



# DIGEST

## *Around and About*

NEW BOARD of Supervisors chairman Ed Edelman called for "a high-level study of total County-City consolidation" as he assumed the gavel (Dec. 7). The Board also chose Supervisor Pete Schabarum chairman pro tem, which means, under the Board's rotation system, he will become chairman in December 1977.

The day before (Dec. 7) Supervisor Kenneth Hahn took the oath to begin his 25th year on the Board, giving him the record as the longest-serving elected official in County history. Four previous officeholders each served 24 years—sheriff Eugene Biscailuz, assessor John R. Quinn, and Supervisors John Anson Ford and Roger Jessup.

THE PARKS department is urging County employees to buy a living tree for Christmas, then donate it later to a County park or golf course. A living pine, cedar, fir, redwood, or spruce may range in price from about \$8 for a three-foot tree up to about \$55 for a ten-footer. For information about where to buy a living tree (and later how to donate it) telephone 749-6941, extension 674.

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## PERMITTEE RANKS TO BE THINNED

THE LIST of County mileage permittees will be reviewed next month with the aim of sharply reducing the number of employees authorized to drive their own cars on County business.

The list, which has grown over many years, contains more than 33,000 names, but only 18,500 file claims each month for mileage reimbursement, CAO Harry Hufford reported to the Board of Supervisors.

The Board ordinance directing the review (Nov. 30) also includes a new requirement that Hufford approve any arrangement under which an employee garages a department pool car at his home.

Hufford said the existing permittee list will be overhauled in this manner:

"During January all mileage permittee certifications will be cancelled on the last day of each permittee's mileage claiming period. All employees who will continue to use private vehicles on County business will be recertified as permittees effective on the beginning date of their next concurrent claiming period. We intend that only those employees who are needed to drive their own vehicles on County business for the benefit of the County, as opposed to the convenience of the individual, will remain on mileage permittee status."

Hufford said that department heads will place requests to put employees on permittee status, and the CAO will review and approve all such designations.

The CAO said four criteria will

be used in screening requests for permittee status:

— That the employee, to perform his job, must travel to the field regularly (as a rule, two or more trips a week)

— That no County vehicle is available for his use

— That public transportation is unavailable or would be an unreasonable burden on the employee

— That he drives sufficient miles on County business, routinely averaging at least 100 miles per month.

A study of mileage claims in late 1975 showed 44 percent of the 18,571 permittees drove 100 miles or less a month on County business.

Hufford noted that the County has had a longstanding policy that mileage permittees be given preference for County parking spaces. The Board adopted the CAO's recommendation that "any current employee who is removed from permittee status and has a County parking space shall be allowed to retain that parking space."

The Board also adopted a policy that, in setting any future mileage rates, it intends to base them on costs of operating subcompact cars, rather than on intermediate size vehicles. Hufford said a study in several departments indicated that subcompacts are adequate for County business travel.

As a sidelight to the permittee situation, Hufford pointed out that the County last May 28 appealed a superior court decision ordering the County to revise its mileage reimbursement system. The CAO said a final decision is not expected from the appellate court until late 1977.

# Computer Population Grows

THE COUNTY, under pressure to cut costs and achieve more output, speeded up its use of computers in 1976. And the pace will quicken further in 1977.

Robert Best, data processing director, said six major systems, producing annual savings and increased revenue of \$2 million, have starting churning out answers from their electronic memory banks to five large County departments during the past year. Another 13 systems, which eventually will yield cost savings and increased revenue of \$24 million annually, will begin operating in 1977.

Many of the systems have been under development for several years. The D-P department's budget for new systems development this year is \$5 million.

New systems already at work include:

For the sheriff—an *automated index system* which feeds criminal histories of suspects and other information to a web of 50 video terminals in the Hall of Justice, the marshal's office, and LAPD's Parker Center. The system can search through 1.8 million fingerprints in a few seconds.

For the probation department—an *automated juvenile intake and monitoring system* which keeps track of all juveniles held in detention facilities. The information moves over a network of ten remote cathode ray tubes located at probation's detention centers and connected to the Downey computer center.

For the district attorney—*child support system improvements* to help the D-A collect child support payments from more than 250,000 absent parents of children on welfare. Hoped-for collections—an additional \$800,000 a year.

For DPSS—a *community resources information bank* detailing social services available from 3,000 community agencies. The departments of sheriff, probation, health services, senior citizens, adoptions, and community development also use the system.

For health services—a *pharmacy stock control and audit system* to control the movement of some 2,700 drugs at County-USC Medical Center pharmacies; and a *nursing home information system* through which anyone, by telephoning 974-7779, may get information about the costs and services provided at 450 nursing homes in the Los Angeles area.

D-P director Best said 13 additional major computer systems will get off the drawing boards and into operation during 1977. Some of them are:

For DPSS—a *welfare case management system* will provide instant access to the records of 1.5 million present and past welfare recipients. To obtain the information through present manual and machine methods takes up to three days; the new system will provide it in seconds. Savings through Phase I of the system this coming year will total an estimated \$1.5 million. When the total system is completed in 1978, Best projects tax savings at \$7.8 million annually.

For the CAO, auditor-controller, and personnel departments—a *County-wide payroll-personnel system* to provide job histories of all employees, an instant census of County positions, audit trail, and management reporting, and to handle supplemental pay warrants, deferred compensation and (eventually) direct deposits of employees' pay. Best predicted yearly operating savings of \$500,000 or more. Another project, a *financial information and resources system*, will integrate the County's financial accounting, program accounting, and cost accounting. Projected annual savings, \$1 million.

For the registrar-recorder—a *voter registration and election processing system* which, among other things, will help process affidavits, realign precincts, and prepare election materials and absentee ballots. Estimated saving in operating costs, \$2 million a year.

For health services—a *laboratory*

## FICA Climbs Again

COUNTY EMPLOYEES who earn more than \$15,300 a year will pay more in social security taxes during 1977.

Under the federal law which mandates that the taxable wage base shall rise to keep pace with the nationwide average increase in wages, the 5.85 percent social security tax will be levied against the first \$16,500 in earnings next year, compared with the wage base of \$15,300 this year.

For workers who earn \$16,500 or more this will mean a total social security tax of \$965.25 in 1977, or \$70.20 more than the maximum this year.

The workers' contribution is matched by the County as an employer.

## Switchover to Oil

THE COUNTY'S four biggest fuel users (the Civic Center steam plant, County-USC Medical Center, King and Rancho Amigos hospitals) have been forced to switch from natural gas to fuel oil on nearly half the days since mid-November—the result of a state public utilities commission order aimed at conserving gas supplies for homeowners and small users.

With oil costing three times as much as gas, the new order is expected to cost the County at least \$3 million more by next June.

*data management system* to give doctors prompt reports on tests from County-USC Medical Center laboratories.

County of Los Angeles

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