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Economy & Efficiency Commission Presentation

Editorial Note: Although every effort has been made to insure the accuracy of the material in this presentation, the scope of the material covered and the discussions undertaken lends itself to the possibility of minor transcription misinterpretations.

PRESENTATION BY
Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich
Mayor, Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors
Topic: State of the County

Chairman Philibosian introduced the Chairman of the Board of Supervisors and the County Mayor, Mike Antonovich. The Mayor is currently serving his sixth term. He began his public service as a high school teacher. In keeping with the theme of North County, Supervisor Antonovich has represented this area for many years.

Supervisor Antonovich introduced his Chief of Staff, Dr. Lori Howard. Supervisor Antonovich commented that the land size the Fifth District is larger than the other four districts combined. The population is what the County Charter and the Courts require to be equal for each district. If the commissioners have seen the population figures, they would note that Supervisor Yaroslavsky and Supervisor Antonovich's districts are currently over populated. The other three are under populated, but within a ½ to 1 percent range. Supervisor Yaroslavsky is approximately 20-25,000 constituents over; Supervisor Antonovich, approximately 60,000 over; and Supervisor Knabe, 14,000 under. This is probably within a permissible variance range, depending upon the court's interpretation.

Commissioner Andes asked whether the problems of the Fifth District could be managed considering the large geographical difference, and diverse population? Supervisor Antonovich responded that the difference between the current administration, and the previous one, was the implementation of field offices. Supervisor Antonovich promised that they would staff the field offices with local people.

Supervisor Antonovich also responded that he had promised to meet regularly with the 27 cities within the district that he represents. There has been a continuing dialogue with the council members and the city managers. The senior deputies in those geographic areas also have a day-to-day operation, and meet frequently in the Antelope Valley.

Supervisor Antonovich complimented the Economy & Efficiency Commission as an organization within Los Angeles County, which could accomplish meaningful results. One of the commission's programs that Supervisor Antonovich was particularly proud of was the Report on The Consolidation of The Department of Health Services Human Resources Function with the Department Of Human Resources, of 1995. There had been success in accomplishing the recommendations.

Today, there are new challenges for the county, such as the Tax Assessor: their forms, regulations, and the public's problems, which need to be answered and resolved easily. A better job is necessary with regard to

probate. Other important areas are the efficiency of the customer service operation. For example, in the Southern California Gas Company, the customer gets a quick response. In government agencies the customer is often referred and often gets lost in automated systems. The county public sector needs to continue to strive for courtesy and efficiency. There needs to be a study to look at the Los Angeles County system, perhaps using Southern California Gas Company as a model, along with noting methods of improving efficiency. People need answers and explanations, and user-friendly services appear to be the answer.

Supervisor Antonovich continued by referring to the large number of children who are preteen/teenagers in the foster care system. The Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) is a custodial parent for 60,000 - 80,000 children. Many are temporary; however, there are a number who will stay in the system and will be emancipated at eighteen. Simplification and streamlining of foster care and adoption procedures need to occur to find foster parents for older youths. Often these youths have been written off. Older adults could adopt, provide a support system, and be role models; i.e. a big brother/sister to these people. The Los Angeles County tries to utilize church and synagogue members, so that they will become aware of the Foster Care Program. Law enforcement, penal institutions and the coroner's office would save countless millions of dollars, if there were youths with a support system in place. If the procedures were simplified and user friendly, more people could become foster/adoptive parents. The youth are not just the future - they are today.

Supervisor Antonovich reiterated that the agencies that are the most congested with mail are Child Support, Property Taxes and Probate. At that point he asked if there were any questions.

Commissioner Thompson stated that youths who come out of protective custody, have a support system for the first twelve to eighteen months. This generally precludes a return to institutions. If the support system is contrasted with the amount of money paid for incarcerating the youths, it is inefficient to ignore the problem. Commissioner Thompson stated that the Commission needs a liaison from the Fifth District. Supervisor Antonovich stated that Dr. Raine Ritchie, who handles the Department of Children and Family Services, would be that person.

