

State 'raids' local services

Budget cuts may force supervisors to raise taxes

By Lee Quarnstrom
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Saying they were shortchanged by California's 1990-91 budget, Santa Cruz County supervisors Tuesday took shots at Gov. George Deukmejian for forcing them to consider some new local taxes.

The budget represents "a ghastly abandonment of responsibility" by officials in Sacramento and amounts to "a state raid on local services," Supervisor Robley Levy said.

The budget cuts \$3.7 million from what County Administrative Officer Susan Mauriello expected from Sacramento.

But the budget law also allows counties to raise money by establishing utility and business license taxes, charging cities for the cost of booking prisoners into county jail and charging cities and special districts for assessing property and collecting property taxes.

Board members told Mauriello to come back next month with various options — cutting specific programs, imposing an across-the-board budget cut or raising fees and taxes.

Mauriello said across-the-board cuts in every county department are likely. "We don't want to sit here and decide whether a nurse is more important than a sheriff's deputy," she told supervisors.

County Health Officer Ira Lubell said the county is losing \$1.6 million it had counted on to provide medical services to the poor. "People will suffer," he said.

And a 12 percent cut in mental health funds for the county will mean the elimination of all outpatient services for the mentally ill, mental health director Rama Khalsa told supervisors. He said outpatient services help 300 children and about 200 elderly people.

"Mental health cuts are going to hit people without discrimination," Levy said. "They are going to hit people and hit people hard."

Supervisors aimed most of their



Supervisor Gary Patton
... Critical of governor

barbs at Deukmejian.

"We all remember vividly how impressed we were with Governor Deukmejian when he visited Santa Cruz and visited Watsonville right after the Oct. 17 earthquake," Supervisor Gary Patton said. "... At that time he made a personal promise he'd do what was necessary to help the county recover from that disaster."

But now, Patton said, it appears that the governor has reneged on a pledge to give state money to match federal disaster-recovery funds available for earthquake relief. The governor cut matching money for parking structures in the devastated downtowns of Watsonville and Santa Cruz, as well as for work on a commercial fishing facility at the Santa Cruz yacht harbor.

Mauriello said matching money for converting the old county jail in downtown Santa Cruz into an art-history museum was eliminated during negotiations between the governor and the Legislature.