



**ADVISORY BOARD  
PRINCIPLES AND POLICIES**

**Adopted June 7, 2005  
Amended November 9, 2010**

In a republic, the government's authority and legitimacy derive from the fact that ultimate policy makers are accountable to the citizens through the electoral process. The Board of Supervisors is elected by the citizens of Solano County to provide policy direction for the County.

In making policy decisions, the Board believes that it is important to obtain input from citizens on a regular basis. The Board seeks and encourages citizen input through a variety of mechanisms, formal and informal, including holding televised public meetings with opportunity for citizen participation, holding public hearings, conducting and attending community meetings, meeting with constituents, commissioning occasional opinion polls, disseminating information about County issues and programs, creating ad hoc committees and task forces and creating advisory boards and commissions.

Advisory boards (sometimes referred to as "councils," "commissions," or "committees" collectively "boards") provide a formal mechanism for the Board of Supervisors to obtain policy advice from selected groups of individuals with particular expertise, interests or backgrounds. Since ultimate accountability for policy decisions rests with the Board of Supervisors, it is appropriate that the Board be able to create, eliminate, reorganize and provide direction to advisory boards, as it deems necessary to meet its need for advice in various areas.

The following principles and policies are designed to provide general guidelines concerning the role of County advisory boards and how those advisory boards should be formed, dissolved, organized or reorganized and staffed as well as how they should operate.

**PURPOSE OF ADVISORY BOARDS**

The purpose of County advisory boards is to enable the Board of Supervisors to obtain advice on policies or issues from a specially selected group of citizens who, the Board believes, have the relevant expertise, interest or background to provide advice that is well reasoned, credible and/or appropriately represents opinions held by the broader community or relevant segments of the broader community. Advisory boards are created when required by law or when the Board believes that the nature of the issue or area requires a more regularized, targeted and structured citizen input process than would be

provided by other less formal, more broad-based or more ad hoc public participation mechanisms.

The role of advisory boards is generally limited to providing advice to the Board of Supervisors on policies or issues within their purview as defined by the Board of Supervisors. Advisory boards are encouraged to provide information and advice whether or not the information or advice is critical of existing county policy. Advisory boards that serve *purposes* that are in addition to advising the Board of Supervisors should assure that *activities* related to additional purposes are consistent with County policies.

The following principles and policies are designed to provide both the Board of Supervisors and advisory boards, guidelines by which advisory boards shall operate. The principles and policies should provide advisory boards with clear expectations for membership, adherence to applicable policies, the role of County staff, and communication and recommendations to the Board of Supervisors.

County Advisory Boards shall seek citizen input, not county staff input. County staff ultimately work for the Board of Supervisors and provide recommendations to the Board through other mechanisms. County staff participation in discussions should be focused on assisting the full group in better understanding what current county policy is. Advisory boards work as a unit to express to the Board of Supervisors its recommendation(s) on policies and/or issues related to the purpose under which the advisory board was formed, whether or not these recommendations are critical of existing county policy.

## **PRINCIPLES AND POLICIES**

### **Principle 1: Advisory Board Selection and Membership**

Generally, advisory boards shall be made up of citizens with expertise, experience, interests and/or backgrounds related to the purpose of the advisory board and in whose judgment the Board of Supervisors has confidence. All advisory board members serve at the pleasure of the Board of Supervisors.

Policy 1-A: Unless otherwise provided by statute the Board of Supervisors may direct the composition of advisory boards, as well as how advisory board members are to be recruited and recommended for appointment. Depending upon the nature of the advisory board, membership recommendations could be made by individual Supervisors, interviews by the full Board after advertising for applicants, delegating responsibility for recommendations to the sitting advisory board members or to an ad hoc committee.

Policy 1-B: Every effort shall be made to recruit advisory board members who can make a positive contribution to the advisory board process and, ultimately, to the ability of the advisory board to provide appropriate recommendations to the Board of Supervisors. This shall be done through recruitment and interview processes that assure the potential candidate has the necessary expertise, commitment and time, to support the work of the advisory board.

Policy 1-C: Members and prospective members serving on advisory boards must comply with conflict of interest laws.

Policy 1-D: All appointees serve at the pleasure of the Board of Supervisors and may be appointed or removed for any reason by majority vote of the Board of Supervisors.

## **Principle 2: Advisory Board Recommendations to the Board of Supervisors**

Advisory boards are encouraged to provide advice, suggestions and recommendations to the Board of Supervisors on legislative and policy issues through established procedures. Given the volume of information received by the Board of Supervisors, it is important that advisory boards use these procedures to ensure that the Board receives information in an organized format and manner.

Policy 2-A: Legislative recommendations shall be made, whenever possible, as part of the "Legislation of Importance to Solano County" update that the Board of Supervisors receives monthly. Additionally, advisory boards are encouraged to report or provide recommendations on proposed or pending state or federal legislation as needed to assure the Board of Supervisors receive the information in a timely manner. This is coordinated through the County Administrator's Office unless otherwise directed by county staff or the Board of Supervisors.

Policy 2-B: Budget recommendations shall be made, whenever possible, as part of the annual countywide budget process. Councils wishing to make budgetary recommendations should begin by sharing their recommendations with the affected department(s), and then provide information to the Board of Supervisors regarding their agreement or disagreement with Department budget requests as part of the county budget hearing process.

Policy 2-C: It is county staff's responsibility to prepare Board agenda items conveying advisory board recommendations to the Board of Supervisors. When a recommendation is presented to the Board of Supervisors, the advisory board or other designated members, but less than a quorum, should typically attend the Board meeting to explain or represent the advisory board's position and/or answer questions from the Board of Supervisors.

