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Patricia Rodriguez, Deputy Clerk
Melissa Kitts, Deputy Clerk
(530) 458-0508/0509/0735
FAX (530) 458-0510
colusacountyca.iqm2.com
www.countyofcolusa.org

COLUSA COUNTY
Board of Supervisors

Special Meeting
Agenda
Board of Supervisors/Department Head Workshop

March 27, 2023

Colusa Industrial Properties
100 Sunrise Blvd.
Colusa, CA 95932

Welcome to a meeting of the Colusa County Board of Supervisors. If you are scheduled to address the Board, please state your full name for the record. The Board will not address timed items before they are scheduled. The "Consent Calendar" may be adopted by one motion. Regularly numbered items may be considered at any time during the meeting. All items are listed in accordance with the Ralph M. Brown Act. We invite all members of the public to attend.

NOTE: You can listen to the meeting by dialing one of the numbers below:

Phone: **1-916-246-0723**
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Code: **401978 - THIS LINE IS FOR LISTENING IN ONLY**

9:00 a.m. CALL TO ORDER
- Opening Prayer - Pledge of Allegiance
- Period of Public Comment

I. HUMAN RESOURCES

1. Discussion and possible direction regarding recruitment and retention challenges, future staffing of the County of Colusa, and to consider potential service model shifts to create General Fund budget savings.

ADJOURN

PERIOD OF PUBLIC COMMENT: Any person may speak about any subject of concern, provided it is within the purview of the Board of Supervisors and is not already on today's agenda. The total amount of time allotted for receiving such public communication shall be limited to a total of **15 minutes per issue** and each individual or group will be limited to no more than **5 minutes each**. **Note:** No Board action shall be taken on comments received.

ORDINANCES AND PUBLIC HEARINGS: If you challenge in a court action a decision of the Colusa County Board of Supervisors regarding a zoning, planning, land use, or environmental protection matter made at any public hearing described in this notice, you may be limited to raising only those issues (1) you or someone else raised at such public hearing, or (2) raised in written correspondence delivered to the Colusa County Board of Supervisors at, or prior to, such public hearing.

ADA COMPLIANCE: Upon request, Agendas will be made available in alternative formats to accommodate persons with disabilities. In addition, any person with a disability who requires a modification or accommodation to participate or attend this meeting may request necessary accommodation. Please make your request to the County Board Clerk, specifying your disability, the format in which you would like to receive this Agenda, and any other accommodation required no later than 24 hours prior to the start of the meeting.

DISCLOSURE OF CAMPAIGN CONTRIBUTIONS: Pursuant to Government Code section 84308, members of the Board of Supervisors are disqualified and not able to participate in any agenda item involving contracts (other than competitively bid, labor, or personal employment contracts), franchises, discretionary land use permits and other entitlements if the Board member received more than $250 in campaign contributions from the applicant or contractor, an agent of the applicant or contractor, or any financially interested participant who actively supports or opposes the County's decision on the agenda item since January 1, 2023. Members of the Board of Supervisors who have received, and applicants, contractors or their agents who have made, campaign contributions totaling more than $250 to a Board member since January 1, 2023, are required to disclose that fact for the official record of the subject proceeding. Disclosures must include the amount of the campaign contribution and identify the recipient Board member and may be made either in writing to the Clerk of the Board of Supervisors prior to the subject hearing or by verbal disclosure at the time of the hearing.

All supporting documentation is available for public inspection and review in the Office of the Board Clerk, 547 Market Street, Suite 102, Colusa, CA 95932 during regular business hours 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday.

COUNTY OF COLUSA, CA 1.1

Request For County Board of Supervisors Action

MEETING DATE: March 27, 2023

DEPARTMENT: Human Resources

FROM: Dar Rhodes

SUBJECT: Board of Supervisors Workshop to Discuss Recruitment, Retention & Service Delivery Model Shifts

Discussion and possible direction regarding recruitment and retention challenges, future staffing of the County of Colusa, and to consider potential service model shifts to create General Fund budget savings.

Detailed Description/Background of request

The County of Colusa, like many surrounding counties, is experiencing a diminished pool of well-qualified candidates. Additionally, changes to pensions in recent years have impacted the ability of public agencies to attract lateral applicants. The post-COVID phenomenon bringing a new world of remote work and more compelling wages is evidenced by the inability to recruit top talent, which is of significant concern throughout the state of California (particularly in Colusa where rental housing stock is low) as agencies around the state contend with a shortage of candidates. As a result, many competing agencies are offering a variety of hiring incentives to attract and retain qualified applicants.

Colusa County is further experiencing a significant loss of incumbents to other counties and agencies within driving distance of Colusa. Our ability to retain staff has decreased and exit interview data reveals our employees are leaving for better pay, higher job classifications, remote work, and more opportunities for advancement.

In addition to the recruitment and retention challenges, we are facing serious, known shortfalls in the County's ongoing General Fund revenues - the impetus for pragmatic discussions related to what departments can do to shift service delivery expectations and ascertain whether the County is willing to consider a *smaller, smarter agency* model. An open discussion related to modernizing our recruitment and retention philosophies with the possibility of establishing a comprehensive Recruitment and Retention Program, including a service-delivery-shift component, would be part of the purpose for this workshop, where topics of discussion may include:

- Recruitment challenges - such as public service perceptions, lack of applicants, market median wages, competitive benefits, promotional processes, new recruitment concepts;

- Retention challenges - such as salary steps, current trends for retention and hiring bonuses, low rental housing stock; and
- Service delivery shifts - with focus on philosophies for a smaller, smarter agency.

In an effort to provide you with insight at the department level, we requested each department head to offer a brief summary of recruitment, retention and staffing realities for their departments. All 17 departments have submitted summaries for your review.

Staff is not necessarily seeking direction on any issue today, but simply starting the dialogue. However, should the Board want to provide direction on any issue, the matter has been agendized so that you can. There is much to consider and we believe these discussions will need to continue over a period of time before we are able to determine strategies that best serve the organization and thereby the constituency.

Prior Board Action
NONE

Fiscal Impact/Funding Source
None at this time.

