

County budget goes back to the drawing board

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Calaveras County Administrative Officer Timothy Lutz will look at trimming 5 percent from the proposed Fiscal Year 2018-19 General Fund budget before bringing a final spending plan back to the Board of Supervisors in September.

Direction from the board came Thursday at the end of three days of budget hearings.

Lutz had presented the board with a proposed budget that had a nearly \$9.5 million deficit.

With the county looking at nearly a \$68 million General Fund budget in 2018-19, a 5 percent cut would reduce it by \$3.4 million to \$64.6 million.

Board Chairman Gary Tofanelli said he had an earlier conversation with Lutz about trimming the budget 5 percent and wanted to get the board's feedback on this option.

Tofanelli said he also emailed County Auditor Rebecca Callen for her opinion on the proposed budget. While Callen agreed with the CAO's budget proposal, Tofanelli said, she had concerns the county could face financial issues the following year.

The rest of the board agreed Lutz should meet with department heads in the meantime to arrive at the 5 percent decrease in projected spending.

District 5 Supervisor Clyde Clapp said he was concerned with the gap between revenue and spending and a 5 percent reduction in expenses "would be a huge help."

District 4 Supervisor Dennis Mills cautioned the county to stay within projected growth rates and not add staffing that will later have to be laid off. He called it creating "a poison pill for the future."

District 3 Supervisor Michael Oliveira agreed the county should not go on a hiring binge only to lay off employees in the future.

"We need to provide the services we can and keep staff employed," he said.

District 2 Supervisor Jack Garamendi pointed out the board had only trimmed about \$1,000 in the budget hearings.

He was critical of the board for not giving better direction as department heads made presentations the past three days while "singing for their supper."

He went along with the 5 percent proposal "or next year at this time we'll have some horrible conversations with people, I'd like to smooth that out."