



## Legislation Text

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**File #:** 2020-0149, **Version:** 1

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**To:** Board of Supervisors

**Department or Agency Name(s):** County Administrator

**Staff Name and Phone Number:** Sheryl Bratton 707-565-2431

**Vote Requirement:** Majority

**Supervisorial District(s):** All

**Title:**

Centralized Communications Division

**Recommended Action:**

- A) Approve establishing a centralized communications division under the management of the County Administrator's Office (CAO) by transferring 6 full time equivalent (FTE) positions from certain departments who have staff currently performing communications services with the intended effective date of July 1, 2020 and adding 1 FTE Admin Aide effective as of March 10, 2020; to support the new division;
- B) Direct Human Resources Department to conduct necessary job classification adjustments that reflect the division's structure, roles and responsibilities;
- C) Direct staff to include in the FY 2020-21 recommended budget position allocation and appropriations changes and/or additions, including redirection of funds for existing staff between departments;
- D) Direct the General Services department to facilitate the Auditor-Controller-Treasurer-Tax Collector's Payroll division relocation in order to provide additional office space within the Administration County campus for the CAO/Board of Supervisors.
- E) Adopt Resolution adjusting the County Administrator's Office FY 2019-20 Position Allocation by adding 1.0 FTE Administrative Aide confidential position to support the establishment of the Centralized Communications division; and
- F) Approve use of up to \$135,000 of FY 2019-20 General Fund Contingencies to finance the addition of Administrative Aide for the last quarter of the year, and finance initial office space needs.

**Executive Summary:**

On December 10, 2019, a consultant presented the Communications Assessment that included a recommendation to centralize communications services under the County Administrator's Office to support countywide communications needs under one cohesive strategy. The report concluded a centralized structure will result in enhanced and improved information services to the community, a priority for the Board of Supervisors. In addition, to receiving and accepting the Communications Assessment, the Board authorized adding a new Communications Manager position to lead a centralized Communications team. A recruitment is underway for this position.

Per the communication's assessment, the CAO is recommending that a new centralized communications division be formally established by collocating existing communications/public information staff. The consolidation includes transferring six department positions currently performing department specific

communications work, and adding one administrative position to support the new division. The collocated staff reorganized into a centralized CAO Communications division under the approved 12/20/2019 Communications Manager will have a total of ten positions (9 existing and 1 new Administrative Aide).

Given sufficient office space is needed to collocate Communications staff, in collaboration with the Auditor-Controller-Treasurer-Tax-Collector (ACTTC), staff recommends the relocating the ACTTC's Payroll Division to an off campus lease space.

In total, the estimated net ongoing annual cost increase for the proposed initial reorganization is \$200,000 to cover the new Administrative Aide and new office lease. In addition, up to \$200,000 in one-time costs for relocation and space adaptation needs is anticipated. If requests are approved by the Board, costs will be programmed from the Board's discretionary General Fund capacity available in FY 2019-20 and FY 2020-21.

**Discussion:**

The County of Sonoma provides a wide variety of services, including law enforcement, social and health services, permitting, building inspection, road maintenance, parks, property assessment, tax collection, disaster recovery, emergency preparedness, voting, and general administration. Effective communications are essential to keeping the community informed of the services, programs and efforts made by their government. The current organizational structure is that the CAO's Community and Government Affairs team includes the responsibility to lead County's communications efforts. In addition, there are several positions within a variety of departments that have the day-to-day responsibility of communications specific to the designated department.

Communications needs and expectations have evolved and significantly increased over the last ten years, including an expanded number of communications channels and platforms given the advent of social media and new technology. Our community expects timely, accurate, valuable, and continuous information especially during impactful community wide events such as disasters, community emergencies, and county-wide impacts such as PGE power shut-offs.

Given the growth of the overall volume and demand on County communications and the need to oversee and collaborate with departmental communications staff, the County Administrator retained a communications firm, Full Court Press Communications (FCP) in July 2019, to prepare an assessment of the County's communication functions and processes.

FCP's assessment incorporated interviews with 50 stakeholders including members of the Board of Supervisors, other County elected officials, staff for elected officials, Department Heads, staff in communications positions, community leaders, and staff at peer government jurisdictions. The assessment also evaluated the County's many communications channels and multiple social media accounts.

FCP identified the top Board communication priorities:

- A fundamental shift from reactive communications to proactive communications so that the County is sharing relevant information with residents;

- A two-way form of communication with Sonoma County residents so that residents have many ways to receive information from the County and have the opportunity to provide input into decisions made by their local government; and
- A greater investment in communications tools and technology that acknowledge the fact that residents can now receive information in myriad ways.

The report provides a number of recommendations to improve the County’s communication efforts, with the principal suggestion to consolidate staff and centralize communications through a choice of staffing models. These staffing models were suggested options that would result in a more centralized structure and represented graduated staffing structures depending on how many positions the County felt were appropriate. Each model suggested a new division be established in the CAO’s Office, a lead manager, communications focused positions that would be assigned “beat”- like coverage of assigned County departments, and support staff.

