DEPARTMENT: Planning  
BY: Sarah Williams, Interim Director  
PHONE: 966-0303

RECOMMENDED ACTION AND JUSTIFICATION:

1. Approve extra help employment agreement for Senior Planner Skip Strathearn

2. Approve budget adjustments for:
   a. Mid-year reallocation for day-to-day office operations
   b. Funding extra help senior planner for staffing the Yosemite West and Wawona Planning Advisory Committees
   c. Continued funding for extra help code compliance technician for continued part time assistance (amendment to extra help employment agreement has been forwarded to the Personnel Director)

   There are no net county costs for these adjustments.

3. Provide direction regarding request for additional planner position.

BACKGROUND AND HISTORY OF BOARD ACTIONS:

See attached memorandum

ALTERNATIVES AND CONSEQUENCES OF NEGATIVE ACTION:

See attached memorandum

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Financial Impact? ( ) Yes (X) No  Current FY Cost: $  
Budgeted In Current FY? ( ) Yes ( ) No ( ) Partially Funded
Amount in Budget: $  
Additional Funding Needed: $0  
Source:
Internal Transfer
Unanticipated Revenue
Transfer Between Funds
Contingency
( ) General ( ) Other

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CLERK'S USE ONLY:
Res. No.:  
Ord. No.  
Vote – Ayes:  
Noes:  
Absent:  
Approved
( ) Minute Order Attached ( ) No Action Necessary

The foregoing instrument is a correct copy of the original on file in this office.
Date:
Attest: MARGIE WILLIAMS, Clerk of the Board
County of Mariposa, State of California
By: Deputy

Revised Dec. 2002

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COUNTY ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER:
( ) Requested Action Recommended  
( ) No Opinion  
Attachments
Memorandum to Board
Proposed Extra Help Agreement
Budget Action Form
I am not recommending the additional planner until an analysis of fees is done.

CAO: Rh
MEMORANDUM

Date: March 12, 2004

To: Board of Supervisors

From: Sarah Williams, Interim Director

Topic: Planning Budget and Staffing Issues

Summary of Request

This item is scheduled to request Board approval of the following:

- Funding adjustments to address immediate budget shortfalls in certain planning line items,
- Execution of extra help agreement with Skip Strathearn for planning assistance in the interim period, to cover the Yosemite West and Wawona Planning Advisory Committees,
- Funding to continue extra help agreement with Milt Crain, for continued part time assistance with code compliance cases

Staff also provides discussion supporting request for an additional planner position, to cover increased demand for current planning services.

Budget Shortfalls - Operations

Reviewing the status of Mariposa Planning's budget effective March 1, 2004, a transfer of funds within the department is necessary to enable continued day-to-day operation of the department.

During the first 8 months of the fiscal year, Planning overspent the following account line items:

Our Mission is to provide our clients with professional service and accurate information in a respectful, courteous, and enthusiastic manner resulting in a well-planned rural environment.
Office expenses,
- Publications/Legal Notices,
- County Vehicle Use, and
- Copier Expense.

These funds pay for our day-to-day office operations, and must be funded for continued level of service. Staff recommends an increase in the county vehicle use line item, to enable county vehicles to be used for site inspections and advisory committee meeting attendance through the end of the fiscal year. The previous director had staff primarily using their personal vehicles for inspections and advisory committee meeting attendance. Staff indicates a strong preference for using county vehicles for county work.

Planning has excess budgeted funds in the following line items:

- Communications,
- Training and Seminars, and
- Private Vehicle Use.

Planning already transferred funds from the Planning Commission line item to pay some of February, 2004 bills.

I propose adjustments within the Planning Services Accounts, and will also need to rely partly upon salary savings.

**Budget Shortfalls – Longevity and Out of Class Pay**

The Longevity account in the Hourly & Other Compensation Expenditure section was under funded. An additional $1,154 is needed to complete this budget year. The Auditor’s Office indicates a transfer of funds is needed to cover out of class pay for my appointment as interim planning director. Funding for these items would come from salary savings.

**Extra Help Planning Services**

The priority advanced planning project for the interim period during recruitment of a planning director is the General Plan Update.

Additionally, I recommend continued staffing of two other advanced planning committees during the interim period. The Yosemite West PAC and the Wawona PAC work are nearly completed.

The other priority advanced planning project is the Catheys Valley Community Plan. I recommend continued staffing of the Catheys Valley Planning Advisory Committee once direction on the General Plan Update is clear.

I contacted previous staff planner Skip Strathearn, who is available to assist the county during the recruitment period for a planning director. Skip Strathearn would be hired to staff the Yosemite West and Wawona Community Planning Advisory Committees. Skip is familiar with the planning issues in these communities, and would attend the meetings, prepare agendas and minutes, prepare information and documents requested by the
Committees, and work on a final draft Community Plan (Yosemite West) and Specific Plan (Wawona). Skip may also work on environmental review documents for these plans.

