



COUNTY OF SAN MATEO
Inter-Departmental Correspondence
County Manager's Office
Intergovernmental and Public Affairs



DATE: January 10, 2012
BOARD MEETING DATE: January 24, 2012
SPECIAL NOTICE/HEARING None
VOTE REQUIRED Majority

TO: Honorable Board of Supervisors

FROM: John Maltbie, County Manager (650) 363-4121
Mary McMillan, Deputy County Manager (650) 363-4129

SUBJECT: Standing Committees of the Board

RECOMMENDATION:

Approve the elimination of the Board's Five Standing Committees

BACKGROUND

Currently, members of the Board of Supervisors serve on more than 50 regional, sub regional and County boards, commissions, committees and subcommittees.

In 2007, the Board of Supervisors established five standing committees: (1) Finance and Operations; (2) Environmental Quality; (3) Criminal Justice Committee, (4) Housing, Health and Human Services; and (5) Legislative. The hope was that standing committees, each with a defined general subject matter area, would improve the efficiency and effectiveness in developing and setting policy; allow for more pathways for raising issues directly with the Board; allow for a more comprehensive analysis of proposals; allow additional opportunities for collaboration among departments and community partners; and help make the Board's public decision-making process more transparent.

While over the past 4½ years, the standing committee process has partially achieved some of these goals, the current need for more focused and individualized attention to a particular issue or project, rather than general attention to a subject matter area, is not as well served by the standing committee structure as anticipated. The standing committee structure has inefficiencies arising from fragmentation of an issue or project as different aspects are considered by different committees and from the "silo effect" of each standing committee being confined to specific subject areas.

DISCUSSION:

Many county issues, programs and services are multi-disciplinary and not optimally

supported by narrow subject area - related discussions. County government delivers many federal and state health, human service and criminal justice mandates. With the continued down turn in the economy, demand for programs and services are on the rise, while all sources of funding are contracting. County government, unlike other agencies, must be prepared to respond to changes in federal and state requirements, as well as respond to local needs.

Eliminating the Standing Committees will facilitate for implementing “town hall” meetings and public workshops, with the use of ad-hoc committees when and as appropriate. The “town hall”/workshop meeting approach have been used over the past year with great success (i.e., budget; jail planning; plastic bag ordinance; community corrections partnership). These meetings facilitate full input by the public and the Board members at the early stages, and together with the use of focused and timely ad-hoc committee work, should result in well vetted proposals for the Board’s consideration.

Eliminating the five standing committees in favor of conducting workshops and forming ad-hoc committees will contribute to the Shared Vision 2025 Collaborative Community by promoting multi-disciplinary and inter-departmental problem solving.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no general fund cost to eliminate the standing committees.