



COUNTY OF LAKE COUNTY ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER  
CAROL J. HUCHINGSON

# THE CAO NEWSLETTER

Winter 2018

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**Attached:** CAO's Community Visioning  
Forum Presentation.

**Also Visit:** [lakecountyca.gov/vision/](http://lakecountyca.gov/vision/)

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*If you Google, "Jeff Smith,  
Lake County Supervisor,"  
you won't find a lot of  
interviews.*

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## Leadership Profile: Jeff Smith

### *Pride in Community*

Some people ascend to positions of authority because they are big personalities. Others humbly go about their work, and the quality of their judgment leads others to elevate them.

If you Google, "Jeff Smith, Lake County Supervisor," you won't find a lot of interviews. You'll find an understated campaign website, and a string of concise, issue-specific comments. Any horn tooting emanates from the symphony of supporters who have come to deeply respect Supervisor Smith over the course of his careers in business and public service.

For many years, he served the Clearlake community as a businessman. At one time, he was even the manager of the largest Rock and Roll venue in the County.

Then, twenty-five years ago, a friend, fatefully, brought him to a Clearlake City Council meeting.

"I [went] just to see what was going on, just to keep an idea of what was happening in the City, and [then] I was attending every meeting. The City Manager at that time said, 'Why aren't you sitting on the other side of the table?' The more I thought about it, I wondered, shoot, why not?"

"I've always had the attitude that, if somebody else can do it, I can do it. Attitude's everything. You've got to believe you can [accomplish anything], and if you project that attitude, other people get the same feeling that [they] can accomplish anything."

Smith sat on the Clearlake City Council for two years, then ran for an open seat on the County's Board of Supervisors.

"When I [first] went on the Board, I wanted to bring the business side of things to government; financial [responsibility], turning out the lights to save money, watching out what you do, serving customers." Smith's Supervisorial leadership reflects those values, and it has helped the County endure times of profound uncertainty.

One of the secrets of Smith's enduring success is his willingness to stretch, even to take on things that will never be comfortable.

"I've got to say, I'm a terrible public speaker. I hear so many people [and] I think, 'I wish I could do that...' I still get nervous!" (Cont. on pg. 4)

## Stay Informed, with CodeRED

The winter storms and wildfires of 2017 were reminders of the great import of disaster alerting systems.

To keep County residents informed, and allow first responders to proceed in an efficient manner, the Lake County Sheriff's Office of Emergency Services has implemented the CodeRED system.



It is free to register for and use CodeRED, and you can sign up here:

<https://public.coderedweb.com/cne/en-US/BF80F1491970>

CodeRED sends notifications by phone, email, text, social media, and/or mobile alerts. If you download the CodeRED app, you can ensure you receive vital information needed to protect your loved ones, even when you are traveling.

Through the CodeRED system, the Sheriff's Office is also able to send geographically-targeted messages via the Integrated Public Alert and Warning System, IPAWS. This additional benefit offers a streamlined way to inform the right people of actual and imminent emergencies.

For more information, visit

<http://www.lakesheriff.com/Services/NotificationSystem.htm>.

Sign up for CodeRED today.

## Know Lake County

*by Jan Cook*

In 2015 the Lake County Library began presenting free monthly programs under the umbrella title *Know Lake County*. The library invites non-profit organizations, government agencies and private businesses to present programs about various aspects of Lake County such as history, archaeology, agriculture, wine, Clear Lake, geology, natural resources, wildlife, plants and arts and entertainment. The goal of Know Lake County is to bolster community pride, increase awareness of local resources, and help everyone learn more about the place we all live. The library has presented more than 30 *Know Lake County* programs and is now preparing the 2018 schedule. Past speakers include Barbara White, Curtis Fair, Dr. John Parker, Dino Beltran, Melissa Fulton, Dr. Jamesina Scott, Dr. Harry Lyons, Marilyn Waits andCarolynn Williams.

Lake County Channel 8 PEG-TV films the *Know Lake County* programs and posts them on YouTube. DVDs of the *Know Lake County* presentations can be checked out from the Lake County Library or purchased from Lake

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*Bolstering community pride, increasing awareness of local resources, helping everyone learn more about the place we live*

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## CAO's Notes: Facing Challenges Together

The current budgetary climate has strained every aspect of our County government, and has resulted in uncertainty for some County staff. Reduced staffing levels are causing challenges in all departments. Our limited capacity, through the years, to deliver needed Cost of Living Adjustments has left some wondering whether they can afford to remain employed by the County of Lake.

We have endured hard times, making it difficult to plan, difficult to commit to building a brighter future in Lake County. Facing uncertainty together, we could choose to serve Lake County residents only until something better comes along. We could resign ourselves to lower standards.

