

Response to Questions on the FY 2011 Budget

Request By: Supervisor McKay

Question: What would be the advantages or disadvantages of de-funding the proposed 298 merit positions for reduction versus complete elimination so that agencies still have the staffing levels to address needs in the future?

Response: The FY 2011 Proposed Budget includes the elimination of 298 positions. Agencies with a relatively large number of positions reductions are noted below:

Agency 51, Park Authority	41 positions
Libraries	81 positions
Community Services Board	15 positions
Fire and Rescue	34 positions
Police	64 positions
Land Development Services	18 positions

The advantage to these agencies of retaining these positions but holding them vacant is that if the County's revenue picture improves significantly and resources become available which could be appropriated to County agencies, these positions could then be filled without additional Board approval. Every County agency for which position reductions have been recommended could benefit from this strategy. Typically, new positions are difficult to justify and are most often limited to the annual budget process. In the past, agencies with a new or expanded staffing requirement have had to wait until the annual process to request, justify and obtain approval for new positions.

In recent years, the County Executive has maintained a limited number of vacant positions which he can allocate to agencies based on emergency staffing requirements. This position pool, of approximately 10 to 15 positions, has been utilized since FY 1999. Vacant positions included in the pool are allocated by the County Executive on an as needed basis; agencies receiving the position pool allocations are required to fully fund the cost of the position. As a result, some flexibility, although limited, exists to deal with selected staffing changes during the fiscal year.

More importantly, one of the major themes of the FY 2011 budget is sustainability which focuses on the need to make budget reductions that the County can sustain over the long term. Agencies should not have the expectation that additional resources will be available within the short term. Continued spending and position reductions will likely be necessary during FY 2012 and FY 2013, and funding increases will be reasonably targeted to core services and programs. Even with the FY 2011 position reductions; there remain unfunded, vacant positions in County agencies in order to meet the higher turnover rates included in the budget. For example, the Park Authority currently has approximately 75 positions vacant in Agency 51, Park Authority and in Fund 170, Park Revenue Fund. These existing vacant and unfunded positions will provide flexibility in the future to address new staffing requirements without the need for additional positions. In addition, should workload requirements increase in the future, agencies will likely use overtime to meet immediate staffing requirements until additional positions can be justified and approved.