

WAYNE COUNTY CUTS BACK LAYOFFS



Usually when layoffs happen there is little to be done about the situation. The decision is made, pink slips are sent out and at the appointed hour the workers are simply out of a job. The line items are off of the budget and the workers are back onto the market in search of a job. It is not a pretty process, but on its face at least it is a simple one. Or at least is usually is, sometimes people and communities pull together and do what they can to save as many jobs as possible for the community. That is what happened this week in Wayne County, where the recent layoffs of more than half of those who were give notice are going to be able to keep their jobs. The county executive, one Mr. Robert Ficano, was able to rescind the layoffs of 26 of the 44 people who had previously been slated to be let go. The jobs were set to be cut from the Health and Human Services Department, and the county was afraid that this big of a job loss would decline the level of care given to patients, a move it was unwilling to make. Add in the fact that the layoffs would have impacted about 13 of the county executive's appointees and you can see why he was motivated to work with the workers and find a solution to keep people in their jobs. Mr. Ficano released a statement attributing the cut in layoffs to the work of many members of his staff, "Due to the hard work I requested of the personnel, health and budget departments over the past week, I am pleased to announce a solution that achieves our budget objectives with less jobs lost." The budget cuts are coming in many ways, including not filling a number of vacant positions this year. The layoff plan, which was designed to help the county save about \$6 million over the next 20 months, was designed to help with the massive budget deficit they are facing. The deficit, which was calculated in October, is about \$160 million. That being said the majority of the jobs being saved are not the appointees, but instead are union workers. The kinds of job titles expected to be taken off of layoff include dental assistants, medical assistants and typists, some of the lowest paid workers. Thomas Richards, president of American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees Local 101, the union that represents the displaced workers, told the following about the layoffs to a reporter for freep.com, "It's good news, but why should there be layoffs at all. It should have been negotiated." The union and the county did recently negotiate a new contract, in which the workers took a 10% cut to their pay, and accepted the costs for a greater share of their health care costs. The union's anger may stem from the fact that the average appointee that remains is paid \$103,000 each year, which is enough to keep a lot more support staff on the payrolls.

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