Instead, we face every challenge that arises. We choose to look directly at problems that confound us, and untangle them, bit by bit. Whatever difficulty may come, we strive for the best response. There is hope to be found in every situation, provided we work *together*.

As CAO, I take steps every day to build a brighter future here. In January, we have heard from County employees and residents through our five Community Visioning Forums. I encourage you to explore the presentation attached to this newsletter and visit <http://www.lakecountycga.gov/vision/>.

We can all make a difference by treating coworkers with radical positivity and uncommon kindness. By supporting colleagues, treating people with generosity and high regard. Please join me in choosing, day by day, to make the County of Lake a terrific place to work, one interaction at a time. Together, we can build a future of significance.

–Carol J. Huchingson

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*We could resign ourselves to lower standards. Instead, we face every challenge that arises.*

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## Know Your County Departments

### A Book for Every Reader

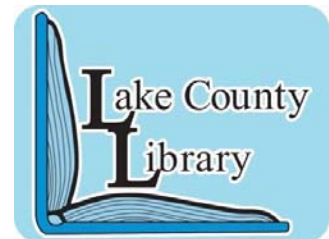
Most of us receive a strange introduction to reading. A teacher shares a few relevant tools in a crowded classroom, and, all too quickly, it's time for a performance! Nervously, each of us takes a shallow breath, and proceeds to stumble to some degree in front of our closest friends and that one kid who is all too happy to mine our moment of growth for comedic material.

Is it any wonder that many grow up to believe reading is intimidating, even out of reach? As young kids, we don't often chalk up the superior performance of a peer to a home environment that set them up to succeed in that particular activity. When we stumble, we too frequently figure there must be something wrong with us. Rather than investing our whole selves in building bridges to what's possible, many feel badly. Gaps widen; things get even harder.

Into these social gaps steps a community response: the Public Library.

"When the Public Libraries started here in America, the idea was that people needed information and the ability to communicate and to share information and values to be able to run a democracy; to be able to govern themselves," shares Lake County Librarian, Christopher Veach. "Our mission is to promote reading, literacy and lifelong learning, and to provide access to materials."

Libraries are critical to development of the social fabric that brings second chances, strengthens families, and binds communities. (Cont. on pg. 6)



## Smith: Pride in Community, Cont.

Even if it is with some fear and trembling, at times, Smith speaks. And when he does, people appreciate his balanced perspective, a perspective that emerges from a deep commitment to listening.

"Listening is the key to a lot of things; and having different views in the room. Often, if you have a group of people that totally disagree, you come out with a better balanced result.

"I go into any meeting completely open-minded. I try not to come to any conclusions until the last person has spoken. It's amazing how many times somebody will make a point, and you'll go, 'O my gosh, I never thought about that.'"

Smith's willingness to listen and compromise helps him get things done.

"I learned really quickly you have to count to three [a majority vote of the Board], and if you're one of the two, or you're by yourself, you better try to get something in between. I'd rather get a little of something I wanted, rather than none at all.

"You have to compromise in life all the time, with a spouse, coworkers, customers... Really, our Board has done that well. In the twenty years I've been here, probably 99% of the time, we've been able to disagree in the Board chambers, walk out, and go have lunch.

"You've got to be able to get along with people, and you have to be able to resolve problems. You win some, you lose some. That's all there is to it. Don't hold a grudge against anybody because you don't agree with them."

Smith is eager to embrace contributions, wherever they may be found. The gentleman Supervisor who will consider any quality argument is genuinely troubled by the prospect of leaving potential untapped.

"If you had one Volunteer Coordinator, that did nothing but coordinate volunteers, [that position would pay for itself] tenfold. We have so many retired folks in Lake County. There's experts in every field. If we had that right combination to get their attention, and to be able to have them do stuff, Executive Director-type people would [say], 'You know what? I'd really like to help the County out.'"

Reflecting upon his twenty years on the Board, Smith is refreshingly candid.

"Every agenda is so different; there's such a wide array of what we deal with. People expect us to be experts at all of it! [There have been projects where] we really made a difference by our involvement, but the time that it took, and the staff that it took, took away from other folks in the community."

Adjusting to the job of Supervisor didn't come easily.

"I didn't have the opportunity [for a proper initial orientation]. What [County Administrative Officer Carol Huchingson] has done for new Board members [Tina Scott and Moke Simon] in 2017 is fantastic, probably one of the best things I've seen since I've been on the Board for new members. For them to meet with a different Department Head weekly, to go through their full department... I wish I'd done it with them! They know more in the first year than [I did in the first five]."

