

County workers staying off jobs

Employees - County
Negotiations continue as strike enters day 3

'I hope this will last only about a week. ... Everybody would rather be working than out here striking, losing your legs, killing your voice and getting sunburned.'

LEE FELLOWS,
PARKING-CONTROL
OFFICER

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A county workers' strike finished its second day Tuesday, and saw county officials trying to track down those employees ordered back to work by a judge.

Negotiations on a new union contract resumed Tuesday afternoon after convening late Monday, when a state mediator joined the discussions. No deal had been struck by 10 p.m. Tuesday.

The strike is the first in the county's history. Roughly 2,000 members of Service Employees International Union Local 415, the county's major bargaining unit, walked off the job Monday.

Workers want salary parity with their counterparts in surrounding

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Bill Lovejoy/Sentinel

Striking workers take their case to the public near the county's Emeline Avenue complex Tuesday morning.

Strike

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counties, more contributions to employee health plans, and benefits and job security for temporary workers. The SEIU's contract expired Friday.

A judge ordered 195 of the workers back to their jobs Monday, saying they were needed for vital health and safety functions.

But county officials had to serve papers to each to get them back, and that was proving difficult. Only 118 of the 195 had returned Tuesday. Many fled subpoena servers or refused to take the summons, said Chris Hirsch, county spokesman.

Many of the workers forced back are donating their pay to a strike assistance fund, union leaders said.

Workers on the picket line said they have received a generally positive response from the public.

Some locals stopped by the County Government Center at 701 Ocean St. to donate money or food.

Others phoned in support. The county Board of Supervisors office received calls from about 60 constituents Tuesday, according to the office manager. Most said they were calling to voice allegiance with county workers.

The Santa Cruz Fire Department donated \$1,800 toward the strike fund.

Even some of the county's upper-management employees, working long hours to keep essential services functioning, offered support. A strike-assistance donation box for administrators on the steps of the county building was filled with \$10 and \$20 bills and personal checks Tuesday afternoon.

County supervisors and their aides continued to support the picket line by working from their homes. The board's weekly meeting, usually held Tuesday mornings, was postponed a week.

It was a ghost town inside the government center, with few residents attempting to use services in the building's cavernous halls.

Strikers outside and on Emeline Avenue held barbecues, traversed picket lines on roller skates and more. Lee Fellows, a parking control officer at the center, got a kick out of watching people park wherever and for however long they wanted.

"Until a strike is over, I won't be writing any tickets," said Fellows, who gives out about 20 tickets daily. "I hope this will last only about a week. ... Everybody would rather be working than out here striking, losing your legs, killing your voice and getting sunburned."

At the health clinic on Emeline, strikers encouraged patients to cross the picket line.

"We want them to know they're welcome to go in," said Ali Hayes, a health educator.

With only one doctor working, the clinic is evaluating all patients but treating only the urgently ill, said Betsy McCartney, pub-

lic health chief. Prescriptions are being filled.

Closures include the Planning Department's Felton and Aptos offices, the Simpkins Family Swim Center in Live Oak, the Ben Lomond swimming hole, social services offices at 1040 Emeline Ave., child welfare offices on West Beach Street in Watsonville, the Transportation Commission office in Santa Cruz, and the Watsonville Veterans Services office.

After-school programs hosted by the Parks and Recreation Department have been canceled until the strike is over. Hazardous-waste collections at the Buena Vista landfill and Ben Lomond transfer station also have been suspended.

The county has set up a strike hotline for questions, and advises residents to call a department before visiting. The hotline number is 454-3410.

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