Action for the Clerk
NONE

ATTACHMENTS:

- DH Projections of Staffing Recruitment Retention Needs for 2023 beyond (PDF)

Department Projections of Staffing, Recruitment, and Retention Needs 2023

Ag

The Agricultural Commissioner's Office

The Agricultural Commissioner's Office maintains a complex budget with revenue sources that include mandatory county general fund contributions, Unclaimed Gas Tax allocations, Mill Assessment from industry and many grant and contract agreements with the State. All of these revenue sources are dependent upon each other. They must be carefully balanced and monitored in order to maintain a steady revenue stream.

Unclaimed gas tax is received as a reimbursement to county contributions. The more county contributions made to the budget, the more unclaimed gas tax is received the following year. However, the county net costs cannot drop below the average contribution made over the last five years. This is the county's Maintenance of Effort and is required by The California Food and Ag Code. The Mill assessment is paid based on pesticide related activities. These activities include hours spent by licensed Biologists performing pesticide work, inspections conducted, amount of pesticide used, and by the county's population. If hours are not spent performing work in these areas, revenues decrease from these two main sources that make up the Ag Department's budget. Maintaining full staffing levels within the department is a *critical* part of maintaining the revenue streams and avoiding large swings in allocations.

The entry level Agricultural Biologist/Standards Officer (ABSO) I, only requires a Bachelor's degree in an approved field. Once hired, the individual must obtain 1 of 8 licenses in the first 12 months. Until the first license is obtained, they are not qualified to do independent work as an ABSO. The exams are at the expense of the candidate and according to county policy are only reimbursed if they are successfully passed. At a current cost of $75 each, the entry level ABSO will not take an exam until they feel they are ready (usually a couple of months). Meanwhile, they are not able to help carry any part of the Department's workload.

Colusa County has tried to recruit more advanced ABSOs in the series, an ABSO II (5 of 8 licenses with 2 years of experience) and an ABSO III (journey level – 8 of 8 licenses with 3 years of experience) multiple times over the past 6 years. Though, we have had advanced level applicants, we have not been able to successfully provide a job offer that was accepted. Throughout these recruitments, we have hired 6 entry level ABSO I – unlicensed/no experience.

Over the past 5 years, our Department has taken actions to try to recruit the more advanced level applicants. We have moved to a 40 hour work week so that we are more competitive with the rest of the market. We have implemented stipends to match surrounding counties such as a phone stipend and a boot allowance. We have begun to provide and encourage more professional development, especially to new ABSOs that are just entering this career field.

Colusa has a lot to offer employees. The County provides better than most when it comes to employee medical premium contributions, retirement, longevity, and a strong supportive management environment. An additional recruitment tool I would like to see the Board implement would be providing a lateral candidate (with “Classic PERS” status) a vacation accrual rate based on total years within the CalPERS system. This would match what the County currently offers to Department Heads.

At this time the Agricultural Commissioner’s Office is currently struggling to meet the needs and demands of the Agricultural Industry in our county. This is due to a few reasons: First, we have vacancies. We carried two Ag Biologists vacancies and one Office Assistant vacancy for more than 6 months. Though the resignations of these positions came as a surprise to the department, they were all purposely left vacant in order to provide salary savings during this drought year as well as the current budget crisis.

Carrying these vacancies provides salary savings, yet it makes it difficult to fulfill the Maintenance of Effort (MOE) requirement, remain eligible to receive Unclaimed Gas Tax and Mill allocations and fulfill our State mandates required by law. We provide many other services to our agricultural industry that must be delayed or not done at all, in order to prioritize the State mandated duties. The lack of crop production during the 2022 season allowed us to complete our work with a smaller team. However, 2023 is starting to look like a very busy year and we are already scrambling to complete the work required of us by the industry.

The next hardship we are facing is that we have a very new and inexperienced team. In years past, we have been fortunate to have a team comprised of all ABSO IIIs with decades of experience each. Now, our department’s most senior full time ABSO III has only three years of experience in the field. We are forced to assign work duties based on which license each holds and is qualified and trained to do. In addition, some licensing has requirements that include time in service before they are qualified to take the exam to become licensed in some areas. Our Assistant Commissioner has to train and perform some of the duties of our ABSOs, which leaves his assigned duties left for the Agricultural Commissioner complete. This is a burden and hardship on not only the Agricultural Commissioner’s Office, but also the Air Pollution Control District and the Migrant Housing Center.

The Air Pollution Control District

The Air Pollution Control District is a non-general fund department. It is funded by revenues collected from permit, burn, and emissions fees as well as grant administration fees. The District personnel include two Air Pollution Standards Officers, a Deputy Air Pollution Standards Officer and the Air Pollution Control Officer.

Much like the Agricultural Commissioner’s Office, the lack of production farming in 2022 affected the District’s revenue. In December 2021, one APSO resigned his position for a higher paying job in the area. During budget preparation discussions, it was decided to leave this position vacant as the reality of the drought began to be realized. The Deputy APSO and the APSO III worked together to complete all duties during the 2022 season. This position remains vacant today.

Recruitment for this position is difficult due to pay disparities within the region. The job descriptions for the APSO classification was recently updated and a compensation study has been completed by Human Resources Department. It is anticipated to request Board approval and adoption of the new job descriptions and salary schedule once revenues return to adequate levels within the district.

The Migrant Housing Center

The Migrant Housing Center is a non-general fund department. It is funded by the State Office of Migrant Services. There is no county cost for operation of the facility at this time. The center's personnel consists of two onsite Resident Caretakers, one onsite Operations Supervisor, and the Migrant Housing Director. The center has not experienced chronic retention and recruitment issues to date.

Assessor

We were not allowed to fill our Assessment Tech position. Our former Assessment Tech left for the Sheriff's Office for higher pay. It has been a tough situation for our staff being shorthanded. We are looking at shortening our hours we're open to the public. We are doing what we can but the stress on our staff right now is very tough. I am hoping I don't lose more employees because of this situation.

We are also putting our Value Change notices after we turn the tax rollover online. This way we don't have to send the notices out thru the mail. It will save cost as far as postage and time of the Assessment Techs having to put them in envelopes and mail them.

