

# Supervisors take pay cut with workers

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Santa Cruz County supervisors will take the same pay cut they making county employees take.

A few minutes after they cut the county work week yesterday, board critic Laurence Fromm-hagen asked supervisors if they would cut their \$49,000 salaries.

Walt Symons said he will take the 7.5 percent cut, and will absorb the cut for his part-time aide. The other four supervisors said they will take the 7.5 pay cut imposed on county employees.

About 30 county workers, including elected officials such as supervisors and judges, collect salaries rather than hourly wages and cannot be required to take the pay cut. The county is asking them to voluntarily take a 7.5 percent cut.

Symons voted against the hours cutback after getting no support from other supervisors on his motion to freeze the unused portion of certain fringe benefits for top county employees. He said after the meeting he otherwise sup-

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## County cuts office hours

Santa Cruz County government offices will close at 1 p.m. Fridays, and most county workers will be cut to 37 hours a week until the end of June, county supervisors decided yesterday.

The county has a \$3.2 million budget deficit for the fiscal year ending June 30, and the hours cutback will save \$646,000, County Administrative Officer Susan Mauriello told supervisors. A long list of small savings will make up the rest of the deficit.

Supervisors heard the hours-cutback proposal last week, then postponed a decision so they could negotiate with unions representing county workers.

The Service Employees International Union, which represents 70 percent of the 2,177

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county workers, agreed to the temporary cutback with these provisions:

- The hours reduction will stop at the end of June, unless there's an agreement to continue it after further negotiations.

- The union agreed to reopen talks on its contract with the county, which isn't scheduled to expire until October.

- Workers can take voluntary time off, and the work hours saved can be used to boost the hours of the general work force.

Tim McCormick, chief officer of SEIU, predicted after yesterday's meeting that a substantial number of workers will take voluntary time off.

In employee meetings last week, McCormick said, two-thirds favored the hours cutback rather than keeping a 40-hour week and laying off some workers entirely.

"These are the most painful recommendations I've had to make," said Mauriello, cautioning the board that cuts for the 1993-94 fiscal year will be tougher.

She is predicting \$10 million in cuts must be made, and said she expects layoffs or hours cutbacks as well as cuts in programs. The state, from which the county gets a large share of its revenue, is talking about a sharp reduction in allocations to local governments.

"It's going to be a very difficult spring and summer for the people of Santa Cruz," said Supervisor Fred Keeley.

Not all county departments will be affected by the hours cutback. The jail staff will continue at 40 hours a week, Mauriello said, because the jail is open around the clock and current scheduling does not permit significant overlap between shifts.

Also exempt are the Public Works and Transportation Commission staffs, which aren't paid for by the county's general fund; the federally funded Jobs Training Partnership Act; the Multi-Purpose Senior Service Program, also not from the general fund; and the summer staff for county parks.

Sheriff's deputies will continue to patrol around the clock, but they'll lose two paid training days to cut their average work week to 37 hours.

In a letter to supervisors, Sheriff Al Noren said excluding some departments from the hours cutback because of their funding source "makes no sense. All funding, save for private grants, comes from tax dollars."

Barbara Cullinane, of the Operating Engineers union, which represents deputy sheriffs, urged supervisors to not cut deputies' hours. Her comments were echoed by deputies Greg Hauberg and Kim Allyn.

"Law enforcement is no longer negotiable. We can't continue to cut," Allyn said.

Laura Baird, a \$10.34 an hour worker in the county's Mental Health Unit, said she might have to leave the area if the hours reduction is permanent.

"We shouldn't have to pay for the poor planning" of the county administration, Baird said.

- Lane Wallace



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on the fire trucks. Currently, the minimum is nine firefighters and one battalion chief. If someone is injured, on vacation or calls in sick and the manning falls below that limit, another firefighter is called in on overtime.

Last summer, the board cut the manning down to eight plus a battalion chief.

That, in effect, led to a firefighters' revolt, with the employee's association openly supporting the candidacies of Steve Mills and Curtis Gabriel in district elections. The association also filed a lawsuit against the district.

Last January, with the new board members in place, the manning was restored to nine.

Last night, Fire Chief Chuck Mornard raised the issue of again reducing the manning to eight — a move that would save about \$16,000 between now and the end of the year.

With a room filled to capacity with on- and off-duty firefighters, the board rejected that proposal on a 4-1 vote. Director Ray Garcia voted against the motion to keep the manning levels at nine.

One veteran firefighter — Floyd Redmon — recently sent the directors a letter with his own ideas on how to save money in the fire department. He suggests eliminating the Battalion Chief positions in the department and requiring the chief officers to respond to major fires.

Eliminating the battalion chief position would also free up a "command vehicle," which could be used by Mornard, who now receives a vehicle allowance to drive his personal vehicle.

He'd also like to see the district end its contract with a private lawyer, eliminate one secretarial position and cut the paramedic program in its entirety.

And finally, he is proposing an across-the-board percentage pay cut for all employees, eliminate the fire marshal position and secretarial support.

The budget submitted by Mornard, and approved unanimously by the directors last night, envisions spending \$3.58 million next year — even with \$400,000 in cuts.

The district expects to spend \$3.75 million this budget year, which ends June 30.

The fire district spent \$180,000 out of its reserves to balance the budget this operating year, and will take another \$333,000 next year to meet its expenses — prompting Garcia to warn that the district is courting fiscal troubles

by continuing to tap its savings to operate.

Like other local fire protection districts which depend heavily on local property taxes and a state-funded Special District Augmentation Fund (SDAF), the Aptos/La Selva district has been nervously watching Sacramento, where the governor and the state legislature have been grabbing local tax revenues in an effort to balance the state budget.

Last summer, the state took \$345,000 in tax revenue from the district — about nine percent of the district's \$3.9 million operating budget.

This summer, the district could lose another \$385,000 or even worse, if the legislature decides to go back to 1981 and recover all of the money it has given special districts since the passage of Prop. 13, \$1.5 million.

The department is one of the most expensive departments in the county, when viewed from a per-capita basis, partly because of the extra manpower and training needed to operate its pioneering paramedic service.

County Auditor-Controller Gary Knutson computed that, with the exception of the Pajaro Dunes

complex, which has formed a special county service area to pay for around-the-clock fire protection at the enclave, the Aptos/La Selva is the most expensive in the county.

District residents pay \$190 per capita for fire protection in the Aptos/La Selva area. Scotts Valley is the next closest — \$184 per person.

Others include:

Central Fire District, \$106; Watsonville city, \$53; Santa Cruz city, \$76; Freedom, \$31; Salsipuedes, \$58; Scotts Valley, \$184; Branciforte, \$126; and the county fire contract with the California Department of Forestry, \$64.

The one approved by the board last night calls for the elimination of \$100,000 in overtime, and the layoffs of three firefighters and two half-time positions in the department's fire-prevention and support areas.

It also severely curtails the department's paramedic program — moth balling the department's paramedic ambulance and assigning one paramedic-trained firefighter to a fire engine that would operate out of Station 2 in Rio del Mar.