



**BOARD OF SUPERVISORS  
AGENDA LETTER**

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

**Agenda Number:**

**Submitted on:  
(COB Stamp)**

**Department Name:** Human Resources  
**Department No.:** 064  
**Agenda Date:** May 5, 2025  
**Placement:** Departmental Agenda  
**Estimated Time:** 45 MINS  
**Continued Item:** No  
**If Yes, date from:** <Insert Date>  
**Vote Required:** Majority

**TO:** Board of Supervisors  
**FROM:** Department Director(s): Kristine Schmidt, Director of Human Resources  
Contact: Natalie Alvarado, Talent Acquisition & Development Division Chief  
**SUBJECT:** Annual County Workforce Vacancies, Recruitment, and Retention Report and Public Hearing

DocuSigned by:  
*Kristine Schmidt*  
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**County Counsel Concurrence**

As to form: Yes

**Other Concurrence:**

As to form: N/A

**Auditor-Controller Concurrence**

As to form: N/A

**Recommended Actions:**

That the Board of Supervisors:

- a) Conduct a public hearing in accordance with Assembly Bill 2561, and receive and file an annual report on the County’s workforce vacancies and recruitment and retention efforts in Calendar Year 2025; and
- b) Determine that the above-recommended actions are not a project that is subject to environmental review under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), pursuant to CEQA Guidelines section 15378(b)[5], finding that the actions consist of administrative activities of government that will not result in direct or indirect physical changes in the environment.

**Summary Text:**

Assembly Bill (AB) 2561, codified in Government Code section 3502.3, took effect on January 1, 2025. AB 2561 requires public agencies, including the County of Santa Barbara, to hold at least one public hearing per fiscal year to discuss vacancies, recruitment, and retention efforts. This report includes an update on the County’s vacancy, recruitment, and retention efforts for Calendar Year 2025.

The Human Resources Director will also give a short overview of the status of current vacancies.

Because this report reflects January through December 2025, it does not take into account the large number of position reductions (vacant or filled) taken in the latter part of this fiscal year, nor those that are recommended to be eliminated as budget balancing reductions effective July 1, 2026.

**Discussion:**

Effective January 1, 2025, Government Code section 3502.3 requires public agencies to present, at least once per fiscal year prior to budget adoption, information at a public hearing regarding the status of vacancies and recruitment and retention efforts. The law also requires agencies to identify any needed changes to policies, procedures, or recruitment practices that may contribute to hiring challenges.

At this public hearing, any recognized employee organization representing a bargaining unit is entitled to present to the Board regarding vacancies and recruitment and retention efforts within its unit. No minimum vacancy threshold is required for an employee organization to make a presentation. However, if a bargaining unit’s vacancy rate exceeds 20%, the recognized employee organization may request that the County include the following additional information:

1. The total number of job vacancies within a bargaining unit.
2. The total number of applicants for vacant positions within the bargaining unit.
3. The average time to fill positions, measured from job posting to hire
4. Opportunities to improve compensation and other working conditions.

For this fiscal year, the County has elected to hold a single public hearing addressing vacancies and recruitment and retention efforts across all departments and bargaining units. Attachment B outlines the Board of Supervisors previously adopted public hearing procedures regarding vacancies pursuant to AB 2561.

**County of Santa Barbara Bargaining Units:**

The County has 31 bargaining units (21 represented and 10 unrepresented). For the purposes of this report, the unrepresented bargaining units are grouped together as they do not have a recognized employee organization that can request further information under Government Code section 3502.3. The County’s overall funded FTE for Calendar Year 2025 across represented and unrepresented groups was 4,736.96.

Given the position reductions recommended in the preliminary Fiscal Year 2026-27 Budget, budgeted FTEs in both represented and unrepresented bargaining units are expected to be reduced in 2026. While most bargaining units will be impacted, the proposed reductions are expected to primarily impact Service Employees International Union, Local 721 (SEIU 721) and Service Employees International Union, Local 620 (SEIU 620).

Represented Bargaining Unit Number & Name	Budgeted FTEs <sup>1</sup>
10: Physicians and Psychiatrists, Non-Supervisory	37.8
11: Physicians and Psychiatrists, Supervisory	4.6
12: Fire Fighters, Non-Supervisory	157.0
13: Fire Fighters, Supervisory	72.0
14: Law Enforcement, Non-Supervisory	478.0

<sup>1</sup> This number includes a job role that exists with funding behind it and is either filled or vacant. FTE measures hours worked rather than the number of employees, allowing part-time hours to be aggregated into the equivalent of full-time positions for budgeting, forecasting, and staffing purposes. The county is able to fill any FTE that is 0.5 or greater.