Auditor/Controller

My office has been luckier than some other county departments in the sense that we have remained fully staffed for most of my tenure here with the county. However, there have been a few years, some as recent as a year ago, that we struggled to fill vacant positions. I noticed over time a decrease in applications being submitted in addition to the lack of competent applicants applying for my vacant positions. It has been challenging to determine if this was due to the emergence of teleworking, salary levels of our county, competition among the workforce for all agencies to fill vacancies post-COVID, or just a combination of a number of issues. I have also seen just as many challenges once we hire a prospective applicant in retaining them and not being considered a training ground until they find a better suited or higher paid position somewhere else, especially those who live out of town and can find alternative employment closer to home. The change in policy/procedure that was implemented by the previous H.R. director whereby we can now higher applicants at a higher step in our salary table was a positive move, but I still wonder if our pay schedules are marketable in relation to other counties that we compare to.

I understand the recent Property Tax audit finding and the loss of revenue to the General Fund has prompted the board to enact changes to provide financial sustainability, such as establishing the hiring committee to oversee all department head requests to fill vacancies within their respective departments. As much as I would like to try to live by the catchphrase "Do More with Less" I caution the board to realize two things; 1) there comes a limit where existing county employees can't take on additional tasks, and 2) we may be able to do more with less, but it won't be within the same time frame. This means, for me, that I have to look at extra help or overtime as a way to accomplish my department obligations and mandates. This puts me in a precarious position trying to show budget savings by not filling a position, while I am incurring increased costs in overtime and extra help. As a consequence to a reduction in staffing, my staff and I are currently reviewing the services we provide and discussing what services could be reduced and/or eliminated.

Behavioral Health Department

Colusa County Behavioral Health department is in dire need of qualified Behavioral Health Therapists. The department currently has five therapist vacancies. These vacancies create a number of issues for the department. The vacancies limit the number of Colusa County residents the department is able to serve, the number of treatment staff necessary to meet network adequacy requirements established by the Department of Health Care Services (DHCS), and billing revenue lost to sustain department operations. Additionally, decreased treatment providers may result in a higher number of residents who may seek emergency psychiatric services.

Recruitment efforts have focused on online recruitment platforms such as NeoGov, LinkedIn, and attending local university job fairs. Unfortunately, there is a provider shortage throughout the state and, as a result, we are in competition with governmental and community-based organizations for these professionals. Increasing pay, offering flexible step placement, matching paid time off accrual rates, and offering hiring and retention bonuses may give us the needed edge to recruit, hire, and retain quality employees. Our department *does* have the fiscal means to offer hiring and retention bonuses, a practice that has been accomplished in Sacramento and Tuolumne counties.

Clerk Recorder Registrar

The Colusa County Clerk-Recorder-Registrar-Elections office is undergoing many changes and is in the middle of many transitions. There are four classifications currently assigned to the office, which are: The Elected Official, the Chief Deputy, Clerk Recorder II, and Clerk Recorder I. The budget has 6 allocated positions in addition to the elected official. There are three (3) positions filled out of six (6) allocated, or 50%, with two of the three being relative new hires. The Senior-most employee was just promoted to a Chief Deputy position and is performing above all expectations. Two other employees classified as Deputy Clerk 1's are in the middle of a training process by the Chief Deputy. They are both progressing well, it is just a matter of putting in the time. There is an active listing for a Deputy Clerk I/II bilingual, as this office is mandated Bi-Lingual (see notes below). The prior Clerk was bi-lingual as was one of the employees who has since left, and we are not meeting the requirements any longer. The position was posted internally for 7 days, and since there were zero internal applicants, HR has posted for outside recruitments, and the position was changed to add the word “Trainee” to the description, in hopes of generating more interest. The Elections division has been decimated by the retirement of the previous Clerk, as well as two senior employees leaving for other County positions. These employees had all the working knowledge of election procedures and the operating systems that are used.

I believe that there is room for modifications of allocated positions if we can adjust positions to become more fluid. The Elections division is the loose cannon, and the key is learning how to manage it within such a changing landscape. It has a Homeland Security classification, and there are many state regulated procedures. It is something that never has the same workload, many variables, and currently many changing laws such as mail in ballots, and pre-registering 16 year olds, as well as a new DMV procedure that is causing a significant amount of people who register their vehicle to re-register to vote. This procedure is causing a huge influx of new registrations for people who are already registered.

The election cycle resembles a farming cycle in many ways. You have peak seasons such as *Planting* (Candidate Filing for the Primary) and then you have *Maintenance of the Growing Crop*, (maintaining voter registrations and checking signatures on Petitions), filing reports with the state, and ultimately *Harvest* (The General Election), and lastly you have *Distribution of the Crop* and then *Cleaning and Putting up all the Equipment* (The Canvas). There are periods of ebbs and also periods of having high volume with critical inflexible deadlines. I provided this watered-down analogy to help the Board understand that there is a need for some employees to evolve into something similar to a seasonal worker. This would really help to reduce full-time positions.

The second part to seasonal help, similar to farming is that there is a need for harvest laborers in addition to seasonal workers, (Poll workers). The current poll worker process needs to be revised. My understanding is that there is great difficulty obtaining participants. I believe that the current working conditions are driving this. Currently poll workers are working 12–16-hour shifts. Many are elderly. They are paid a stipend which is roughly the equivalent to minimum wage for 8 hours. I propose that poll workers will only work 8 hours. I think the long hours become becomes both a safety issue and a recruitment issue. It was also brought to my attention from staff that they did not receive overtime for their hours.

Bi-lingual requirement: According to the U.S. Justice Department, Bilingual Ballots and the Voting Rights Act - FindLaw all information that is provided in English must also be provided in the qualified minority language. This covers not only ballots, but also sample ballots, absentee ballots, voter registration, instructional forms, polling place notices, and voter information pamphlets.

