

SANTA BARBARA COUNTY BOARD AGENDA LETTER



Clerk of the Board of Supervisors
105 E. Anapamu Street, Suite 407
Santa Barbara, CA 93101
(805) 568-2240

Agenda Number:
Prepared on: 5/20/05
Department Name:
Department No.:
Agenda Date: 6/28/05
Placement: Administrative
Estimate Time:
Continued Item: NO
If Yes, date from:

TO: Board of Supervisors

FROM: Supervisor Firestone, 3rd District
Supervisor Gray, 4th District

STAFF CONTACT: Susan Paul, Human Resources Director
568-2817

SUBJECT: Subcommittee Report – Agenda Management

Recommended Actions:

That the Board of Supervisors:

Set a hearing to consider recommendations regarding Agenda Management Subcommittee Report, as follows:

- a) Receive and file report of the Agenda Management Subcommittee on recommendations related to streamlining and improving the efficiency of meetings of the Board of Supervisors and the quality and consistency of agenda reports and staff coordination; and
- b) Conceptually approve the recommendations of the Subcommittee and direct staff to return as appropriate with resolutions amending and/or rescinding Board of Supervisors resolution 03-282 (regarding Board of Supervisor agenda policies and conduct of the meetings) and resolution 91-333 (regarding rules for land use hearings) and the Agenda Procedures Manual, consistent with the direction of the Board.

Based on the review and analysis of Board Meetings over the last several months, the subcommittee is making a number of recommendations to streamline and improve the overall flow of the meetings and improve the quality and consistency of Board Letters and staff coordination.

Executive Summary and Discussion:

In an effort to improve the efficiency of Board of Supervisor Meetings and the overall management of the agenda process, the Board requested a review of the current agenda-meeting format and related procedures. Further, the Board asked the County Executive Officer (CEO) and a subcommittee of the Board of Supervisors, comprised of Supervisors Firestone and Gray, to review the current procedures and return to the full Board with recommendations for overall improved agenda management.

Background:

Since 1850 when the County of Santa Barbara was formed and consisted of a small community of 90,000, it has experienced consistent growth and today serves 415,000 citizens. The County is considered a major employer and is responsible for efficiently and effectively managing a myriad of resources, a variety of public programs, and an annual operating budget of 650 million dollars.

Over time, the complexity of issues handled by the Board of Supervisors has grown, and public outreach and involvement has necessarily increased. The explosion in Federal and State mandates, the Brown Act, and other environmental changes have broadly impacted the requirements placed on local government. In addition to these changes, the technology available to support the Board's public outreach efforts and requirements to meet mandates has improved to include cable television coverage of Board Meetings, video conferencing, and Internet and computer access. In short, the County today is significantly more sophisticated and complex than it was in 1940.

The following report and related recommendations represent the outcome of the review of the County's agenda process and procedures. The methodology used by the subcommittee included a five-month review and analysis of the weekly agenda management meetings, discussions with County staff, and a review of recurring issues that impact the flow and efficient time management of Board meetings.

Analysis:

Major factors that impact the flow of Board meetings are:

- Significant time is spent on awards and recognition for a variety of public interest and service groups, which impacts the Board's ability to address the core mission and business of the County. Consequently, reports on key issues pending critical Board decisions are frequently postponed or rushed.
- There is no restriction on the amount of time members of the public can speak in aggregate regarding an issue thus adversely impacting the overall timeframes of meetings and the ability to efficiently address matters.
- In the Agenda Review Meeting, timeframes are assigned to items but not adhered to in the course of the actual Board Meetings.
- Currently, there are no scheduled briefings of Board Members on key agenda items.
- The format and content of Board Letters is inconsistent throughout the County, and decision impacts are typically not addressed in Board Letters.
- Board Meetings can be long for Board Members who start their day at 7:30 a.m. and may go until 5 or 6 p.m. with virtually no more than a brief lunch break
- Public comment and Administrative Agenda review fluctuate significantly in time from 30 minutes to two hours.
- Staff reports sometimes evolve into extensive power point presentations read aloud to the Board. consequently, public testimony and Board questions do not receive adequate hearing.

- Invocations are usually developed and delivered by County staff. Locating and securing individuals to perform this function is sometimes time consuming. Additionally, in many cases the presentation is a meaningful reflection rather than an invocation.
- The length of Closed Sessions varies greatly. Lengthy Closed Sessions cause the entire meeting to run seriously behind schedule.

Recommended Format Changes and Modifications for Board Meetings:

- Closed Session – 7:50 a.m. or 8:00 a.m. (depending on number of issues to discuss)
- 9:00 a.m. – 9:30 a.m. - Call to Order, Moment of Reflection and Flag Salute, Approval of Minutes, Public Comment (15 minutes), Request for Discussion of Administrative Agenda items.
- 9:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. - Major Policy Issues
- Between 10:00 a.m. and 10:30 a.m. – 10 minute break
- 12:00 p.m. – 1:30 p.m. - Lunch Break
- 1:30 p.m. – 4:00 p.m. - Major Policy Issues, Complex Land Use Items, and/or Departmental Reports
- Between 2:30 p.m. and 3:00 p.m. – 10 minute break
- 4:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. - Presentations, Resolutions, Administrative Agenda Items pulled for discussion.

