



DIGEST

Around and About

APPLICATIONS WERE open only one day—March 5—and in that time 5,374 applied to take the civil service exam for deputy sheriff trainee. About 300 to 350 of them will be hired during the year starting July 1.

THE BOARD of Supervisors has voted to support state Assembly Bill 384, which would permit the Board to withdraw the County from the social security system, provided County employees vote for the withdrawal, and the Board makes increased benefits available to them. If the bill passes, withdrawal would take more than two years.

BASKETBALL PLAYER Bayard Forrest will speak at the annual Good Friday prayer breakfast in the Courthouse cafeteria April 8. Tickets (\$2.50) for the 6:30 a.m. affair are available at the door or in room 203 or 428F, the Courthouse.

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ENERGY-SAVING IDEAS POUR IN

SCORES OF employees' suggestions on how the County can save energy were turned over to the CAO this week where they will be evaluated for possible action.

The suggestions came in response to an "Invitation for Ideas" printed in the Feb. 25 Digest, and prompted by a Board of Supervisors' directive to reduce County use of natural gas, fuel oil, and electricity.

Proposals ranged from the massive (erect buildings with skylights to admit solar heat) to the minute (eliminate electric pencil sharpeners and go back to manual ones).

Most suggestions concentrated on the nitty-gritty of everyday office operation. For instance:

Lights

"Instruct secretaries to turn off the bosses' lights when they are away at meetings, etc. Many secretaries leave lights on 'out of courtesy'." —Ophelia Sanches, health services

"Office lights are on 24 hours a day to shine on plants growing in offices. This is wasteful." —Unsigned

"Desk lights are being used on desks that get more than sufficient lights from above and from outside windows." —Unsigned

"Employee restrooms and utility rooms should be lighted only when in use." Bohdan Bucmaniuk, Board of Supervisors

"Use 35-watt fluorescent 'watt-miser' lamps instead of the present 40-watt and 73.5-watt lamps in County buildings." —Melvin Delperdang, mechanical

"Consider lighting corridors with so-called 'phantom' fluorescent tubes, which Caltech has been using in its campus buildings." —Desmond Partridge, mechanical

Office Temperatures

"Turn off air conditioning on average-temperature days and open

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Grant Programs Will Get Critical Eye

THE BOARD of Supervisors has adopted new guidelines to control County involvement in any new federal and state grant programs that would drain away County money and staff time more needed in other County operations.

"There are few, if any, 'free' grants," CAO Harry Hufford informed the Board. "Most grants require matching County funds or services. And even those grants 100 percent funded often initiate programs that eventually require County money to operate, like parks and beaches, or they initiate services the community comes to rely on, especially human services."

Hufford listed 168 grants and contracts into which the County has entered with federal and state agencies. Nine of these programs involve services mandated by federal or state law, the other 159 are non-mandatory.

The fund commitments total nearly \$230 million—63 percent from outside sources, 37 percent (\$86 million) from County tax funds. The County matching contributions go into 112 of the 168 programs.

Biggest participant in grants is the County parks department with 33 programs, followed by health

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A Look Inside DPSS

• THE FOLLOWING questions and answers occurred during a DIGEST interview with Keith Comrie, newly appointed director of the County department of public social services.

QUESTION: *As welfare operations go, is the County's DPSS major league or minor league?*

COMRIE: Decidedly a major operation. It's bigger than welfare operations in 45 of the 50 states. Only the states of New York, Illinois, Michigan, Pennsylvania, and California have larger basic workloads. At any given time our DPSS here is aiding close to a million people.

Q: *Who are these people?*

A: Most of them are on AFDC, Aid to Families with Dependent Children. They total nearly 600,000—typically a mother with two children, the father has deserted. Then there are cash grants to 23,000 elderly on the homemaker-chore program, to 20,000 on general relief, and about 11,000 Vietnam and Cuban refugees. There are also about 165,000 who get food stamps only and another 173,000 who are on Medi-Cal only.

Q: *In terms of dollars, what does DPSS cost?*

A: Our local budget is roughly a billion dollars. Of this, \$295 million comes from property taxes. The rest is federal and state funds. In addition, our staff determines who's eligible for food stamps and Medi-Cal cards, for which the federal and state governments cover the total cost of about \$600 million a year in recipient benefits.

Q: *Of your local billion-dollar budget, AFDC absorbs the lion's share?*

A: By far—\$650 million, or almost \$700 million if you also include foster-care payments. General relief, the refugee programs, and so forth take another \$100 million. Our administrative costs run roughly \$200 million for all programs.