The federal government requires jurisdictions (cities, counties, states, etc.) to provide multilingual ballots when a single-language group in that location numbers more than 10,000 individuals or is more than 5% of the voting-age population. It must also have an illiteracy rate that is higher than the national illiteracy rate. California, Florida, and Texas are three states in which any election materials issued *statewide* must include Spanish translations. But cities and counties are exempt from the requirement if they don't have the minimum number of people from an eligible language group. Some states have enacted stronger laws to buttress the federal Voting Rights Act in requiring translations for some language groups. California, for instance, requires precincts to provide translations to language groups that comprise just 3% or more of their population (instead of the federal 5% minimum) in a qualified category and to make a "good faith effort" to recruit bilingual poll workers to help those groups on Election Day.

The Voting Rights Act also requires that information be provided orally by bilingual poll workers and by trained personnel who can provide information in courthouses and city halls.

Interestingly, from the *Census* is the following information: The 5 largest ethnic groups in Colusa County, CA are White (Hispanic) (44.3%), White (Non-Hispanic) (34.8%), Two+ (Hispanic) (8.36%), Other (Hispanic) (6.12%), and Two+ (Non-Hispanic) (2.38%).

> ***None of the households in Colusa County, reported speaking a non-English language at home as their primary shared language. This does not consider the potential multi-lingual nature of households, but only the primary self-reported language spoken by all members of the household.*** Colusa County, CA | Data USA

Is there any way the County could provide this resource? An employee that could be utilized to review elections materials? Someone who could be called if needed to translate counter customers?

Another factor affecting the efficiency of the office as well as a recruitment incentive is flexible work hours. The reality is many employees are balancing work and home and childcare and school pick-up and activities. This is a huge personnel issue. Employees are granted 12 days of paid sick leave per year, but may take up to 8 weeks FMLA time. After modification of our office hours from 7am-3pm my requests for time off virtually disappeared. Employees who told me they were thinking of leaving, and were actively being head-hunted, have now committed to staying and being loyal. They are all present for training and during peak workloads.

I would also like to propose bringing back the Assistant Clerk-Recorder-Registrar position. Transitions should be seamless. While no election is ever guaranteed, and the Assistant position may not always want to run, there should be continuity in changing of the guards. This position would be a tremendous asset to any incoming successors.

In summary, I believe we could comfortably permanently eliminate two positions if I could re-structure to the following:

1. Permanently adjust our public office hours to 7am – 2 pm (working hours 7am to 3pm with ½ hour lunch). This is 7 hours to the public which provides ½ hour more public hours than the original 8:30-4:00 pm closed during lunch. We have done a time study and have not had any complaints from the public about our temporary hours.
2. Chief Deputy Clerk-Recorder-Registrar (or alternatively bring back the Assistant Clerk position)
3. Chief Deputy Clerk-Recorder
4. Two (2) Deputy Clerk I/II positions
5. Modify Poll worker schedules to 8 hours maximum
6. Develop a budget that includes "seasonal workers" during elections
7. Recruit and train seasonal elections workers

Community Development Department

Staffing challenges in the Community Development Department are not too dissimilar to some of the challenges being experienced in a number of other County departments. I believe that these challenges can be attributed to the County's location and the competition for qualified staff from nearby counties that are larger, have more housing opportunities, and tend to pay more. Since my time with the County, we have lost a number of staff members to other nearby jurisdictions due to pay levels, commuting times, and advancement opportunities. However, we have been able to employ a number of successful strategies that have helped in employee retention.

One of the strategies has been to hire and/or promote individuals based on their potential and not necessarily the length of their resume. We have been quite fortunate to have been able to identify a number of individuals who wanted to or currently live in the County who showed tremendous potential. Although this has required a considerable amount of investment in staff development, it has helped fill several positions with long-term talent.

Another strategy has been to work with staff members on their work hours and weekly work schedules. While the Department's County Code defined hours of operation are 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. on Monday through Thursday and from 8:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. on Friday of each week, by working with individual team members we have been able to expand office hours to 7:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday with no closure for a lunch period. We have also worked with several staff members on alternative work weeks (9 – 75 for example) to allow them to have a three-day weekend every week to reduce their overall commute times and increase employee satisfaction while helping to expand the above mentioned public service counter hours.

Although these strategies have helped, we have still struggled filling several positions due to compensation competition from other jurisdictions. Last year we tried a different approach that presented itself as a result of the retirement of the Department's long-tenured Associate Planner. Given the current budget constraints, when our Associate Planner retired we made the decision to not fill the position. This was done in part to address the County's current General Fund's long-term salary and benefits cost reduction targets, but to also "free-up" additional salary savings that were then used to hire the Department's Principal Planner and Building Inspector at a salary step higher than typical. The result is that we were able to attract and hire two very qualified candidates that we would not have been able to attract without the advanced salary steps.

The downside with this approach is that in the Planning Unit, the work of three full-time planning employees (FTE) has to be performed by two planning FTE's. However, we were able to make this work by not only distributing the work load between the remaining 2 planning staff FTE's, but also with our Code Compliance Officer and the Community Development Director. Previously, we have crossed trained the Code Compliance Officer to perform some building inspection services which has proven critical during the recent Building Inspector vacancy to maintain customer service levels. He has also more recently received additional training to perform certain planning and application processing functions. This has also proven to be vital to maintain planning customer service during our Assistant Planner's unexpected absence since November and that the planner has only recently returned to work in a part-time capacity.

One staff issue that we have not been able to successfully address is maintaining long-term staffing of the Environmental Health Inspectors. The competition for Environmental Health Inspectors throughout the State is very high. Since the Environmental Health Division has been part of the Community Development Department, we have lost six (6) inspectors. In general, we have had to hire unregistered health inspectors who we then train and help them to pass the State's registration exam. Shortly thereafter, we have lost inspectors to another jurisdiction that pays higher and is closer to their place of long-term residency. We currently have one registered health inspector, one unregistered health inspector, and a vacant position that we have been unable to fill since last May. We are currently evaluating different approaches to address this issue.