Whatever hiccups came, Smith dug in, paid close attention, and consistently grew. (Cont. next page)

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*"Don't hold a grudge  
against anybody  
because you don't  
agree with them."*

*--Jeff Smith*

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## Smith: Pride in Community, Cont.

"I've told people this for years... I graduated high school with an 8th grade education. I was just pushed through. My reading level's gone way up since I've had this job!"

Smith has accomplished a great deal, but he isn't concerned with getting credit.

"We're doing so many things with so many people, I don't look at any of [them] as personal accomplishments. It has always been staff. I might have an idea, but it takes everyone else to jump in and believe in the idea, and get things done." The sense of accomplishment, the pride, suggests Smith, belongs to the community of contributors.

When challenges swirl, Smith rises to meet them. This resolve was perhaps most convincingly demonstrated in the wake of the Sulphur Fire, which claimed Smith's family home in the early morning hours of Monday, October 9, 2017. By Tuesday morning, October 10, he was back in the Board room, chairing the meeting. It was a profound demonstration of leadership.

"My wife and I are [resilient]. We were not going to say, 'Okay, that's going to be the most devastating thing in our life, we're never going to recover.' We just both went, 'Okay, let's move on. What's going to happen next? What do we have to do now?'"

Smith's resilience and can-do attitude will continue to enliven the Board throughout 2018, his final year of service. Does the outgoing Chairman of the Board and now savvy veteran Supervisor have any advice for those who follow him leading the County's governing body?

"Probably the biggest thing is to keep focused. Be prepared. Know what you're going to do on the agenda as things come up. Look around the room and see who's sitting there on non-timed items, and take them, so they can get back to work. Control the meeting, too. Let people know up front."

Looking ahead, what does Supervisor Smith see as the greatest challenges Lake County is facing?

"The greatest challenges are budgetary; even keeping employees is difficult. To me, it's really sad. We keep doing twice as much with half the amount of money and half the staff. It's tiring for employees. Dealing with the Lake issues in another challenge. We've had a couple of fish die-offs this year, probably due to oxygen depletion. We have to look at everything, and try to get back on track."

"How did Lake Tahoe get so much attention? How did they attract so much investment? Clear Lake is the largest natural lake in California alone, and one of the oldest lakes in the Northern Hemisphere, so we should get some more attention on it."

What does Smith hope County staff has learned from his leadership?

"We can accomplish what we really want to accomplish if we put our minds to it, get busy and get it done. You have to spend time on things that are productive. The biggest thing is working together, making the sacrifices you have to make, and just getting stuff done."

Fittingly, following these poignant thoughts, Supervisor Smith paused, and then humbly offered, "I say those things, and they're important, but I've learned mostly from all of you guys, more than you have learned from me."

Once more, to the community goes the glory, goes the pride.




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*Smith's resolve was convincingly demonstrated in the wake of the Sulphur Fire, which claimed his family home.*

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## Lake County Library, Cont.

"Part of what the Library does is help people see the realm of possibility. [Reading] can help people envision other worlds, other modes of living, other careers; tons of different possibilities."

For many families, contact with the Library begins with Storytime.

"Storytimes are amazing, because they are multigenerational. Storytime [primarily intends to serve] children who come and listen to the story, but we also engage with the parents, and teach them literacy skills. [Some of the] parents are grandparents, there are all kinds of different caregivers, and we are always trying to see how we can engage the adults in the room, to help teach [caregivers] literacy skills they can pass on to their kids. It builds that love of reading in children, but also helps adults help their children develop that love of reading and those literacy skills."

Literacy, broadly defined, is the capacity to be socially conversant; the ability to read the written word and to interpret other verbal and non-verbal stimuli toward the end of meaningfully interacting with others. As technologies change, so does the meaning of literacy.

"People say, 'You have the internet now, why do people need Libraries?' Because we have the internet, the level of literacy [individuals] need to understand the nuance of what's being published is much higher. Libraries are even more important, because there's so much more out there for people to consume. Digital literacy, financial literacy, cultural literacy, it's all more complex, so people really need assistance with that."

The Library embraces any technology that will help fulfill its mission. Online content platforms offer virtual Library patrons the chance to explore quality new terrain from their personal computer or mobile device. "I love Hoopla the most, because it fulfills the promise that people feel when they have a digital device, they're going to get what they want right away."

Novelist, a book recommendation engine created by librarians, now helps connect readers to their next adventure. "A group of librarians decide what [books are] similar, based upon different aspects, and [Novelist will even tell you] what it is about [a] book that is similar [to one previously enjoyed]."

A recently-awarded grant brought Virtual Reality headsets to the Lakeport and Redbud Libraries.