Commissioner Sylva introduced herself as the Chair of the Policy Task Force. One of the goals of the Task Force was to promote economic development in Los Angeles County and to make it increasingly user-friendlier. The Southern California Gas model is something that the Task Force will examine. The Task Force took a tour of the Business Technology Center, in Altadena. Supervisor Antonovich explained that the Jet Propulsion Lab (JPL), California Institute of Technology (CalTech), and the community are working to support this.

Commissioner Sylva asked if there were an agenda for other supervisors to have a similar business center in each district? Supervisor Antonovich responded that any type of program that is going to bring in jobs and opportunities to Los Angeles County are important. Simplifying the bidding process for greater participation by creating websites with a clearly defined boilerplate information packet/application process: "Keep It Simple" is imperative. If such a website is too condensed or ambiguous, the process within Los Angeles County will not be user-friendly.

Commissioner Padilla asked if Supervisor Antonovich could comment on the dynamics of dealing with the tensions of unincorporated area residents who live near Santa Clarita? As a resident, they are ambiguous as to who serves them? Supervisor Antonovich responded that in some instances the Los Angeles County serves them: the Sheriff's Department and the Fire Department are examples. In Altadena the people will fight to remain unincorporated. In the Santa Clarita and Antelope Valley areas, town councils have been established. There are currently fifteen town councils, who have elected officials and meet with the Fifth District Deputies concerning issues that impact their community. Public hearings and meetings are held to determine whether an area wants to remain unincorporated, be incorporated or annexed. Los Angeles County and San Bernardino County are working on mutual aid for such issues as snow removal, in part because of border ambiguities. Commissioner Stoke agreed that the county offices and the fire departments have responded quickly in these areas.

Commissioner Fuhrman stated that the Health Department was the single largest concern in the next few

years, and asked Supervisor Antonovich to update the Commission on their future direction. Supervisor Antonovich said that every hospital has a different collections and services procedure. Development of a good procedure for all hospitals would improve collections. There have been studies suggesting that each hospital could provide specific services, making them more economical and efficient. Developing a time line to achieve some of the recommendations would be very important. A \$1Billion deficit is anticipated within the next five years. Supervisor Antonovich suggested that yearly reductions be made, instead of one balloon payment. It has been suggested that Los Angeles County consider operation of services provided and then compare the services with other counties to see how Los Angeles County compares. The Chief Administrative (CAO) will report to the Board of Supervisors in a couple of months on other counties' systems. Orange County and San Diego County do not have hospital systems; they contract with the University of California Medical School. Throughout the entire State of California, only ten counties have hospital systems.

Commissioner Fuhrman stated that the crux of the problem appears to be that Los Angeles County is providing services to large numbers of people who are not insured. Reimbursement for those services from the Federal and state government are significantly lower than the actual costs. Supervisor Antonovich stated that emergency services are approximately \$100M per year. Another problem is that people go to the emergency rooms, unnecessarily, which creates long lines in waiting room. These people should be diverted to the recently expanded community health centers.

Commissioner Barcelona asked if the High Desert Hospital would be affected. Supervisor Antonovich stated that every hospital would be affected. What is unique about the High Desert Hospital is that an infrastructure is not in place. There is a contract with the State of California to provide services for the prison population. The Federal government also has a contract with Immigration Naturalization Services (INS), for their use of Mira Loma as a detention center. Antelope Valley Hospital does not have a sufficient number of beds to compensate for the closure of the High Desert Hospital. Reforms, not closure, will be the solution. If Los Angeles County starts using general funds to subsidize public health, then public safety and other support systems will be affected. The Fifth District and the other supervisors will meet with the Administration and members of Congress. The Federal Budget ends in October, and the County Budget ends June 30th. The Federal and State budgets should be on the same cycle.

Supervisor Antonovich thanked the commissioners for their attention and their service to the Commission. He remarked that the Economy and Efficiency Commission's role and adoption of the recommendations that the Commission makes were very important.

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