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BOARD OF SUPERVISORS RECEIVES BUDGET REQUESTS, ANTICIPATES MORE SIGNIFICANT FINANCIAL CHALLENGES IN 2012-13 FISCAL YEAR

Alameda County officials revealed this week that the County will face another significant budget gap in the coming fiscal year, as challenges including State cutbacks and new responsibilities in law enforcement and other areas will weigh heavily on local finances.

The news came during two budget work sessions held by the Board of Supervisors as an important early step in the process of developing an Alameda County Budget for Fiscal Year 2012-13.

If adopted, State budget cuts proposed by Governor Brown would have a significant negative impact on vital programs administered by the County, including financial subsidies for individuals and families affected by persistent unemployment and child-care programs to help parents obtain and keep productive jobs.

“The Governor’s budget would essentially decimate resources families in our community need,” said Lori Jones, director of Alameda County’s Social Services Agency. Jones said her agency, which administers CalWORKs welfare-to-work benefits and other public assistance programs, continues to struggle with the realities of a down economy. “We are operating with a budget that is \$26 million less than it was three years ago, while the demand for our services is significantly greater,” she said.

The Board of Supervisors also got an early taste of the difficulties that are expected to come with “realignment,” the sweeping shift of key services from State to local government responsibility. In the area of law enforcement alone, Alameda County stands to lose more than \$20 million because it will no longer be able to contract with other counties and the federal government to house inmates from other communities in local jails, Assistant Sheriff Brett M. Keteles said.

"It is still difficult to predict how much revenue counties will receive for taking on new responsibilities under realignment," said Supervisor Carson. "Our budget process will continue to be uncertain until there is some resolution in our discussions with State leaders."

The work sessions allowed officials from County Departments/Agencies to articulate to the Board their anticipated budgetary needs for the 2012-13 fiscal year. These needs are based on each department/agency's estimated costs to maintain services at current levels.

County budget analysts will now evaluate these estimates and compare them to the anticipated levels of funding Alameda County expects to have in FY 2012-13. This comparison will be used to come up with the estimated Budget Gap – to be released later this month - that will figure prominently in the process the Board of Supervisors will undergo in the coming months to develop a Final County Budget for FY 2012-13.

Following the work sessions, County Administrator Susan S. Muranishi praised County Department/Agency heads for their ongoing work to keep costs down. "By holding positions vacant, reducing operating expenses, implementing efficiency initiatives and aggressive revenue collections, our County departments have achieved significant savings that will help in the coming budget process," Muranishi said. "These measures mean our existing staff has had to work that much harder – and we appreciate that."

Public hearings by the Board in June will mark the final step in that process. By law, Alameda County must have a Final Budget approved by July 1.