

County OKs final budget

Budget
SENTINEL STAFF REPORT

A budget calling for cuts in nearly every department was formally approved this week by the Board of Supervisors.

The board had given preliminary approval to the county's 2004-05 budget in

SANTA CRUZ June, but delayed formal adoption until the state budget was approved and all the detail digested. That final adoption came Tuesday.

For the current year, the total budget is \$368.5 million, up from the original proposal of \$355 million. That increase is from about \$12.8 million in the road funds that was not spent during the previous fiscal year and was rolled over into the current one, said Auditor-Controller Gary Knutson.

General fund moneys — the fund goes to basic day-to-day operations — decreased by \$632,000 from the original proposal, to \$321.3 million.

Initially, budget writers called for slashing 118 positions from county payrolls. Ultimately, only two people were out of a job, said Carol Girvetz

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of the county administrative office, with others moving into positions that had previously been frozen.

The number of approved positions in the county budget stands at 2,413, compared with 2,504 for the previous year. During the past three years, 216 positions have been cut.

To cope with the tough times, the county obtained special state legislation to allow it to borrow money from its Redevelopment Agency, about \$2.4 million, which is what the county was set to send to the state.

Meanwhile, a November statewide ballot measure is aimed at insulating local governments from raids on their coffers by the state. In return for the state grabbing \$2.6 billion statewide in property tax moneys the next two years, Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger agreed to back an initiative that would prevent similar schemes in the future.

Under Proposition 1A, the Legislature would be allowed to borrow from local governments in the future with a two-thirds majority vote.