

## PRESENTATION FOR LWVSD UNITS ON COUNTY GOVERNMENT, JAN. 2010

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Additional Resources: January, 2010 LWVSD Voter article. LWVSD's *Political Directory*, 2009-10. San Diego County's website is [www.co.san-diego.ca.us](http://www.co.san-diego.ca.us)

**County Government Authority:** The County of San Diego is a political subdivision of the State of California. It has its own Charter but is also governed by the State Constitution. The County funnels funds and grants from both the state and the federal governments and oversees the administration of projects they fund. For instance, the County School District is funded by the State, but the County distributes the money to the 42 school districts in the county. There are eighteen separate cities in the San Diego County but some of them contract with the County for services such as sheriff and library. The County also serves as the municipal government for unincorporated parts of the county. Areas such as Ramona are still unincorporated.

**Elected Officials and Districts:** There are four elected county-wide administrators: Sheriff, Treasurer/Tax Collector, District Attorney, and Assessor/Recorder/Clerk. The Sheriff resigned and was replaced in July, so William Gore was appointed.. Dan McAllister has been the Treasurer/Tax Collector for several years. Bonnie Dumanis is the District Attorney. The Assessor/Recorder/Clerk also resigned a year ago and was replaced by David Butler. The next primary election for all four offices is June, 2010. Of course, the Board of Supervisors (BOS) is elected every four years, but their terms are staggered as follows:

**District 1** - Greg Cox was first elected in 1995. The next District 1 election is in 2012. District 1 is the southwest part of the County including part of the city of San Diego, Chula Vista, National City, and Imperial Beach.

**District 2** - Dianne Jacob was elected to the Board of Supervisors (BOS) for her fifth term in 2008, so the next election for District 2 is 2012. She has the largest district (2000 square miles) which goes from Poway through the Anza Borego Desert to Imperial County and from the eastern edge of District 1 to Imperial County along the Mexican border. She does not have any part of the City of San Diego in her district.

**District 3** - Pam Slater-Price was elected to the BOS in 1992. The next election for District 3 is also in 2012. The District is very irregular but kind of an H shape. It goes along the coast from Pacific Beach to Encinitas plus the inland cities and neighborhoods of Escondido, Rancho Bernardo, Scripps Ranch, Tierrasanta and across the Carmel Valley area.

**District 4** - Ron Roberts is serving his fourth term on the BOS as Supervisor for District 4. District 4's next election is June 2010. The District is in the city of San Diego and runs from Paradise Hills to University City and Miramar; it includes the College District, Linda Vista, City Heights, Balboa Park, and Golden Hill.

**District 5** - Bill Horn joined the BOS in 1994. District 5's next election is in June, 2010. Supervisor Horn also has a huge district (1,800 square miles) running from the coast to Imperial County including Carlsbad, Oceanside, Camp Pendleton, Vista, Borrego Springs and goes inside District 3's H-shaped boundaries to pick up Rancho Santa Fe and 4-S Ranch.

Maps are on the San Diego County website.

**Elections:** As you recall, if a candidate wins more than 50% of the vote in the Primary Election, there is no runoff. Independents may not vote in the Primary because much of the ballot is divided by party line. Currently, there are no term limits for anyone elected for county office in San Diego County. However, there is a ballot measure to be voted on in June, 2010 which will limit the BOS to two four-year terms. Signatures were gathered by the Service Employees International Union. The LWVC has a position opposing term limits on elected officials because the League believes that elected officials should be voted in and out of office by the electorate. (Discussion)

**Redistricting:** An Advisory Committee develops a redistricting plan, but the BOS can make changes after the committee has made its recommendations to them. This occurred in 2001 when Bill Horn proposed changes which were adopted by the BOS. He switched Escondido with Rancho Santa Fe. By law, two districts must be substantially outside the City of San Diego.

