



DIGEST

Around and About

INTENSIVE NEGOTIATIONS are under way between County management and unions to work out memoranda of understanding on 1977-78 salaries and benefits. CAO/Personnel Director Harry Hufford said that negotiations on MOUs covering most employees are scheduled to be completed and ready for Board of Supervisors review by mid-June.

CHANGE AT THE TOP: Health services director Liston Witherill moves to White Plains, N. Y., June 1 to join a consulting firm, Rosenfeld Associates, Inc. A month later, Witherill's medical director, Dr. John Affeldt, will become director of the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Hospitals, in Chicago. The Board of Supervisors named Morrison Chamberlin to take over as acting health services director June 1.

THE BOARD of Supervisors has asked the County energy commission to intensify its efforts in evaluating the impact of President Carter's energy proposals on citizens of L. A. county and on County government itself. Ideas up for exploration include daytime shifts for custodians, further shutdown of fountains, and stricter control of temperatures in County buildings.

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CAO'S BUDGET--MORE AUSTERITY

THE BOARD of Supervisors has taken under study CAO Harry Hufford's proposed 1977-78 County budget totaling \$3.5 billion. Public hearings will open June 6 on the document.

The budget recommends a County property tax rate of \$4.46 per \$100—the same as the current year—as ordered by the Board of Supervisors.

Hufford characterized the budget recommendations as the result of 18 months of hard efforts by the Board, County departments and his office to establish a climate of financial austerity in County operations and turn around the general direction of County government. He said this reflects a dramatic change from the late 60's and early 70's when the County workforce and budget were growing at a rapid pace to cope with federal and state mandates, particularly in the health and social services areas.

Hufford took particular note of the difficult challenge this presents to the Board and County departments since almost 90% of the County budget covers the costs of services mandated by the state or federal governments, contracts, or court decisions. He pointed out the many County services to the poor, unemployed and those in trouble—to the welfare, health care, and civil and criminal activities of the courts and law enforcement agencies. He observed that a majority of the population do not need these services themselves and often resent having to pay for them, even though these services help maintain the overall quality of life in the community.

Hufford pointed out that the

County's share of the local tax dollar has been decreasing over the past six years. Since 1971, he said, the County tax levy has risen less than 33 percent, while the levy for the L.A. school district, for Los Angeles City and surrounding cities has climbed from 48 to 54 percent. In that same period, the consumer price index here has risen 40.6 percent, outstripping the County tax levy increase.

Less than one-third of the average tax payment covers County services, with education taking over 44% and municipal and special districts accounting for the rest.

"I hope these facts will put to rest any complaints that the County budget is out of control," Hufford said.

The CAO said he is recommending a 2.4 percent cut from this year's expenditures for most departments, but, despite the cut, all major County programs and services will continue, and no substantial number of County employees will be laid off. Some low-priority services, however, may disappear.

Hufford recommended continuation of the present partial hiring freeze that has reduced the number of permanent County employees by 4,000 during the past year, down to 69,600, and elimination of more than 2,000 presently budgeted jobs. But he proposed creating 660 new positions—240 in hospitals to improve patient care; 174 to staff new County park, health, and other facilities; 75 in the new collections department; and 171 in the D.A.'s department to collect child support

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Olive View to Be Resurrected

A NEW and smaller Olive View hospital will rise on the site where a barely-finished 888-bed hospital was destroyed by the 1971 Sylmar earthquake.

The Board of Supervisors (April 19) approved replacing the shattered structure with a 350-bed institution that will cost \$74 million, half of it a grant from the federal disaster administration.

When the new hospital is completed, the County will close and sell the 150-bed Olive View Midvalley Hospital it has been using as a replacement, will terminate its lease for 50 psychiatric beds with Valley Hospital, and will deactivate some 150 beds at County-USC Medical Center now used by San Fernando Valley residents.

In earlier action, the Board awarded a \$4.5 million contract to finish 90,000-square-foot John Wesley comprehensive health center next to old Wesley hospital, which is slated for demolition.

Retirees:

THE BOARD of retirement has announced that Alvin Warnberg, head of the D-A's trials division, is leaving the County after 41 years service.

