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Local

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Budget cuts force libraries to trim hours

By JOHN BESSA
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SANTA CRUZ — Library patrons will have to do with less service as library officials struggle with a \$179,000 shortage in the next fiscal year.

A plan approved Monday by the Library Oversight Committee will mean the closing of all but one branch on Mondays and dropping the equivalent of 5½ full-time employees.

It will spare the all-out closing of any of the county's 10 branches, but across-the-board cuts in hours for all branches are also part of the

package, which will take effect July 1, library officials said.

"The strategy was to make the cuts equitable and that's what we've tried to do," said Anne Turner, director of libraries.

The total hours of service countywide will drop from 396 to 302 when the new plan takes effect.

What it means for library patrons is fewer chances to use the library and less help while they are there.

"This is a very difficult situation because library use is up," Turner said.

In the last fiscal year, circulation

grew by 10 percent. Requests for reference assistance went up by 7 percent.

In cutting hours, the library system will save \$179,000 over the next fiscal year. The library, which operates under a joint city/county agreement, has a total budget of about \$3.8 million.

Committee member and County Supervisor Jan Beautz said the library system could have made ends meet by closing branches, an alternative other counties have turned to, but instead spread the cuts system-wide.

"I think with our system we've

done very well," she said.

The library hours, as of July 1, are as follows:

- Central — Closed Monday; 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday; 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Friday and Saturday.

- Aptos — Closed Monday; 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. Tuesday and Thursday; 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Wednesday; 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Friday and Saturday.

- Boulder Creek — Closed Monday; 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. Tuesday and Thursday; 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Wednesday; closed Friday; 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturday.

- Branciforte — Closed Monday; 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. Tuesday; 1-8 p.m. Wednesday; 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Thursday; 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Friday; noon to 5 p.m. Saturday.

- Felton — Closed Monday; 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Tuesday and Thursday; 1-8 p.m. Wednesday; closed Friday; 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday.

- Freedom branch and Outreach Program — Closed Monday; 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Tuesday and Thursday; closed Wednesday and Friday; 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. and 2-5 p.m. Saturday.

- Garfield Park — Closed Monday; 10 a.m. to noon and 2-6 p.m.

Tuesday; 2-6 p.m. Wednesday and Thursday; closed Friday and Saturday.

- La Selva Beach — 1-5 p.m. and 6-8 p.m. Monday and Wednesday; closed Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday; 1-5 p.m. Friday.

- Live Oak — Closed Monday and Tuesday; 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Wednesday; 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. Thursday; noon to 5 p.m. Friday; 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday.

- Scotts Valley — Closed Monday; 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. Tuesday; 1-8 p.m. Wednesday; 1-6 p.m. Thursday; noon to 5 p.m. Friday; 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturday.