

# \$20 million boost given to county's workers

By David L. Beck  
Mercury News

The new contract between Santa Cruz County and its workers will boost pay and benefits by nearly \$20 million over the next three years, a county analysis shows.

The contract is scheduled to go to the board of supervisors Tuesday. The supervisors have already signaled their approval, however, by ordering the payroll department to adopt the new rates.

The wage increase includes not only across-the-board cost of living adjustments, which total almost \$10 million, but also nearly \$6 million in "special adjustments" — or parity raises — that will be phased in over four years, one year beyond the contract.

"Parity" — how county salaries and benefits ranked next to an eight-county comparison group — was the key issue in the union's three-day strike last week.

For some job classifications, the parity raises are notably large. A journeyman building maintenance worker, for example, will get 18.14 percent over four years, a senior

See **CONTRACT**, Page 6B

## NEW CONTRACT NUMBERS

The new contract between Santa Cruz County and its workers will boost pay and benefits and is set to go before the board of supervisors on Tuesday.

### \$20 million:

The boost in pay and benefits that the city is proposing for its workers.

### \$10 million:

Cost-of-living adjustments planned over the next three years.

### \$6 million:

Parity raises — that will be phased in over four years, one year beyond the contract.

## CONTRACT | Raises in Santa Cruz County pact

Continued from Page 1B

buyer 24.16 percent.

Here's how the raises will work for that maintenance worker: He or she gets 3.63 percent in parity plus 4 percent cost of living, effective immediately; 5.44 percent parity plus 3.75 percent cost of living next year; 5.44 percent parity plus 3 percent cost of living the third year; and a final 3.63 percent parity raise the fourth year — which would be the first year of a new contract in terms of any cost-of-living raises.

County spokeswoman Dinah Phillips said the county anticipated the increases and squirreled away money when it approved the budget in June.

"They know which contracts are coming up, and they set parameters for what they need to set aside," Phillips said. "It would be foolish of them to think, 'Boy, here's a budget for next year — wonder what's going to happen with negotiations?'"

Not all of that \$20 million is coming from the county's general fund. Some is federal, some is state, and some comes from departmental revenues.

The contract was reached after all-night negotiations during a three-day strike, the first in county history. Union members ratified the contract with a 79 percent vote, and it is effective as of Sept. 14.

Cliff Tillman, executive director of Local 415, Service Employees International Union, which represents the county

workers, said his membership was "excited" about a contract that "sets new standards" for the area.

In fact, he said, city workers are eager to get started on their own bargaining. Local 415's contract with the city of Santa Cruz expires April 25.

On the county's side, there was regret over the union's request Tuesday for a week's delay — "I wanted to get this over with," said Supervisor Mardi Wormhoudt — but also praise for the contract.

Administrative Officer Susan Mauriello called the adjustments in the new contract "really meaningful."

Supervisor Tony Campos called the contract "not perfect" but "a step forward." "I'm

happy that we achieved parity," he said.

The county's temporary workers — called "extra help" in the contract — won a right-of-return clause, giving veteran seasonal workers a kind of job continuity. They also won some health benefits. Workers who put in 220 hours a quarter will be reimbursed for half of their insurance premiums, but only up to a maximum of \$100 a quarter.

The contract addresses a long list of smaller issues, such as clothing allowances (they'll become wages), workloads in Child Protective Services (the issue has been added to a joint study committee's workload) and differentials (85 cents an hour extra, up from 70 cents,

for bilingual workers in certain jobs).

Maintenance workers assigned to clean the morgue get an extra 45 cents per hour, unchanged from the last contract.

County workers who want to testify before "any public body including the board of supervisors" may do so without enduring repercussions. (This addresses an issue that arose during June's budget hearings, according to a union official.)

Local 415's other county bargaining unit, the court chapter, also finished work on a new contract last week and ratified it Saturday.

Contact David L. Beck at [dbeck@sjmercury.com](mailto:dbeck@sjmercury.com) or at (831) 423-0960.