Each person has unique needs; each individual's perspective is valued. "Not a lot of people just want books; they want one specific book. One of the laws of Library Science is, 'Every reader has their book and every book has their reader.' "

That commitment to honoring each story makes community engagement and community service a natural extension of the Library's core mission. Veach has spoken at numerous events, partnered with local businesses, and championed the use of reading as a driver of social action.

"Part of what the library is about is creating a community, and I think that's so important in our day and age, as some of the social fabric gets unwoven. We're out there, trying to keep the social fabric strong."

"The library has to work hard to keep literacy development at the forefront of people's minds."

In this distracted age, there remains magic in the melding of paper and ink. We continue to read books, in part, because it is good for us:

"In a way, it's kind of like exercise. If you exercise every day, you feel fitter and healthier. If you stretch your intellectual muscles and read every day, it makes everything easier. Yet, it's hard to find the time." (Cont. next page)




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*People say, "You have the internet now, why do people need libraries?"*

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## Lake County Library, Cont.

Like physical exercise, many of the benefits the Library has to offer take time to manifest; so do many of the detriments of underfunding library services.

"[My predecessor] used to say, 'Libraries are like mayonnaise. Everyone likes them, but they're not going to march in the streets if libraries are cut.' When the library materials budget is cut, you don't see [the effects] right away. 5-10 years down the line, it becomes noticeable; oh, the Library has no current materials."

During the recession, funding was severely cut for the Library Services Act, the document that articulates the State legislature's commitment to ensuring all Californians have access to quality materials. Libraries serve as a critical educational safety net in society, disrupting generational poverty.

Because Public Library services are free, as long as patrons return materials on time, appropriately funded libraries provide equity of opportunity. Underfunding has far-reaching consequences.

People see the Library as a meaningful tool when their one book is on the shelves, but, "If [we don't] have their one book, people just stop coming to the Library, they don't view it as useful."

In the face of limited resources, Veach and County Library staff and volunteers persist in connecting County residents with their book, their materials. People are often surprised at the great lengths to which the library will go to obtain a particular item.

How did Veach develop his commitment to the Lake County Library and community service?

"I came to the Library in 2007 as a volunteer. I had just graduated from college with a degree in Literature, and I [was evaluating the possibility of becoming] a Librarian. I started as a volunteer, then was hired as a Library Assistant; I've worked my whole way up in this one organization."

Concurrently with this professional ascent, Veach pursued a Master's degree in Library Science, attending a distance education program through San Jose State University. "Effective online courses are the future of education. It taught me skills with technology I still use today."

"The former County Librarian, Kathy Jansen, was a mentor to me, she really helped provoke me to becoming a Librarian. Just seeing the way she helped the public, and was always professional. I appreciated her character, and I appreciated the work she did. [It] helped me want to follow in her footsteps."

Now, County residents have a fine example in Veach.

We can model his relentless pursuit of funding, which facilitated the transformation of the Lakeport library branch into a tremendous and responsive community meeting place through a successful USDA grant.

We can model his commitment to serving the public, by participating in "Book to Action" this Spring, funded through a grant from the California Center for the Book.

"We're reading *Braving the Wilderness*, which is about isolation, true belonging, being yourself, and civility. We're going to have a local counselor, JoAnn Saccato, do a workshop, and then we're going to have an event where people can have community conversations, and talk to people they don't know about important topics."

We can model Veach and the County Library's commitment to voluntarism, listening and fashioning social fabric.

"I love Lake County because I love the wide open spaces [and] the mix of people. So often, in larger [cities], people can sort themselves into kind of a bubble, where they're not meeting people that are different than them. Here in Lake County, if you want to have a social life, you have to mix with a lot of different kinds of people, and that's good and healthy. In my reading and in my life, I try to get a wide variety of ideas, and a wide variety of viewpoints."

We can work together, to ensure every reader has their book, and every book their reader.

To learn more about the many services offered by the Lake County Library, visit <http://library.lakecountycalifornia.gov/>.





This PowerPoint Presentation intends to show Lake County residents how local tax dollars are spent.

The first two slides show that the great majority of local dollars, including property tax, sales tax and gas tax, are dedicated to the most essential public services in our community, our “essential core services.”

Other County services are self-funded, some by fees, and others through special funding from the state & federal government that is restricted for only those purposes. (Such as Water Resources, Health Services, Social Services, Air Quality and the Building and Safety).

These slides primarily focus upon the essential core service departments which rely on property tax, sales tax and gas tax.



