

THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS OF THE COUNTY OF STANISLAUS
ACTION AGENDA SUMMARY

DEPT: Assessor Don Oppman

BOARD AGENDA # B-9

Urgent Routine

AGENDA DATE May 4, 2010

CEO Concurs with Recommendation YES NO
(Information Attached)

4/5 Vote Required YES NO

SUBJECT:

Approval of Revised Assessor's Operating Hours, Reduction-In-Force of Four Filled Positions, the Deletion of One Vacant Position and the Reclassification of One Position in the Assessor's Department Effective July 17, 2010

STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Approve the revised Assessor's current operating hours of 7:30 a.m.-5:00 p.m. to 8:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m. effective July 1, 2010.
2. Approve the reduction-in-force of four filled positions, the deletion of one vacant position, reclassification of one position, and unfunding one position in the Assessor's Department as outlined in the Staffing Impacts section of this report effective July 17, 2010.
3. Amend the Salary and Position Allocation Resolution to reflect the changes as outlined in the Staffing Impacts section of this report effective July 17, 2010.

FISCAL IMPACT:

The Assessor is submitting a Proposed Budget of \$5,283,002 for Fiscal Year 2010-2011, a reduction of \$387,944 from the 2009-2010 Fiscal Year. The Assessor anticipates generating revenue of \$1,481,500 and will receive \$3,801,502 of General Fund revenue in Fiscal Year 2010-2011 to balance their budget. In order to meet the budget shortfall, the Department is recommending a reduction-in-force of four filled full-time positions, the deletion of one vacant position, the reclassification of one position and unfunding one vacant position.

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BOARD ACTION AS FOLLOWS:

No. 2010-276

On motion of Supervisor Chiesa, Seconded by Supervisor O'Brien

and approved by the following vote,

Ayes: Supervisors: O'Brien, Chiesa, DeMartini, and Vice Chairman Monteith

Noes: Supervisors: None

Excused or Absent: Supervisors: Grover

Abstaining: Supervisor: None

1) X Approved as recommended

2) _____ Denied

3) _____ Approved as amended

4) _____ Other:

MOTION:

Christine Ferraro

ATTEST: CHRISTINE FERRARO TALLMAN, Clerk

File No.

FISCAL IMPACT: (Continued)

The reduction in expense associated with the recommended reduction-in-force of four positions, the deletion of one vacant position and unfunding one vacant position results in a cost reduction for the 2010-2011 Fiscal Year of approximately \$534,500, less the associated estimated retirement cashouts of \$28,500, for a net cost reduction of approximately \$506,000.

As part of the Third Quarter Financial Report, a recommendation is made to establish positions for an Assessment Appeals team to mitigate the potential revenue loss if the Assessor does not defend Assessment Appeals. Contingent upon the approval of funding from the Board of Supervisors in the 2010-2011 Proposed Budget, additional positions will not be subjected to the reduction-in-force.

DISCUSSION:

After the reductions-in-force, the 2010-2011 Proposed Budget will leave the Department with 54 funded positions. This is a 21% drop in staffing from just four years ago, and as a result of furloughs, a 23% drop in available working hours.

Unfortunately, the Assessor has not seen a corresponding drop in workload. Changes in ownership are 4.1% higher than four years ago while new construction has dropped by 38% (although building permits are on the rise from last year) and reviews for declines in ownership have increased beyond comprehensible measurement.

Even with improved efficiencies over the past several years that have allowed completion of most mandated duties the 2010-2011 Proposed Budget will force the Department to drop all non-mandated tasks performed and eliminate many constitutionally mandated duties.

This will result in the loss of millions of dollars of revenue for the County, Cities, Special Districts and Schools in Stanislaus County. It will also result in many tax-payers not having fair assessments because of the inability to respond to requests for reviews for declines in value. While this may seem like an advantage to government revenue, because there are no resources to defend appeals, many of these tax payers may file appeals that result in greater losses of revenue than if the Department had fairly assessed their property.

The revenue at risk due to appeals for the 2009-2010 Fiscal Year is approximately \$8 million. Since defending an appeal is not a mandated Assessor's duty and because the Department does not have the staffing to perform this non-mandated task it is highly likely that this \$8 million in revenue would be lost with the County's share at \$1.9 million (from both property taxes and property taxes in lieu of vehicle license fees). In working together with the Chief Executive Office, the Assessor put together a proposal for an

Approval of Revised Assessor's Operating Hours, Reduction-In-Force of Four Filled Positions, the Deletion of One Vacant Position and the Reclassification of One Position in the Assessor's Department Effective July 17, 2010
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Assessment Appeals team. If approved by the Board of Supervisors, it is anticipated that the Assessment Appeals team would be implemented effective the beginning of the 2010-2011 Fiscal Year, July 1, 2010. The Assessor will be able to move current employees into the Assessment Appeals team, resulting in reducing the number of reductions-in-force that the department would have to take in Fiscal Year 2010-2011.

