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Gregory Priamos

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**Agenda Item
Regular Meeting of the
Board of Supervisors
Tuesday, October 28, 2025**

Item Number: 2.3

MEETING DATE: 10/28/2025
DEPARTMENT: COUNTY COUNSEL
AGENDA ITEM PREPARER: Gregory Priamos
DEPT HEAD/DIRECTOR: Gregory Priamos

SUBJECT:

COUNTY COUNSEL - G. PRIAMOS

Review, discuss, and give direction, if any, to the County Counsel as to whether Chapter 3.01 of the San Benito County Code should be amended to transition from the current County Administrative Officer (CAO) Management Model to a County Executive Officer (CEO) Management Model.

SBC FILE NUMBER: 160

AGENDA SECTION:

REGULAR 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.

If the Board is interested in a transition to the CEO management model, the Board may wish to consider adopting an ordinance amendment which would formally change the title from CAO to CEO and update and clarify the position's duties. First, the Board may wish to:

1. Require that all administrative matters come to the Board through the Office of the County Executive Officer; and
2. Consider the County Executive Officer as its representative.

Second, the Board may wish to further clarify and define with greater specificity the responsibilities of the County Executive Officer:

1. Administer and enforce policies established by the board of supervisors; promulgate rules and regulations as necessary to implement board policies;
2. Refer policy matters, and other matters beyond the county executive officer's authority, to the board of supervisors for determination, direction, or authorization;
3. Supervise and direct the preparation, revision, maintenance, coordination, and control of long-range plans for management of county property and the construction, alteration, and use of physical facilities necessary and proper to render county services under the jurisdiction of the board;
4. Represent the board of supervisors in the county's intergovernmental relationships in accordance with board policies and instructions; when directed, represent the board in dealing with individuals or groups concerned with county affairs;
5. Attend all meetings of the board of supervisors, except when excused; when directed, attend meetings of commissions and committees established by the board of supervisors;
6. Supervise preparation of the agenda, evaluate departmental and other requests to determine if such requests should be submitted to the board, and make recommendations to the board on agenda items; propose necessary revisions of the Personnel Policy and Procedures Manual and County Code in conjunction with the county counsel; make reports to the board on county matters as needed;
7. Implement the board of supervisors' legislative advocacy program, including the initiation of legislation approved by the board of supervisors that will benefit the county and county

government, including the analysis of proposed state and federal legislation; make recommendations to the board of supervisors for positions on proposed legislation; and review all department head requests involving legislative activities;

8. Negotiate contracts on behalf of the board of supervisors, subject to the limitations and procedures established by state law or authorized by the board; be responsible for the administration of all county contracts and their faithful performance;
9. Recommend to the board of supervisors the preparation and revision of state and federal grants-in-aid and contract programs as are, in the county executive officer's judgment, beneficial and necessary for the prevention or solution of problems in the county;
10. Conduct continuous research in administrative practices so as to bring about greater efficiency and economy in county government;
11. Review and make recommendations on risk management and the proper level of insurance coverage;
12. Analyze the need for and make recommendations on hiring professional services, consultants, experts, and advisors to perform and advise on any functions of county government;
13. Serve as the representative whose duty it shall be to meet and confer in good faith regarding wages, hours and other terms and conditions of employment in an attempt to reach agreement with representatives of county labor organizations; and
14. Perform such other duties as may be lawfully prescribed by ordinance or by resolution or order of the board of supervisors.

The amended ordinance could also address the CEO's role in budgetary matters under the California Government Code and overall departmental supervision as well as any other matters which the Board deems appropriate.

FISCAL IMPACT:

None.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

That the Board:

1. Review, consider and discuss whether Chapter 3.01 of the San Benito County Code should be amended to transition from the current County Administrative Officer (CAO) management model to a County Executive Officer (CEO) management model.
2. Review, consider, and discuss whether Chapter 3.01 of the Code should be amended to again include relevant educational requirements for the position of CAO or CEO.
3. Review, consider, and discuss whether Chapter 3.01 should be amended to clarify the duties of the CAO in any regard.
4. Provide direction to the County Counsel, if any.

ATTACHMENTS:

[Board Agenda Fact Sheet - CAO v. CEO](#)