



Midpeninsula Regional
Open Space District

R-26-18
Meeting 26-05
February 11, 2026

AGENDA ITEM 7

AGENDA ITEM

Revisions to the Board Policy 2.01 *Guidelines for Board/Staff Working Relationship*

GENERAL MANAGER'S RECOMMENDATION

Approve the proposed revisions to the Board Policy 2.01, *Guidelines for Board-Staff Working Relationships*, to clarify the interactions by Board members when acting in a volunteer capacity and accurately describe the General Manager's administrative oversight of the staff performance evaluation process.

SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

During the last two years, staff have asked questions about how to respond to Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District (District) Board of Directors (Board) inquiries during or about volunteer projects. At events and projects organized by the District for volunteers, it can be particularly difficult for program and project staff to address policy inquiries or other complex questions that are raised by Board members who are attending as volunteers. Board Policy 2.01, *Guidelines for Board-Staff Working Relationships* addresses at a high level the board-staff relationship, stating that during volunteer projects, Board members should be treated similarly to other volunteers. In addition, there have been instances when certain volunteer activities are best reserved for external members of the public to best achieve specific District goals, such as administering trail surveys via personnel who hold no decision-making authority to avoid potentially affecting the responses, or trainings that requires limited enrollment due to space or other factors. For clearer guidance to staff and the Board, it would be helpful to amend Board Policy 2.01 to clarify (1) that all the overarching guidelines regarding board-staff interactions also apply to volunteer-related interactions and (2) the need to reserve select volunteer activities for external members of the public while providing proper Board notification of such limitations.

Other minor proposed edits to the policy serve to accurately describe the General Manager's role in overseeing the staff performance evaluation process, and to update pronoun use throughout the text.

The suggested edits to Board Policy 2.01 *Guidelines for Board/Staff Working Relationship* are presented in Attachment 1 for Board consideration.

FISCAL IMPACT

None

PRIOR BOARD OR COMMITTEE REVIEW

Given full Board interest, the item is coming directly to the full Board for consideration.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Public notice was provided as required by the Brown Act.

CEQA COMPLIANCE

This item is not a project subject to the California Environmental Quality Act.

NEXT STEPS

Pending approval of the proposed revisions, the District Clerk would include the revised policies in the Board Policy Manual.

Attachments

1. Suggested revisions to Board Policy 2.01: *Guidelines for Board-Staff Working Relationships* – Redline version
2. Suggested revisions to Board Policy 2.01: *Guidelines for Board-Staff Working Relationships* – Clean version

Responsible Department Head:
Ana Ruiz, General Manager

Prepared by:
Brian Malone, Assistant General Manager

Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District

Board Policy Manual

Guidelines for Board-Staff Working Relationships	Policy 2.01 Chapter 2 – District Personnel & Board Support
Effective Date: 11/20/91	Revised Date: 12/14/2022 <u>XX/XX/2026</u>
Approved by Board Action:	
Prior Versions: 11/20/91, 4/9/92, 1/11/93, 8/26/93, 2/14/96, 4/9/97, 1/28/98, 10/25/04, 1/28/09, 11/13/13, 9/23/15, <u>12/14/2022</u>	

Purpose

To set forth the guidelines and procedures for working relationships between District staff and the District's Board of Directors. The Board of Directors is the policy-making body of the District, while the General Manager is the administrative head of the agency under direction of the Board of Directors. One of the primary functions of the General Manager is to oversee the work of the agency staff in executing Board policy and other Board direction. Each District staff member ultimately takes guidance and direction from the General Manager and is hired with General Manager final approval and their performance evaluations are reviewed and completed with final sign-off from the General Manager or designee. ~~their performance evaluations are reviewed and completed with final sign-off from the General Manager.~~

Policy

Neither the Board President nor Board of Directors shall direct, request, or attempt to influence either directly or indirectly, the hiring, termination, or discipline of any person of employment by the General Manager or in a manner interfere or prevent the General Manager from exercising individual judgement in the personnel matters pertaining to District staff. Issues concerning the performance of an employee must be directed to the General Manager. Except for the purpose of obtaining information that already exists, the Board members are to work through the General Manager or designee for other types of requests and solicitations of new information. Board members should refrain from giving direct orders or instructions to any subordinates of the General Manager. Any information requested by any Board member shall be distributed by the District Clerk or the General Manager to all Board members, as appropriate, to ensure all are privy to the information.

Board member Inquiries and Requests for Information**A. General**

Board communications with District staff should be limited to normal District business hours unless the circumstances warrant otherwise. Responses to Board member questions posed outside of normal business hours should be expected no earlier than the next business day. A request for information, records, written work or analysis by District staff with support work of up to one (1) hour will be provided. Requests over one hour must be approved by the Board at a future Board meeting.

