



DIGEST

Around and About

PAYCHECK CONTRIBUTIONS for County-sponsored health plans will become a thing of the past Aug. 10. That's the date when County contributions rise to a new maximum of \$85.29 a month, equal to the Blue Cross family plan coverage. Employee deductions have shrunk rapidly the past month as County contributions increased, under agreements negotiated with employee unions. In June, a worker with family coverage was paying \$26 to \$39 a month, depending on which health plan he carried. In July this deduction dropped to \$3 to \$13. In August—zilch.

NEW FACES: Clayton Cottrell, 52, will take over as community development director Aug. 16. He has been acting director of the U.S. labor department veteran's employment service in Washington . . . New Yorker Joseph Halper moves in as chief deputy director of parks July 19 (formerly New York City recreation commissioner and N. Y. state assistant parks commissioner) . . . The employee relations commission has named personnel analyst John Caraway, 37, as ERCOM executive officer. He worked in DPSS employee relations 1972 to 1974, previously was business agent with SEIU Local 535.

JULY 16, 1976
Volume 9 Number 6

NEW BUDGET IS A TIGHT FIT

COUNTY DEPARTMENT heads were poring over the new 1976-77 budget this week, discovering that, while it pinches here and there, the squeeze—particularly on budgeted positions—is less severe than many had feared.

A preliminary survey indicated few, if any, layoffs may be necessary, and that reductions, where required, probably can be accomplished largely through attrition as employees leave County service during the year.

The final budget, adopted by the Board of Supervisors only hours before the new fiscal year began July 1, totaled \$3.343 billion, an increase of \$275 million over the 1975-76 budget. Because of inflation in salaries and other costs, however, the budget provides for only 80,947 positions, 764 fewer than in last year's budget. (Many of the 749 positions are already vacant, so that actual shrinkage of the work force will be considerably less.)

It appeared this week that the new budget will result in a rise in the County tax rate of as much as 30 cents, up to a record high of \$4.82 per \$100 of assessed valuation. (The precise rate will not be known until the Board sets it Aug. 31.)

Pressure on the tax rate was eased by several late developments, notably the state's agreement to speed up its refunds on County Medi-Cal claims, thus eliminating need for a \$16.4 million reserve, and by assessor Phil Watson's announcement (July 12) that assessed value of property in the county will rise 14.33 percent this year, instead of the 10 percent CAO Harry Huf-

ford had estimated in his proposed budget.

The Board of Supervisors also lowered the flood control district's general fund tax rate from 15 cents per \$100 to 12 cents. Chief engineer A. E. Bruington said he does not believe this will require any immediate layoffs in the district.

In other actions, the Board

—restored 1,577 positions in health services, leaving the department only 50 positions down from the 24,800 budgeted in 1975-76; the Board, however, reduced inpatient beds at Long Beach General and Rancho Los Amigos hospitals, curtailed outpatient services at John Wesley and El Cerrito, curtailed the Med-Ocho program, and eliminated the community outreach program at King hospital, and the internal minibus service at King and the County-USC Medical Center

—restored to the sheriff 184 of the 260 deputy positions he was scheduled to lose, also gave him 146 new civilian slots to replace uniformed deputies now on desk jobs

—voted to cut its own staff in the Board offices by 6 to 11 percent

—cut 500 vehicles from the 1,600 County-owned sedans and light trucks that employees now drive between home and work; this cutback will be phased in over the next six months.

Other budget highlights:

DPSS lost approximately 220 positions in the so-called Title 20 programs (mostly homemaker and child services), for which federal funds have fallen short.

County engineer lost 86 positions,

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County Mayor Is up to Voters

TWO QUESTIONS — should the County have an elected mayor with strong executive powers? and should the Board of Supervisors be enlarged to nine members?—will be decided by the voters next Nov. 2.

The Board of Supervisors ended months of debate by adopting ordinances (June 29) placing both charter amendments on the general election ballot.

The mayor proposal, Proposition A, calls for the election in November 1978 of a mayor to be “the executive and administrative authority of the County” who would “supervise all County officers and employees and administer all departments of the County” except those of the elected sheriff, district attorney, assessor, and the Board of Supervisors.

The mayor, elected on a nonpartisan ballot for a four-year term, would take office Jan. 1, 1979. He would be limited to two successive terms.

Proposition B provides that a nine-member Board would take office in December 1980, following election of added members in November that year. Proposition B would go into effect only if the voters also approved the County mayor amendment.

Powers of the Mayor

Proposition A would give the mayor extensive powers including:

APPOINTMENT. The mayor would appoint

- an assistant County mayor
- department heads from a civil service commission list certifying the candidates as “meeting the standards for the position”
- the members of all County commissions and committees.

His appointments must be confirmed by the Board of Supervisors.

REMOVAL. The mayor may remove any of his appointees after stating his reasons in writing. The Board of Supervisors also may remove, by three-fourths vote, any appointee it has previously con-

firmed, but removal must be for cause with reasons stated in writing, and the appointee may request a public hearing.

BUDGET. The mayor shall submit a recommended budget to the Board at least 60 days before the start of each fiscal year. The Board may adjust the budget before adopting it, but the mayor then may reduce or veto any item in the budget. The Board may override his veto or reduction by a two-thirds vote.

The Board similarly may override the Mayor’s veto of other Board ordinances or resolutions.

NEGOTIATING. The mayor or his designee would negotiate labor agreements for the County.

CAO SHIFT. The entire CAO staff would become employees in the mayor’s office.

Powers of the Board

Under Proposition A, the Board of Supervisors would exercise legislative and quasi-judicial authority. It could

— enact ordinances and resolutions (subject to veto) and Board orders (not subject to veto). The use of Board orders is strictly limited

— appropriate funds for all County expenditures

— appoint a “general accounting officer” to conduct audits and investigations of County departments and operations, and make written reports to the Board. The GAO would have a four-year term, but the Board by two-thirds vote could remove him for demonstrated incompetence or other cause

— conduct public hearings on any matter on which the Board is empowered to act

— create or combine County offices

— pass ordinances specifying County services and policies

— request the mayor for regular reports on County services and productivity

— place County charter amendments on the ballot (not subject to mayor’s veto).

Board Approves 45 Pay Agreements

MOST COUNTY employees will find their July 23 paychecks fattened by slightly more than 5 percent, in the wake of Board of Supervisors’ approval (June 22) of 43 memoranda of understanding negotiated with employee organizations for 1976-77.

The Board added two more MOUs to the approved list last Tuesday (July 13) with the late-settling units of 4,400 peace officers and 50 public defender investigators.

Negotiations continue with a unit of 130 dentists. Talks also are under way with four engineering units whose salary year begins Sept. 1.

At its June 22 session, the Board voted a ceiling of \$49,500 a year on salaries of top County managers.

BUDGET

(Continued from page 1)

principally in engineering services for roads, water systems, and other projects.

Data processing gained 173 positions to develop the WCMIS computer system for DPSS, and systems for other departments.

Other deletions include the marshal, 25 jobs; public defender, 28 positions, mostly in the juvenile and civil divisions; fire department, 26 positions, with closure of station 108 in Sierra Madre.

CAO Hufford termed the 1976-77 budget “a transitional plan enabling the County to reallocate its limited resources without the trauma experienced in other communities which were unable to modify their service delivery systems to a level consistent with their financing capacity.”

County of Los Angeles

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