Procedural Recommendations:

- Whenever possible, Board Members are encouraged to present resolutions and other forms of recognition at the actual event, receiving entity’s location, meeting, or department rather than the Board Meeting.
- Staff presentations should generally be no longer than 15 minutes depending on the complexity of the issue. Each presentation should be vetted by the CEO’s Office for clarity and direction.
- Administrative Agenda -“A” Agenda, requiring more than 5 minutes, items pulled by the public will be moved to the end of the Board Meeting (after the “D” Agenda). Departments will be encouraged to discuss the item with the member of the public expressing concern.
- The Public Comment segment will be 15 minutes ONLY. The clerk will count the number of requests to speak, divide that number by 15 minutes, and announce the time allotted for each public speaker.
- No more than one hour should be allocated to Closed Session. Closed Session items not completed within the hour will be continued to lunchtime or after the Board meeting. In the event more than one hour is necessary for closed session, the Board schedule should be altered to accommodate said items. It is recommended that whenever possible, the schedule change be noticed on the Thursday prior to the Tuesday meeting.
- The Discussion Agenda will begin at 9:30 a.m.
- New material should not be distributed at the Board meeting. All materials pertinent to a matter should be delivered to Board Members and the public on the Monday prior to the Tuesday meeting date.
- Land Use Items (Board of Supervisor Appeals) – A standard process is recommended for Land Use Projects heard by the Board of Supervisors for the purpose of streamlining the overall process and the time allocated to these items. Recommendations are as follows: (It should be noted that the complexity of a land use issue may cause the recommended time frames to be modified.)
 - Staff presentation – Not to exceed 20 minutes
 - Proponent or Applicant – 20 minutes to present case
 - Opposition - 20 minutes to present case

- Public Input - limited to 45 minutes
- After presentations and public input, proponents and opponents will have five additional minutes for rebuttal
- Board considers item and makes final determination

Recommended Changes to Agenda Cover and Meeting Minutes:

- The Clerk of the Board will include a different historical fact or event regarding the County of Santa Barbara on each agenda if possible.
- Invocation will be changed to a Moment of Reflection.
- Start times for the morning and afternoon sessions should be removed from the agenda and the face sheet should set forth the time schedule. (See Attached)
- Minutes of Board meetings will reflect the actual beginning and end time of an item for future analysis and review.

Recommended Changes to Board Letters:

- The format of Board Letters should be consistent throughout the County.
- Board Letters should include background information, analysis, fiscal impact information, and decision impacts. Information should be presented clearly and concisely.
- Each Board Letter should have an executive summary, not to exceed one page, which indicates why the item is appearing before the Board, what action is requested, any legislative history, i.e., information indicating whether the Board asked for it, etc.
- The responsible staff member's phone number shall be noted at the top of the Board Letter and the staff member shall be available on the Friday afternoon and Monday prior to the meeting to respond to Board Members' questions.
- The County Strategic Goals could be removed from Board items.

Additional Recommendations:

- Board Members will make every effort to have any questions they may have regarding an item handled ahead of time by contacting the CEO and/or cognizant departments. Each department shall have a designated staff person available by telephone on the Friday afternoon and Monday prior to the Board Meeting to answer Board members' questions.
- Staff Reports – Staff reports should be brief and concise, covering only highlights and fiscal impacts. Slide presentations are not necessary for most staff presentations. (When slides are necessary, they should consist of two or three at most.) Staff should be available to respond to questions. Staff presentations should assume that Board Members have read the materials.
- Study Sessions – Items that contain background information or matters such as strategic scans, status of projects, or potential issues could be addressed, directed for future staff work, etc., should be held as study sessions. To convene Study Sessions the Board will adjourn their regular Board meeting to a Study Session at a designated date. The meeting would be a continued regular meeting and the Study Session would be a noticed item of business on the agenda. Specific Study Session topics will be identified on the agenda. The advantage of this approach would be that Tuesday's Board Meetings would be used for items that benefited from completed staff work.
- The Board will hold a Ceremonial Meeting for Personnel Recognitions, Child Friendly awards, Women of the Year, Black History month, and any other ceremonial/recognition events at the lunch hour.

- From time-to-time the County Executive Officer (CEO) may conduct “Board Briefings” with individual Board Members. The following are suggestions for the format of the briefings:
 - The CEO would determine the items to cover in the briefings. The items covered should be significant matters.
 - Individual Board Members may ask to be briefed on a specific Board item.
 - An agenda including the briefing items should be e-mailed on Fridays.
 - The agenda should include the Board item number, the item’s title, and the staff person providing the briefing.
 - The agenda should be formatted for both agenda and non-agenda items. (Non-agenda items would include any information the CEO would like to provide the Board; it could also be regarding a Closed Session Item.)
 - The CEO may chose to include department heads in the briefing
 - Briefings should be early, preferably two weeks before the hearing date

Conclusion:

The County of Santa Barbara is a complex organization that deals with significant issues that have far reaching impacts. The recommendations contained in this report are designed to improve the flow and efficiency of Board meetings while making sure that the public is heard. Additionally, the recommendations are designed to improve both the quality of agenda items and overall communication regarding Board items.

We believe that instituting the recommendations contained in this report will enhance our meetings and our service to the public.