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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.

**PRESENTATIONS BY
Supervisor Don Knabe
Chairman, Board of Supervisors, 4th District
Los Angeles County**

March 5, 2009

Chairman Barcelona greeted Supervisor Knabe, Chairman of the Board of Supervisors and welcomed him while turning it over for Supervisor Knabe to speak to the Economy and Efficiency Commission (EEC). Supervisor Knabe expressed that he was honored to be there and thanked Executive Director Edward Eng for inviting him to speak to the EEC.

Jobs and the Economy

Supervisor Knabe, Chairman of the Board of Supervisors, explained that he is seeking to create as many as 10,000 temporary jobs in Los Angeles County thanks to funding available from the Federal Stimulus Package. Supervisor Knabe also explained that he introduced legislation that would utilize over \$100 million in federal funding to create subsidized employment opportunities in County departments, private sector employers, non-profit organizations, and in cities across Los Angeles County.

Supervisor Knabe stated that the goal of the motion is to place 10,000 unemployed local workers in financially subsidized positions from May 2009 through March 2010. The funding would come from the Federal Emergency Temporary Aid for Needy Families Contingency Fund and would provide a minimum of \$100 million to the County to create temporary jobs. The federal portion of the funding provides 80 percent of subsidy, and the County would have to provide the remaining 20 percent share.

Supervisor Knabe also stated that subsidized employment is one of the major priorities of this fund, and he intends to take full advantage of the significant network already in place to provide training and employment to ensure this funding gets out the door and put towards jobs. He also stated that he will be engaging both the County Workforce Investment Board, as well as the other eight Workforce Investment Boards across the County to help employ residents.

Contract Extension Agreement with Union Partners

Supervisor Knabe stated that all six of the County's public safety bargaining units, plus two other justice-related unions, have agreed to a one-year, no cost-of-living increases or salary increases for the next year.

He stated the eight unions that agreed to the extension are Firefighters (Local 1014), Supervisory Firefighters (Local 1014), Peace Officers (ALADS), Beach Lifeguards (LACOLA) Supervisory Beach Lifeguards (LACOLA), Supervisory Peace Officers (PPOA), Deputy Probation Officers (AFSME, Local 685), and Public Defender Investigators (Peace Officers Counsel of California).

Supervisor Knabe stated that current contracts with the eight unions had originally expired between December 31, 2008 and January 31, 2009. He explained that under the extension, labor leaders from the County and the public safety unions will now avoid having to negotiate in the midst of the County's current financial challenges. Supervisor Knabe stated that with the extensions in place, labor leaders from the County is facing significant fiscal challenges and have agreed to work with the County.

Advocating for Infrastructure Funding

Supervisor Knabe shared that he traveled to Washington D.C to meet with legislative leaders about local infrastructure improvements as part of the federal stimulus debate for a nationwide, multibillion dollar investment in public works projects. Supervisor Knabe explained that included in his schedule were meetings with the Army Corps of Engineers, the Offices of Senator Dianne Feinstein and Senator Barbra Boxer, and the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee.

10 Most Wanted Program for Child Support Evaders

Supervisor Knabe reported that on March 18, 2008 the County launched a program modeled after the FBI's successful Most Wanted list, to track down and capture the County's ten most egregious child support payment evaders. He stated that the 10 Most Wanted List features some of the County's worst child support offenders. The ten individuals together owe more than \$2 million in unpaid child support for 17 children. The individual amounts owed range from \$63,000 to \$427,000 per person. Supervisor Knabe stated that with this list the County now has another tool to aggressively track down these uncooperative parents. He stated that the County previously had a list of the most wanted delinquent parents, but in the past, the Child Support Services Department (CSSD) had no way of arresting and bringing these offenders to court. That changed last April when Supervisor Knabe created a partnership between CSSD and the Office of the District Attorney to establish the Child Support Arrest Warrant Project. He stated that the project was designed to pursue uncooperative parents who evaded their child support obligations even after arrest and bench warrants have been served against them for failing to appear in criminal court. Supervisor Knabe stated that he provided \$500,000 to assist in funding District Attorney Investigators who will seek out, investigate and arrest these child support evaders.

Supervisor Knabe also reported that 9 out of 10 on this Most Wanted list have been detained and each time the Department seizes one of the delinquent parents a new one is added to the list, and the County has also collected over \$8.3 million dollars in back child support payments.

