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PRESS RELEASE

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COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS BUDGET WORKSHOPS APRIL 17-21
Public Invited to Attend and Follow Online or Via CSBTv 20

(SANTA BARBARA, Calif.) – The Board of Supervisors will hold budget workshops next week on April 17, 19, and 21. These public hearings will convene at 9 a.m. in the County Administration Building, Fourth Floor Hearing Room, 105 East Anapamu, Santa Barbara. Remote testimony and public comment will be available at the Joseph Centeno Betteravia Government Administration Building at 511 East Lakeside Parkway, Santa Maria.

At the workshops, the Board will hear from County departments on their major initiatives and draft 2017-18 budgets. The workshops provide an early opportunity for input prior to completion of the Recommended FY 2017-18 Budget and Proposed FY 2018-19 Budget, to be released in May. The public is encouraged to attend the workshops and provide input regarding the ideas being developed by staff to restructure operations and address how to fund vital services – and to offer their own suggestions.

Final budget decisions will not be made at the April workshops, but on June 12, 14 and 16 when the Board holds budget adoption hearings. The three-day April workshops provide earlier and greater opportunity for the Board of Supervisors to provide input to the budget process prior to the June hearings.

“Being new to the Board this year and facing a significant budget gap, I appreciate the early budget workshops that provide the Board an opportunity to review anticipated revenues and expenditures and ask questions,” said Third District Supervisor Joan Hartmann, Chair of the Board. “I’m grateful to the County’s executive and budget teams, and all the County Departments for putting together informative and thorough presentations on the key initiatives and work plans they are proposing.”

“As County staff began fiscal year 2017-18 budget preparations, including evaluating all costs to provide services and revenue for these services, several challenges became clear that equate to significant cuts in services and the possibility of raising new revenue,” said County Executive Officer Mona Miyasato. “Some of the main reasons include an increase in employee costs such as pensions, funding public safety operations, increases in mental health services, and reductions in state and federal revenue.”

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More than 70 percent of County revenue is restricted for specified services, leaving less than 30 percent of the budget for discretionary spending on Board priorities. Facing a challenging budget scenario, County managers began discussions in the fall and preparing their budget plans in December 2016. Budget cuts and cost saving strategies of approximately \$39.5 million have been proposed, with most in the Social Services Department due to reduced or limited State funding. Other reductions are also under discussion for public safety departments, Behavioral Wellness and others.

“Adopting a balanced budget in each of the next several years will be complex and challenging,” said Miyasato. “As difficult as this will be, we are better positioned to meet this challenge now than in the past. The Board has fully built up our rainy day fund, the Strategic Reserve, over the last few years, and has developed plans to ensure our major funding commitments are in place for the new Northern Branch Jail, enhanced fire services, deferred maintenance, and pension and retiree health liabilities.”

“Next year, we are focused on minimizing the impact to the community and organization, while taking the opportunity to re-vision how County services are provided in the future,” added Miyasato. “We began a Budget Rebalancing process to examine all operations to determine how best to structure County government for the coming years and where savings may be found. This is an ongoing, long-term effort that will require we look at rebalancing our finances and focusing on our highest priorities to ensure a sustainable future.”

The recommended budget is scheduled to be released in May and presented to the Board on June 12, 14, and 16. To review documents for next week’s budget workshops, go to <http://www.countyofsb.org/ceo/budget/bw2017.sbc>.

For information about Santa Barbara County government, go to www.CountyofSB.org.