## CORE SERVICE DEPARTMENTS

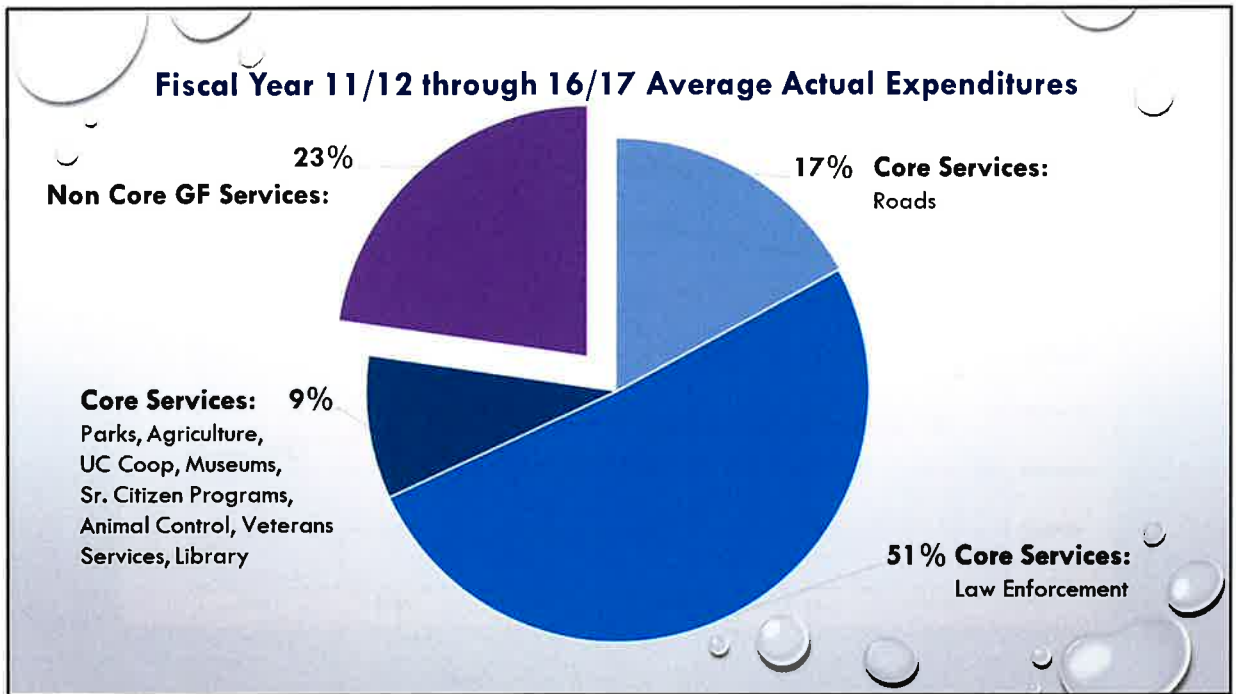
PRIMARILY FUNDED WITH PROPERTY TAX, GAS TAX, AND SALES TAX

- LAW ENFORCEMENT
  - DISTRICT ATTORNEY
  - DA / VICTIM WITNESS
  - PUBLIC DEFENDER
  - SHERIFF-CORONER
  - SHERIFF-CENTRAL DISPATCH
  - SHERIFF-MARINE PATROL
  - SHERIFF-JAIL FACILITIES
  - PROBATION
  - JUVENILE HOME
  - JAIL-MEDICAL SERVICES
- AGRICULTURAL COMMISSIONER
- UC COOPERATIVE EXTENSION
- SENIOR CITIZENS PROGRAMS
- VETERANS SERVICES
- ANIMAL CONTROL
- PARKS AND RECREATION
- MUSEUM
- LIBRARY
- ROAD

Listed on this slide are our core service departments, Law Enforcement on the left, other departments on the right. These are reliant on property tax, sales tax and gas tax.

