

## c. COMMUNICATION AND COLLABORATION

### *How does a commission member accomplish the goal of being effective?*

As with any new assignment, it is important to begin building relationships with fellow commission members, local elected officials and their staff and the department staff person(s) who provide technical support to your assigned commission. An attitude of cooperation, spirit of tolerance and understanding and a goal of promoting consensus will be key attributes in your role as a commissioner. When requesting assistance that requires direct staff support on a project or for special research, please check with the department head or supervisor in advance to get prior approval for such assignments.

You will also want to have a working knowledge of your commission's By-Laws so you are clear about the purpose, membership, meeting times and operating procedures of the group. Robert's Rules of Order are widely accepted as the "standard" rules for conducting meetings. These procedures also insure that the flow of communication is clear and everyone has an opportunity to be heard. (See Section 7)

### *Who does a commission member represent?*

Commission members represent the whole community and not the exclusive point of view of a particular group or special interest. The role of the commission is to gather and analyze public input prior to making a recommendation to the Board of Supervisors. The guiding principle of any decision or recommendation is that of addressing the overall public benefit. Please see the Marin County Code of Ethics for public officials summarizing the ethical standards that govern conduct for both elected and appointed public officials. (See Section 8)

### *Can I be a spokesperson for my Commission?*

Unless authorized as the designated spokesperson by the Commission, an individual commissioner may not represent the commission before any other commission, outside agency, to the press, or the general public. Members of commissions who are responsible for conducting public business for the County of Marin shall not knowingly or otherwise misrepresent the scope of their influence or authority in matters assigned to their commission or represent recommendations of their respective advisory body as official County policy until such time as formal action, such as adoption of a resolution, has been taken by the Board of Supervisors.

### ***Where does a commission member gather information?***

Be aware of specific issues addressed by the commission, as well as far-reaching ones that will impact all sectors of County programs and services. Be acquainted with the Board of Supervisors' priorities and interests. These are defined in the County's Mission Statement and Defining Values adopted by the Board of Supervisors in September 2001. (See Section 9) The Board of Supervisors' meeting agendas are posted at several Civic Center locations and are available on the internet. Audio/video recordings of Board of Supervisors' meetings are also available on the internet.

### ***What is the best way to prepare for commission meetings?***

You will typically receive a meeting agenda and a packet of related material a minimum of three days prior to the scheduled meeting date. This should allow adequate time for you to review any background information in preparation for agenda items to be discussed or acted upon at the meeting. Stay informed about commission matters by reading minutes, staff reports and related material. Be prepared to ask clarifying questions, invite and consider public input, and promote discussion.

### ***What happens if I need to miss a meeting?***

Regular attendance at meetings and important related events is vital to the overall functioning, success and effectiveness of the commission.

Although regular attendance at commission meetings is essential to the work program and functioning of the committee, there will be occasions when it is not possible to attend a meeting. In this situation, please give a courtesy call in advance to your staff support person, so they will be aware of your absence. This can be critical, especially if there are other member absences; this can result in less than a majority (quorum) of members present, with no formal action possible at the meeting.

### ***What about my point of view?***

Although each of us has opinions and preferences, the role of the commissioner is to represent the public—this can be achieved by being open-minded, respecting and valuing the perspective of others and inviting differing points of view. This will insure a process that is both open and inclusive. Your responsibility as a commission member is to represent the public interest, putting the needs, interests and protection of the citizens as your primary concern.

*As a commissioner, do I have access to County business cards or letterhead stationery that identifies me as an appointed representative? Where do I get these, and under what circumstances can I use them?*

The Board of Supervisors has adopted a policy addressing this issue which requires that County letterhead stationery and business cards may be used by persons appointed by the Board of Supervisors to a County board, commission, committee, task force or other advisory body **only** when such use is duly authorized for use by the County Administrator, and only when such use is consistent with the duties or the purpose of the County advisory board (see Appendix 10, Administrative Regulation No. 21).