

MOTION BY SUPERVISOR HOLLY J. MITCHELL

August 12, 2025

Maintaining Transparency in Board Policymaking through the Cluster Review Process

The Los Angeles County (County) Board of Supervisors (Board) is the legislative and executive body for over 10 million residents. The scope and scale of the Board's policymaking authority demand structures that promote deliberate, transparent, and accountable decision-making, particularly when addressing complex, cross-sector issues such as homelessness, mental health, justice reform, and workforce development. Amidst increasing attacks from federal Administration actions, natural disasters, and even the County's own bureaucratic errors, the uncertainty and disruption experienced by our residents compels this Board to provide reassurance about the effectiveness and integrity of County policymaking.

Transparency is important now more than ever to ensure that the public trusts, and can weigh in on, critical decisions affecting their lives. For decades at its weekly Tuesday meeting, the Board regularly approved motions with significant impacts just days after their public posting the previous Friday night (or at most, the previous Wednesday night). This allowed major County actions to be approved with minimal public scrutiny, leaving stakeholders and community scrambling to raise issues and suggest improvements.

This Board recently took the unusual step of holding itself to a higher standard of

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public accountability. Since December 17, 2024, under a pilot adopted by the Board, motions have been filed publicly and presented at policy-area-specific Cluster meetings two weeks prior to being placed (and potentially approved) on the Board agenda. Recognizing that timely Board action is sometimes required by circumstances, the process included a built-in exemption (which Supervisors regularly use) to bypass the process for urgent or emergency matters.

In addition to upholding transparency in the Board policymaking process for the benefit of public trust, the pilot also improved the quality of policymaking. A comprehensive evaluation of the first six months of the pilot by the Executive Officer and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) (issued June 20, 2025)¹ found that introducing motions through Cluster meetings led to several key benefits:

- a. Motion quality improved significantly, with authors voluntarily choosing to revise 53.2% of motions based on Cluster feedback, up from 31.4% in the pre-pilot period.
- b. Departments appreciated earlier access to proposed motions, allowing for better internal planning and identification of implementation concerns.
- c. Interdepartmental collaboration increased, particularly on complex items requiring coordination across multiple agencies.
- d. Public participation and transparency improved in select Clusters, with higher attendance for motions on issues of public concern, such as criminal legal system reform and homelessness.

Moreover, the report noted that in particular, the CEO's office is supportive of the motion cluster process, as it provides an opportunity for them to evaluate motions and provide meaningful feedback. Before this process, the CEO was often asked to provide feedback on motions within 24 hours, which they noted was not conducive to a productive dialogue, especially for motions with a substantial fiscal or operational impact.

At the same time, the report identified several structural and procedural challenges:

- a. Inconsistent scheduling and short notice strained departmental resources and

¹ [Report Back on Adopting a Deliberate Policymaking Structure 1](#)

- limited public awareness.
- b. Lack of clear exemption criteria caused confusion.
- c. Public comment practices varied widely across Clusters, undermining equitable access to engagement.

Unless extended by the Board, this pilot ends in August, returning the Board to its previous policymaking regime with minimal transparency and opportunity for public and stakeholder input. Yet, this cluster review process is needed now more than ever, not only to maintain unprecedented transparency in County policymaking, but also to provide for more deliberative review that ensures motions are well-crafted, resourced, and responsive to operational realities and public needs before final adoption. Taking this urgent step now to reaffirm our commitment allows us to work to clean-up procedural gaps by providing a clear framework for exemptions, standardized public engagement tools, and departmental accountability. The process must also evolve to reflect feedback from departments, stakeholders, and the public by promoting clarity, flexibility, and consistency across policy areas.

I THEREFORE MOVE THAT THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS:

- 1) Direct the Executive Officer of Board (EO), in consultation with County Counsel, to extend the Cluster Motion Review Process for all substantive Board motions, defined as motions that propose policy, operational, fiscal, or programmatic actions affecting County departments or services, as currently defined in the Rules of the Board, by revising Section 22.1(g). to state that "This Section shall become effective for member motions to be introduced for the January 21, 2025, Board meeting and shall stay in effect until repealed." Further, add the Economic Development Policy Committee as a sixth policy meeting where motions can be presented for the purposes of review by revising Rules of the Board Section 22.1(a) to state, "A policy cluster means one of the following six clusters: (1) Health and Mental Health Services Cluster; (2) Operations Cluster; (3) Public Safety Cluster; (4) Community Services Cluster; (5) Family and Social Service Cluster; and (6) Economic Development Policy Committee.
- 2) Direct the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), in collaboration with EO to continue (a)

facilitating the Cluster Motion Review Process across the five original Cluster meetings (Health and Mental Health Services, Operations, Public Safety, Community Services, and Family and Social Services), and (b) overseeing the coordinated submission, calendaring, and posting of motions.

- 3) Direct the EO and the Director of the Department of Economic Opportunity to facilitate the Cluster Motion Review Process for the Economic Development Policy Committee within an appropriate timeframe that allows for full implementation.
- 4) Direct the EO and CEO to provide a written report to the Board in 12 months summarizing:
 - a) Cluster motion volume and revision rates;
 - b) Public participation metrics;
 - c) Departmental engagement; and
 - d) Operational challenges and recommendations for ongoing improvement.

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