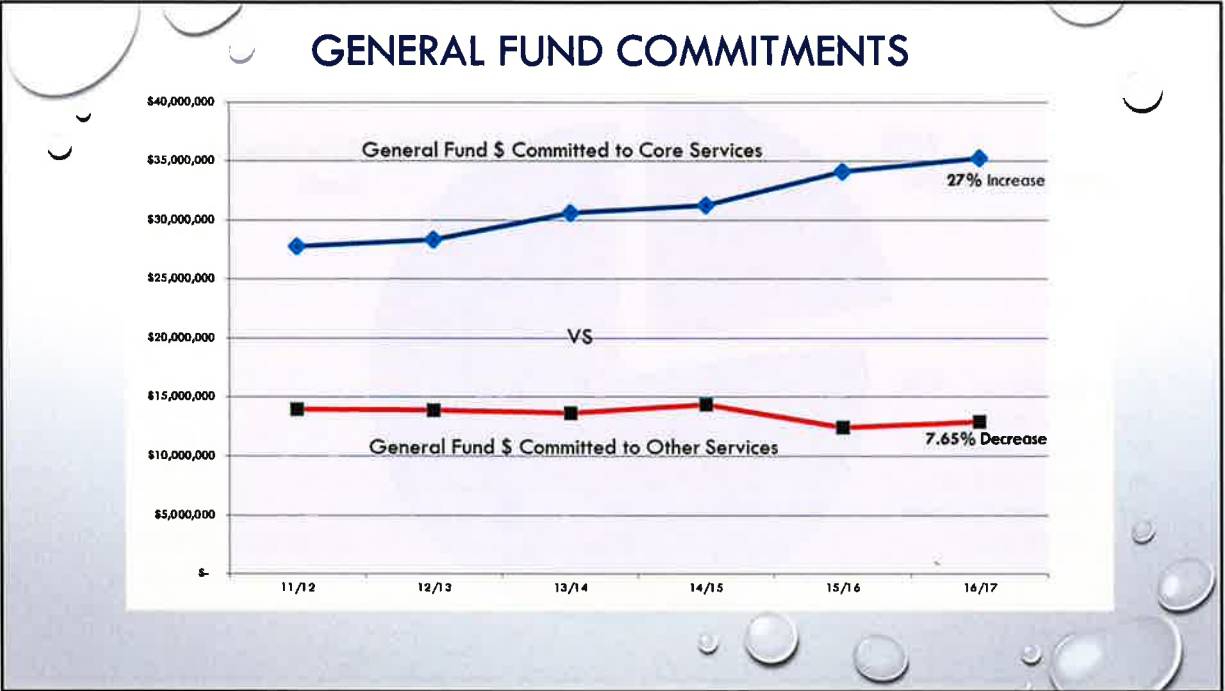
A number of other departments are funded by these same local tax dollars. For the most part, the "non-core" departments provide internal support to the core; the Auditor-Controller, Treasurer, HR, County Counsel and IT.

As you will see on the next side, non-core services receive substantially fewer local tax dollars than core services.



Not only do the core services receive the majority of funding, in recent years the Board of Supervisors has made sure that funding for these core services is given highest priority.

77% of all General Fund dollars are designated to core services, leaving just 23% to non-core services - the departments that, for the most part, provide internal support services to enable the core service departments to operate.

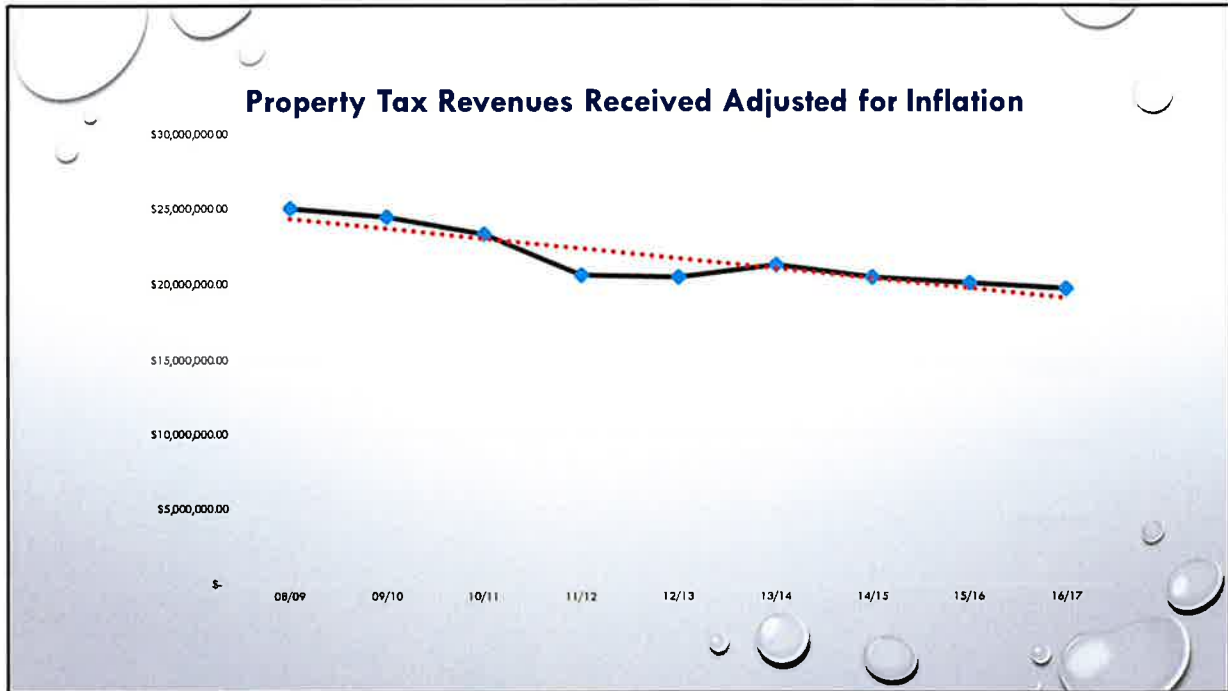


This slide consists of a graph which illustrates how, over the past 6 years, funding for the core services has increased - up 27% and still climbing.

