeles

DIGEST

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