

Katherine Douglas *Public Comment - COLAB*

From: Andy Caldwell <andy@colabsbc.org>
Sent: Monday, June 10, 2024 9:23 AM
To: sbcob
Cc: Steve Lavagnino; Bob Nelson; Joan Hartmann; Das Williams; Laura Capps
Subject: County Budget: Broken Promises and Misplaced Priorities

Importance: High

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COLAB

The Coalition of Labor, Agriculture & Business

Public Comment County Budget Hearings
6-10-2024

Dear Supervisors,

Due to the extremely limited opportunity to share our comments verbally (approximately 60 seconds per department), COLAB is writing to your board to address the broken promises and misplaced priorities in this year's budget.

The 2024-25 proposed final budget represents an abysmal failure in several respects as it pertains to ethics, the economy, and the environment.

Regarding ethics, county supervisors, years ago, promised to address the gargantuan shortfall in maintaining our roads, parks, and buildings by spending an additional 18% per year in increases from discretionary revenue (revenue that is not bound by state and federal mandates).

Accordingly, the county went from spending a paltry \$1 million per year on maintenance to \$15 million from their general fund (discretionary) monies. Other funds to maintain infrastructure come from federal and state gas taxes and SB1 funds. 2024 marks the first of five years in a row that the sups are planning on renegeing on their promise to add the 18% funding even though this will doom their commitment to catch up on over \$500 million in maintenance shortfalls.

Instead of serving your constituents, the budget proposes to spend the money on your staff. When did averting layoffs become a higher priority than public safety and infrastructure? That is, besides averting layoffs, the budget proposes to spend the money on things like racial justice grants (\$275k), a new County DEI Coordinator (\$100k plus?), \$2.4 million electric vehicle infrastructure, and over \$1 million on their climate action plan and

clean vehicle program. Moreover, your board is still failing to maintain the capacity of the county jail, by way of virtually closing the south county jail, without increasing the capacity of the north county jail commensurately. Moreover, how is it a higher priority that each supervisor maintains their own off-budget individual slush fund, read that “earmarks”, that add up to \$100k per year for each supervisor?

All in all, the county budget grew by over \$100 million in the last year, meaning out of a \$1.6 billion budget, your board has no excuse to fail to maintain our crumbling roads and other county infrastructure, which is going to cause you to fall further and further behind over the next five years.

Regarding the economy, the county (Social Services Dept.) had the audacity to list \$75 million per month in welfare benefits as “economic stimulus” with a multiplier effect no less and as a departmental accomplishment! Let us explain why this poverty indicator is nothing to celebrate!

When somebody earns and spends money, that money “multiplies” throughout our economy as it is used to pay vendors and suppliers. However, productive members of society must pay higher taxes to pay for welfare benefits, or worse yet, when government borrows the money to pay for those welfare benefits, it causes inflation. Either way, the money spent does not multiply throughout our economy except as it pertains to the growth of government. Instead, it represents a form of debt and deficit spending. Moreover, portions of the money get siphoned off (divided, not multiplied) by bureaucrats in Washington, DC, Sacramento, and Santa Barbara County who all get paid to manage the welfare programs. Santa Barbara County’s Social Services department has 900 employees and a budget of some \$236 million per year not counting the \$900 million per year doled out to residents by way of debt and deficit spending. This is not an accomplishment.

Regarding environmental and ecological failure, consider the fact that an organization the county belongs to, and helps lead (Das Williams chairs the governing board), 3CE (a renewable energy farce), is raping the environment to save it! 3CE is paving over the desert to build a solar farm near the town of Boron, including stirring up Valley Fever fungus spores and removing some 3,500 Joshua Trees (some of which are 100 years old!) that are now being considered for protection by the CA Endangered Species Act. Another project of theirs, involves a 550-mile transmission line through pristine, undisturbed wilderness including Native American cultural and heritage sites, which is being challenged in court by affected tribes and environmentalists. Would you have approved any of these projects in your own jurisdiction?

Locally, the county has protected poison ivy, oak trees, nonnative eucalyptus trees and even the lichen on boulders, thereby proving themselves environmentally righteous at home, but wretched hypocrites as it pertains to previously undisturbed habitat elsewhere, including the deep strip mines in third world countries supplying metals (lithium and cobalt) for your green revolution.

Please ask yourselves if the majority of taxpayers in our county are in support of these broken promises and misplaced priorities!

Andy Caldwell
COLAB