

Agenda Item 26-0298

Good morning, Members of the Board,

I'm Lee Tannenbaum and I'm speaking today on behalf of the Taxpayers Association of El Dorado County and the more than 150 residents who have signed our public petition in just a few days about the Board's new public comment policy who want the policy rescinded.

This response is not organized opposition. It is organic concern. It was a good experiment to try but isn't working for the residents of EDC.

People are paying attention because this policy directly affects their ability to participate in decisions that impact their property, their communities, and their taxes.

Under the new policy, public comment on non-hearing agenda items is consolidated into a single three-minute period held before staff presentations and before Board discussion begins.

That means members of the public are asked to speak without hearing the staff report, without knowing the full recommendation, and without understanding how the Board is framing the issue.

Then, once discussion begins, when questions are answered or new information comes out, the public is no longer allowed to speak. At that point, decisions are moving forward, but the public is locked out. That is not meaningful participation.

Public comment is not about taking time on the agenda. It is about allowing the public to respond to the information being considered while it is being considered.

The Brown Act guarantees the public the right to address a legislative body on matters of public interest before or during the body's consideration of an item. A process that requires people to speak before they have information and then prevents them from responding once deliberation begins undermines that purpose.

It's also important to note that nearly all California counties still allow item-by-item public comment, including during Board consideration of non-hearing agenda items. El Dorado County's current approach is not the norm.

This is not about efficiency. It is about access. It is also about trust.

When more than 150 residents sign a petition in just a few days, it should send a clear message: people feel their voice is being reduced, not respected.

Today, we are asking the Board to take a straightforward and reasonable step: Rescind the consolidated public comment policy adopted under Agenda Item 25-2034; Restore item-by-item public comment on non-hearing agenda items; and reaffirm that public participation is a core value of our county governance.

This is not a request for more time. It is a request for the right time.

The petition will continue to grow, and this does not need to become adversarial.

The Board can correct this now, restore confidence, and show the public that participation still matters in El Dorado County.

Thank you.

Lee Tannenbaum

President, Taxpayers Association of EDC