Q: *Are welfare costs going up each year, or are they standing still?*

A: Caseloads have been fairly stable the past two years, except for

Medi-Cal, which is growing because, with the inflation in medical costs, more and more people can not pay for it themselves. These benefits and administrative costs for them are paid 100 percent by the federal and state governments.

Q: *If your workload is growing, how do you handle it? Isn't your staff shrinking like that in most other County departments?*

A: We have 12,500 employees now, compared with 14,200 in July 1975. By June 30 we expect to be at 12,000, which we will reach by attrition. Even in this poor employment market, we lose 100 employees a month, retiring or resigning. We have not laid off anyone. Our problem is balancing internally among classifications.

The biggest part of our staff, about 80 percent, is involved in cash grants, food stamps, Medi-Cal cards. The other 20 percent of our staff is in social services—most of them in protecting abandoned and abused children. A significant number also are involved in the homemaker program to help elderly persons stay in their homes.

As for absorbing the workload:

With the full support of the Board of Supervisors, we are getting a tremendous assist from Bob Best and his data processing department. We are installing a major computer system called Welfare Case Management and Information System, or WCMIS for short (pronounced *wiss-miss*). Until now each district

KEITH COMRIE, 37, grew up in south Los Angeles. He worked his way through USC, attending night classes to earn a B.S. in business administration (1963) and a master's degree in public administration (1966). After five years with the city of Los Angeles CAO and three years with the County CAO, Comrie transferred to DPSS in 1971. He headed a number of DPSS operations and was named assistant director in 1973. He became acting director when Ellis Murphy retired in 1976, was appointed director by the Board of Supervisors March 1, 1977. He lives in the Griffith Park area of Los Angeles with his wife Sandy, who expects their first child next August.

office had to maintain big tub files containing records for every person it served. We also had to have a large control unit for records on all current and past recipients, county-wide. It generally took three days to make a clearance by hand—that is, to make sure a person had not signed up in two or three different DPSS offices for benefits, and things like that. We are now installing the first phase of the WCMIS system automating these records, and we can clear a case in three to six seconds, compared with the three days before. In those few seconds the WCMIS checks through records on 1.2 million present and past welfare recipients. As soon as the record shows on the monitor, if it's something we want, we just press a button on the printer next to the monitor and get a hard copy of it. This is making things much easier for the staff. We have the system in five districts now and by May 1 it will be in all our districts. This computerization should save us about 500 staff in time savings.

Q: *How about the cost of WCMIS itself?*

A: It's minor compared with the savings. And the system enables us to give clients much faster service. And being more accurate it helps keep the system clean of fraud. It helps make sure nobody signs up more than once.

Q: *How does your DPSS error rate compare with other big welfare offices in the nation?*

A: The comparable larger systems back east in Pennsylvania, New York, Michigan, and Illinois are running a 14 percent error cost in AFDC. We used to have that rate here. But federal and state audits show that in the past three years we've cut our error rate cost to 4 percent. And every one percent of reduction saves \$6 million.

Q: *How have you been able to reach this 4 percent figure?*

A: A number of things contributed to this. First, a high quality staff, from top to bottom. And we have better computer systems. And comprehensive quality-control programs to review each month exactly what errors we're making so corrective action can be taken immediately. Further, we've got a work

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United Way Sign-ups

COUNTY EMPLOYEES are signing up for United Way payroll deductions at a rate of more than 5,000 a month, according to latest figures released by the chief administrative office.

The drive for charity support began in January after the Board of Supervisors voted to end the County's 21-year affiliation with AID-United Givers and switch to United Way, which raises money for 250 local health and social service agencies and 12 Red Cross chapters.

By Feb. 10 the United Way drive had obtained 1,890 employee contributors. In the next 30 days another 5,344 authorized payroll deductions.

The County campaign is headed by Supervisors James Hayes, chairman, and Ed Edelman, vice chairman.

"We urge employees to participate in this worthwhile cause," Hayes said. "All departmental payroll and personnel offices have payroll deduction cards for employees to sign."

COMRIE

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measurement program to set reasonable standards, both in quality and quantity, of what is a fair day's work.

Q: How many DPSS offices do you have?

A: About 100—65 of them major public-contact facilities with 50 to 300 employees each. We see around 250,000 persons a month in our reception rooms. We get 50,000 new applications each month.

Q: In the long run, is there any prospect of reducing welfare rolls?