I do think that if there is one must-know take-away that can be gleaned from the hiring and retention efforts of the Community Development Department is that there is no single solution that can resolve the challenges we have with attracting and retaining the quality staff that we have. The differences are not just within the Department as other departments face their own unique issues and constraints. Within the Department we have implemented a variety of approaches to not only attract and maintain our great staff, but also to expand customer service. Unfortunately, given the current planning staffing challenges it is anticipated that our expanded Friday customer service hours will have to be slightly scaled back. Although my goal is to still have four or more office hours on Fridays than the County Code specifies.

Cooperative Extension

University of California Cooperative Extension (UCCE) in Colusa County develops and implements local research and educational programs to support the county's youth and agriculture, the economic base as well as providing a direct link to UC resources and expertise.

We are a small department. Ten to fifteen years ago, our office had four (4) county employees: one (1) fiscal program analyst/office manager, one (1) office assistant, one (1) department secretary, and one (1) research associate. Since then and under a previous budget crunch, the office manager added the office assistant's tasks to their job tasks, the office assistant position was vacated and eventually dropped from the list of vacancies.

Today, there are three (3) county employees in our office. The research associate is planning to retire in the next two years. The permanent loss of a third position in the office will result in the remaining staff working inefficiently to meet the public and do their work. We are open to changing the job focus of this third staffer from ag research (research associate) to more community outreach and perhaps a mixture of funding sources. The additional funding sources could be from another Colusa County Department. Maybe this is a reach, but we are flexible as the 3rd staff position is critical to our office.

County Administrative Office

The County Administrative Office recommends and manages the county budget, facilitates the implementation of policies for the Board of Supervisors, analyzes issues and makes recommendations to the Board, represents the county in intergovernmental relationships, coordinates the work of all county departments, and coordinates the overall administration of county government. The County Administrative Officer also serves as the Clerk of the Board, Purchasing Agent and provides direct supervision to several divisions: Risk Management, Purchasing/Procurement, Information Technology, and Building and Maintenance. Each function or division has challenges and opportunities, thus I will address them individually.

Risk Management: Risk Management consists of a single FTE, the Safety Officer/Assistant Risk Manager. Prior to my arrival in 2016, this division was staffed with 1.5 FTE. The .5 FTE was absorbed into Human Resources with an understanding that they would provide clerical support to the Safety Officer. While in theory this should work, it has been quite difficult to maintain consistent clerical support for the risk division due to the ever growing demands on the staff within the Human Resources Department. We have been incredibly fortunate to have had our Safety Officer/Assistant Risk Manager position filled by the same staff member for 10 years. However, that will change in the coming fiscal year, as there is a planned retirement. I anticipate difficulty in recruiting a seasoned candidate into this position without the ability to offer leave accruals that recognize prior governmental service.

Purchasing Procurement: This division currently consists of a single FTE, the Purchasing Technician. In 2018, the Purchasing Coordinator left to work in another department and it was determined to not fill that vacancy. The workload from that FTE was split among the Purchasing Technician and the Deputy Board Clerks. Again, we have been very fortunate to have had the same Purchasing Technician for 8 years. Recently, there was a long-term absence of this individual which resulted in the entire workload having to be spread among other staff. While the staff managed everything admirably, it is not something that would be sustainable on any permanent basis.

Information Technology: The IT division consist of six (6) FTE, a Department Director, an Information Systems Analyst, and 4 IT Technicians. Recently a technician left county employment for an opportunity in the IT industry with better pay. That vacancy was not filled due to the current hiring freeze. However, this has resulted in the workload being spread among the remaining IT staff. Over the past few years we have seen fewer applicants for our IT positions, as well as diminished quality of candidates. We tend to attract entry level candidates that we train and who then move on to better paying jurisdictions, or to a position closer to their home. Fortunately, we do have a core team that we have been able to retain thus far.

Building/Maintenance/Custodial: This division consists of ten (10) FTE, five (5) in maintenance and five (5) in custodial. Recently a maintenance worker left the county, and due to the hiring freeze, the vacancy has not been filled. There is also a vacancy currently in the custodial unit, with a recruitment underway as this vacancy is funded by DHHS/BHS due to their increased building footprints. As with most other divisions within the CAO umbrella, we have maintained a core group of staffing in both units, only experiencing the occasional vacancy. However, when we do have need to recruit there are few applicants, let alone many with pertinent experience, who are willing to work for the pay that is offered.

CAO: This division consists of five (5) FTE, a CAO Budget Analyst, Chief Deputy Board Clerk, Deputy Board Clerk II Deputy Board Clerk I, and the CAO. The Chief Deputy and Analyst are long tenured employees, with the Deputy Clerks and CAO being hired since 2016. We have had no vacancies to fill since then.

The divisions under the Administration umbrella are mostly internal services functions, i.e., we provide services to every other department within the County organization. We are already functioning with three (3) fewer FTE than we were just two years ago. To further reduce staffing in these departments would result in work being pushed back out to every other department, thereby necessitating increased staffing in those departments. That said, in order to consider hiring incentives, better pay and benefits, or telework opportunities it requires funding, which would most likely have to come from reductions in staffing. Fewer employees but with higher pay/benefits, doing the core functions of county services is where we may have to head in the future. What we cannot do, is subscribe to the mantra of "more with less."

County Counsel Department

The County Counsel's office consists of only three (3) employees, two attorneys and one secretary. I am fortunate that the staff of the office have significant ties to the local community. However, last summer the attorney who held the contract for representation of Child Protective Services retired. We attempted to recruit an attorney to cover the representation, but only received one responsive application, who withdrew before we could hire them. We elected to bring the representation in house to make sure that the position was covered and to bring additional revenue into the office from a specially funded department. This meant that we had to absorb a .5 FTE workload into the existing 2 FTE attorney positions. This has been very difficult and has resulted in longer turnaround time on projects and will likely result in an increase in the need to outsource certain litigation matters.

As an attorney, I have worked in six different counties and seen many different strategies in employee retention. In all but one of the counties I worked in, employees were allowed to work alternative work schedules (pre-COVID). This was very popular and encouraged retention and significantly reduced absenteeism as employees tended to schedule medical and other appointments on their scheduled days off. On the other hand, when I was County Counsel in Tehama County, I had one deputy resign from her position because I could not offer her an alternate work schedule and her long commute made it too difficult to drive in five days a week. In Sutter County, when the financial constraints did not allow for significant monetary raises, we were offered additional time off through administrative leave days: 104 hours per year that could not carry over. This was also very popular. I am also aware that many of the employers we compete with offer extensive work from home options for employees that are also popular.

