

Consolidation plan brought before county board; Rexroad: Bar would be raised for CAO

By ERIN TRACY / Daily Democrat

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A four-department consolidation that will result in 12 layoffs, but save an estimated \$1.5 million, was presented to the Board of Supervisors on Friday.

Should the board approve the consolidation, Parks and Resources, General Services and Human Resources will lose their status as standalone departments and merge into three new divisions of the County Administrator's Office.

Administrative and clerical staff will be shared across each division.

General Services will take over all park maintenance, eliminating current Parks and Resources Director Warren Westrup, as well as four of his staff. General Services Director Ray Groom will oversee the new division, but he will lose five of his staff.

Groom said his goal is for the transition to full functionality to be seamless, which he expects to take about six months.

The resources aspect of Parks and Resources will fall under an a Development and Resource Division, to be managed by Deputy County Administrator Dirk Brazil.

The responsibilities of Brazil's staff will remain largely the same, apart from the addition of natural resources, gravel and water issues.

"My goal is at the end of the year we can show very clearly the additional revenue that has been brought in by our efforts ... and make a justification for a grant writer position, for some development folk, for perhaps whatever it is the boards priorities are, and we can use some of this revenue to do that," Brazil said.

A third division, administration, will be overseen by HR Director Mindi Nunes, who will lose one staffer in the consolidation.

Friday's budget workshop was the last in a series in which department heads outlines what cuts they believe are sustainable in their departments, the results of which leaves \$15.2 million still to cut out of a total \$22 million deficit.

Supervisor Jim Provenza questioned the equity of Human Resources and the CAO each losing one person, while the other two departments each will lose five. Considering the large gap that remains, Provenza asked whether there is greater flexibility is distributing the burden.

Nunes said she might be able to share the accounting functions through the consolidation.

CAO Patrick Blacklock, however, advised the board against further cuts to his office, saying it will lead to a reduction in the amount of external work such as advocacy, regional leadership and securing earmark funding.

"At the end of the day, the core mission that we have to do right is the administration of the county," he said. "That is something that the board would have to weigh because there is a cost associated with that."

Blacklock also pointed out that his office will be taking on additional responsibilities, but will also utilize outside assistance.

The Auditor's Office will become a collaborative partner in the budget process by compiling supporting financial transactions. Consequently, the CAO's three analysts, under the direction of the administration division, can focus on researching the practices of other counties.

Blacklock said the analysts can aid department heads by obtaining staff reports and material pertaining to particular policy in other counties, then synthesizing that information to determine the cost and application to Yolo County.

"By having the analyst at the CAO's Office, we can position them anywhere in the county," Blacklock said.

The auditors' aid will also free up Assistant County Administrator Pat Leary to work more closely with departments and programs such as indigent health care.

Supervisor Matt Rexroad pointed out that the CAO will be the only department to receive additional help rather than just cuts, which raises the bar in terms of progress.

"This is the one place we are really making time within county government this year so if that's going to be the case, for me, I expect more," he said.

Blacklock recommended that the board approve the consolidation in May so that it can take effect by July 1.