A: Yes. If someone is able to work, we should not offer them an unemployment or welfare check. We should be able to offer them a job as they come in the front door and not get them into this massive paperwork mill. We're trying to get skeleton legislation toward this end adopted in Washington, giving the federal government the goal of creating jobs, primarily in the private sector through tax incentives, tariff changes, research, whatever is necessary.

Q: Aren't most of those on welfare unemployable?

CAO PREVIEWS 1977-78 BUDGET

CAO HARRY HUFFORD has presented the Board of Supervisors a scenario for a 1977-78 County budget that would call for no increase in the property tax rate (as the Board had ordered), would continue the present partial hiring freeze, and might entail the disappearance of some low-priority County programs.

Hufford, however, predicted no major disruption of County services and no sizable layoffs. Nor did his assumptions include any sizable pay increases.

The CAO gave his views to the Board in a message entitled *Budget and Economic Outlook for 1977-78* (Feb. 23).

"Our no-tax-rate-increase policy will require the cost of labor settlements to be financed through reductions in departmental appropriations," Hufford said. "To limit the impact these reductions have on layoff of County employees and services to citizens, we must hold 1977-78 pay settlements at the minimum feasible within County charter provisions."

Hufford said that in calculating

Sheriff Gets Windfall

SHERIFF PETER Pitchess says the price can't be beat—it's free! That's the cost of picking up in the past year more than \$1 million worth of property declared excess by the federal government.

County jail received inmate clothing valued at \$285,000, kitchen equipment (\$88,000), laundry machinery (\$41,000). Among other acquisitions were dump trucks, a bulldozer, a 36-foot power boat for chasing narcotics runners (\$65,000), and 2,000 gas masks (\$72,000).

A: That's a common view. But I'd say a minimum of 50 percent and probably up to 75 percent of the heads of their households are potentially employable. There is no reason they should be locked out of the system. Their only chance for a decent standard of living is to be out there working with the rest of us. A mother and her two children can not live decently on an AFDC allowance of \$338 a month. Her only hope is to get into the mainstream with the rest of Americans.

how to live within the no-tax-rate-increase policy, he had

—assumed the assessed value of taxable property in the county will rise 6 percent this year, bringing an added \$99.7 million to the County treasury

—assumed the County will lose \$28.3 million in reduced revenue-sharing funds and redevelopment agency tax increments

—forecast an \$88.8 million rise in mandatory spending for law enforcement, fuel, utilities, workers' compensation, and other unavoidable costs

—included no money for higher employee pay and benefits except those mandated by federal or state law or by existing labor agreements.

The projected revenue losses (\$28.3 million) and mandatory spending increases (\$88.8 million) total \$117.1 million. Deducting from this the anticipated \$99.7 million increase in tax income leaves a gap of \$17.4 million. Hufford proposed to make this up by curtailing departments' spending next year by 2.4 percent in net County costs. The CAO said he has sent each department a target level for 1977-78 budgeting based on this 2.4 percent reduction.

In urging continuation of the present selective hiring freeze, Hufford said: "By reducing personnel through attrition rather than by precipitous layoffs, we have enabled departments to implement productivity improvements and eliminate low-priority programs. My office is working with department heads to establish productivity improvement programs for all County departments. In our 1977-78 budget recommendations to the Board, we will propose eliminating those low-priority services that have been found of limited value and not cost effective."

Hufford added that, in accord with Board orders, the no-tax-rate-increase policy and the employee-reduction program will apply to the consolidated fire protection district, the public library fund, and the flood control district. Major impact of this policy, he said, will be to postpone most new flood control and library capital projects.

ENERGY

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the windows." — Ray Ballesteros, Jr., road

"All south and west facing windows could be coated with a reflective film such as 3M Scotchtint." — David Ager, County counsel

"From November to May leave all thermostats at 65 degrees. Restructure windows so that outside air will heat or cool offices." — Bob Smith, public defender

"Carpet work areas wherever possible to insulate cold floors." — William Toensing, probation

Water Temperatures

"Recently a leaking hot water faucet in the Long Beach county building was repaired—by shutting off the hot water valve under the basin. Why not shut off the same valve on all basins, leaving only the cold water? Hands can still be washed, and soap still lathers." — Bob Grose, probation

Many other employees suggested deactivating hot water faucets in County restrooms.

