



NEWS

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For Immediate Release

Building Equity & Social Justice Into Policy, Budget *Board Will Consider New Office to Focus on Equity Agenda; Proposal Comes as Board Approves 2020-21 Recommended Budget*

Redwood City — A new County of San Mateo Office of Equity and Social Justice would focus on ways to ensure all residents have the equal opportunity to thrive, according to a proposal advanced Tuesday by the Board of Supervisors.

“We need one person who wakes up every day thinking about equity and social justice,” said Board of Supervisors President Warren Slocum. “That person will help to lead efforts to ensure our budget priorities and our actions are aligned with the idea of social equity.”

Slocum asked the County Manager’s Office to present a funding and staffing plan to the Board in September. By standing up the office, the County would join a growing list of socially progressive organizations that focuses on the people and places where needs are the greatest – often communities with low incomes.

Slocum’s District Four includes the areas of North Fair Oaks and East Palo Alto, which would benefit from a dedicated and concerted effort to ensure that all residents have access to services, resources and information.

“But the need for justice and equity is not dedicated to only my district or one geographical area,” Slocum said. “Fairness and equality should be an underlying tenet of how the County serves all of our residents.”

In a separate action, the Board approved a [resolution](#) supporting the Black Lives Matter movement and reaffirming the County of San Mateo's commitment to racial equity.

2020-21 Recommended Budget

The Board today voted 5-0 to approve the [Fiscal Year 2020-21 Recommended Budget](#), a budget County Manager Mike Callagy said does not reflect the County’s response to the COVID-19 pandemic or the significant economic impacts caused by the virus since early March.

The FY 2020-21 Recommended Budget totals \$3.2 billion and 5,590 positions for all County funds, a net increase of \$163.6 million or 5.4 percent and net decrease of 18 positions from revisions made to the FY 2020-21 Preliminary Recommended Budget.

State law requires each county to submit a budget by July 1 of each calendar year to authorize spending and the functioning of county government. County staff will submit updated revenue and spending projections to the Board during a public hearing in September.

According to figures released Tuesday, the County has spent a total of \$169.7 million on response to COVID-19. The total includes \$58.2 million in expenses related to staffing the County's [Emergency Operations Center](#), \$46.9 million on emergency medical care, \$26.7 million on care and shelter, \$10 million on testing and additional expenses, including programs to feed vulnerable seniors.

Many of those expenses are expected to be reimbursed by federal, state and other sources. A major hit, however, is expected from the economic downturn that has driven the local unemployment rate past [11 percent](#) and hit property and sales taxes. The total reduction in revenues is projected at \$109 million to date.

Strategies under consideration for mitigating the hit to the budget from COVID-19 include extending the current hiring freeze, no promotions, deferral of capital projects and dipping into reserves. He said a goal is not to layoff workers.

Up until the pandemic, Callagy said departments were building up "rainy day" reserves.

"I'm here to tell you it is raining," Callagy said to the Board, adding later in the meeting, "I want to assure you that brighter days are ahead for all of us."

The Board has scheduled a series of study sessions to discuss options to balance the budget. Agendas are posted on the Board's website at <https://sanmateocounty.legistar.com/Calendar.aspx>

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