The General Manager can authorize a deviation from this policy if ~~he/she~~they determines that the request needs to be filled before the Board next meets.

Board members and management will endeavor not to surprise each other with important information.

Any Board member will advise the General Manager when ~~they/he/she~~ feels staff is attempting to direct or set Board policy.

B. Routine Requests for Information and Inquiries.

Board members may contact staff directly for information made readily available to the general public on a regular basis by District staff (e.g., “What is a specific preserve’s hours of operation?” or “How does one request a permit for camping at Black Mountain?”). Under these circumstances staff shall treat the Board member no differently than they would the general public, and the Board member shall not use their elected status to secure preferential treatment. The General Manager generally does not need to be advised of such contacts.

C. Non-Routine Requests for Readily Available Information.

Board members may also contact staff directly for easily retrievable information *not routinely requested by the general public* so long as it does not require staff to discuss the issue or express an opinion (e.g., “How many permits were issued for Black Mountain this year?” or “Under what circumstances does the District lower its flags to half-~~staff~~mast?”). The General Manager generally does not need to be advised of such contacts.

D. Non-routine Requests Requiring Special Effort.

If an individual Board member suggests that staff time be spent on a project not previously approved by the Board, ~~he/she~~they will contact the General Manager. The General Manager will then make an initial assessment of the project, evaluating its consistency with established goals and policies, effects on other projects, and availability of staff and financial resources including the approximate amount of staff time required to complete the assignment. The General Manager will then communicate the information to the Board and obtain Board majority approval prior to proceeding with more in-depth assessment taking more than one hour of staff time, or proceeding with the project. Responses to such requests shall be copied to all Board members, the General Manager, the General Counsel as appropriate, and affected Department Managers.

E. Questions Regarding Board Reports.

Where possible, Board members should forward any questions regarding staff Board reports to the General Manager and District Clerk at least 36 hours in advance of the Board meeting for which that item is agendaized. Questions should be limited to those needed for the Board member to make a decision on the recommendation(s) in the Board report. All responses shall be provided to all Board members, General Counsel, and members of the public. Questions received less than 36 hours prior to a Board meeting may be responded to at the Board meeting. During Board meetings, any questions from Board members having to do with non-agenda items shall be directed to the General Manager for follow-up.

F. Meeting Requests.

Any Board member request for a meeting with staff must be directed to the Board's appointees. When in doubt about the appropriateness of a communication with staff, Board members shall ask the General Manager for advice.

Volunteer Related Interactions

Board members may serve in District volunteer programs under the same terms and conditions as any member of the volunteering public. The General Manager or their designee may reserve voluntary participation in certain special events or projects to only external community members in order to achieve specific goals and will notify the Board of this limitation. When volunteering, Board members they agree to conduct themselves as would any other member of the volunteering public, while also adhering to the guidelines governing Board and staff interactions under this policy document. They will accept all direction from staff members organizing the volunteer activity. Staff conducting volunteer activities will treat Board members as they would any other volunteer, and will bring any difficulties to the Department Manager or General Manager for resolution.

Public Related Interactions

1. Board members shall treat staff professionally and will refrain from publicly reprimanding staff members. Any concerns about employee performance should be discussed privately with the General Manager. Staff members shall treat members of the Board professionally.
2. The Board shall not prohibit public criticism of its policies, procedures, programs or services, but shall request members of the public to refrain from personal attacks upon individual staff members.
3. District staff shall acknowledge the Board as having the final authority to make policy decisions. The Board of Directors shall acknowledge staff as implementing and administering the Board's policies through the General Manager.
4. Board appointees will actively support and implement Board decisions through their staff.

Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District

Board Policy Manual

Guidelines for Board-Staff Working Relationships	Policy 2.01 Chapter 2 – District Personnel & Board Support
Effective Date: 11/20/91	Revised Date: XX/XX/2026
Approved by Board Action:	
Prior Versions: 11/20/91, 4/9/92, 1/11/93, 8/26/93, 2/14/96, 4/9/97, 1/28/98, 10/25/04, 1/28/09, 11/13/13, 9/23/15, 12/14/2022	

Purpose

To set forth the guidelines and procedures for working relationships between District staff and the District's Board of Directors. The Board of Directors is the policy-making body of the District, while the General Manager is the administrative head of the agency under direction of the Board of Directors. One of the primary functions of the General Manager is to oversee the work of the agency staff in executing Board policy and other Board direction. Each District staff member ultimately takes guidance and direction from the General Manager and is hired with General Manager final approval and their performance evaluations are reviewed and completed with final sign-off from the General Manager or designee.

