

# Supervisors try to be upbeat about trimmed budget

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SANTA CRUZ — The county's proposed budget for 1983-84 is the first ever to be lower in total dollars than the previous year's budget, according to Supervisors' Chairman Joe Cucchiara.

The \$110 million budget is some \$3.2 million less than this year's.

"That in itself is a statement of the kind of conditions we have been facing and what we will be looking forward to in future years," Cucchiara said Tuesday as the board accepted the proposed budget for review.

In these days of recession and dwindling revenues for local governments, budgets are never a happy subject. Nonetheless, County Administrative Officer attempted to be upbeat in telling supervisors what's to come in 1983-84.

He called the upcoming fiscal year "historic" because it will mark the end of the 110-year-old county hospital, the be-

ginning of the end to the Front Street Jail and the signing of agreements to replace the old cable television system in the north county with a "state-of-the-art" system.

The county psychiatric facility, the only part remaining from the county hospital established in 1873, will be closed next year when Dominican Hospital opens a new psychiatric wing through a partnership with the county.

In July, the county will award bids for construction of the second phase of the Water Street jail. Once this phase is completed — sometime after next year — the old Front Street jail will close.

Newell hopes the county will use the downtown site of the old jail to generate money, perhaps by leasing the site to a commercial venture.

The county and city of Santa Cruz now are negotiating with Group W Cable Inc. for a new cable system for the north county. If negotiations are successful, contracts will be signed this fall, and a

modern cable system will be installed in the next few years.

Newell called the proposed budget "a maintenance budget," maintaining the vital services such as sheriff's patrol, senior services and children's services that supervisors have refused to cut in the past.

Newell said the budget assumes recovery from the recession will continue, the state will continue its present formula for welfare payments to the county and the federal government will continue giving revenue sharing funds to the county.

But supervisors backed away from Newell's guarded optimism.

"It does, in its recommendations, eliminate 102 positions . . . which is something short of a maintenance budget. While it's apparently a maintenance budget, it still has within it some deep . . . cuts throughout county government," Cucchiara said.

The 102 positions eliminated in the

budget include 68 that were cut in January.

Noting recent news reports saying California is one of several states that may go broke by the end of the year, Supervisor Dan Forbus said, "This budget may be a lot more grim than we anticipate it to be . . . because the state probably will go broke by the end of the year."

While Newell is trying to brighten the gloom, "it's a grim situation that faces us," Supervisor Gary Patton agreed.

It's only because of the drastic cuts made earlier this year that Newell is able to come up with a maintenance budget, Supervisor Robley Levy pointed out.

Supervisor E. Wayne Moore Jr. was the only one able to squeeze anything positive out of the situation.

Dwindling government revenues aren't necessarily bad, Moore said, because they allow the people to decide through tax measures what services they really want from government.