Other longtimers on the retirement list include:

With 35 to 40 years service—McKinney Ward, mechanical department; Jack Wagstaff, assessor; Garth Guise, sheriff; William Gutierrez, community development; Easter McNeal, collections; Owen Boon, D-A; St. Elmo Bowles, building services; David McCluskey, County engineer; Alex MacKenzie, health services; Charles Hambleton, fire.

With 30 to 35 years service:

HEALTH SERVICES—Darrington Weaver, Nick Vidinoff, Ernestine Nickerson, Lawrence Mitchell, Dolores McDole, Doris Kiger, Mary Howard, John Hermsen, Sophie Dickman, Barbara Brooks, Milton Seacord.

DPSS—Lolita McCrimmon, John Johnson, Edith Emery, Kiyo Doi, Jeanne Allen, Leona Le Flore.

ENGINEER—Donald Heldoorn, John Henderson, John Freeman, Milo Dobes, Fred Tellez.

PROBATION—Stanley Rogers, Dale Gardner, Margaret Boon, Murray Barnett.

SHERIFF—William Werren, Melvin Wert, John Lawton, Robert Gordon, Karl Kraft, Thomas Morrow.

FIRE—Tommy Towns, William Mullen, Corliss Johnston.

BUDGET

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payments. Hufford said the new collections and child support positions should be more than self-supporting.

Curtailment in health services include the closing of old John Wesley hospital and the deletion of 189 administrative and support positions.

In DPSS, increasing use of the WCMIS computer system and other management changes will permit elimination of 1,006 budgeted positions, Hufford reported.

The courts and law enforcement departments escaped the CAO's 2.4 percent scalpel. "Their job is to enforce court decisions and state laws, so that 96 percent of their spending, some \$300 million, is for mandatory functions over which the County has no budgetary control," Hufford said.

He recommended enough funds for the sheriff, D.A., probation, and other justice departments to maintain their existing levels of service. He included a slight increase for the courts to handle expected workload growth.

While taking note of past difficulty in controlling justice department expenses, he called for an intensified effort by his office in 1977-78 "to improve the justice system through increased coordination of activities, management improvements, productivity programs and approved expenditure and revenue controls."

The CAO's recommended budget totals \$3.5 billion, a rise of \$221 million over the 1976-77 budget. The increased funds would come largely from a boost in the value of taxable property in the county, which Hufford estimated at 6 percent. The exact increase will be announced by the assessor in mid-summer.

ROAD—Louis Parker, Samuel Taylor, Minoru Endow.

MARSHAL—George Ferrari, Arthur Glasier, Jr., Frank Gompert, Jr.

OTHER DEPARTMENTS—Walter Lucien and Ralph Matelson, assessor; Frances Villarreal and Melvin Thale, D-A; Lowell Floyd and Howard Taber, flood control; William Traeger, library; Elaine Hendricks, schools; George Ratkovich and Claude Olsen, treasurer; Virginia McKee, personnel; Clair Van Vleck, superior court.

Sheriff Becomes Lynwood's Lawman

SHERIFF'S DEPUTIES became the police force of the City of Lynwood this week under a contract with the County. Thirty other cities have similar pacts for sheriff's services.

Financially-pressed Lynwood, a city of 40,000 had sought the contract. It will pay \$1.5 million a year to cover all sheriff's costs.

The former Lynwood police station on Bullis Road became the 19th sheriff's station last Sunday (May 1). Nearly 100 sheriff's personnel from overcrowded Firestone station will move into the Lynwood facility. Sheriff Peter Pitchess said the Lynwood station also will police unincorporated Willowbrook and East Compton.

The Lynwood takeover will require 42 new sheriff's positions. Many of the 79-member Lynwood force are being transferred to jobs in the sheriff's department.

Work Force Shrinks

THE PERSONNEL department's most recent census of County employees shows a drop of nearly 5,400 in the total classified service between February this year and February 1976.

The figures:

Permanent employees, 69,627 on Feb. 28, 1977, a drop of 4,018 from Feb. 29, 1976.

Temporary employees, 6,612, a drop of 1,204.

Recurrent employees, 1,284, a drop of 153.

Total, classified service, 77,525, a drop of 5,378.

During the same February-to-February period, the number of federally-funded CETA workers rose by 224, from 1,899 to 2,123.

County of Los Angeles

DIGEST

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