



**League of Women Voters of Santa Cruz County**

**61st Annual Meeting**

**Saturday, June 28, 2026, 10am at the Crow's Nest Restaurant, Santa Cruz, CA**

**Welcome and Introductions:** Barbara Lewis, President

**Introduction of Guest Speaker:** Pam Newbury, Program Co-Chair

**Guest Speaker presentation:** Nicole Coburn, Santa Cruz County Executive Officer

The following is an edited AI generated summary of Nicole's excellent overview of Santa Cruz County's budget, fiscal challenges, priorities, and strategies for managing a structural deficit.

**Reasoning and Approach**

To summarize the key county budget highlights, Nicole reviewed the FY 2026-27 Santa Cruz County budget overview, focusing on major financial figures, strategies for closing the budget gap, workforce impacts, service priorities, and identified risks. The summary below distills the most important points for a clear, actionable understanding.

**Key Santa Cruz County Budget Highlights (FY 2026-27)**

**1. Balanced Budget Amid Deficit Pressures**

- The County delivered a balanced \$1.3 billion All Funds budget, closing a projected \$23.2 million deficit for FY 2026-27.
- No layoffs were required; all position eliminations targeted vacant roles.
- The budget relies on \$43.1 million in one-time resources, including \$30.8 million from reserves and \$12.2 million from trust funds. These funds will not be available in FY 2027-28 posing ongoing risks to fiscal stability.

**2. Workforce Adjustments**

- Funded positions: 2,677.28 Full-Time Equivalents (FTE), a net reduction of 62.88 FTE from the previous year, all from vacant positions.
- Largest reductions occurred in Health Services Agency (-23.1 FTE) and Human Services Department (-24.5 FTE) due to federal funding cuts and eligibility changes.
- A countywide hiring freeze is in effect for vacant General Fund positions, with limited exceptions for public safety and direct services.

### 3. Three Levers Used to Close the Gap

- **Cost Reductions:** Hiring and travel freezes, targeted service and supply cuts, and realigned salary savings.
- **Revenue Actions:** Updated reimbursement rates, fee increases, and enhanced revenue projections.
- **One-Time Resources:** Significant use of reserves and trust funds to buffer federal funding impacts.

### 4. Service Priorities and Investments

- **Mandated Services:** Remain the top funding priority (public safety, health, social services, etc.).
- **Core Initiatives Preserved:**
  - AI & Organization Modernization (AI workplan, code updates, new Alternate Public Defender's Office)
  - Roads, Parks & Infrastructure (Measure K funds for roadwork and parks)
  - Housing & Homelessness (funding for housing studies, homelessness reduction, and maintaining CORE contracts)
  - Public Safety & Justice (sustained funding at \$216.6M, new Alternate Public Defender's Office to reduce heavy case loads)

### 5. Fiscal Risks and Outlook

- **Structural Imbalance:** Without permanent corrective action, the deficit is projected to reach \$67.5 million by FY 2028-29.
- **Federal and State Risks:** Federal legislation (H.R. 1) and pending state budget decisions threaten further reductions, especially in health and social services.
- **Reserves:** After planned drawdown, reserves will drop to 10.3% of General Fund expenses, just above the minimum target.

### 6. Board-Adopted Budget Principles

- Maintain mandates and generate revenue
- Balance impacts across departments
- Address workload and cost shifts
- Build ongoing fiscal capacity

### Example Implementation:

- The County avoided layoffs by targeting only vacant positions for elimination and using one-time funds to buffer service impacts.

- Investments in modernization and infrastructure were preserved despite fiscal constraints, demonstrating a commitment to long-term priorities.

This summary provides a clear snapshot of the County's budget approach, priorities, and challenges for FY 2026-27.

**Business Meeting Call to Order:** Barbara Lewis at 11:15 am

**Board members present:**

Barbara Lewis, Jane Cohen, Laura Grossman, Denise Gurer, Pam Newbury, Pamela Peterson, Marilyn Radisch

**Board members absent with notification:** Mindy Ryan

**Introduction of Parliamentarian:** Dorothy Fry, Voter Service Coach

**Quorum Count:** The required 15% of Membership was present.

**Adoption of Meeting Rules:** Dorothy Fry presented the Annual Meeting Rules and Program Adoption Procedures as documented in the Annual Meeting Kit previously distributed to attendees. Barbara Lewis announced that all voting would be by voice at this meeting.