District Attorney

1. <u>How to recruit and retain attorneys</u>

Attorneys are hard to find, and even harder to retain. The average debt burden of graduating attorneys in 2020 was $180k, nearly double the burden on attorneys in 2000 (see EducationData.org). Corresponding to this increase in costs has been a significant decrease in enrollment and graduation rates, which has resulted in less attorneys generally.

Prosecutors have an even shorter supply. Law enforcement jobs in general have suffered due to negative messaging in the media and academia. Academic negativity toward law enforcement necessarily penetrates the attorney pool given the required BA and JD degrees. Prosecutors' offices across the country are experiencing shortages. San Diego County lost 28% of its applicants in the last 3 years (See [Prosecutors wanted: District attorneys struggle to recruit and retain lawyers | Reuters]). San Diego County pays near the top of the State and offers some of the best lifestyle options in the country.

In the North State, the issues are the same. In December, I did an informal survey of the eleven comparison counties, and found 17 vacancies, not including Colusa County. Butte County alone had 7 openings (-28%), Lake County had 3 openings (-21%), Amador had 2 openings (-20%) and Nevada, Shasta, Yolo, and Yuba Counties were also hiring (we are currently down -25%).

As we all know, when supply drops while demand remains the same, the value of the supply increases. What are we offering attorneys commensurate with their increase in market value? We are not offering exciting or attractive pay, at best we are offering at or below median. We are not offering nightlife or shopping or any other attractive lifestyle options. We are not offering brand-name recognition like Napa, Sonoma, Sacramento, or San Francisco. We are not really offering affordable housing anymore. We are not offering (thankfully) a great deal of gangs, murders, or other exciting caseloads; but we have plenty of the less-than-exciting cases.

There may have been a time when new attorneys sought to be prosecutors. Those days appear to be over, as loan debt, law changes, and societal pressure make the job less attractive. We need to address the change in market value of attorneys, as median pay or below is insufficient to fill vacancies (after all, the median pay of Butte County etc. still results in vacancies). We are in the market of the greater-Sacramento area, and must somehow compete. We need attorneys in the courtroom, but we need to attract them here with attractive pay.

2. <u>How to retain Legal Specialists</u>

Legal Specialist in the DA's office, in my opinion, is the hardest-working and most technical position relative to pay in the County. The amount of paperwork and filing is great. The stakes are also high. If a Specialist makes a mistake on some of the filings, it could result in the dismissal of a case. On top of that, the workload has steadily increased over the years. It used to be that a case had a police report and maybe a few photographs. Now, cases involve body camera, vehicle cameras, Ring cameras, phone dumps, social media accounts, GPS evidence, etc. The digital age has exponentially increased the amount of discovery for which Legal Specialists are responsible. On top of that are their responsibilities toward digital capture of information within the office through scanning, email, case management software entry, and database access. Legal Specialists have to master multiple systems within strict timelines, and have to understand how the court system and allied agencies work. On top of those duties, they are tasked with answering phones and responding to the counter, resulting in constant distraction and multi-tasking. It is very complex, yet the pay is low.

For many years we had a very stable group of Specialists. But, in the past three years we have had high turnover. The fact is, once a Specialist works in the office, they develop the skills to work any number of places for higher pay and in a less stressful environment. We have to be creative to retain our staff given this situation.

a. Remote Work

I am planning to go paperless in the next 18 months for a number of reasons. But, a major reason is to offer one or two days of remote work per week. We generally attract young people and parents for the position, and remote work appears to be an attractive option for this category. In order to do that, I need to update software, buy laptops, and provide internet access. While this may cost some money in the short term, it will save money in the long term by hopefully retaining talent at a lesser cost regarding salary and training.

b. Provide Rideshare or Travel Stipends

Most of our recruitment tends to attract from Yuba City. The County needs to discuss having a rideshare bus in the mornings and evenings to cut down on gas prices, or provide stipends or take-home vehicles for carpooling. The gas situation is hurting our ability to retain Specialists.

c. Pay More

Again, you get what you pay for, and it is an employees' market. If we do not pay our talent, someone else will. But, if we deal with the above, perhaps we can get by without paying more than we can afford.

3. Better Environment

Colusa County is a small-town community. I think County government should reflect that. It appears that we are trending toward an impersonal bureaucratic environment where employees are anonymous costs to be reduced whenever possible. I would suggest more knowledge-gathering on the ground with the employees, department heads, and executive officers. After all, we are not a large group. I would also be cautious about messaging and posture during negotiations. Last time around, there was a large hit to morale. And, right now, morale is all department heads and executive officers have to offer.

Health & Human Services Department

This may be part of the obvious, but here are the top items that come to mind based on what staff have indicated and observations:

While DHHS just had a significant increase in salaries for ES and PHNs, and the ability to start higher than Step 1 was a great improvement, the OA (Office Assistants) and ES (Eligibility Specialists) positions are still at lower salary rates than surrounding areas, which limits the number of applicants and is the reason that after training we have seen a turnover in staff jumping to other counties.

Compressed and flex schedules have been greatly appreciated by staff and has definitely aided in retaining some of the staff we have hired over the past year; however, the inability to telework is a reason that most candidates have not accepted positions and a reason that some staff look at other counties/employers. Most, if not all, surrounding counties have telework as part of their work schedules; therefore, higher salaries and telework to do government work staff can and do go to Counties that have those options, it is a no brainer for staff. Therefore, the absolute of NO TELEWORK by the County will not serve the County in the long run; it is very short sighted (and I'm not even a fan of telework, but get that times have changed).

Another item that isn't necessarily a huge retention reason, but is a definite hiring issue is that staff do not have vacation time available until 6 months. We have numerous staff that end up in

LWOP status due to not having time to utilize, which causes decreased paycheck/decreased accruals and is a morale issue. I would also add that Management and Department Head's having ZERO administrative leave is ridiculous, as all surrounding counties offer Admin Leave (that cannot be cashed out and must be utilized each year). Again, short sighted by the County.

