



RURAL NORTH VACAVILLE WATER DISTRICT

POLICY TITLE: Board/Staff Communications
POLICY NUMBER: 1020
ADOPTED: 8-14-18
REVISIONS: None

Objectives: Effective governance of the District relies on the cooperative efforts of the District's elected Board, who set policy and priorities, and the District's staff members, who analyze problems and issues, to make appropriate recommendations, and implement and administer Board policies. At this time the District has no employees. The District staff is comprised of part time skilled Independent Contractors including the General Manager, Bookkeeper, Meter Reader, Operator, Accountant, Webmaster, and Clerk. The General Manager is responsible to manage all the independent contractors. It is the responsibility of District staff to ensure Board members have access to information and to insure such information is communicated completely and with candor to those making the request. However, Board members should avoid intrusion into those areas that are the responsibility of District staff. Individual Board members must avoid intervening in staff decision-making, the development of staff recommendations, scheduling of work, and executing department priorities. This is necessary to protect District staff from undue influence and pressure from individual Board members and to allow the General Manager and staff to execute priorities without fear of reprisal.

Role of the Board: As the legislative body for the District, the Board is responsible for approving the District's budget, setting policy goals and objectives and adopting strategic plans. The primary functions of the District staff members are to execute Board policy and other Board actions and to keep the Board well informed.

Individual members of the Board should not make attempts to pressure or influence staff decisions, recommendations, workloads, schedules, and department priorities. If a Board member wishes to influence the actions, decisions, recommendations, workloads, work schedule, and priorities of staff, that member must prevail upon the Board to do so.

Board members also have a responsibility of information flow. It is critical that they make use of staff and other reports and Board meeting minutes. Board members should come to meetings prepared; having read the agenda packet materials and supporting documents, as well as any additional information or memoranda provided on District projects or evolving issues. Additional information may be requested if necessary.

Individual Board members, as well as the Board as a whole, are permitted complete freedom of access to any information, as requested of staff and shall receive the full cooperation and candor of staff in being provided with any requested information. The General Manager will pass critical information to all Board members at the same time.

There are limited restrictions when information cannot be provided. Draft documents (e.g. staff reports in progress, etc.) are under review and not available for release until complete and after review by District staff. In addition, there are legal restrictions on the District's ability to release certain personnel information even to members of the Board. Any concerns Board members may have regarding the release of information or the refusal of staff to release information, should be discussed with the President for clarification.

There shall be mutual respect from both staff and Board members of their respective roles and responsibilities at all times.

Purpose: The purpose of the policies listed below is to facilitate Board/staff communications consistent with these principles.

1020.1 All requests for information or questions by Board Directors outside of a Board or Committee meeting, shall be directed to the General Manager and shall include the desired time and date for receiving the information. Staff will confirm the date they can provide the information. So that all Board members are equally informed, all written informational material requested by any Director shall be submitted by the General Manager to all Board members with the notation indicating which Board member requested the information.

1020.2 Individual Directors cannot directly assign work to the General Manager or other staff members. Board initiated projects will follow organizational channels, through the General Manager, unless there is an emergency. As no formal procedure will answer all cases, the following should be considered as a guide and used with restraint and judgment:

- a) Directors should make requests of staff through the Board President who will contact the General Manager for handling the request.
- b) For long-term, involved studies or where the matter includes confidential material, the President should be contacted and the subject matter discussed with the full Board at a Board meeting prior to staff working on the assignments.
- c) In the event that staff is a participant or representative of a Committee or Work Group of the Board, the Board may contact the staff member directly to request or provide information or confer regarding matters of the Committee or Work Group.

1020.3 At Board meetings and other public meetings, respectful communication is expected. Staff is encouraged to give their professional recommendations, and the Board should recognize that staff may make recommendations that could be viewed as unpopular with the public and with individual Board members. Board members may request clarification and ask questions of staff at public meetings, and Directors are encouraged to participate in healthy discussions amongst each other regarding items under discussion on the Agenda. However, Directors should refrain from debate with staff at Board meetings about staff recommendations or other items being discussed. Staff must recognize that the Board, as the decision maker, is free to reject or modify a staff recommendation and that the Board's wishes will be implemented by staff even if it was contrary to a staff recommendation.

1020.4 Directors shall not attempt to coerce or influence staff, included in the making of recommendations, the awarding of contracts, the selection of consultants, the processing of any projects or applications, or the granting of permits. Directors shall not attempt to change or interfere with the operating policies and practices of any District department through interaction with staff. Individual Directors may discuss these items with the General Manager to get clarification or raise concerns.

1020.5 Board members should not make public comments critical of the performance of a District staff member or staff consultant. Any concerns by a Director over the behavior or work of a District employee or staff should be submitted privately to the Board President.

1020.6 Staff will respect the right of Directors to refuse to provide information or answers to staff and recognize that Directors may be bound by other rules of law or procedure that do not permit the Director to speak about the subject matter presented. If a Director violates any of the policies regarding communications as stated in this policy, any member of staff has the right to request that the Director speak directly with the General Manager about the subject matter presented without any fear of reprisal.