



**BOARD OF SUPERVISORS  
AGENDA LETTER**

**Agenda Number:**

**Clerk of the Board of Supervisors**  
105 E. Anapamu Street, Suite 407  
Santa Barbara, CA 93101  
(805) 568-2240

**Submitted on:**  
**(COB Stamp)**

**Department Name:** Human Resources  
**Department No.:** 064  
**Agenda Date:** September 23, 2025  
**Placement:** Administrative Agenda  
**Estimated Time:** N/A  
**Continued Item:** No  
**If Yes, date from:** <Insert Date>  
**Vote Required:** Majority

**TO:** Board of Supervisors  
**FROM:** Department Director(s): Kristine Schmidt, Human Resources Director  
Lisa Plowman, Planning & Development Director  
Contact: Erin Jeffery, Fiscal & Workforce Planning Division Chief  
**SUBJECT:** Building and Safety Classification and Compensation Changes

**County Counsel Concurrence**

As to form: Yes

**Other Concurrence:**

As to form: Choose an item.

**Auditor-Controller Concurrence**

As to form: Choose an item.

**Recommended Actions:**

That the Board of Supervisors:

- a) Adopt an amendment to the salary resolution in Attachment A to revise the County of Santa Barbara's Classification and Salary Plan Sections 2 and 3 to establish additional classifications and salary ranges; adjust the titles and salary ranges for other classifications in the Building and Safety Division of the Planning and Development Department; and establish a new allowance; and
- b) Determine that the above actions are exempt from California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) review per CEQA Guidelines Section 15378(b)(4) since the recommended actions are government funding mechanisms or other government fiscal activities which do not involve any commitment to any specific project which may result in a potentially significant physical impact on the environment.

**Summary Text:**

Effective January 19, 2026, approval of the recommended actions will:

- Retitle existing classifications: Building Engineering Inspector I/II/III, Building Engineering Inspector Specialist, and Building Engineering Inspector Supervising to Building Inspector I/II/III, Building Inspector Specialist, Building Inspector Supervising, respectively; and Assistant Plan Checker to Plans Examiner.

- Increase the salary ranges for the above classifications, as well as Grading Inspector I/II and Grading Inspector Senior, by various amounts from 8% to 24%.
- Establish two new job classifications: Building Permit Technician Senior and Plans Examiner Senior.
- Establish a Special Duty Allowance for no more than one employee in the classification of Plan Check Engineer who holds a CASp (Certified Access Specialist) certification.

**Discussion:**

County Human Resources (HR) recommends retitling classifications within the Planning and Development Department's Building and Safety Division to better reflect industry standards and clarify responsibilities. The "Building Engineering Inspector" series (Inspector I–III, Specialist, and Supervisor) would be simplified to "Building Inspector" to avoid implying an engineering license is required and to improve public and interagency understanding. Similarly, "Assistant Plan Checker" would be retitled "Plans Examiner" to emphasize its professional, technical nature and align with common industry terminology, moving away from a subordinate-sounding title.

County Human Resources recommends increasing salary ranges in the Building & Safety Division to align with market rates and ensure consistent career progression. A compensation study found these positions lag 6%–20% below the market median. Adjustments are proposed to these classifications ranging from 8.68% to 24.24% increases. The increases establish clear pay differentials between the different levels and maintain internal equity, particularly for unique roles such as the Grading Inspector series. In addition, HR recommends creating two new classifications—Building Permit Technician Senior and Plans Examiner Senior—to strengthen career pathways and organizational structure.

A 5% Special Duty Allowance shall be granted to no more than one employee in the classification of Plan Check Engineer in the Building & Safety Division who holds a CASp (Certified Access Specialist) certification. The CASp certification demonstrates expertise in accessibility standards and compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), enabling the engineer to perform specialized plan review and inspection duties related to accessible design.