**BOS Meetings:** The BOS meets every Tuesday and Wednesday. They do not have committees where some of them concentrate on certain aspects of the government, so there is a lot of deliberation and discussion at the Board meetings, much like you would see at a committee meeting. "The Board exercises both executive and legislative powers, and as an appeal body has semi-judicial powers as well." Three members constitute a quorum, so policy can be made by two of them. ("The Structure of County/Regional Government in San Diego: A 1985 Update", LWVSDC.) They each have staff members ranging from 7 to 11 people. The County Administrator (CAO) must approve each item on the BOS agenda and determines the order of the agenda. The BOS also serves as the Air Pollution Control Board, Flood Control District Board, Housing Authority Board, Independent Development Agency Board, Redevelopment Agency Board, and five Sanitation District Boards. Planning is done at the Wednesday meeting.

The BOS appoints the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO), County Counsel, Probation Officer, and Clerk of the Board. All other appointments are made by the CAO. The County building is on Pacific Highway downtown, but many of the operations are in Kearny Mesa.

**Administration:** There is an appointed Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) who is currently Walt Ekard. He oversees the 16,415 full time equivalent (FTE) employees currently working for the County. The work is divided into 5 Departments: Public Safety has a budget of \$1.3 billion and employs 7,170 which includes probation, but not the state run courts; Health and Human Services has a budget of \$1.9 billion and employs 5,482; Land Use and Environment has a budget of \$427 million and employs 1,562; Community Services has a budget of \$313 million and employs 1,019; and Finance and General Government has a budget of \$569 million and employs 1,182. The Capital Program has a budget of nearly \$100 million in 2009-10. There are 774 fewer FTE this year compared to last - a decrease of 3.5%.

**Budget:** The total 2009-10 budget is \$5 billion. School and court budgets are not included in this. The budget is prepared by the CAO and approved by the BOS. The current budget (2009-10) was adopted last spring and took effect on July 1st. Sources of funding include 24% from the State, 18% from the Feds, 16% from charges for current services, and 19% from property taxes/personal property taxes. Several other smaller sources of income make up the balance. The budget can also be divided into salaries and benefits 32.5%; services and supplies 37%; operating transfers out 8%; capital assets, equipment, and land acquisitions 3%; and other 20%.

In talking with Dan McAllister, we learned that if the State does not fund its programs, the County does not provide the money to continue the programs either. In the 2009-10 State budget, a total of \$31 million was deferred and \$114 million was cut from the San Diego County budget.

A case in point is recycling bottles and cans and getting back the CRV deposit. The State has been using its income from this recycling program in the general fund, so now it has run out of money to run the collection. Not only are the collection people out of work but the people picking up cans and bottles to make a few dollars have few places to take them.

Property taxes stay in the County and are distributed by the Auditor and Controller's office to 110 public agencies in the County. Sales taxes collected by vendors are sent to Sacramento; a portion is returned to the County. The cities and county also collect Transient Occupancy Tax (TOT); the city of San Diego collects \$120 million and the County collects \$3 million.

Budget pie charts and the whole budget are on the County website.

**Neighborhood Investment Funds:** The Supervisors have budgeted \$20 million or \$4 million each in Neighborhood Investment Funds this year and next. Groups and individuals can apply for these grants which follow guidelines established by the BOS. No one has been able or willing to tell us how this money is spent, but we did get some details for Districts 4 and 5 off a recent Board agenda. The amounts vary considerably from \$5,000 to \$100,000 and the projects include scholarships, construction, purchasing a van for serving the homeless, funding a parade, fundraising events, equipping government entities such as a library or security patrol, and equipping nonprofit groups.

**Government Privatization/Outsourcing:** In 1998, the BOS adopted a plan to do comprehensive reengineering to improve services while lowering costs and to put some county services out to bid. Staff input is welcome in this process. In some cases, the county staff won the bid and in other cases, the bid was won by a private or non-profit group. By 1999, there was a \$34 million savings. The County also has a Contract Business Plan Review and a General Management System which plans, implements, monitors, and evaluates all departments including contracts. Further information on outsourcing is presented in a LWVSDC publication, "An Introduction to Government Privatization in San Diego County, 2000".

**Citizen Committees:** There are over 100 standing and special citizen boards, commissions, committees and task forces formed by the BOS and County staff.

