

CONTRA COSTA TIMES

ContraCostaTimes.com

Contra Costa workers retiring at twice average levels

By Rick Radin
Contra Costa Times

Posted: 03/27/2011 08:57:01 PM PDT

Carlos Silva, a 29-year veteran of Contra Costa County's information technology department, is retiring this month in part because he's concerned about supervisors' expressed desire to negotiate pay and benefits cuts with county unions.

He says that he and many of his colleagues won't be thrilled if they're making less money when a new labor contract takes effect July 1.

Silva sees a "retirement tsunami" this month among county workers, based on conversations he's had with co-workers.

"A lot of people are making the decision to retire," Silva said. "The anticipated pay cut is the main trigger."

Retirement association CEO Marilyn Leedom confirmed the trend toward more retirements, saying last week that pension applications this month are running at twice the normal average for March.

This is always a popular month to retire, Leedom said, because March retirees are the first to benefit from the annual cost-of-living adjustment, pegged at 1.5 percent this year.

"We're being inundated with requests," Leedom said, adding that Wednesday was the final day for applicants to file their paperwork to retire this month.

The business manager for the county's largest union said he was unaware of the retirement wave but not surprised by the news.

"People's view is we're in for tough times, potential reductions in income," said Rollie Katz, of Public Employees Union Local 1 in Martinez. "Why go through a few more tough

years?"

Katz, who negotiates for librarians, vocational nurses and a host of other employee classifications, said older workers may want to spare their younger colleagues should layoffs be part of the picture.

"Maybe retiring can save the job of a younger person with lower seniority who might be laid off," he said.

Local 1 represents 2,300 out of about 9,000 county workers.

Earlier this month, the five-member board of supervisors voted to eliminate the practice of allowing about 300 managers to sell their vacation back to the county more than once in a 12-month period. The change eliminates a benefit that enabled them to increase their pensions as much as 4.5 percent annually.

Supervisor John Gioia, of Richmond, said he does not anticipate any adverse effects on the \$5.1 billion pension system or county departments from a wave of retirements.

"Having more people retiring means a lesser number next year and the following year," said Gioia, who serves on the retirement system board. "We have good people to bring up through the ranks."

Gioia confirmed the board's desire to pursue pay and benefits cuts with negotiators for the three main unions that represent the majority of employees.

Fast, convenient,
AND affordable

Save on select
Wireless*
All-in-Ones,
Photo Printers
and Lasers

Save Today

Limited time offers

Shop Now >

Print Powered By  FormatDynamics™

CONTRA COSTA TIMES

ContraCostaTimes.com

The current contracts expire June 30, and negotiations will begin later this spring, he said.

"There is the need to cut our compensation costs to balance the budget," Gioia said.

Contact Rick Radin at 925-779-7166.



HEARTLAND QUALITY
OMAHA STEAKS
SINCE 1917

SAVE
up to **64%**

Plus, get
3 FREE Gifts

Special Code: 45069ZWN

To order: www.OmahaSteaks.com/print71
or call 1-877-605-0496

Print Powered By  **FormatDynamics™**