15: Law Enforcement, Supervisor	69.0
17: Deputy District Attorneys	59.0
18: Probation Peace Officers, Non-Supervisory	195.0
19: Probation Peace Officers, Supervisory	21.0
20: Deputy Public Defenders	50.0
21: Human Services, Non-Supervisory	458.0
22: Human Services, Supervisory	65.0
23: Clerical Services, Non-Supervisory	698.38
24: Admin, Tech, Ofc and Health Services, Non-Supervisory	1,042.15
25: Admin, Tech, Ofc and Health Services, Supervisory	266.75
26: Craft, Tech and Maintenance Services, Non-Supervisory	267.75
27: Craft, Tech and Maintenance Services, Supervisory	59.0
28: Engineers and Technicians, Non-Supervisory	102.5
29: Engineers and Technicians, Supervisory	46.0
30: Civil Attorneys Association	30.0
44: Law Enforcement Management	32.0

Unrepresented Bargaining Units	Budgeted FTEs <sup>1</sup>
Unrepresented managers, attorneys, confidential employees, department heads, assistant department heads, elected supervisors and officials	523.03

Vacancies, Recruitment, and Retention

Vacancies occur for a variety of reasons, including the addition of new positions, promotions and transfers, and separations due to retirement, resignation, or termination. In general, Human Resources and departmental staff work to fill vacancies as efficiently as possible.

During the past year, however, departments also made strategic decisions to hold certain positions vacant in anticipation of fiscal constraints. This approach allowed departments to manage costs, support development of a balanced budget, and reduce the likelihood of future layoffs if position reductions are required in Fiscal Year 2026–27. Where operationally necessary, recruitment efforts continued to ensure continuity of services, minimize overtime, and avoid disruption to core functions.

While AB 2561 now formalizes annual reporting requirements, timely recruitment and hiring have long been County priorities. The County continues to utilize a range of recruitment strategies, including expanded advertising, referral incentives, and hiring and promotional incentives, particularly for hard-to-fill classifications.

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Throughout the 2025 Calendar Year (CY), the County's average vacancy rate across all bargaining units was 9.0%. The vacancy rate is calculated monthly by dividing the number of **funded** vacancies by the total number of **funded** positions. The 2025 vacancy rate reflects a 3.51% decrease from the prior year and demonstrates a commitment from the County to more accurately track vacant funded versus unfunded positions, as well as progress in recruitment and retention efforts of employees.

As of December 31, 2025, the vacancy rate for each bargaining group was under 20%, with the exception of bargaining unit 10: Physicians and Psychiatrists, Non-Supervisory, which had a vacancy rate of 38.23%. The Union of American Physicians and Dentists (UAPD), which represents bargaining unit 10, has been notified of the vacancy rate and requested additional information be presented in the public hearing on this bargaining unit as outlined above. The Human Resources Department plans to include the following information in the presentation for bargaining unit 10:

1. The total number of job vacancies within a bargaining unit.
2. The total number of applicants for vacant positions within the bargaining unit.
3. The average time to fill positions, measured from job posting to hire
4. Opportunities to improve compensation and other working conditions.

**Background:**

Assembly Bill (AB) 2561 was advanced by labor organizations to increase transparency and accountability regarding job vacancies in local government. The bill was opposed by many public employers, public service organizations, and the California State Association of Counties (CSAC), which raised concerns about the administrative burden and the absence of state reimbursement. Despite this opposition, AB 2561 was enacted into law.

It is broadly recognized that vacancy rates have increased across approximately 3,800 local agencies subject to these requirements, as well as among other employers throughout California. A certain level of vacancies is expected and reflects normal workforce movement, including promotions, retirements, and employee turnover. In addition, organizations may strategically manage vacancies throughout the fiscal year to address operational needs within budget constraints.

At the same time, ongoing labor shortages in California have contributed to elevated vacancy rates across many sectors, including those with competitive compensation. For counties, which often operate within limited funding structures and provide critical public services, recruitment and retention challenges can be particularly pronounced. Higher vacancy rates are commonly observed in areas such as behavioral health, law enforcement, corrections, employment services, and social services.

While AB 2561 does not apply to the State of California, similar workforce challenges exist at the state level. The statewide vacancy rate has remained above 10 percent for at least the past two decades.

**Fiscal and Facilities Impacts:**

While there are no direct financial impacts, AB 2561 represents an unreimbursed state mandate that will increase administrative burdens on recruitment staff, negatively affecting the availability of staff time to work toward filling vacancies.

**Attachments:**

**Attachment A** – Vacancy, Recruitment, and Retention Data for 2025

**Attachment B** – Adopted Public Hearing Procedures Regarding Vacancies Pursuant to AB 2561

**Contact Information:**

Natalie Alvarado

Talent Acquisition & Development Division Chief

[nalvarado@countyofsb.org](mailto:nalvarado@countyofsb.org)

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