Homeless Housing Program

Supervisor Knabe explained that a County program that has created permanent housing opportunities for dozens of homeless individuals has resulted in a cost avoidance of over \$800,000 in medical and hospital cost in the past year. He explained that he created the Access to Housing for Health pilot program (AHH) in December 2006 and utilizes \$ 3 million of the \$80 million in funding for countywide homeless prevention initiatives that was approved by the Board of Supervisors in 2006.

Supervisor Knabe expressed that the primary goal of AHH is to improve discharge opportunities for homeless men and women receiving taxpayer subsidized medical care at County hospitals by connecting them with permanent housing resources. He also explained that upon leaving County hospitals, homeless individuals are provided with housing vouchers, as well as supportive services designed to help them successfully address their chronic illnesses and remain in housing.

Supervisor Knabe explained that as of January 30, 2009, 49 homeless clients in the AHH program have been placed in permanent housing, including 37 men and women who have been housed for more than one year.

He stated that the 37 clients had a combined total of 152 emergency room visits during the 12 month prior to their enrollment. Since their enrollment, the 37 clients only had a combined total of 27 emergency room visits, a reduction of 82 percent. Supervisor Knabe explained that the reduction in emergency room visits represents a cost avoidance of approximately \$117,000 and the reduction in inpatient hospital visits represents approximately \$748,000 in taxpayer funds. All told, the AHH program helped avoid \$865,000 in taxpayer spending that would have otherwise been used to pay for emergency and inpatient hospitalizations for homeless men and women. He started by addressing the underlying issues (lack of housing) and that AHH participants can better manage their chronic conditions in an outpatient setting, shifting away from costly emergency medical care.

Questions

Commissioner Reznik stated that since clinics are less expensive to operate today than hospitals, and can provide quality service at a fraction of the cost. Then why can't we take the idea of the clinic efficiency and move it into the hospitals? Supervisor Knabe replied that that is a great idea and it is one of the things the Board of Supervisors is working on. He stated that currently the Long Beach Memorial is one of his choices to put a staffing clinic next door to, so the hospitals will be able to send patients from ER to a clinic. Supervisor Knabe stated that his philosophy is the closer the Clinics are to the ER the better we will be as a whole. He stated that in addition, people have a tendency to go to the Clinics quicker and get taken care of quicker and less costly, compared to by the time they go to the ER they're so sick that that expenses of the treatment is astronomical to the taxpayers. He explained the County is trying to do some joint venture practices to see what the County can and can't do.

Commissioner Otto asked about the status of Martin Luther King Hospital (MLK). Supervisor Knabe replied that Supervisor Ridgley Thomas brought in a motion on Tuesday, and that all Supervisors are motivated to reopen the hospital. He explained that it is such a critical part of the County's safety net and has gone way beyond a community hospital. He stated that the County is in the process of and close to having the trustees address this with the UC system which will be a win/win situation because it could draw research dollars. He stated that it is not an easy sell to have someone come in and take over MLK, however, the situation with the UC System would be ideal. He also stated that there is a meeting today in Sacramento regarding this matter. Supervisor Knabe stated that if everything goes as planned, then MLK will not reopen with all 250 beds but with the goal to reopen in phases starting with approximately 140 beds.

Commissioner Murray asked Supervisor Knabe about his thoughts on Project 50 and the expansion of the project. Supervisor Knabe replied that he supported the original Project 50, which was to take a piece of the County's homeless dollars and distribute it to 50 homeless people in LA County. He stated that there is an opportunity for expansion but there has to be efficient public safety, and a rehabilitation piece for the program. Supervisor Knabe stated that Supervisor Yaroslavsky will bring in a motion to expand the Program to another 50 people. He also stated that he would support the program and its expansion but he will ask for specific provisions to take place such as how it relates to the Law Enforcement piece. Supervisor Knabe stated that all indigents should no longer be doing or selling drugs and initiate some form of rehab treatment. Commissioner Murray asked if the County done an assessment of cost savings. Supervisor Knabe replied that they are in the process of doing that but there has to be significant cost avoidance.

Chairman Barcelona expressed his appreciation to Supervisor Knabe for coming to speak to the EEC and the Commissioners applauded.

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