

County adopts record budget

October 15, 2023



Supervisors concluded the 14-day public hearing and adopted the 2023/24 county budget. The balanced budget for the upcoming fiscal year is \$211,491,252 with a general fund budget of \$40,522,171. To no one's surprise and in the wake of record high inflation, both are new budget records.

The vote was 4-1. Chairman Darrin Short, Vice Chair Valerie Starkey and supervisors Joey Borges and Dean Wilson vote YES. Supervisor Chris Howard voted NO.

From the opening of the public hearing two weeks previous, the board increased the general fund budget just under \$2.9 million.

The general (discretionary fund) carried over a balance of \$7.1 million, caused mainly by the continuing labor market and hiring trends. The fund balance is much higher than anticipated due to high vacancy and turnover rates and reduced departmental spending.

Voter-approved Measure R passed in 2020 added a 1 percent local sales tax that created an overall 8.25 general sales tax. Measure R derived-funds supported budget increases in law enforcement, emergency and disaster response, public nuisance, blight and code enforcement, emergency response, animal services, planning and capital improvements.

The adopted budget is retroactive to July 1, the beginning of the fiscal year.

In a rare occurrence, supervisors declined to approve consent agenda number 11 which would have authorized the director of Health and Human Services, the Public Health Officer and director of Public Health Nursing to implement the Bridge Access program.

Supervisor Dean Wilson pulled the item from the single vote consent agenda for additional discussion. The Bridge Access program would allow providers to continue to offer COVID-19 vaccines to adults age 19 and above and who are medically uninsured.

Wilson questioned the COVID 19 injection protocol as a non-vaccine, experimental, non-effective and creating adverse effects on many individuals who previously had taken the medication. Wilson saw no purpose to offer the Bridge Access program and stated he was unable to vote in favor of the state-funded program. Starkey respectfully disagreed with Wilson, and made the motion to approve Bridge Access. There was no second to Starkey's motion and the item failed to acquire the necessary quorum votes.

Supervisor Wilson also announced Del Norte County would be the recipient of a \$10.8 million grant to provide shelter needs, pallet homes and wrap-around services to those individuals who are homeless and living in the woods in and around the city. The announcement was delivered at a Rural County Representatives of California (RCRC) conference in Monterey. The funding and subsequent housing will help the county address the 9th District Appeals Court decision in 2018, Martin vs. Boise, requiring communities provide emergency beds for those who seek to rest. According to Wilson, it is the hope that with the creation of this housing, Crescent City and Del Norte County can pass local ordinances to limit homeless camps and direct homeless for wrap-around services. A committee has been established to determine how to best provide these housing needs with the allocation of these funds.

The Board meets again Tuesday, October 10, at 10 a.m. at the Flynn Center.