



COUNTY OF HUMBOLDT

For the meeting of: 8/18/2026

File #: 26-778

To: Board of Supervisors

From: County Administrative Office

Agenda Section: Departmental

Vote Requirement: Majority

SUBJECT:

Review and Adoption of Revisions to the Board of Supervisors Code of Conduct and Ethics and Rules of the Board of Supervisors

RECOMMENDATION(S):

That the Board of Supervisors:

1. Receive the report from the Board-appointed Ad Hoc Committee regarding recommended revisions to the Board of Supervisors Code of Conduct and Ethics and Rules of the Board of Supervisors; and
2. Review and discuss the proposed revisions; and
3. Approve an amendment to the Board of Supervisors Code of Conduct and Ethics Rules of the Board of Supervisors; and
4. Adopt the Amended 2021 Code of Conduct and Ethics and Rules of the Board of Supervisors; and
5. Repeal Resolution No. 22-44 adopted on April 4, 2022; and
6. Adopt Resolution upon adoption of the Amended 2026 Code of Conduct and Ethics and Rules of the Board.

STRATEGIC PLAN:

This action supports the following areas of your Board's Strategic Plan.

Area of Focus: Core Services/Other

Strategic Plan Category: 9999 - Core Services/Other

DISCUSSION:

On Mar. 3, 2026, the Board of Supervisors appointed an Ad Hoc Committee consisting of Supervisors Steve Madrone and Michelle Bushnell to review the county's Board of Supervisors Code of Conduct and Ethics and Rules of the Board of Supervisors and return with recommended revisions. The purpose of the review was to evaluate the effectiveness of the existing policies, clarify expectations for Board conduct, and identify opportunities to improve accountability, transparency, and governance.

The attached redlined document reflects the recommendations developed by the Ad Hoc Committee. While many of the revisions are technical, organizational, or intended to modernize language, several substantive policy changes are proposed.

The proposed revisions include:

- **Clarification of recusal during Code of Conduct proceedings.** The proposed revisions clarify that a Board member who is the subject of an allegation will make their own determinations as to whether to recuse themselves from participating in any Board action directly related to the complaint or investigation.

- **Clarification of the Code of Conduct complaint process.** The revisions replace the existing internal committee review process with an independent review conducted by external legal counsel. External legal counsel would determine whether allegations warrant investigation, oversee any investigative process, recommend informal resolution when appropriate, and preserve confidentiality while providing a more independent evaluation process.
- **Revised procedures following sustained findings.** Rather than automatically bringing investigative findings before the Board for discussion, the proposal limits the initial Board action to receipt and filing of an executive summary on the consent calendar. Any consideration of censure or other Board action would occur only through a separately agenda item consistent with the Brown Act.
- **Addition of voluntary mediation.** The revisions authorize the county to offer voluntary, county-funded mediation when both the complainant and the involved Board member agree, providing an opportunity for informal conflict resolution where appropriate.

In addition to these substantive revisions, the Ad Hoc Committee recommends numerous non-substantive edits throughout the document, including modernization of terminology, clarification of Board member responsibilities, grammatical corrections, improved organization, and formatting changes intended to make the document easier to read and administer.

The recommended revisions are intended to promote respectful discourse, strengthen public confidence in County governance, clarify Board processes, and provide greater consistency in the administration of the Board's Code of Conduct.

SOURCE OF FUNDING:

General Fund and Liability Fund

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

Narrative Explanation of Financial Impact:

The proposed revisions do not have a direct fiscal impact. However, implementation of the revised complaint process may result in occasional costs associated with retaining external legal counsel, investigators, or mediation services when warranted. Such costs are anticipated to be infrequent and absorbed within existing appropriations when feasible.

STAFFING IMPACT:

Narrative Explanation of Staffing Impact:

The Board of Supervisors sets the tone for the organization's culture and work environment. Professional interactions between Board members, County staff, and the public contribute to employee engagement, morale, and retention. Conversely, conduct that is perceived as disrespectful, intimidating, or inconsistent with the Board's adopted standards may negatively affect staff morale, reduce employee confidence in organizational leadership, and create challenges in recruiting and retaining qualified personnel.

The proposed revisions are intended to reinforce clear expectations for professional conduct, respectful communication, and appropriate governance roles. By providing a more clearly defined process for addressing alleged violations of the Code of Conduct, the revisions support a workplace environment where County employees can perform their duties without fear of inappropriate interference or public criticism by individual Board members. These changes are expected to strengthen accountability, promote mutual respect, and foster a healthier organizational culture that supports effective service delivery to the public.

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OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT:

None

ALTERNATIVES TO STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS:

Board discretion

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Redlined Board of Supervisors Code of Conduct and Ethics and Rules of the Board of Supervisors
2. Clean Board of Supervisors Code of Conduct and Ethics and Rules of the Board of Supervisors
3. Resolution 22-44
4. Draft Resolution

PREVIOUS ACTION/REFERRAL:

Meeting of: 7/20/21, 4/4/22, 3/3/26

File No.: 21-964, 22-390, 26-167