I recommend hiring Skip at the Senior Planner Step 5 level. Skip was working at the Senior Planner Step 3 level when he left permanent employment with the County in June of 2002. The work I plan to assign to Skip is senior level work, previously done by the director. Skip will need to work independently. The Committee work is challenging, and necessitates conflict resolution skills, organization skills, knowledge of state law and county policy, writing skills, and a level of experience which cannot be expected from anyone less than a senior level planner.

Funding for this extra help position would come from salary savings. There are savings because the Associate Planner position was vacant for a short period (between the departure of Julie Sergovic and the hiring of Patricia Nicholson). There are savings based upon the departure of the planning director. Funding of $7,000 will cover approximately 20 hours of work per week, for 13 weeks.

Extension of Extra Help Agreement - Code Compliance Technician

The Board of Supervisor approved an 860 hour extra help agreement with Milt Crain for July 1, 2003 to June 30, 2004, for the position of Code Compliance Technician. Milt works as needed to handle the technician work, which has averaged approximately 20 hours per week. In order to continue the level of service provided through this extra help agreement, I have sent the Personnel Director a request for extension to Milt’s extra help agreement, to the maximum 999 hours allowed.

Maximum additional funding in the amount of $3,556 will be needed to cover Milt’s hourly compensation through the end of the budget year. I propose to use salary savings to cover these costs.

Additional Planner Position

Mariposa Planning has experienced a revolving door of project planners lately, with the departures of Associate Planner Julie Sergovic, Senior Planner Skip Strathearn, Associate Planner Steve Engfer, and Associate Planner Jean Clark. In discussions with these planners and with current staff, there is common concern expressed regarding balancing the amount of current planning work and the needs of the many advisory committees we serve. Current planning work includes processing paid applications, coordinating agency review of projects, making recommendations for environmental review determinations and project action, making presentations to the Planning Commission, review of building permits and site plans, and answering public inquiries at the counter and over the telephone. Knowledge of state law and county codes and policies are critical.

In general, the conclusion is there is too much work, high expectations for professional product (from department managers, Planning Advisory Committees, the Planning Commission, the Board of Supervisors, applicants, and the public), many opportunities for missed deadlines and mistakes, and a frustrating work environment based upon regular and typical phone and counter interruptions. Often, planners work outside of the normal work hours to complete their staff reports and initial studies. Planners regularly accumulate comp time, as the department doesn’t have an overtime budget. In the end,
with planners having too much to do each day, the public and applicants can be affected. Phone messages and e-mail inquiries may not be answered on the day they’re received. Noticing deadlines may be missed. Projects may be rescheduled from one meeting to another. Adequate time isn’t available to research alternative ways to address current project issues, to develop creative solutions. Planning Advisory Committee requests may be answered too late to provide for productive meetings.

Senior Planner Bill King has undertaken the task of evaluating the permitting process. He and Tracy Gauthier have made significant changes to streamline the process and reduce unnecessary paperwork. This work has included an attempt to shorten the time period between submittal of an application and scheduling of the public hearing. There is a limit to how far these improvements can go toward the real issue.

Over the past 5 years, there has been a noticeable increase in the number of current planning applications we accept for processing, the number of building permits we review, the public inquiries we field, and requests for assistance from the Public Works Department for various County Projects. There has been a general increase in the complexity of the projects (the “easy” sites seem to have already been developed). We are processing more major projects, necessitating Environmental Impact Reports (EIRs). Finally, state law regulating LAFCOs has changed, and there are significant service review requirements which are supposed to be met by January 2006.

Current Planning projects have increased as follows:

- Applications accepted in 1999: 163
- Applications accepted in 2000: 130
- Applications accepted in 2001: 135
- Applications accepted in 2002: 215
- Applications accepted in 2003: 219

Applications include land divisions, lot line adjustments, certificates of compliance, appeals, conditional use permits, design review applications, general plan/zoning amendments, land conservation act applications, mining permits, parcel mergers, transient rental applications, etc.

Building Permit activity has increased as follows:

- Building permits reviewed in 2000: 442
- Building permits reviewed in 2001: 880
- Building permits reviewed in 2002: 1013
- Building permits reviewed in 2003: 1199

Planning reviews all building permits for parcel legality and compliance with the zoning ordinance standards.

The list of recent public works projects needing planning assistance for environmental determinations and processing include the Arts Park, Field of Dreams, Amphitheater, Lake Don Pedro Wastewater Treatment Plant, Courts Complex, Joe Howard Street Bridge, Landfill Lot Line Adjustment, Airport Lot Line Adjustment, Airport Expansion project, Regional Transportation Plan, County Bike and Pedestrian Plan, Skate Park, and the Bridgeport Fire Station. All of these are important projects and deserve prompt assistance.
Management of the Planning Department is typically a balancing act between allocating staff time to the paid current planning applications and allocating staff time to the special or advanced planning projects. When more time is needed for the current planning applications, less time is available for the advanced planning projects. The Planning Advisory Committees progress is affected, if we continue to schedule meetings and don't have adequate time to prepare prior to the meetings. Board directed special projects progress is affected, if we can't complete them in a timely manner or if we schedule meetings and don't prepare adequately prior to the meetings.

