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## MENDOCINO COUNTY MEMORANDUM

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**TO:** Carmel Angelo, Chief Executive Officer

**FROM:** Stacey Cryer, Assistant Health & Human Services Agency Director  
Nash Gonzalez, Planning & Building Services Director

**SUBJECT:** Integration of Environmental Health Land Use Program into Planning & Building Services

**DATE:** April 22, 2010

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This is to apprise the Chief Executive Officer of findings in regard to the potential merger of the Environmental Health Land Use Program with Planning & Building Services. Below are listed: 1) pros and cons to integration, 2) ideas to facilitate integration, 3) other county organizational models, and 4) recommendations.

1) There are several advantages to integration:

- Greater centralization of services creating a one stop shop approach to improve customer service.
- Improved coordination in code enforcement involving violations of housing standards and septic/water. Enforcement can be handled under Building's Code Enforcement Program thereby eliminating the need for Land Use staff involvement.
- Clerical duties can be consolidated in Planning & Building Services which can result in a cost savings.
- Shared data base can provide more efficient review of project proposals resulting in a more efficient approach to development.
- Merger may provide for better coordination of building and septic system inspections for new constructions thereby reducing the number of site visits by county staff. Cross training between building inspectors and health inspectors may allow for the consolidation of plumbing code inspections.



Some identified obstacles to integration are:

- The Land Use Program will not qualify as a public health service if transferred into Planning & Building Services and will result in the loss of state realignment funding.
- Potential cost associated with transferring Land Use data from Access Database into CRW.
- Potential cost associated with remodeling office space to accommodate additional staff in Planning & Building Services.
- Planning & Building Services would become less autonomous by having North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board oversight.
- Short term disruption of service during transfer of data base and office move.
- Loss of seniority bumping rights for Environmental Health staff moving into new department.
- The segmenting of the Land Use Program into Planning & Building Services may impact:
  - The required cross training of staff in the various environmental health programs as they advance from entry level REHS I position to REHS II certification.
  - The ability to draw on staff from other programs to provide coverage when facing workload demands.
  - Career growth ability for staff moving from REHS I position to senior and management positions.
  - Environmental services on the coast, ocean water and shellfish monitoring, now provided by Land Use staff located in the Fort Bragg office.

2) Possible actions to address some of the identified obstacles include:

- Raise fees 39% (\$132,000 based on 2008-2009 actuals) to have the Land Use Program 100% fee supported.
- Planning & Building Services and Environmental Health enter into a MOU to provide mutual assistance in staff development, career growth, and environmental services on the coast.
- Time the transfer to occur during wet weather season to minimize disruption of service.



3) Other county organizational models:

Sonoma County: Environmental Health is located under the Department of Health Services and Planning & Building Services and Land Use/well and septic are located under the Department of Development Services.

Siskiyou County: Both Environmental Health and Planning & Building Services are located under the Public Health and Community Development Department.

Solano and Ventura Counties: Both Environmental Health and Planning & Building Services are located under a Resource Management Agency.

4) Recommendations:

- Recommend no consolidation at this time since it increases General Fund costs.
- Recommend further fiscal analysis to identify any additional funding sources.
- Recommend Planning & Building Services and Environmental Health continue to work together and build on strategies to improve coordination and efficiencies in providing service to the community.

We are available to answer any questions and look forward to further direction on this matter.

