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**Agenda Item
Regular Meeting of the
Board of Supervisors
Tuesday, December 16, 2025**

Item Number: 1.16

MEETING DATE: 12/16/2025
DEPARTMENT: COUNTY COUNSEL
AGENDA ITEM PREPARER: Gregory Priamos
DEPT HEAD/DIRECTOR: Gregory Priamos

SUBJECT:

COUNTY COUNSEL - G. PRIAMOS

Adoption of Ordinance Amending Chapter 3.01 of the County Code of Ordinances regarding the qualifications and executive powers, duties, and functions of the County Executive Officer.

SBC FILE NUMBER: 160

ORDINANCE NO.: 1090

AGENDA SECTION:

CONSENT AGENDA

BACKGROUND/SUMMARY:

According to the current San Benito County Code, the County Administrative Officer (CAO) serves as the chief administrative staff member in County government and is appointed by the Board of Supervisors. The CAO advises, assists, and acts as an agent for the Board of Supervisors, and is responsible to the Board for the proper and efficient administration of the affairs of the county that are placed in their charge by the Board, and enforces ordinances, orders and regulations as directed by the Board. The CAO is directly responsible to the Board for projects that will increase efficiency, improve services and be more cost effective, and may include, but not be limited to, the review and evaluation of programs, policies, procedures and organizational structure.

The current County Code does not provide any further clarity on the powers, duties, and functions of the CAO. Moreover, the Code does not explain the CAO's role over administrative matters involving all county departments including those operated by separately elected officials or the reporting structure.

As part of the recent 90 Day Performance Review of the CAO, the Board of Supervisors directed the County Counsel to bring forward an agenda item for the Board to discuss and consider a possible

transition from the current County Administrative Officer (CAO) management model to a County Executive Officer (CEO) management model.

The consideration of any transition is based on the Board's unified objective to enhance communication and streamline operations across various departments. It also reflects the Board's ongoing efforts to explore more effective and efficient management strategies.

Chapter 3.01 of the County Code was originally adopted in 1966 and was inexplicably amended in 2013 to essentially eliminate any educational requirement for holding the position of County Administrative Officer. Most counties require at least a bachelor's degree in public administration or business administration. Many counties also prefer or require a master's degree in Public Administration (MPA) or Business Administration (MBA) due to the scope and complexity of the role.

In California's 58 counties, currently there are 37 with a CAO model, 18 with a CEO model, and three utilizing other models.

In general, the CAO model focuses on administrative coordination and day-to-day operations. The CAO is an advisor to the Board and ensures smooth functioning of county services. In contrast, the CEO model emphasizes a stronger role for the CEO with respect to Board policy implementation, budget preparation, and department oversight.

At its meeting of October 28, 2025, the Board of Supervisors received a presentation from the County Counsel on the differences between a County Administrative Officer Management Model and a County Executive Officer Management Model. After careful consideration and deliberation, the Board unanimously directed that Article VI of Chapter 3.01 be amended to transition to the County Executive Officer Model based on the Board's unified objective to pursue more efficient and effective management strategies and to enhance communication and streamline operations across various departments.

Attached is the draft ordinance amending Chapter 3.01 as directed by the Board of Supervisors which addresses the specific issues discussed including the qualifications of the CEO, the CEO's executive powers and duties, general administration, budgetary matters, department supervision, and appointment, evaluation, and dismissal authority.

The amendment also specifically addresses the CEO's authority over personnel, budget, and administration over the entire organization, including the separately elected officials. All administrative matters will come to the board through the office of the county Executive Officer.

The amendment details that the CEO will assist the Board of Supervisors in the exercise of its constitutional authority over the county budget and to prescribe the number, compensation, tenure, and appointment of employees in all departments and offices, including those operated by the separately elected officials.

Additionally, the CEO will also assist the Board of Supervisors in the exercise of its authority under Government Code Section 25303 to supervise the official conduct of all county officers, and officers of all districts and other subdivisions of the county, and particularly insofar as the functions and duties of such county officers and officers of all districts and subdivisions of the county relate to the assessing, collecting, safekeeping, management, or disbursement of public funds.

Finally, the CEO will assist the Board of Supervisors in the exercise of its authority under Government Code Section 25303 to supervise the official conduct of all county officers, and officers of all districts and other subdivisions of the county to see that they faithfully perform their duties.

On November 18, the Board approved the item as presented and introduced the ordinance. The matter is now before the Board for adoption of the ordinance which would become effective in 30 days or on January 15, 2026.

FISCAL IMPACT:

N/A

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Adopt Ordinance amending Chapter3.01 regarding county Executive Officer.

ATTACHMENTS:

[Board Agenda Fact Sheet - Ordinance 1090 CEO](#)

[Ordinance 1090 - CEO](#)