**Treasurer's Report:** Pamela Peterson, Treasurer

**Proposed Budget for Fiscal Year 2026-2027:** Pamela Peterson, Budget Committee Chair  
Pamela summarized the Proposed Budget for Fiscal Year July 1, 2026-June 30, 2027, as documented in the Annual Meeting Kit previously distributed to attendees. Pamela noted a few updates to the totals since the budget was distributed. She concluded that our income and assets are sufficient to cover our expenses.

Denise Gurer requested slight increases to budget items 630 and 630.1 to cover recent increases in website costs. Denise then moved that we accept the budget as presented with the two increases: (1) Increase Line 630, Website Hosting from \$375 to \$400, and (2) Increase Line 630.1, Domain Name / Email Hosting from \$70 to \$85. Pam Newbury seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

**Program Report:** Pam Newbury, Program Co-Chair

In October 2025, our Voter Service coordinator Dorothy Fry, member Kit Hein, and County Registrar Tricia Webber answered voters' questions about Proposition 50, the redistricting initiative. In November, we co-hosted a meeting with the AAUW featuring County Superintendent of Schools Faris Sabbah, who spoke about his approach to education and updated us on what's happening in our county schools. In January, we took an onsite tour of the new Pure Water Soquel plant in Santa Cruz. In February we met to decide on our recommendation for the League's national program, and in March members discussed options for local program planning.

### **Presentation of Recommended Program: Pam Newbury, Program Co-Chair**

The board recommends retention of all local positions based on previous study and consensus.

They also recommend three topics for general meetings in our 2026 to 2027 fiscal year.

1. In early 2027, we will host a discussion panel with elected local officials from judges to county supervisors.
2. We will consider housing alternatives in Santa Cruz County: Affordable housing in our County is hard to come by. The League will explore housing options from tiny homes to high-rise apartments.
3. Local healthcare issues: A scarcity of local healthcare providers makes it hard for county residents to find physicians from primary care to specialists. With only two local hospitals, residents sometimes must travel far to get emergency care at a hospital that accepts their insurance or that has a specialist who can treat them. We will look at causes and solutions to local healthcare concerns.

Some members asked questions about and requested more education from the League as the November midterm elections approach. Pam assured them that we would provide our usual candidate forums and pros and cons sessions for public before the midterms.

Dee Takemoto moved that we accept the recommended programs. Pamela Peterson seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

### **Report of 2025-2026 Nominating Committee**

The following slate of officers for 2026-2027 was presented to the membership by Laura Grossman, Nominating Committee Member, on behalf of the committee consisting of:

Elected Members: Dee Takemoto and Judith Heher

Board Appointed Members: Laura Grossman and Marilyn Radisch

### **NOMINATIONS FOR THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS FOR FISCAL YEAR 2026-2027 OFFICERS**

President: Barbara Lewis

1st Vice President/VOTER Newsletter Editor: Marilyn Radisch

2nd Vice President/Membership Chair/Roster Manager: Laura Grossman

Secretary: Jane Cohen

Treasurer: Pamela Peterson

### **DIRECTORS:**

Co-Program Chairs: Pam Newbury and Mindy Ryan

Publicity Coordinator: Mindy Ryan

Webmaster: Denise Gurer

## **NOMINATING COMMITTEE**

Marilyn McCusker, Judith Heher, Geri McGillicuddy

In addition, the following members have agreed to serve in positions off-board:

League Telephone: Kathy Van Horn

Voter Service Coach: Dorothy Fry

**Requests for Nominations from the Floor:** none

**Election of 2026-2027 Officers, Directors, and Nominating Committee:** Pam Newbury made a motion to accept the slate of officers as presented. Dorothy Fry and Marilyn Radish seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

**Request for Suggestions for the new Board:** none

**Adjournment:** The meeting was adjourned at 11:31 am.

Jane Cohen, LWVSCC Secretary