

June 2, 2011



### **YEAGER WORKS TO SAVE PROGRAMS FOR SENIORS AND YOUTH**

When I ran for Supervisor, I promised to do all I could to protect our most vulnerable populations. The County is the major provider of “safety net” services that assure our children, seniors, domestic violence survivors, low-income residents, and others are kept safe and healthy. We have to keep these communities in mind as we craft the County budget.

Due to decreased property tax revenues and dwindling State funding, the County faces a \$219.6 million shortfall in the coming fiscal year. That means the Board of Supervisors has some tough choices to make about how to prioritize spending. Unfortunately, I have some problems with the County’s proposed budget that I am working to resolve.

A proposed major reduction in funding available to community organizations that perform direct “safety net” services to resident concerns me. Some of these services are targeted toward youth, such as after school programs, pregnancy prevention, and group homes for at-risk foster youth. Others assist our seniors through Meals on Wheels, adult day care, and health care coordination. Still more fund domestic violence shelters and prevention programs.

The programs provided by the community based organizations are successful and cost-effective. Losing them would have a grave effect on this County. In talking with community groups, I believe that I have found a solution that can keep these programs going by lessening the severity of the proposed cut and restructuring programs.

In addition to these “safety net” services, I want to make sure that the County continues to support our partnership with the Housing Trust. The Housing Trust provides first-time homebuyers assistance as well as facilitates the construction of affordable housing and shelters. They do this by leveraging public dollars with private donations.

The County was the co-creator of the organization and should remain a strong collaborator. The County’s investment in the Housing Trust can leverage millions of dollars toward vital programs. Furthermore, we can do so without affecting the rest of the budget. The County already has \$2.5 million dollars allocated in an Affordable Housing Fund.

Beyond the “safety net” cuts, I am also troubled by two proposed cuts to public safety services. The first is the elimination of a Sheriff’s Deputy position assigned to coordinate mutual aid between the County and other public safety agencies. If eliminated, local law enforcement and fire agencies throughout Santa Clara County would not have a central point of contact to coordinate resources to respond to a catastrophic emergency or natural disaster.

The second is a reduction of 12 probation community workers. These workers assist probation officers so that the officers can spend more time in the community supervising those entrusted to their watch. With the State poised to shift more probationers to County supervision, these vital positions cannot be cut.

Finally, I would like to change the budget to assure that our local elections are as fair and open as possible. A proposal to require candidates for judge to reimburse the County fully for the cost of ballot statements would limit the pool of candidates, especially in underrepresented communities. A suitable compromise would be to have those candidates pay for part of the costs, based on a rate of 1% of a judge's salary.

Furthermore, I believe that the County's shift toward greater voting by mail may be disenfranchising some low-income and minority communities. To combat this, the County should increase its voter education and outreach efforts. The costs for doing so can be covered by forgoing some already requested, but non-critical equipment purchases.

The County's total proposed spending plan for the \$2.1 billion General Fund budget outlines spending for all discretionary and many mandated services for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2011. The County Executive's recommended budget proposes \$75 million in savings through concessions from renegotiated labor contracts. An additional \$145 million in savings would come from cuts to departments, reductions in services to residents, and the elimination of hundreds of employee positions. I believe that an upcoming review of the budget by the Board's Management Audit Division will reveal additional funds that can be used to counteract the proposed cuts detailed above.

Over the next few weeks, the Board will continue to debate and study the County Executive's proposal. Public hearings will be held for a full week, starting June 13. Final approval of the budget will take place on June 17. As always, I encourage you to contact my office if you have any concerns or are interested in additional information. You can reach me at 299-5040 or via e-mail at [Supervisor.Yeager@bos.sccgov.org](mailto:Supervisor.Yeager@bos.sccgov.org).