Human Resources Department

The Human Resources Department has been significantly understaffed since June 2022, running on two- to three-filled positions versus the five (5) departmental position allocations. Now, in February 2022, HR staff consists of one seasoned (of two allocated) HR Analyst, one newer (of 2 allocated) HR Technician, and myself (HR Director). Gratefully, we also have the equivalent of an HR Assistant, by way of a Department of Health and Human Services employee "on loan" who serves as office support. Unfortunately, like many departments, we are having a very difficult time recruiting for a key position (our other vital HR Analyst).

The HR Department, from both an industry best practice and unfunded mandates perspective, has significantly evolved over the past decade, experiencing a great deal of responsibility growth – from federal legislative and state control agencies which have created increased workload and demands, delegating both authority and responsibility to local agencies for many more functions in recent years, and thus adding an additional strain on the current HR Department staffing. The scope and complexity of the Department's programs and services provided to Colusa employees have significantly increased and this tiny team which supports all seventeen (17) County departments is overseeing a plethora of complex central services responsibilities including: recruitment and selection; Equal Employment (EEO); workplace violence prevention and overall health and safety (COVID mandates, animals in the workplace); classification and pay structures; performance management; disciplinary and separation assistance; labor relations; employee benefits support; Reasonable Accommodation (RA); complex, layered leave management, training and development; records management; as well as organizational, workforce and succession plan development that is aligned with the County's overall mission, goals and objectives.

The department currently enjoys a collaborative team culture; engaged, competent, empathetic leaders; and varying flexible schedules (to ensure continual office coverage and technical support to county departments) – all of which have worked well as retention tools. However, the Human Resources departmental structure needs attention to ensure providing the correct levels of technical, analytical, and professional staff to address critical and sensitive HR administrative matters that have an extremely high consequence of error.

While the Board will see proposed structural changes soon, to that end, the HR Department understands that working in an understaffed capacity means that we need to focus on service delivery shifts to keep the work moving, but not burn out our employee assets. This can come in many forms, but the most logical seems to be operational hours shifting – although, HR is not quite there, yet. We continue brainstorming other viable service delivery model modifications.

We are currently focused on partnering with various departments heads to shift both service delivery and budget allocation models. For example, we have partnered with both HHS and BHS, who have generously agreed to provide full funding for an HR staff allocation. This is primarily due to the fact that both HHS and BHS recognize that as a central services department, HR provides approximately one-third of its services to HHS and BHS, who employ more than 38% of the Colusa County workforce. This puts HR in a unique situation to be able to decrease the department's position allocations, while retaining the same number of staff members (5) and providing the same level of support, for all intents and purposes.

From an overall perspective, we need to ensure we are arming the Department Heads with valuable tools to competitively hire and proactively retain top talent. In analyzing the strategies that I believe would help Colusa County to hire and retain employees best, I offer the following:

My top **recruitment strategies** –

1) Initiate a directed effort to hire top lateral talent (from other public agencies) and grant new hires parity with our leave accruals versus establishing hiring or signing bonuses for general fund department. Essentially, calculate the equivalent of a hiring bonus through vacation, sick leave, and other accruals equal to the years of service they have attained in other agencies. We should not be penalizing top talent with tenure in their respective fields for coming to our agency by offering them entry-level leave accruals; and
2) ensure new employees are offered a competitive wages and opportunities for advancement, on par with our survey counties – this means more regular comp studies and establishing flexibly staffed job classification series to offer ladders of success.

My top **retention strategies** –

1) Modifying the advanced step capability to match offers-in-hand which would be reserved for retaining *only* the top talent (top performers and top performers in hard-to-fill positions).
2) Offering remote work ability to top talent who have worked for the County for more than 12 months in their current position and have above-average performance reviews and whose positions would would be eligible for remote work.

Library Department

With the exception of the two-year global pandemic, the Colusa County Free Library system has seen a steady increase in usage, including program attendance, books and material circulation, and daily visits that include computer and other uses. We welcomed 13,378 patrons through our doors between July 1, 2022 and December 31, 2022: nearly double months in 2021. During that same period, we hosted 155 programs, including the first in-person Summer Reading Programs in two years. The patron-favorite Raising-A-Reader program was held in Colusa, Arbuckle, Williams, Maxwell and Princeton; sign-ups for Spring 2023 were so overwhelming that a second weekly session has been added to the Arbuckle branch, and all sites but Maxwell are at capacity. Many of our programs are surpassing pre-COVID attendance levels, with waitlists for those that require registration and large groups gathering for those that do not. There is currently a waitlist for Adult Literacy tutoring and computer training, and several programs are on hold due to insufficient staffing to run them. Likewise, we are much more selective about which grants we apply for and accept, as we are operating beyond capacity.

Currently, the library system is operating with seven full-time employees, one 80% employee, and four part-time employees who work 19 hours or less per week. Since the hiring freeze was implemented, the library system has lost three permanent part-time staff members, whose hours were equivalent to one full time employee. The demand for our services countywide is beyond our current staffing levels.

The stop-gap partnership with DHHS and Behavioral Health implemented in this fiscal year has brought to light areas where our services align, and highlighted a natural inter-departmental collaboration. With branches in each community, the library is primed to reach each and every community member, without the same stigma or fear that sometimes comes with seeking help, in part because of our primary role as a source of neutral information. Outside of the financial benefits of this partnership, the human benefits we are enabling countywide cannot be overstated.

Library return of investment (ROI) studies consistently demonstrate that public libraries give a high return on investment, providing anywhere from $2 to $10 in return for every tax dollar received. Libraries will not yield greater direct monetary returns, but provided higher value services for the money that is invested in them. With relatively low-cost library services, communities find the support they need to stay off of- or out of- other higher cost government services.

The library is fortunate in that once people begin working here, they tend to stay for years, if not decades. This is particularly true of full-time positions. Part-positions have been more difficult to fill and maintain. To meet the growing needs of Colusa County, we quite simply need more staff and financial resources invested into the library system.

