

NEWS

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For more information, contact
David Wert, Public Information Officer
(909) 387-4717
dwert@sbcounty.gov



Board approves balanced budget focused on Vision

The Board of Supervisors today approved a balanced, forward-thinking \$4.06 billion County budget for the fiscal year that begins on July 1.

"I am pleased that we moved the county's budget forward in such an expeditious manner," said Board of Supervisors Chair Josie Gonzales. "We stayed focused on our priorities to provide quality services and support public safety countywide."

The 2012-13 Budget is \$28.8 million less than the 2011-12 budget, closes a projected \$33.2 million shortfall for the coming year, and accomplishes this while setting aside \$16.3 million for contingencies and reserves.

The budget also puts the County on track to eliminate a five-year gap of \$91.5 million by including \$40.3 million in savings. Those savings include \$11.8 million in reductions to department budgets and reducing \$7.3 million in allocations to capital projects and an emergency radio system upgrade.

The savings also include \$8.9 million in labor union concessions currently under negotiation.

The County's role in achieving the Countywide Vision serves as the basis of the 2012-13 Budget. For example, a \$2.3 million investment in updating the County General Plan and Development Code directly addresses the Vision Regional Implementation Goal of making the county a model of business friendliness. A \$20 million allocation toward the replacement of an outdated public safety radio system addresses the Public Safety element of the Countywide Vision, www.sbcounty.gov/vision.

"The Board adopted an austere and balanced budget that will allow the County to continue serving and protecting its residents, but unknown factors could still impact this spending plan, including cuts to the State budget and lackluster returns in our retirement system," said Second District Supervisor Janice Rutherford.

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The budget approved today does not attempt to predict the impact of the 2012-13 State budget, which has yet to be approved. The Board of Supervisors was warned that the State budget could have a substantial impact on the County budget, especially in the area of Human Services.

"Since our nation's economy took a downturn years ago, we have done our best to make appropriate budgetary decisions in order to keep providing services to our residents," said Fourth District Supervisor Gary Ovitt. "The County is at the whim of the State Legislature and I really hope that our tenuous position isn't made worse by decisions from Sacramento."

"While we have done our part, the looming threat of deeper cuts remains a reality with the State considering suspending pass-through agreements," Chair Gonzales added. "I echo the message to the State that Supervisor Ovitt voiced during today's meeting, 'Leave our pass through dollars alone.'"