Policy 2-D: Policy and legislative recommendations to agencies and organizations other than the Board of Supervisors shall be consistent with Board Policies and Priorities.

Policy 2-E: Recommendations and actions of an advisory board must be limited to matters within the scope of jurisdiction. The scope of jurisdiction is defined when the advisory board is created, and may be amended only by action of the Board of Supervisors.

### **Principle 3: Advisory Board Communication with the Board of Supervisors**

Inherent in the purpose of advisory boards is the ability to have regular communication with the Board of Supervisors that may not necessarily contain recommendations. The Board of Supervisors must have the ability to provide advisory boards with direction, to inquire about issues affecting the County, and to receive informational reports from advisory boards.

Policy 3-A: Advisory boards, unless otherwise directed, shall make available to members of the Board of Supervisors, all agendas, minutes and reports.

Policy 3-B: Each advisory board shall provide the Board of Supervisors with a report of goals, accomplishments and recommendations on at least an annual basis.

Policy 3-C: Advisory boards desiring to make a report of interest to the Board of Supervisors shall coordinate this activity with county staff so that staff can facilitate placement of the report on to the Board's agenda.

### **Principle 4: Staff Support for Advisory Boards**

Competent staff support is critical to the effective use of advisory boards. Providing effective staff support requires both expertise in particular subject areas and a solid understanding of County policies and procedures. Principles of accountability require that staff recommendations to advisory boards come from staff who are accountable to County Department heads, County management, and ultimately, the Board of Supervisors. Although staff are expected to make recommendations to advisory boards and the Board of Supervisors that reflect County and departmental policies and positions, staff are also expected to respect and foster the ability of lay citizens who serve on advisory committees to fairly and effectively convey their independent recommendations to the Board of Supervisors.

Policy 4-A: County staff, rather than independent contractors, shall provide staff support for County advisory boards, unless otherwise authorized by the Board of Supervisors.

Policy 4-B: County staff provides support while representing their department and the County. Staff recommendations to advisory boards shall reflect the policies of their department, County management, and the Board of Supervisors.

Policy 4-C: Except where required by law, it is inappropriate for County staff to serve on advisory boards. Where state law requires that certain County staff serve on an advisory board, and to the extent permitted by law, it is understood that those staff represent their Department, (and the County) and shall reflect the positions of department management and this understanding shall be conveyed to the members of the advisory board. Staff shall be selected by and serve at the pleasure of their department head.

Policy 4-D: It is appropriate for County staff to represent the County or their department on *coordinating councils* or similar bodies whose purpose is to *facilitate* inter-agency

communication and/or coordination of policy development or service provision. Where appropriate, County staff shall seek policy direction from their Department Head or the Board of Supervisors on issues being considered by such coordinating bodies.

#### **Principle 5: The Brown Act**

Advisory board meetings are intended to provide a forum by which members of the public, whether or not they are appointed as members, may participate or provide public comment. This allows for citizens interested in issues being considered by the advisory board to be aware of the issues and to provide input and thereby facilitates an 'open' process. Advisory boards that are not ad-hoc in nature, fall under the guidelines of the Brown Act.

Policy 5-A: Advisory boards that are not ad hoc are required to adhere to the Brown Act.

Policy 5-B: Advisory boards shall review the Brown Act requirements every two years.

Policy 5-C: Questions regarding adherence to the Brown Act should be directed through staff to County Counsel, and follow the recommendation of County Counsel.

Policy 5-D: Newly appointed advisory board members must receive training and written guidelines on the Brown Act within one year of appointment to an advisory board.

Policy 5-E: Existing and newly appointed advisory board members must complete AB 1234 – Ethics Training within one year of appointment and renew every two years thereafter. The trainings may take place in either at home, in-person or online. The renewal trainings satisfy the Brown Act review requirements in Policy 5-B.

#### **Principle 6: Regular Evaluation of County advisory boards**

The Board of Supervisors recognizes and appreciates the value of citizen input and the volunteer nature of advisory board members. At the same time, the creation of formal County advisory boards and commissions is potentially the most costly citizen input mechanism in terms of time and money. Formal board and commission membership is also by its nature limited to a small number of active participants. Thus, this mechanism should be used sparingly and the need for existing advisory bodies shall be re-evaluated on a regular basis. In addition, wherever possible, advisory boards shall be combined, so that one body can serve multiple purposes.

Policy 6-A: Upon creation of a new advisory board, the Board of Supervisors may determine guidelines for its purpose, duration, funding, membership and any other material matter. Advisory boards shall establish by-laws that adopt Roberts Rules of Order, post agendas in accordance with the Brown Act, and keep and distribute minutes of meetings to members of the Board of Supervisors.

Policy 6-B: The Board of Supervisors will review the goals and accomplishments of existing advisory boards annually and evaluate continued need for such advisory boards. The Board of Supervisors may, at their discretion, choose to combine, discontinue, or

change the focus of existing advisory boards to better serve the needs of the Board of Supervisors, the County, and the citizens of Solano County. Factors that may be considered in changing the status of advisory boards include but are not limited to:

Purpose of advisory board becomes broader or narrower than purpose for which it was established and is no longer consistent with Board of Supervisors' goals or priorities

Advisory board purpose, goals or activities that conflict with county policy

Continuing need for advisory board

Violations of county policy, Brown Act, or legislative mandates

Goals and accomplishments met and purpose for which advisory board was established is concluded

Goals and accomplishments not met

Inability to maintain a quorum of membership attendance

Need and/or desire for combining advisory board(s)

Reduction in or lack of resources to support advisory board

To consolidate and/or reorganize advisory board(s) to better facilitate outcomes or accomplishments or to meet policy or legislative requirements