Overall, departments’ leadership and communications staff were in favor of FCP’s recommendations to develop proactive County communications through improved strategic planning, consistent and cohesive messaging and material, and a job classification series that would better reflect communications related responsibilities. Concerns expressed from departments about releasing staff to the central communications team mainly were due to operational impacts given that some of their staff with communications duties also perform non-communications duties in support of the departments’ operations.

Given concerns expressed, the County Administrator’s Office collected more information on the department positions and further assessed the appropriate number and which positions should be consolidated at this time. As a result, the CAO identified six positions needed for initial collocation and reorganization to a Central Communications division. The effective date of reorganization is recommended to be July 1, 2020.

Department	Communication Position	Notes
Emergency Management	Dept. Program Manager	Position and incumbent, if position is filled, will be transferred to CAO Office
General Services	Dept. Program Manager	
Health Services	Planning and Eval. Analyst	Position and incumbent, if position is filled, will be transferred to CAO Office
Permit Sonoma	Dept. Program Manager	
Regional Parks	Dept. Program Manager	Vacant position allocation will be transferred to CAO Office
Transportation and Public Works	Dept. Program Manager	Position and incumbent, if position is filled, will be transferred to CAO Office

The County’s Civil Service Rules allow for the transfer of position allocations to another department. In cases where there is an incumbent in the identified position to be transferred, the employee is transferred to the new department.

Existing CAO’s Communications team includes three positions including the new County Communications Manager. If the Board approves the recommendation to transfer the six positions as described above and the addition of an Administrative Aide, the positions for the new Countywide Communications division will be ten. FCPs report recommended the centralized communication division staff spend some physical time in their assigned departments (e.g., “beats”) to ensure and maintain appropriate subject matter expertise of the departments’ operations and services. The new division will operate using the recommendation from FCP to spend some physical time in their assigned departments.

In order to implement consolidation of a new team of communications professionals, the CAO has asked ACTTC to relocate their Payroll division to an offsite location, freeing up additional work space for the CAO/Board of Supervisors. Moving payroll functions to an offsite location will also achieve the county’s goal of having some separation of critical functions so that if one location is impacted by a disaster, critical functions may be performed from a different location that is not impacted by a disaster. Payroll is a critical function and moving it to a different location helps build resiliency for continuity of operations should the county administrative campus be unavailable or de-energized in a power shut-off.

Relocation of payroll functions and moving into the new space is expected to increase ongoing county cost to up to \$65,000 per year for an office lease agreement, plus one-time expense of \$130,000 for relocation activities, and one-time estimated expense of \$70,000 to build out the new space for CAO.

If the Board approves the plan, appropriate job classifications will be needed for this new division and Human Resources will conduct a classification study with appropriate class recommendations. Employees in studied positions will be reclassified appropriately depending on the classification study’s recommendations. CAO staff will work with HR to establish appropriate job classifications for the new team and reclassify positions and incumbents as appropriate.

In addition, as part of the June budget hearings for FY 2020-21, the Board will consider final position allocation transfers, staff additions, office space appropriations, departmental funding redirection, and increased General Fund requests, with effective dates of July 1, 2020.

**Prior Board Actions:**

12/10/2019 Communications Assessment received and request to add County Communications Manager Position approved

**FISCAL SUMMARY**

<b>Expenditures</b>	<b>FY 19-20 Adopted</b>	<b>FY20-21 Projected</b>	<b>FY 21-22 Projected</b>
Budgeted Expenses (ongoing) Budgeted Expenses (one-time)	\$35,000 \$100,000	\$200,000 \$100,000	\$206,000 \$0
Additional Appropriation Requested	\$135,000		
<b>Total Expenditures</b>	<b>\$135,000</b>	<b>\$300,000</b>	<b>\$206,000</b>

<b>Funding Sources</b>			
General Fund/WA GF		\$300,000	\$206,000
State/Federal			
Fees/Other			
Use of Fund Balance			
Contingencies	\$135,000		
<b>Total Sources</b>	<b>\$135,000</b>	<b>\$300,000</b>	<b>\$206,000</b>

**Narrative Explanation of Fiscal Impacts:**

General Fund contingencies will be programmed to finance current FY 2019-20 estimated costs are associated with hiring Administrative staff to support the establishment of the new division at \$35,000; and with initial relocation and space adaption at \$100,000. Besides the balance of one-time office space cost of \$100,000 in FY 2020-21, the ongoing annual costs for the added Administrative Aide of \$135,000; and annual office lease of \$65,000 will be funded with General Fund discretionary sources.

<b>Staffing Impacts:</b>			
<b>Position Title (Payroll Classification)</b>	<b>Monthly Salary Range (A-I Step)</b>	<b>Additions (Number)</b>	<b>Deletions (Number)</b>
Administrative Aide (confidential)	\$27.27		

**Narrative Explanation of Staffing Impacts (If Required):**

Administrative support is requested to support the establishment of the new Centralized Communications division.

**Attachments:**

Resolution Adjusting the CAO’s FY 2019-20 Permanent Position Allocation

**Related Items “On File” with the Clerk of the Board:**