Given a staff that is less than it was thirty to forty years ago, the Assessor will not only be unable to value any new construction projects, they will be unable to create new parcels, which means the Department cannot participate or help in the County's Geographical Information System project. The Assessor will perform audits at 66% to 75% of normal. They will rely on tax-payers contacting the Department to request a decline in value review rather than reaching out to tax-payers. The Department will be unable to annually review information that results in a current Williamson Act value for farm property in the county.

The following chart shows the county's lost revenue due to the Assessor's inability to value new construction due to lack of resources. The amounts reflect the loss of revenue from both property taxes and property taxes in lieu of vehicle license fees.

Fiscal Year	Total Potential Revenue	Total Potential County Revenue	Actual County Revenue	Lost Revenue
2007-2008	\$3,464,200	\$831,408	\$831,412	\$0
2008-2009	\$2,600,000	\$624,000	\$382,495	\$241,505
2009-2010	\$1,872,000	\$449,280	\$28,013	\$421,267
2010-2011	\$1,872,000	\$449,280	\$0	\$449,280

Since these values remain on the assessment roll year to year the revenue loss is compounded each year. This is just one example of revenue being lost because of insufficient staffing in the Assessor's office.

In order to accomplish as much as the Department can the Assessor is requesting the Board of Supervisors approve shortening the Assessor's current office hours of 7:30 a.m.-5:00 p.m. to 8:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m. This request mirrors the Tax Collector's request to shorten their office hours as part of the 2010-2011 Proposed Budget and matches the current office hours of the City of Modesto's Finance-Customer Service Department, all located on the second floor at 1010 Tenth Street.

Other reductions in customer service will be longer waits for help at the counter, possible introduction of a phone-tree answering system, delays in tax payers receiving notices (which will most likely result in a delay in receiving property tax payments), and sales and transfers of properties will not be analyzed as closely as necessary to always insure a fair and equitable assessment.

POLICY ISSUES:

Staffing reductions are needed to comply with the budget reductions included in the Assessor's 2010-2011 Proposed Budget. The Board of Supervisors determines if approval of staff's recommendations meets its stated priority to promote the Efficient Delivery of Public Services.

STAFFING IMPACT:

Currently there are 60 full-time allocated positions in the Assessor's Office of which 58 are filled and two are vacant. This agenda item recommends the deletion of four full-time filled allocated positions requiring approval of a reduction-in-force action. Additionally, it is recommended to delete one vacant allocated position, unfund one vacant allocated position and to reclassify one position. It is recommended that the Salary and Position Allocation Resolution be amended to reflect the recommended position changes as outlined in Attachment A and the deletion of five total full-time positions effective July 17, 2010. Final effective dates and impacts for the reduction-in-force may be modified as a result of additional vacancies generated through the Voluntary Separation/Retirement Incentive Program to be implemented in July 2010.

Recognizing the potential impact this recommendation may have on the County's workforce, representatives from the County's Chief Executive Office/Human Resources Division and the Assessor's Office have discussed the potential impacts of this action with the affected labor organizations. Chief Executive Office staff will work with the affected employees regarding any opportunities available within the organization. Staff affected by these recommendations will also have access to Workplace Wellness and the County's Alliance Worknet Department should staff wish to seek their assistance.

CONTACT PERSON:

Doug Harms, Assessor. Telephone: (209) 525-6461

Attachment A

Assessor's Department

May 4, 2010

Recommended Changes to Salary and Position Allocation Resolution

Allocated Budget Unit	Position	Allocated Classification	Filled/ Vacant	Filled Classification	Recommendation
Assessor	10928	Appraiser Technician	Filled		Delete Position
Assessor	1269	Auditor-Appraiser III	Filled		Delete Position
Assessor	8954	Cadastral Technician II	Vacant		Delete Position
Assessor	8953	Cadastral Technician II	Filled		Delete Position
Assessor	3115	Confidential Assistant III	Filled		Delete Position
Assessor	1511	Manager IV	Vacant		Unfund Position
Assessor	2076	Supervising Account/Admin Clerk I	Filled	Administrative Clerk I	Downgrade to Administrative Clerk I