

Workers want end to cutback in pay, hours

Service union searching for 7.5 percent solution

By LANE WALLACE
STAFF WRITER

The union that represents two-thirds of Santa Cruz County employees is opposed to continuing the temporary wage and hours cutback imposed last month, a union official told county supervisors this morning.

"We're looking at creative ways to come up with a 7.5 percent reduction" to match the amount the county is saving by the wage and hours cut, said Dave Morales of the Service Employees International Union.

Last month, supervisors cut most county workers by three hours a week and started closing county offices on Friday afternoons as an emergency cost-cutting measure, effective through June.

Morales took a break from contract negotiations to address supervisors as they began seven days of budget hearings for the fiscal year beginning July 1.

Morales urged supervisors to consider a "reconfiguration" of executive positions to help reduce costs.

"In the past several years, the biggest hit (in budget cuts) has come from our membership," said

Morales, whose union represents two-thirds of the 2,175 county employees. Management workers are not represented by the SEIU.

County Administrative Officer Susan Mauriello is recommending either continuation of the wage and hours cutback, or some other solution that will reduce wages 7.5 percent.

In addition, Mauriello told supervisors, layoffs of 31 workers and cuts in a number of county services will also be needed to balance the \$261-million budget, down \$4 million from last year.

When the state budget is passed, Mauriello said, even more cuts will have to be made locally. The county gets nearly half its revenue from the state, and state legislators are talking about substantial cuts in their allocation to counties, cities and special districts.

The county has a contingency fund of \$592,000, which Mauriello called "quite a narrow margin."

The Legislature is supposed to pass a budget in June, but didn't approve one until September last year.

County-budget hearings will continue daily through June 25, with presentations by the heads of each county department.