



Response to Questions on the FY 2010 Advertised Budget Plan

Request By: Chairman Bulova, Supervisors Smyth and McKay

Question: What “menu” of options might be available to employees to address the morale issues associated with not receiving any pay adjustments in FY 2010? Are there any overtime savings that might be able to be generated through this?

Response:

As a result of a number of initiatives undertaken in the County in recent years, agencies already have significant flexibility as it relates to teleworking and flexible scheduling designed to meet specific employee needs, while maintaining quality services to our residents. While the County has been very successful in promoting telework, with 28 percent of eligible employees currently participating, this program does not result in significant overtime savings. The benefits are more in the areas of increased morale, reduced transportation costs, reduced impact on the environment and support for balancing work/life issues.

Typically overtime scheduling is required to meet specific service coverage in the County’s 24/7 operations, primarily in public safety, so flexibility in the areas mentioned above will not generate overtime savings. The current shift structures have been designed over time to meet service requirements and provide some degree of flexibility to the employee.

A voluntary reduction in hours is currently an option if it works for both the employee and the agency however, if this were to be “promoted,” it is expected that the number of volunteers is likely to be small and the associated savings minimal. A broader, mandated reduction in hours could generate savings would likely exacerbate any morale issues.

Early retirement has also been suggested as an alternative to abolishing occupied positions. While early retirement or buyout plans sound like good alternatives, the reality is that they rarely result in overall savings. For the savings to occur and for RIFs to be avoided, the "right people" (those in the job classes impacted by the potential RIF) need to take the early retirement option and then those positions must be permanently abolished. Otherwise the cost is simply transferred to the retirement systems which in this economic climate is not advisable. Additionally, the County's DROP programs were implemented to encourage retention of our longer-term employees which would run counter to an early retirement option.