**County Departments:** The breadth of the work of the County is overwhelming:

**Public Safety** - 26.6% of the budget:

- a) The **Sheriff's** office provides law enforcement for the unincorporated and contract areas of the county, court services, and detention services.
- b) The **District Attorney** is a State official responsible to the electorate of the County. She/he prosecutes all felonies within the County and all misdemeanors outside the City of San Diego. The DA can initiate criminal investigations including organized crime, white collar crime, and criminal misconduct of public officials. This office also works on crime prevention and victim protection.
- c) The **Public Defender** provides legal aid to those who cannot afford to pay for it.
- d) The **Probation** Department supervises over 20,000 people in a variety of settings.
- e) The **Child Support** office helps the state in locating financially responsible adults to pay child support.
- f) The **Medical Examiner's** office determines the cause of death in problematic cases. They have a newly opened facility which includes a forensic pathologist. They had 11,000 cases in 2008.
- g) **Law Libraries** - there are two law libraries in the county.

h) **Office of Emergency Services** - planning for major disasters is done with the cities and agencies.

Note that the merged Superior/Municipal Courts also try many civil and criminal cases and is a state agency serving the people in San Diego County.

**Health and Human Services** - 37.2% of the budget:

- a) In 1996, the Board of Supervisors approved the merging of several county organizations into the Health and Human Services Agency which delivers 300 discrete programs through six regions, four centralized operating divisions, seven support divisions, and a 20-member executive team.
- b) **Aging and Independence Services (AIS)** provides services to older adults, people with disabilities and their family members to keep clients in their homes, promote healthy and vital living and publicize positive contributions made by older adults and persons with disabilities. Service areas and services for this program include among others Ombudsman- Long Term Care. The Ombudsman LTC Program advocates for people living in various healthcare institutions.
- c) **Behavioral Health Services** includes mental health, alcohol and drug services; they provide prevention, treatment, and interventions.
- d) **Child Welfare Services** is a family-centered and child-focused protective services including child abuse. They administer the Polinsky Children's Center housing temporary emergency cases; San Pasqual Academy housing adolescent foster youth; the foster care program; and adoptions.
- e) **Public Health** is also centered on serving children. There is no county hospital in San Diego, so each hospital contracts with the county for services to indigents. Public Health includes prevention, inoculations, dental, HIV/AIDS, tobacco control, maternal, domestic violence, vital records and statistics, public health laboratory, and public health nursing.
- f) The **Public Administrator** investigates and administers the estates of persons who die without a will or an executor. The **Public Guardian** serves as the legally appointed guardian for persons, as determined by the Courts, who are unable to care for themselves and have no legal guardian. They provide both basic needs and financial services.

**Land Use and Environment**, 8.5% of the budget:

- a) **Public Works**
- b) **Environmental Services** includes integrated waste management, hazardous waste, recycling, landfill siting & oversight, inactive landfill management, contaminated property cleanup, pollution prevention, capturing methane, petroleum storage, beach & bay monitoring (also done by the City), handling dead animals, food facility permits and inspections, pest control, swimming pools, etc.
- c) **Air Pollution Control**
- d) **Agriculture/Weights & Measures** includes calibrating all scales and weights.
- e) **Planning & Land Use** includes building permits and inspections, code enforcement, abandoned vehicles, noise control, and zoning & signs.
- f) **Parks and Recreation** includes development and administration of 93 parks, 4 rec centers, and 1 historic building.

Note that regional parks (Mission Bay, Mission Trails, Balboa, etc.) are run by the City of San Diego.

**Community Services** 6.3% of the budget:

- a) Department of **General Services** provides necessary workplaces and vehicles for county operation.
- b) Department of **Purchasing and Contracting** is also internal. They bill each department.
- c) The **Redevelopment Agency** works on two projects - Upper San Diego River Improvement Project Area and Gillespie Field Project.
- d) **Registrar of Voters**.

- e) **Animal Services** include homeless animal shelters, pet adoption, animal licensing, vaccinations, and pest and insect control.
- f) The **County Library Service** has 33 coordinated branch libraries and 2 bookmobiles.
- g) **Housing & Community Development** offers rental and homeowner services, information on home renovation, and resources for the homeless.

Note that housing vouchers for San Diego city residents are handled by the San Diego Housing Commission, which is under the City of San Diego.

