

**MOTION BY SUPERVISORS HOLLY J. MITCHELL
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Encouraging Public Participation and Deliberation at the Board of Supervisors to Deliver a More Accessible and Community-Driven Approach to Policymaking

On July 9, 2024, the Board of Supervisors (Board) passed a motion titled, *Delivering a More Equitable and Transparent Governance Model for Los Angeles County*¹, directing County Counsel to return with an analysis of the Board’s authority to create policy committees, and how these committees could be comprised. Los Angeles County (County), as one of the most populous and diverse regions in the United States, faces numerous challenges and opportunities that necessitate a structured approach to policymaking. In the County, the complexity of decision-making processes often obscures the reasons behind policy outcomes from public view. Members of the public are unclear where to go to weigh in on policy proposals before they become law. Policy proposals (known as “motions”) are placed on a public agenda only three business days before a Tuesday Board meeting, and the public is often not aware of the proposal until it has already become law. This intentionally disenfranchises individuals who do not have the time or agency to analyze Board agendas in a few short business days and prepare written or verbal public comments. Additionally, this process does not provide meaningful time to materially edit proposed policy and discuss proposals with affected County

¹ <https://file.lacounty.gov/SDSInter/bos/supdocs/193107.pdf>

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MOTION

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Departments and other Board offices. Establishing a structure within the County to vet policy proposals before they reach the Board for a vote is not just beneficial but crucial for effective governance and for sharing power with the community.

A structure for thoughtful deliberation before policy introduction at a Board meeting promotes thorough examination and analysis of proposed policies. The Board already has a structure that can be leveraged for policy discussion – the “cluster” process. Clusters already focus on specific areas such as health and wellness, housing, economic development, children and family services, public safety and more. All departmental recommendations to the Board, known as “Board letters,” are required to be presented at cluster meetings prior to adoption by the Board, however, the same requirements do not apply to motions for introduction. By requiring that motions first be introduced at cluster meetings for discussion and review, the Board can leverage expertise from departments, weigh perspectives from the public, and ensure that policies are scrutinized for their feasibility, impact, and alignment with County priorities.

Additionally, the aforementioned structure enhances transparency and public participation. Currently, many policy decisions are made during Board meetings where public input may be limited to brief comments. It is now recognized that policy created by government bodies, including the Board, has created and perpetuated systemic disparities. This problem can be traced, in part, to which communities and individuals have had—or lacked—power to influence, participate in, or control legislative policymaking. Public participation in legislative decisions is central to our democratic form of government, but in practice, some communities have been left out. This inequitable distribution of power and influence is partly the result of laws and policies that create barriers to participation for people of color, low-income communities, immigrants, systems-impacted individuals, and other marginalized groups. With a more transparent and robust policy committee structure, stakeholders—community groups, advocacy organizations, experts, and concerned residents—can participate more meaningfully at earlier stages of the policymaking process.

Moreover, the County's vast geographic and demographic diversity necessitates tailored approaches to governance. What works for one community may not be suitable for another. Policy discussion and motion review at cluster will allow for localized considerations and solutions, ensuring that different community voices are heard from a diversity of stakeholders, and that policies are responsive to the needs and realities of different neighborhoods and populations across the County.

The status quo has contributed to the inequities we see in our communities today. Motions are often adopted, implemented, and evaluated with little or no direct input from the people who will be directly affected. This leads to policies that do not center the needs of those who experience the starkest inequities. It is time for the County to embrace a collaborative approach to policymaking and lead by example in promoting transparent and inclusive governance by leveraging our current structure of clusters and policy committees as defined in Board Policy 3.055².

WE THEREFORE MOVE THAT THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS:

- 1) Direct the Executive Officer of the Board of Supervisors ("Executive Officer"), in consultation with County Counsel to, return to the Board within 45 days with revisions to the Rules of the Board for adoption by the Board of Supervisors ("Board") to require that all motions be agendized and introduced at the appropriate cluster meeting before consideration by the Board, except for urgency motions, including declarations of emergency and all recovery and related actions, fee waivers, proclamations without policy instruction, and reward motions. The revised Rules of the Board will have an effective date of January 1, 2025. At a minimum, the revised Rules should articulate:
 - a. Motions must be agendized and introduced at the appropriate subject matter policy cluster before consideration by the Board, except for urgency motions including declarations and ratifications of emergency and all recovery and related actions, fee waivers, proclamations without

² See Board Policy 3.055. <https://file.lacounty.gov/SDSInter/bos/supdocs/f220d31c-3215-4e4b-a8b7-0e80761af064.pdf>.

substantive policy direction, reward motions, and motions to adjourn in a deceased person's memory.

- b. Once submitted for introduction at the appropriate policy cluster meeting, the motion will appear on the next regular meeting of the Board after the policy cluster meeting. Any revisions to the motion from its original form shall also appear on the Board agenda.
- c. Each policy motion must be presented and discussed at the designated policy cluster meeting where the responsible County department(s) or stakeholders can provide input, an initial analysis of the proposed motion's fiscal, operational, and/or community impacts, and offer recommendations for potential revisions. Any written public comment or recordings/transcripts of oral public comment must be included as an attachment to the agenda item when the motion is submitted for consideration by the Board. Any revisions to the originally introduced motion must be clearly reflected and resubmitted as "REVISED" for the agenda to the Executive Office, similar to the current practice for revised motions.
- d. Policy Cluster schedules shall be at the discretion of the chair of each cluster but shall meet no less than twice per month, or as necessary to ensure review and discussion of relevant motions in a timely fashion.
- e. If substantial revisions or additional information is required, the motion may be continued by its author for further discussion before advancing to the Board.
- f. Emergency matters permitted by subdivisions (a)(3) and (b)(1)-(4) of section 54954.2 of the Ralph M. Brown Act, including where the Board finds there is a need to take immediate action and that the need for action came to the attention of the Board subsequent to the agenda may bypass the policy cluster review process. Motions that are not policy

related, such as fee waivers, rewards for unsolved crimes, adjourn-in-memory declarations, and non-policy proclamations may bypass the policy cluster review process.

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