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Santa Cruz

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Employee makes a pitch to save county jobs

SANTA CRUZ — County Geologist David Leslie wants to save jobs, so he's circulating a petition among fellow employees to find out if there's support for a reduced work week.

The county is faced with cutting \$5.8 million from its current budget, a cut that could mean eliminating approximately 140 jobs, according to County Administrative Officer George Newell.

Tuesday, as supervisors addressed a two-phase work plan by Newell for cutting the budget, Leslie made his pitch for saving jobs.

Newell's plan wasn't approved by supervisors. Instead, the board voted 4-0 (with Dan Forbus absent) to have

Newell bring the first round of cuts up for consideration on Nov. 16. The second round is scheduled for January.

It's time for looking into all options, instead of just cutting jobs, Leslie told supervisors.

The situation is worse now for employees than it was in June when 135 positions were cut from the budget, he said. At that time, there were vacancies within the county that employees could fill. Then, only about 45 employees were laid off out of the 135 positions cut.

Now there are hardly any vacancies, meaning more people will be out of work, Leslie said.

Leslie said he isn't making any specific proposal in his petition, but only trying to find out if there's support for a reduced work week or a restructured work week.

For instance, he said, employees could work four days a week for nine hours a day or work four days a week for 10 hours a day. Job sharing, where two people share a job, also is a possibility, he said.

Leslie will continue to circulate his petition this week and expects to get 300-400 signatures from the work force numbering 1,300-1,400. He'll then submit his petition to the union representative and to the county administrative officer before bringing it

to supervisors.

Any reduction or change in the work week would require an amendment to the employees' contract.

Supervisors Tuesday also heard from several day care center operators who are concerned about Newell's proposed 10 percent cut in community programs.

They said any cuts over those the county enacted last summer will cause some child care centers to close. Several years ago, the county agreed to help support child care centers so the facilities could take in low-income children.