



April 8, 2009

## Plan to lay off 42 JFS employees approved

BY JOE GIESSLER  
*The Eagle-Gazette Staff*

FAIRFIELD COUNTY - Some 42 Fairfield County Job & Family Services workers will join the unemployment ranks by May 1.

The employees are the latest casualties in the recession as local officials grapple with a loss of \$2.4 million in state funding.

The layoffs are part of a budget reduction proposal JFS officials asked the Fairfield County Commissioners to approve on Tuesday.

"The further we delay, the further the cuts," said JFS Director Mike Orlando. "The staff is waiting on pins and needles for a decision on their careers and their futures, and in order to stay on these targets of deficits we need to act swiftly."

Commissioners approved the plan, which includes the indefinite elimination of 10 positions, by a vote of 2-1 after about 40 minutes of discussion.

Commissioners Jon Myers and Judy Shupe voted for the plan. Commissioner Mike Kiger voted against it.

Kiger, who said he felt rushed to vote for the proposal, asked for another week to review it the agency's plan.

Myers said the longer the Commissioners wait to take action, the worse the situation will get.

"We need to move swiftly to start the reduction of workforce," Myers said during the meeting. "Nobody wants to see that, but it's the reality of what's being handed to us by the state."

The initial proposal called for 43 layoffs, but one employee voluntarily resigned, Shupe said.

Orlando said a reduced work week and involuntary furloughs are some cost-cutting options if more cuts must be made.

If there are no further budget reductions, 10 to 20 "critical positions" could be restored within 12 months under the local JFS plan.

The Commissioners agreed to provide a funding advance for emergency foster placement until January. That's when money from a 10-year, 1-mill operating levy - which voters approved in 2008 - will kick in. That will provide \$2.4 million annually for adult and child protective services.

"Personally, I think we have an obligation for the care and protection of children," Shupe said. "At the same time, the general fund cannot make up the total cuts made. We are basically tiding them over until the levy money becomes available."

Shupe said the county's general revenue fund did not have extra money to give to alleviate the agency's financial strain.

---