Funding for non-core services has diminished by nearly 8%.

Despite the growth in core services spending, I'm certain each department head can make a compelling argument that they still lacking the staffing and resources needed.

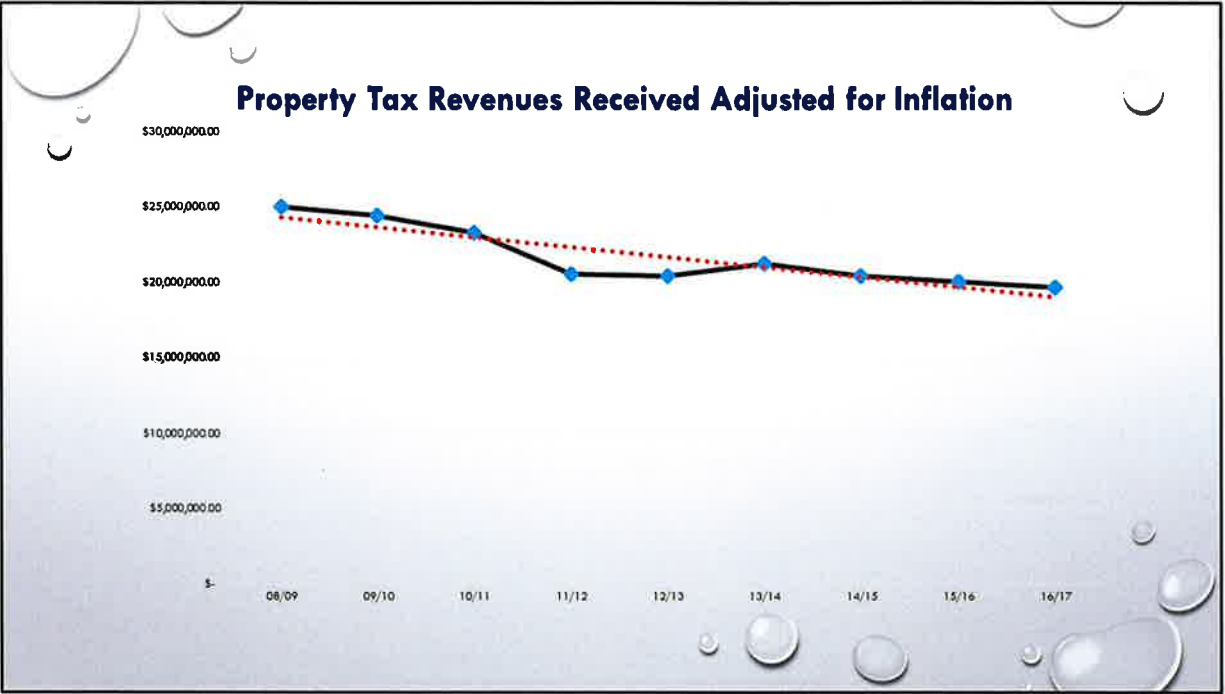
For the non core services departments, their financial circumstances are even worse.



As illustrated above, our efforts to fund core services have become increasingly challenging in recent years, as there has been no real growth in **property** tax revenues since the great recession. For all property tax collected, the County government receives about 25 cents on the dollar, and this revenue source has declined considerably on an inflation adjusted basis.

In addition to our sluggish recovery from the great recession, Lake County's property tax base has been decimated by the series of unprecedented fires. Recovery is a long-term process and rebuilding takes time. Using the Valley Fire as an example, the largest of all by far, 2.5 years out, just over 10% have been fully rebuilt. Many others are in progress, but some of the lost properties may never be rebuilt. For some survivors, the devastation was understandably just too much, and they were compelled to move on. Homes never rebuilt result in a permanent reduction of property tax revenue.

To date, cumulative **property** tax loss totals about \$3,500,000, with over a million more lost during subsequent years of recovery.



Because property tax represents about 50% of total General Fund revenue, the failure of it to recover has already resulted in staffing reductions and the loss of some important services, the details of which are reflected on the departmental reports posted at <http://www.lakecountycga.gov/vision/>. Approximately 11% of staffing in core departments has been eliminated since Fiscal Year 2008/09. The effects of the reductions departments have suffered to date, and consequences anticipated should the trend continue, are startling.

As you can see, we are down about \$5,000,000 since the Great Recession, and the red trend line illustrates a continuing decline.