To address current needs, the library would require the following staffing levels:

- 1 full-time Librarian to manage the Arbuckle and Grimes branches;
- 1 full-time Librarian to expand hours at, and manage the Williams branch;
- 1 full-time Librarian to manage the Princeton, Maxwell and Stonyford branches; and
- 2 part-time support staff to assist with programming and front desk coverage at the branch libraries.
- Remove 2 part-time staff positions, to be absorbed into the full-time positions.

This would provide consistency and continuity between locations, and to allow adequate, safe coverage at all times. If the current fiscal environment is not able to support the above staff structure, and knowing that the funding DHHS and Public Health are one-time moneys or limited in scope, the library will be required to limit programming and services at all branch locations.

Probation Department

<u>Staff Retention and Recruitment (Probation Department)</u>
As with most law enforcement agencies, we have been seeing fewer and fewer qualified applicants. This has resulted in staffing shortages throughout most of the state. As a result, the probation field is quickly becoming what I call a “mercenary” field where, staff float from county positions based on the “highest bidder.” This, as most of you know, is already happening and readily apparent in our partner law enforcement agencies within our county. Although our Probation Department has yet to feel this directly, several of our surrounding counties are currently doing so.

In addition, since at least 2012, the Probation Department has seen a substantial increase in duties and responsibilities being imposed by state legislation. However, over that same time

period the Probation Department has not had a class/comp study done to properly address adequate monetary compensation for these additional duties. Over the last few years, most of our comparison counties have done evaluations of duties which resulted in substantial raises, thus increasing the disparity of pay between the counties. As most of these counties implanted these raises over multi-year deals, pay disparity will continue to widen over the next several years. We have also seen a change in retirement benefits, such as an overall reduction in safety retirement, that have made positions less attractive to potential applicants. All of this coupled, with unprecedented raises in inflation has only exacerbated the concerns and needs of our current staff and has caused a stark reduction in qualified applicants for open positions.

Unfortunately, the majority of the above issues can only be addressed through monetary compensation. I understand, as a colleague of mine stated this is “the perfect storm,” that the county is facing substantial fiscal concerns along with county wide MOU negotiations. This is unfortunate, but it is my belief that we must address these issues – but we cannot address them combined into one. If you try to do both at the same time, you will never address the core issues and as a county we will continue to be non-competitive in the job market and we will continue to lose our best and most qualified staff to higher paying counties.

We must first address the need to provide a competitive wage, then come back with how we are going to pay for those increases. Increasing wages to be competitive and attract potential employees, which as you know, could, depending on the size of the increases, cause substantial reduction in staffing positions and services provided – but clearly it is unavoidable. In addition, this should not be addressed collectively by the Board. Ultimately, not every department will face equal reductions in service and staffing. It is my belief, the “how to pay for it,” is something each department head must plan for and address individually before providing the Board with their recommendations.

<u>Suggestions to help with Recruitment and Retention (for the Probation Department)</u>:

- Conduct a class comp study and bring positions in-line with the median of our comparison counties. The Probation Department is a smaller size department with several probation-specific positions. I believe a class comp study could be performed specific to this department for little overall cost.
- In conjunction, subsequent to this increase, in following years of MOU Agreement continue to provide CPI based salary increases, but move the cap to a maximum of 5% per year.
- Expand benefits to include:
    - Increase vacation accrual for lateral transfers to include all prior relevant job experience in all probation specific positions to include management, supervisions and line officers.
    - Substantially increase county match contributions to the 457 deferred comp program.
    - Incentive Pay (similar to POST Incentive for Sheriff’s Office) for additional, STC advanced training (ex: Leadership, Supervisory, Management, Executive academies).

Public Works Department

Employment challenges in the Public Works Department are similar to many of the challenges being experienced by a number of other County departments. Currently, our greatest employment hurdle has been that of licensure (in the Road Maintenance and Transit Divisions). It is my belief the primary driver of this phenomena is competition with adjacent jurisdiction offering greater compensation.

In order to attract and retain quality, productive and conscientious employees the Department will continue to exercise flex schedules and attempt to inform and educate potential candidates as to the 'intangibles' associated with Colusa County employment. Quality of life is sometime measurable by other means than purely finical.

Sheriff

As of January 31, 2023, the Sheriff's office has the following number of vacancies: Dispatchers (3), Correctional Officers (1), Sheriff Deputies (5), and Sheriff Technicians (1).

Historically, we have had success filling vacancies for Sheriff Technicians and Correctional Officers. However, we struggle to attract and retain Dispatchers. Dispatching requires an individual that can multi-task and is comfortable sitting for long periods in an isolated environment. These aspects of the job, accompanied with working weekends, holidays and graveyards have proven to be a main factor for staff resigning.

Deputy Sheriff's applications are rare. We might average one application every 2-3 months and rarely do they pass our background process. The last 2 deputies that resigned left for higher paying positions.

Several of the most recent exit interviews reflect people are leaving for higher paying jobs. The majority enjoyed their co-workers and supervisors and felt the department was a positive place to work. However, the disparity in pay was their deciding factor in leaving.

With many surrounding counties giving raises and offering signing bonuses to sworn personnel, recruitment and retention is only going to get more challenging.

Treasurer Tax Collector

Treasurer- Tax Collector Allocations are as follows: Elected Official, Assistant Treasurer-Tax Collector, Account Technician, Account Clerk III and a part-time (.53%) Account Clerk I/II. We are small and efficient.

My department has been relatively fortunate over all but have felt the effects of the Counties' retention and recruitment problems. In 2016, the current Assistant Treasurer-Tax Collector was hired due to the retirement of her predecessor. In 2018, our senior Account Technician retired. Fortunately, we were able to promote from within for her position and hire externally to replace the Account Clerk position. In 2022, our Account Technician accepted a position with

Yolo-Solano which included a substantial increase in pay and benefits and offered both flex and work from home options. We again were fortunate in that we were able to promote from within.

Our difficulty lies primarily with the part time position. In the past 10 years we have had no less than six employees fill this position, only one who promoted within the department. Full-time work and increased salary were the primary reasons for separation for the part time position.