

New county chief appointed

By Chuck Doud

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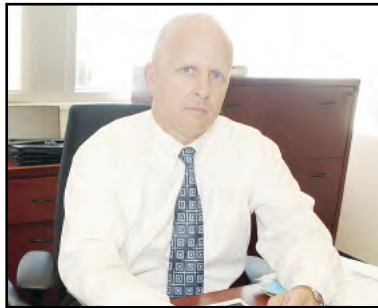
Eric Fleming has been appointed acting chief administrative officer of Madera County.

His appointment came after the resignation Tuesday night of Chief Administrative Officer Steven Rodriguez, who was named to the job late last summer.

Rodriguez replaced long-time CAO Stell Manfredi, who retired in September.

Fleming was hired by Manfredi in August of 2005. He was one of three assistant administrators in Manfredi's office. The others were Stan Kohler, who resigned about the time Manfredi did, and John Sears, who has said he plans to retire later this year.

County Supervisor Tom Wheeler said Rodriguez gave him a letter of resignation about 5:30 p.m. Tuesday. He said he was unable to give a reason why Ro-



WENDY ALEXANDER/THE MADERA TRIBUNE

Eric Fleming, in his office at the Madera County Administration Building. Fleming has been appointed acting chief administrative officer of Madera County.

driguez had resigned.

“He just thought it was time to move on, I guess,” he said.

Rodriguez's resignation came at the end of a day that included a scheduled evaluation of his job performance.

Wheeler wouldn't comment on the evaluation, except to say it was done in closed session.

Wheeler said Fleming
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Administrator

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had taken over Wednesday as temporary CAO. A resolution appointing him CAO is on the agenda for Tuesday's Board of Supervisors meeting.

The CAO is responsible for the day-to-day operations of the county. According to the job description on the county Internet site, "The CAO serves the legislative function of the Board of Supervisors by providing research, information and recommendations, and serves all of the executive functions of the board by administering and supervising all county departments in matters that are the responsibility of the board.

Wheeler wouldn't say whether he was glad or sad to see Rodriguez leave.

"Change is always difficult," he said. "We'll just have to see what happens.

Fleming said his biggest immediate task would be formulating the county budget for fiscal year 2010-11. Deliberations on that budget were scheduled for August during Tuesday's Board meeting.

"There's still going to be a lot of unknowns in our subvented programs," he said. Those are programs carried out by the county but paid for with state or federal funds.

Both the state and federal governments are still reeling from the economic downturn, and hard numbers for how much money might be coming from those sources are missing.

"We still don't know what the impact is going to be" on county programs, said Fleming.



MADERA TRIBUNE FILE PHOTO

Former County Administrator Steven Rodriguez, testifies before the Board of Supervisors earlier this year.

He said he expected next year's county budget to be similar to this year's, perhaps even tighter.

"We're putting together a spending plan that we feel is

pretty much in line with the current year's, trying to maintain as many of the services that we currently provide.

"Of course, we're having to do this with a lot less staff," he said. "Our vacancies continue to grow as people leave, either through retirement or moving on to other jobs. We aren't filling those positions. Credit needs to go to our department heads, because they continue to provide a basic level of service that the public is entitled to, with not only this growing number of vacancies, but furloughs on top of that."

He said the trick would be to keep the county on a steady course.

"We do know things aren't going to get much better any time soon," he said. "I would like to think things will start getting better soon, but I think it's

going to be a long recovery."

He said he thought county revenues for next year would decline by some \$4 million below this year's revenues.

"We're coming up with creative ways to close that gap without further major impacts on staffing," he said. "We want to avoid that if possible."

Fleming said he didn't plan to fill the vacancy his move up would create.

"It's time for the administrative department to take a hit, too," he said.

Both Wheeler and Fleming said they expected Kevin Fries, who was hired by Rodriguez to replace Kohler, to stay on.

Fleming, 41, is married to Shawn Fleming, who works at Madera Community College Center. They have two sons, 10 and 6 years of age.