Policy

Neither the Board President nor Board of Directors shall direct, request, or attempt to influence either directly or indirectly, the hiring, termination, or discipline of any person of employment by the General Manager or in a manner interfere or prevent the General Manager from exercising individual judgement in the personnel matters pertaining to District staff. Issues concerning the performance of an employee must be directed to the General Manager. Except for the purpose of obtaining information that already exists, the Board members are to work through the General Manager or designee for other types of requests and solicitations of new information. Board members should refrain from giving direct orders or instructions to any subordinates of the General Manager. Any information requested by any Board member shall be distributed by the District Clerk or the General Manager to all Board members, as appropriate, to ensure all are privy to the information.

Board member Inquiries and Requests for Information

A. General

Board communications with District staff should be limited to normal District business hours unless the circumstances warrant otherwise. Responses to Board member questions posed outside of normal business hours should be expected no earlier than the next business day. A request for information, records, written work or analysis by District staff with support work of up to one (1) hour will be provided. Requests over one hour must be approved by the Board at a future Board meeting.

The General Manager can authorize a deviation from this policy if they determine that the request needs to be filled before the Board next meets.

Board members and management will endeavor not to surprise each other with important information.

Any Board member will advise the General Manager when they feel staff is attempting to direct or set Board policy.

B. Routine Requests for Information and Inquiries.

Board members may contact staff directly for information made readily available to the general public on a regular basis by District staff (e.g., “What is a specific preserve’s hours of operation?” or “How does one request a permit for camping at Black Mountain?”). Under these circumstances staff shall treat the Board member no differently than they would the general public, and the Board member shall not use their elected status to secure preferential treatment. The General Manager generally does not need to be advised of such contacts.

C. Non-Routine Requests for Readily Available Information.

Board members may also contact staff directly for easily retrievable information *not routinely requested by the general public* so long as it does not require staff to discuss the issue or express an opinion (e.g., “How many permits were issued for Black Mountain this year?” or “Under what circumstances does the District lower its flags to half-staff?”). The General Manager generally does not need to be advised of such contacts.

D. Non-routine Requests Requiring Special Effort.

If an individual Board member suggests that staff time be spent on a project not previously approved by the Board, they will contact the General Manager. The General Manager will then make an initial assessment of the project, evaluating its consistency with established goals and policies, effects on other projects, and availability of staff and financial resources including the approximate amount of staff time required to complete the assignment. The General Manager will then communicate the information to the Board and obtain Board majority approval prior to proceeding with more in-depth assessment taking more than one hour of staff time, or proceeding with the project. Responses to such requests shall be copied to all Board members, the General Manager, the General Counsel as appropriate, and affected Department Managers.

E. Questions Regarding Board Reports.

Where possible, Board members should forward any questions regarding staff Board reports to the General Manager and District Clerk at least 36 hours in advance of the Board meeting for which that item is agendaized. Questions should be limited to those needed for the Board member to make a decision on the recommendation(s) in the Board report. All responses shall be provided to all Board members, General Counsel, and members of the public. Questions received less than 36 hours prior to a Board meeting may be responded to at the Board meeting. During Board meetings, any questions from Board members having to do with non-agenda items shall be directed to the General Manager for follow-up.

F. Meeting Requests.

Any Board member request for a meeting with staff must be directed to the Board's appointees. When in doubt about the appropriateness of a communication with staff, Board members shall ask the General Manager for advice.

Volunteer Related Interactions

Board members may serve in District volunteer programs under the same terms and conditions as any member of the volunteering public. The General Manager or their designee may reserve voluntary participation in certain special events or projects to only external community members in order to achieve specific goals and will notify the Board of this limitation. When volunteering, Board members agree to conduct themselves as would any other member of the volunteering public, while also adhering to the guidelines governing Board and staff interactions under this policy document. They will accept all direction from staff members organizing the volunteer activity. Staff conducting volunteer activities will treat Board members as they would any other volunteer, and will bring any difficulties to the Department Manager or General Manager for resolution.

Public Related Interactions

1. Board members shall treat staff professionally and will refrain from publicly reprimanding staff members. Any concerns about employee performance should be discussed privately with the General Manager. Staff members shall treat members of the Board professionally.
2. The Board shall not prohibit public criticism of its policies, procedures, programs or services, but shall request members of the public to refrain from personal attacks upon individual staff members.
3. District staff shall acknowledge the Board as having the final authority to make policy decisions. The Board of Directors shall acknowledge staff as implementing and administering the Board's policies through the General Manager.
4. Board appointees will actively support and implement Board decisions through their staff.