

Opinion: County Counsel Says BOS Must “Economize” Its Meetings

May 8, 2025

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Seems the April 22nd meeting of the Del Norte County Board of Supervisors wasn't economical enough for Del Norte's County Counsel, Jacqueline Roberts. The meeting lasting just over an hour, maybe should have been entirely on the "Consent Agenda." According to Counsel Roberts those pesky Public Commenters can't seem to shut up. They, those who have the temerity to speak up during Supervisor meetings, should have the good grace, children they are, to be silent.

I, for one, wonder just how far County Counsel Roberts would go to define economizing the Board's meetings. No "Public Comment" at all? Seems there is already too much to impede public participation and opportunity to be meaningful in the structure of the current format of the board. If only the board would open their ears and listen as well.

To start with, meetings held twice a month on Tuesday mornings at 10:00 am. Nothing like having a meeting to inconvenience the public, the county's employers, in order to make sure the county's unelected are available during a workday without inconveniencing the county employees at all. Just slip on over to the Board chambers, while getting paid to do the People's Work. Meetings often held with "county employees" out numbering the public ten to one.

Board members and the unelected county employees allowed to prattle on with no time limit in sight. The public, three minutes period. Board members allowed unlimited time to wax elegant on topics without being subject to public scrutiny or questions. Often in narratives which could use a dose of reality along the way. Too often Board members are allowed to comment on topics which are questionable at best, or utter fantasies of the worse possible kind.

A consent agenda which incorporates 50 to 80 percent of the entire meeting passed inevitably 5-0 with near zero public or Board discussion. Double-digit items on consent agendas allow public participation locked at three minutes for its entirety. So, just how does County Counsel plan to economize the Board's meetings any further? Everything on the Consent agenda? Limit further public comments? Limit public participation?

The impression the Board's counsel gives to the public is they are some freshly chewed piece of gum newly deposited on a sidewalk to be scraped off one's shoe like some offending rubbish of no importance. Public participation is irrelevant! THE PUBLIC NEED NOT ATTEND! And they don't, spanning across a near empty gallery.

Counsel Roberts has failed to understand her role. She is engaged by those she is displeased with, ALSO KNOWN AS HER EMPLOYER, THE PUBLIC!

The Chair of the Board of Supervisors has just a few duties prior to each meeting, one of which is the setting of the agenda for the meeting of the board. It is his obligation, Chair Borges, to remove items from the "Consent Agenda" which represent the county's general business, controversial or not. Non-Controversial items should be limited to the minutes of the previous meeting and Ceremonial items. Everything else, in case you fail to realize this, would be the general business of the board and be subject to scrutiny by the public, three-minute limit for each item, commenter on each item. Only obtuse, Easter Island Statues fail to understand this.

If Chairman of the Board, Joey Borges, cannot manage such a simple task. He should move over for someone who can! The current consent agenda has been abused by the county's unelected for far too long. Meaningless "Board Reports" and contracts fail in too many ways to inform the public what is being paid for in their name. Past time for change which is in the job description of the Chairman of the Board, Joey Borges, to propose the changes.

The County Counsel is a county employee, not someone who gets to dictate policy. If the meetings have become too long for her, she should step aside. Economical government can do without such sentiment! Meetings after all, rarely last much beyond the noon hour. If the County Counsel and the Board cannot devote a few hours to a public meeting at a very generous cost twice a month to the taxpayer, why are Chris Howard, Valerie Starkey, Dean Wilson, Darrin Short, and Joey Borges in elected office? What say you Chairman Borges? County Counsel Jacqueline Roberts? Is the job too much for you? Perhaps the citizens of the county should economize your employment to zero?

