



County of El Dorado

330 Fair Lane, Building A
Placerville, California
530 621-5390
FAX 622-3645
www.edcgov.us/bos/

Legislation Details (With Text)

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On agenda: 8/27/2013 **Final action:** 8/27/2013
Title: Chief Administrative Office recommending the Board discuss the creation of a defined Government and Community Affairs function. (Est. Time: 15 Min.)

FUNDING: General Fund.

Sponsors:

Indexes:

Code sections:

Attachments: 1. A - BOS CAO Comm Affairs Position Letter 8-27-13.pdf

Date	Ver.	Action By	Action	Result
8/27/2013	1	Board of Supervisors	No Formal Action	

Chief Administrative Office recommending the Board discuss the creation of a defined Government and Community Affairs function. (Est. Time: 15 Min.)

FUNDING: General Fund.

BUDGET SUMMARY:	
Total Estimated Cost.....	\$100,000
Budgeted.....	\$0.00
New Funding.....	
Savings.....	
Other.....	
Total Funding Available.....	
Change To Net County Cost.....	\$100,000

Fiscal Impact/Change to Net County Cost

The estimated salary and benefit cost for this position will increase Net County Cost by approximately \$100,000. Exact costs will depend on salary step and benefit options.

Background

Two areas of work where the Board, Chief Administrative Office staff, and County departments are constantly engaged include government affairs and public communication.

In many cases, work on intergovernmental issues is assisted by local agency staff such as the County Transportation Commission, SACOG, or LAFCO. Appropriately, Board members themselves

often take lead with intergovernmental issues and handle the “nuts and bolts” work. Increasingly however, the County is engaged in governmental affairs that we have not formally identified as a priority, nor have we identified dedicated County staff and resources. The result of this disorganized approach is marginal effectiveness.

Examples of this type of government affairs at the state and federal level include the Board’s interest in the various pieces of legislation, the State Fire Fee and associated implementing regulations, the Eldorado National Forest Travel Management Plan, and the recent proposed endangered listing of the Sierra Nevada yellow-legged frog. Government affairs is also very prevalent at the local level and examples include the ad-hoc City/County two-by-two, the proposed homeless encampment, various regional committees, developing a consistent and legally sound development mitigation impact fee program with special districts, and fire district consolidation efforts. While Board members and staff address these issues on a case-by-case basis, the effort is not incorporated into a systematic work program. For example, legislation that the Board has taken a position on should be tracked for changes in the committee process. We should have advanced knowledge of federal actions impacting El Dorado County by consistently reviewing the Federal Register and purposely cultivating relationships with federal staff. County staff should be consistently following the work of other local agencies that potentially have an impact on County business.

The County completely lacks a formal communication function. Effective communication strategies ensure a two-way information flow between the County, citizens, businesses, and visitors. We should strive to create feedback opportunities that are convenient for citizens to attend, and work to present information about County services in a way that is convenient for citizens to receive. The result of additional two-way communication is more transparency and better information, which leads to better decisions. Once a decision has been reached, internal and external communication is critical to the success of Board policies.

This need is even more pronounced as we embark on significant organizational changes and projects within the community. For example, organizational changes such as the formation of the Community Development Agency stimulate questions from both employees and the public. We need to be communicating this change to employees as part of change management process, and communicating the benefits of this opportunity to members of the public who utilize community development services. Key policies and projects such as the County Budget, FENIX implementation, the Animal Shelter and the move of Mental Health facilities compel a significant level of communication with the community. While staff responds to questions from reporters, we devote few resources to front-end communication. The County Budget is an area where the Board should be exceptionally proud as it represents our largest piece of annual public policy, and in contrast to many other cities and counties, we have no debt, have amassed respectable reserves, and are undertaking significant investments. Yet, we hardly let our residents know what the Board and its Executive Management team have accomplished, or how citizens can affect the allocation of resources.

Finally, we are utterly failing to take advantage of modern communication tools such as video communication, social media, and mobile technology. While we should always work with traditional media sources, these tools allow end users to customize the frequency and type of information they would like to receive.

A fully staffed Intergovernmental and Public Affairs function would require the following basic components:

- A coordinator equivalent to a Principal CAO Analyst (existing resource)
- A Government Affairs Sr. Department Analyst (approximately \$100,000)
- A Public Information Specialist (approximately \$100,000)
- Advocacy Services (\$60,000)
- Contracted research & audio/visual services (\$50,000)

In a pilot approach, I am proposing that we designate one Principal Analyst in the Chief Administrative Office as a government and public affairs coordinator. This is basically the formalization of work that is already occurring and does not require a new position.

Front-end communication results in a more informed public and improved policy discussion, which ultimately saves time and money. I am suggesting the addition of one Sr. Department Analyst to serve the public information function. The job specifications for the Sr. Department Analyst are sufficiently broad enough to encompass this function. We should consider housing the new analyst in the Board Clerk's office, as the primary function will be to organize communication projects and tools to communicate Board policy and projects. Finally, I am recommending that we execute small contracts on an as needed basis for research consulting and/or communication needs.

Reason for Recommendation

While the Board at some point should consider the need for a comprehensive government and community affairs program, the lack of a formal communication function is currently the largest deficiency in this policy area.

Action(s) to be taken following Board approval

Amended personnel resolution to be brought back to the Board. Board Clerk to work with Human Resources and CAO for recruitment of one Sr. Department Analyst. CAO to include additional resources in Budget addenda.

Contact

Terri Daly

Concurrences