In line with the Employer-Employee Relations Policy, the County notified all recognized employee organizations of its intent to place the new classifications in Bargaining Unit 28 (Engineers and Technicians, Non-Supervisory), represented by the Engineers and Technicians Association (ETA). No objections were raised, and the County reached a side letter agreement with ETA on August 15, 2025, with an effective date of January 19, 2026.

**Background:**

Since 2021, the Building and Safety Division has struggled with significant staffing challenges, filling nine vacancies—about one-third of its workforce—many of which remained open for up to 25 months. These shortages delayed permit reviews and forced reliance on contractors at additional cost. Recruitment difficulties were linked to compensation levels that lagged neighboring jurisdictions, as confirmed by a comprehensive 2024 market study. Beyond pay concerns, HR's review highlighted outdated job classifications that did not fully reflect the work performed, required soft skills, technological competencies, or modern qualification pathways. To improve retention and service delivery, the department also requested new classifications for Building Permit Technician Senior and Plans Examiner Senior. In July, the Board of Supervisors authorized HR to commence discussions with the appropriate employee representative groups on potential updates to both classifications and compensation.

**Fiscal Analysis:**

Costs for these changes are projected not to exceed \$254,908, for the remainder of Fiscal Year 2025-26, \$568,870 in Fiscal Year 2026-27, \$585,936 in Fiscal Year 2027-28, and ongoing thereafter. Funding for these positions is primarily fee based. The Planning and Development Department will present options, including a fee study, to the Board of Supervisors in November of 2025 aimed at fully covering these cost increases. If approved, staff will work with the County Executive Office to monitor departmental budgets and will return to the Board with adjustments during the fiscal year, if necessary.

<b>Funding Source</b>	<b>FY 25/26<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>FY 26/27<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>FY 27/28<sup>3</sup></b>	<b>Total</b>
General Fund <sup>4</sup>	\$35,687	\$79,642	\$82,031	<b>\$197,360</b>
Fees	\$219,221	\$489,228	\$503,905	<b>\$1,212,354</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$254,908</b>	<b>\$568,870</b>	<b>\$585,936</b>	<b>\$1,409,714</b>

<sup>1</sup> Becomes effective PP-03 2026 (accounts for 12 pay periods in FY 25/26)

<sup>2</sup> Includes a 3% GSI in FY 26/27 as contracted with ETA

<sup>3</sup> Estimates a 3% GSI in FY 27/28 - TBD in future successor contract negotiations

<sup>4</sup> Applies a 14% GFC percentage that is generally applicable to ETA as a whole

**Potential Impact of Increases on Pension Plan**

The Santa Barbara County Employees' Retirement System (SBCERS) bases retirement plan funding on long-term salary growth assumptions of 3% annual wage inflation plus additional longevity and promotion increases. While actual year-to-year growth may vary, these assumptions are designed to balance out over 20–30 years. If actual growth falls below assumptions, plan funding can be negatively affected; if it exceeds them, actuarial losses may occur. SBCERS reviews and adjusts its assumptions every three years through an actuarial experience study to ensure alignment with real trends. Recent actions included a 3.0% general salary increase for the Engineers & Technicians Association on June 23, 2025, which aligned with SBCERS assumptions. However, the proposed salary range adjustments for Building & Safety classifications add approximately 2.45% above this level, meaning overall increases will exceed actuarial assumptions and result in funding losses—nonetheless these will be balanced over time by future gains, investment returns, inflation, and demographic factors.

**Special Instructions:**

Please email one (1) copy of the Minute Order and fully executed amended Salary Resolution to [HRPositioncontrol@countyofsb.org](mailto:HRPositioncontrol@countyofsb.org) and [HRBLCoordinator@countyofsb.org](mailto:HRBLCoordinator@countyofsb.org).

**Attachments:**

**Attachment A** – Salary Resolution Amendment

**Attachment B** – Proposed Class Specification for Building Permit Technician Senior

**Attachment C** – Proposed Class Specification for Plans Examiner Senior

**Contact Information:**

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