**Finance and General Government** - 8.1% of the budget; 11.4% listed in budget under "other finance":

- a) The **Assessor** is appointed and has the job of locating and appraising all vacant land, improved real estate, business property, some mobile homes, boats, and aircraft for property tax; it totals about one million properties. In addition, there are 35,000 non-taxable properties on Federal and State land, in the Port District, and owned by non-profit organizations and schools. More than 300,000 properties have been temporarily reassessed during this economic downturn with a savings of \$235 million to their taxpayers or a 2.5% decrease in assessed valuation. Eventually, they will be brought back to their original assessed value. Meanwhile, the real estate market has dropped 20-40%. About 8% of the property in the county has not changed hands since Prop. 13 was implemented; most are residential.
- b) The **Recorder** accepts and records legal documents such as birth, marriage, and death records as well as land deeds and liens.
- c) The **County Clerk** issues marriage licenses and performs civil marriage ceremonies, maintains all records for the Superior/Municipal courts, and provides other legal services.
- d) The **Treasurer/Tax Collector** manages the County Investment Pool including funds from several other special districts, agencies, and school districts. He also collects property taxes.
- e) The **Auditor/Controller** maintains accounts for the County, special districts and agencies, and school districts. The office also provides an independent audit for these funds. The auditing performed in the General Management System performance oversight is done by the Auditor/Controller as well. They also work on collections of overdue monies.
- f) The County **Technology** Office provides information technology (IT); this service is outsourced.
- g) The **Civil Service Commission** protects the merit basis of the personnel system.
- h) The **Clerk of the BOS** provides access to BOS official records as well as passport and notary public services. This office also manages the County Administration Center and accepts applications for property tax assessment appeals.
- i) The **County Counsel** provides legal advice and litigation to the County and BOS as well as the school districts.
- j) The **Grand Jury** is a citizen group that investigates, evaluates, and reports on the actions of local governments and special districts selected by the CAO.
- k) **Media and Public Relations.**

The County has a **Pension Fund**, of course, with its own Board of Directors and 85 employees who invest the money. New benefits were added in 2001-2 which will begin to affect the budget in 2012 and cause similar problems with funding the pension as experienced by the City of San Diego.

**Services not performed by the County in Incorporated Cities:** In most cases, municipal services include land use & planning, building inspections, public safety, parks and rec, sewage disposal, street lighting, and flood control within the municipality. Special districts provide schooling and water delivery. The City of San Diego also does housing vouchers, libraries, road maintenance for city streets, and solid waste collection & disposal. Some municipalities contract other services from the County.

**How Well Does the County Government Work?** The County does not seem to get much publicity and therefore works under the radar often. Attendance at BOS meetings is often minimal; they are somewhat tedious to sit through. LWVSDC has an observer who has been there for over 30 years, but there are few questions raised for League review.

**Current criticisms are:**

a) San Diego County awards **food stamps** to the lowest percentage of eligible people in the nation. LWVSDC has been working with the Supportive Parents Information Network, Springfield College prof. Bill Oswald, and the Coordinating Council on this issue. This group has done in-depth research and interviewing to try to figure out why and how people are rejected. They have concluded that the Supervisors do not understand food stamps and the food stamp program in enough detail and that the Supervisors are refusing to be further educated on the issue. The Supervisors also are overly concerned about fraud and spend a disproportionate amount of money fingerprinting people, making surprise house visits, and requiring several lengthy office visits as part of the qualification process.

b) San Diego County only gives **general relief funds** to about 1,000 of the very poor (if you have \$5, you are rejected). The percentage of the population receiving general relief is much higher in San Francisco, Los Angeles, and Sacramento but less than several other smaller counties. (*San Diego Union Tribune*, 8/31/09)

c) The **Pension Board** has just hired a new investment manager who comes from Texas and will be paid much more than his predecessor and beyond the normal county salary level.

d) The **General Plan (GP) 2020** has been delayed, reworked, rejected, reworked, etc. for a few years now (one department chair told us that he has submitted the same changes nine times). An article in the *Reader* (12/3/09) claims that some developers are improperly influencing the development of the GP Interest Group Review to delay it, because the development restrictions will be much greater than they are currently. Developers are also contributing to the Supervisors' re-election funds.

e) The **number of Supervisors** could be increased through a County Charter change.

**Discussion** and Other Issues Experienced by Unit Members, Handouts on Food Stamps