



County of Mendocino
Grand Jury

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Too Many Chiefs: A Report on the Mendocino County Clerk of the Board Office

May 4, 2006

Summary

The 2005-2006 Mendocino County Grand Jury investigated the Clerk of the Board office, its structure, and its supervision by the Board of Supervisors (BOS).

Background

As a result of considerable public attention to the situation in the Clerk of the Board office, the 2005-2006 Mendocino County Grand Jury conducted an oversight of the relationship between the Mendocino County Board of Supervisors and the Clerk of the Board.

The status and duties of the Clerk of the Board are in part spelled out in California Legal Code §25100-25105.5.

Methods

The Grand Jury conducted numerous interviews of County workers and administrators and reviewed job descriptions and overtime reports.

Findings

1. The Clerk of the Board (COB) is a department head, with a budget calling for a total staff of four.
2. In addition to its direct support of the Board of Supervisors (BOS), the COB staff manages Board appointments to more than 110 commissions, boards, and committees.
3. As of December 2005, all non-elected County department heads are supervised by the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), except for the County Counsel and the COB.
4. At the time of the creation of the CEO position, consideration was given to placing the COB under the CEO for administration and supervision, but that proposal was rejected by the BOS.
5. The COB is responsible for a wide range of functions, including the production of agendas and minutes of BOS meetings.
6. The agenda for Tuesday BOS meetings is generally made public by end of business on the Thursday before each meeting.
7. Background documents for agenda items are usually available at the COB office on Thursday before the Tuesday BOS meeting.
8. The COB office is currently closed to the public on Fridays.
9. The BOS has not defined performance criteria for the COB position.
10. Performance reviews of the COB have not been carried out in a regular or timely fashion.
11. Supervision and performance reviews of the COB are currently the responsibility of the five-member BOS.

12. The turnover rate in COB office staff has been unusually high for a number of years. From the start of 2000 through the end of 2005, at least six full time employees were hired and have since left this office.
13. The COB office was understaffed at the time of the investigation, having, in addition to the Clerk, two full-time employees and one part-time employee.
14. The posting of BOS meeting minutes, a responsibility of the COB, is at times delayed.

Recommendations

The Grand Jury recommends that:

1. the COB office be placed under the supervision of the CEO. (Findings 3, 4, 9-11)
2. the CEO's office should establish and implement policies, procedures, and performance criteria for the comprehensive review of the COB and its office staff. (Findings 9-11)
3. the resources of the COB be reallocated or increased in order to keep the office open to the public on Fridays. (Finding 8)
4. background documents for BOS agenda items be made available online. (Finding 6-8)

Comments

The overwhelming workload currently borne by the COB office is a result of the failure on the part of the BOS to provide effective oversight. For its own reasons the BOS chose to keep the COB under its control, but all observers and participants agree that politics and personalities have played a major role in this decision. Giving responsibility for supervision to the CEO's office, as is the case for most other County departments, may remove the COB from the political arena.

Responses Required

The Mendocino County Board of Supervisors (All Findings. All Recommendations)

The Mendocino County Clerk of the Board (All Findings. All Recommendations)

Director, Mendocino County Department of Human Resources (Findings 9-11, 13. Recommendations 1-3)

Mendocino County Chief Executive Officer (Findings 1-7, 12. All Recommendations)