"Disconnect the refrigerating mechanisms in water coolers, or adjust them to keep the water not quite so cold." — Edward Melanson, public library

Equipment, Appliances

"Bring coffee or tea in a good thermos instead of using electrical warmers and pots in offices." — Philip Kent, personnel

"One electric wall clock going night and day may not use much power. But the County must have hundreds of them. (There are four in my division alone.) Since nearly everyone has a wrist watch, all these clocks seem unnecessary." — Don Miralle, flood control.

"Cut down on photocopying. In many cases it would be sufficient to post or circulate one copy and have employees initial it." — Scott McGaffin, health services

Escalators, Elevators, Doors

"In Europe last year I saw escalators that ran only when someone approached to use them. The user's weight on a plate near the escalator started it in motion." — Robaire Viloria, superior court

"Have elevators stop at odd floors only." — Unsigned

"Some County buildings have automatic doors. Convert these to push-open doors." — Unsigned

"Require that, in rooms having individual air conditioners and heaters, doors be closed while these devices are operating. I have walked down the corridor when the room on the right has a heater on, the room on the left an air conditioner on, all doors open, and one device cancelling the other." — Ann Wakefield, health services

Work Shifts

"Return custodians to their original night shift time of 4:30 p.m. to 12:30 a.m. instead of the present 5 p.m. to 1 a.m. This would save electricity." — Wilbur Torrence, building services

"Have custodians work morning hours as they did a couple years ago." — David Camp, public library.

Numerous employees suggested switching to a four-day, 40-hour week to save energy. Barbara Channel, DPSS, also urged adopting the "9/80" schedule of working 9-hour days with a four-day week every other week.

Supervision

"Have a special employee in each office assigned to check desk lights, keypunch machines, etc. after employees have gone home." — Gloria Anderson, data processing

"Appoint an 'energy conservation monitor' in every County facility, one to each floor in large buildings, to report on energy-wasting conditions." — Harry Nissen, DPSS

"I propose the Board of Supervisors establish an Office for Energy Conservation, staffed by persons with thorough working knowledge of the equipment involved." — Eugene Phelan, mechanical

County of Los Angeles

DIGEST

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GRANTS

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services (30 programs), community development and County engineer (13 each), fire department (12), sheriff (9), CAO (8), probation and DPSS (6 each), and library and senior citizens affairs (5 each).

The Board's new guidelines state:

"Approval of new grant applications or renewal of existing grants will not be authorized unless the requesting department clearly identifies funding offsets or equivalent cost savings resulting from the grant. Of particular concern are grants that would obligate the County to assume ongoing costs after termination of the grant, or to assume an increasing share of the cost over the life of the grant program."

Retirees:

THE BOARD of retirement has announced the following longtime employees are leaving County service.

With 35 to 40 years service—Henry Zoboski, communications department; Roland Michel and Velma Plummer, health services; Reuben Kenis, flood control; Holland Hilton, assessor; Alfred Gonzales and Joseph Shambrey, parks; Gene Elbinger and Arnold Fischer, probation; George Dreier, engineer; Louise Arvedson, treasurer; Lockhart Gale and Travis Oltman, sheriff.

With 30 to 35 years service:

HEALTH SERVICES—Elizabeth Clements, Dolores Herrig, Stanley Holmes, Edward Hurd, Mildred Hurt, Theodore Imsen, James McDaniel, Guy Maletta, Jr., Jessie Ward.

SHERIFF—William Anderson, James Baust, Dale Brennan, Reinhold Kiel, Ralph Larson, Richard Larson, Harold Smith.

FIRE—Wallace LaFlamme, Robert Liddell, Leonard Lumpkin, Robert McPhetridge, Elva Vaniman, George Workman.

ENGINEER—Jack Allen, Carl Coutts, Preston Harrell, Jr., Rudolph Yelinek.

PROBATION—Herbert Audet, Jesse Gorman, William Dickerson, Amy Uchide, Sidney Wachs.

ROAD—James Martin, Perry Mayer, George Nelson, Jr., Albert Stubberfield.

MECHANICAL—Edwin Bleeker, Marion Cherry, Joe Lopez, Karol Ruminski.

ASSESSOR — Herbert Evans, Simeon Roach, Jr., Willie Wilder.

OTHER DEPARTMENTS—Kenneth White and Hortense Montes, district attorney; Raymond Bellinger and Lillian Read, communications; Leo Bialis, small craft harbors; Philip Deranja, auditor-controller; Jack Eisenberg, Nancy Gross, and Benjamin Novak, DPSS; Frederick Emery, data processing; Arber Hall, County clerk; John Szuba, parks; Bill Wells, building services.