Relative to the future, it is likely that Mariposa County will experience continued growth in the number of current planning applications submitted for processing. There are also other special projects in line – implementation of the General Plan Update foremost. Future advanced planning work includes staffing of the advisory committees and preparation of community plans, and preparation and review of updates to the County Zoning Ordinance and the County Subdivision Ordinance. Mariposa Planning may also be implementing the GIS system for our department use, and changing all maps to GIS maps.

In conclusion, it is my recommendation that Mariposa Planning needs another planner position in order to achieve the following objectives:

- provide prompt quality service to the public,
- provide quality and thorough review of projects,
- have time to work on advanced planning and special projects,
- provide a satisfying and productive work environment for employees,
- retain valuable employees who've been trained, and
- assist with the processing of county projects.

Without an additional staff person, I believe the above qualities we strive to achieve in our office will continue to be compromised.

At this point, I recommend creation of a counter staff position, most likely at a Planner I or a Planner II level. This person would be available at the counter full time and to field incoming general phone inquiries. This person would assist applicants at the counter with their site plans and application materials. This person would be primarily responsible for review of all building permit applications.

I recognize the serious budget challenges the Board of Supervisors will face this year, however I cannot ignore the reality of day to day operations in our office. Perhaps this is evidence of the county's "growing pains".

Alternatives to impacting the county budget by hiring an additional planner include:

1. Decrease the amount of advanced planning
2. Review planning fee schedule to evaluate possibility of cost recovery

Hiring consultants to do the bulk of advanced planning is also a possibility, though there are county budget impacts to this alternative.

I request direction and input relative to this request.
# BUDGET ACTION FORM

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**ACTION REQUESTED:** (Check all that apply)

( ) Budget appropriation by Board of Supervisors (4/5ths Vote Required): Amending the total amount available in the county budget, or in any one fund of the budget, or transferring appropriation from Contingencies;

(x) Transfer by Board of Supervisors (3/5ths Vote Required): Moving existing appropriations from one budget to another, or between categories with a budget unit;

**JUSTIFICATION**

**DEPT HEAD SIGNATURE**

**APPROVED BY RES NO.** 24-110  CLERK

**DATE** 3/2/04  3-23-04

**AUDITOR'S USE ONLY**

**BA#**
COUNTY of MARIPOSA
P.O. Box 784, Mariposa, CA 95338 (209) 966-3222
GARRY R. PARKER, CHAIR DISTRICT IV
DOUG BALMAIN, VICE-CHAIR DISTRICT II
LEE STETSON DISTRICT I
BOB PICKARD DISTRICT V
JANET BIBBY DISTRICT III

MARIPOSA COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

MINUTE ORDER

TO: SARAH WILLIAMS, Interim Planning Director
FROM: MARGIE WILLIAMS, Clerk of the Board
SUBJECT: EXTRA-HELP EMPLOYMENT AGREEMENT; BUDGET ACTION TRANSFERRING FUNDS FOR DAY-TO-DAY OPERATIONS; SENIOR PLANNER FUNDING FOR STAFFING YOSEMITE WEST AND WAWONA PLANNING ADVISORY COMMITTEES; AND CONTINUED FUNDING FOR EXTRA-HELP CODE COMPLIANCE TECHNICIAN
Resolution No. 04-110

THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS OF MARIPOSA COUNTY, CALIFORNIA,

ADOPTED THIS Order on March 23, 2004

ACTION AND VOTE:

Sarah Williams, Interim Planning Director;
Approve Extra-Help Employment Agreement for Senior Planner Skip Strathearn; Approve Budget Action Transferring Funds within the Planning Department Budget for Mid-Year Reallocations for Day-to-Day Office Operations; Funding Extra-Help Senior Planner for Staffing the Yosemite West and Wawona Planning Advisory Committees and Continued Funding for Extra-Help Code Compliance Technician for Continued Part-Time Assistance ($22,030)

BOARD ACTION: Discussion was held with Sarah Williams relative to the requests and recommendations. She advised that she would like direction relative to pursuing one additional planner position, and advised that she would review the fee schedule for the department. Rich Inman, County Administrative Officer, recommended that the fee structure be reviewed, and stated he agreed with the request for an additional planner position. (M)Pickard, (S)Stetson, Res. 04-110 was adopted approving the extra help employment agreement with Skip Strathearn, and the recommended budget adjustments, and direction was given for the Interim Planning Director to work with the County Administrative Officer to bring back a proposal for the additional planner position/Ayes: Stetson, Balmain, Bibby, Pickard; Excused: Parker.

cc: Rich Inman, County Administrative Officer
    Tom Guarino, County Counsel
    Ken Hawkins, Auditor
    Mary Hodson, Administrative Analyst
    Sandi Laird, Personnel/Risk Management Technician
    File