## DISASTER RESPONSE AND RECOVERY

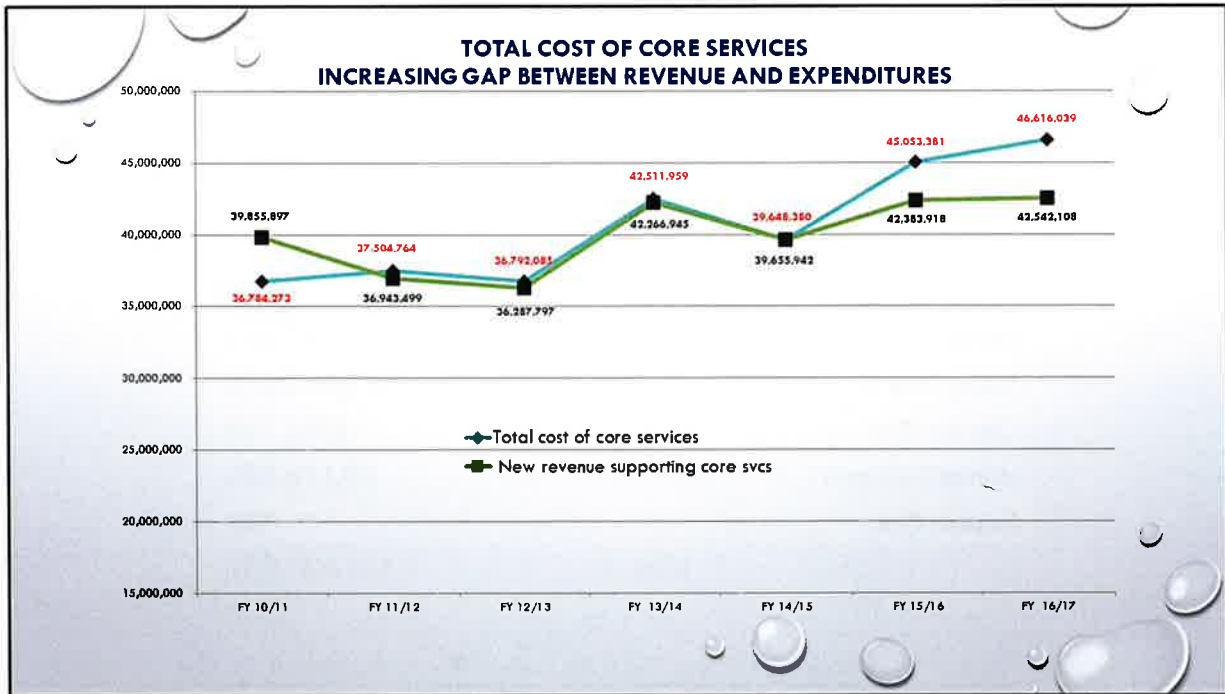
Based on actual costs incurred and estimated total project costs identified to date, the estimated costs for the recent disaster events is estimated as follows:

<u>DISASTER EVENT</u>	<u>COSTS</u>
Rocky / Jerusalem Fires	\$357,603
Valley Fire	\$16,371,670
Clayton Fire	\$395,722
Winter Storms #1-3	\$9,116,936
Sulphur Fire	TBD
Total	\$26,241,931

Not only has the reduced **property** tax challenged our ability to sustain core service levels, the cost of disaster response and recovery has exacerbated our financial challenges. As you can see from the above slide, the total cost of disaster response and recovery is over \$26,000,000.

Some of these costs are being reimbursed, but we will never be made whole. At this point, our best estimate, barring any further disasters, is that the County will bear as much as \$5,000,000 in disaster-related costs.





This last slide puts our financial challenge into perspective.

The cost of core services is exceeding the new revenues needed to support them each year. Looking back at Fiscal Year 2010/11, revenue actually exceeded expenses. Those funds were set aside in reserve, and in the subsequent years, with expenses exceeding revenue, gaps have been filled by these carried over funds.

By 2015/16, reserves were exhausted, and when you look at 2016/17, the unsustainable gap is evident.

So the bottom line is this: There is only so much money to go around, and it is less than it used to be. At our current trajectory, it will become less and less.

What we are seeking from you is a better understanding of what services are top priority to you. Where do you want to see limited funds allocated? We also want to hear your ideas for ways to save money or find new money.

The challenges are great, but we know Lake County residents will face and overcome them. Right now, you can help your County government by sharing your best ideas.



**COMMUNITY VISIONING FORUM**

**YOUR VOICE**

**YOUR GOVERNMENT**

**[VISION@LAKECOUNTYCA.GOV](mailto:VISION@LAKECOUNTYCA.GOV)**