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Jacob Rigoli <jarigoli@gmail.com>

Proposed changes to the Museum Commission; Repeal of County Ordinance 4551

Jacob Rigoli <jarigoli@gmail.com>

Thu, Oct 16, 2025 at 4:23 PM

To: Bryce Lovell <Bryce.Lovell@edcgov.us>, "Krystal M. Owens" <krystal.owens@edcgov.us>

Cc: Randal Mitchell <thehistoryguy@sbcglobal.net>

Hi, Krystal - Please forward the following message to our Historical Museum Commissioners and copy me. Please confirm once it is sent to them. Thank you! -Jacob

Dear Fellow Historical Museum Commissioners,

We have a problem.

I'm writing to share my thoughts and context about the proposal to transition our Commission from one established by ordinance to one governed by a Board of Supervisors (BOS) resolution. On its surface, this may appear to be a simple administrative update; but in reality, it's a significant change that would alter both the legal foundation and functional independence of our body.

Our current status, grounded in Ordinance No. 4551, means we are recognized in county law. Ordinances are durable and not easily changed. They require public notice and two separate votes by the BOS. This gives our Commission a degree of permanence and authority. A resolution, by contrast, is a policy statement that can be passed or repealed in a single meeting, without much process. It doesn't carry the same legal force. If we move to a resolution model, we would no longer be a legally mandated body; we would become a committee that exists at the discretion of the Board and administration, with far less protection.

If the proposed changes mirror those found in the attached and linked Parks and Recreation Commission, the impact to the Historical Museum Commission would be significant. Commissioners could be removed "without cause" by a three-fifths vote of the BOS. **This opens the door to politically motivated removals and creates a chilling effect**, particularly for any commissioner who raises concerns or disagrees with staff or the Board. We would also lose our ability to adopt and amend our own bylaws. Instead, those procedures would be embedded in the BOS resolution and controlled by the CAO's office. That fundamentally changes how we govern ourselves.

Another change we've seen in the Parks and Rec model is that commissioners now need a majority vote of the full body just to place an item on a future agenda. Under our current structure, any commissioner can propose agenda items through the chair or secretary. This new approach makes it harder to raise issues, especially if they are sensitive or not favored by the chair or staff.

Even our duties would likely be rewritten. Specific responsibilities like advocating for the Museum's budget or ensuring professional archival standards in our operational documents could be removed or rewritten in more generic terms. That shift gives staff more leeway to interpret what our role should be, and reduces our ability to act independently on behalf of the museum and its mission. From where I sit, this new structure appears designed to reduce friction; consolidating control in the administration, streamlining oversight, and limiting the ability of commissioners to challenge decisions or elevate concerns.

I think this raises a bigger question: **What is the role of a public commission?** At its best, a commission serves as a bridge between the community and government. We help to bring public insight, expertise, and oversight into the process. Commissioners are supposed to provide continuity, institutional memory, and a long-term perspective that transcends political cycles and staff transitions. That only works if we have some independence. If we are reshaped into a body that can be quietly altered, dissolved, or overruled at any time, we risk becoming a staff-led advisory group, offering feedback only when invited and only on safe topics.

We all joined this Commission because we care deeply about the Museum and its place in our community. **This change could limit our ability to advocate for its needs, build public trust, or fulfill our responsibilities with integrity.**

Unfortunately, it appears that this motion began much earlier this year and, to my knowledge, the BoS and CAO did not reach out to us. The Board of Supervisors is voting on the conceptual motion on the same day as our annual presentation to the Board. I'll call for a special meeting of our committee to address these concerns. We will invite the CAO to attend. Please let Krystal know if there are any dates you would not be available to meet after 3PM between the 27th and 30th of this month.



Jacob Rigoli <jarigoli@gmail.com>

Museum Commission

Jacob Rigoli <jarigoli@gmail.com>

Sun, Oct 19, 2025 at 6:51 PM

To: Laura Schwartz <laura.schwartz@edcgov.us>

Cc: Bryce Lovell <Bryce.Lovell@edcgov.us>, Tara Stout <Tara.Stout@edcgov.us>, Sue Hennike <sue.hennike@edcgov.us>

Dear Ms. Schwartz,

Thank you for your response. I appreciate that you took the time to reply, but I must express my continuing and deep concern that your message not only fails to address the core issues raised, but in several ways reinforces them.

To begin, the Museum Commission was established by Ordinance No. 4551 in 1973—over fifty years ago—comprised of public citizens from historically oriented community groups including the El Dorado County Historical Society, South Lake Tahoe Historical Society, Daughters of the American Revolution, Native Daughters of the Golden West and others. This ordinance created a legally recognized and durable structure within the County Code, designed to ensure continuity, public accountability, and independence in the Commission's advisory role. Your statement that there is "no difference" between an ordinance and a resolution is inconsistent with both law and practice. If no difference truly existed, there would be no need to propose the change.

The stated motivation of "efficiency" is, frankly, a euphemism. What is being made more "efficient" is not the Commission's service to the public, but the ability of the administration and the Board to unilaterally reshape, limit, or dissolve the Commission with fewer procedural safeguards. **Let us be clear: the Commissioners represent not only the Board of Supervisors, but also the public.** Any change that reduces the Commission's standing inherently reduces the power and representation of the people in matters concerning the Museum. That is the core concern, and it has not been addressed.

Equally troubling is that the Commission was not notified, consulted, or invited into conversation regarding this proposed change, even though it directly affects our legal status and operational scope. This lack of engagement, combined with the selective characterization of our work and history, reflects a pattern of administrative avoidance that cannot be reconciled with good faith governance.

Your letter further misrepresents the issue of the bylaws and alleged "non-compliance." As noted, the bylaws in question were drafted under the authority of the then-Museum Administrator, a County employee, long before the current Commission's tenure. But more importantly, your concern about gift acceptance is puzzling given that the processing of gifts is a core duty of the Commission. We literally have a deed of gift for every accession into the Museum collection. It is deeply ironic that this core responsibility is being cited as evidence of overreach, when in fact it reveals a concerning lack of understanding (perhaps even a misalignment) on the part of the County in administering the Museum itself.

We also categorically reject the implication that we misunderstand our advisory role. The Commission has never claimed independence from the Board; we fully recognize that we serve in an advisory capacity. What is at stake here is our independence within that advisory function: **the ability to deliberate, provide counsel, and act transparently without fear of removal or restriction.** This distinction is fundamental, and your response's refusal to acknowledge it underscores the very problem we are trying to illuminate.

Given the nature and implications of the proposed change, and the administration's unwillingness to engage the Commission in dialogue, **we are compelled to declare this an emergency matter.** The shift from ordinance to resolution would have a chilling effect on the Commission's ability to perform its duties as intended and would diminish a governance structure that has served this County for half a century.

Finally, I am formally requesting, again, that my original message to the Commission be immediately forwarded to all sitting Commissioners. The Commission is entitled to be fully informed of matters directly affecting its legal structure. If this has not been completed by the end of day Monday, October 20, that failure will be documented and included in the record of any future escalation or inquiry.

Our Commission remains committed to acting with professionalism and integrity. We simply expect the same transparency and respect in return. Again, a conversation with the Board of Supervisors as well as the CAO's office on this matter would be welcomed.

Sincerely,

Assistant Chief Administrative Officer

County of El Dorado

Chief Administrative Office

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laura.schwartz@edcgov.us

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