

**CITIZENS'  
ECONOMY  
EFFICIENCY  
COMMISSION**  
LOS ANGELES COUNTY  
1964-2002

**Chairman**

January 9, 2003

Robert H. Philibosian

**Vice Chair**

Chair of the Board Yvonne Brathwaite Burke  
County of Los Angeles Board of Supervisors  
Room 866  
500 W. Temple Street  
Los Angeles, CA 90012

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Dear Chairperson Burke:

In our current economic environment there is an ever increasing awareness throughout both public and private sector organizations that effective internal and external communication has become a fundamental element in achieving meaningful success. This conclusion was reached in 1998 by Supervisor Knabe when he initiated a project to improve both internal and external county communications through the creation of a Master Events Calendar. As a result of his efforts a web based calendar (cited in a November 25, 1998 memo, subject Master Calendar of County Events, from the then Executive Officer, Joanne Sturges) was created with the objective to "...keep the public informed of important events in their communities and it will assist County staff in avoiding conflicts when scheduling important events". It was anticipated that initially the calendar would "...include the following types of events/meetings:

- Board of Supervisors meetings, with major item/hearing topics when known
- Individual Board Office special hearings, community events and press conferences
- County Commissions/Committees, Task Forces, special meetings (not routine meetings) and special events
- County Department special events, public meetings/hearings, press conferences, recognition awards, etc."

**Executive Director**

Bruce J. Staniforth



With the recent creation of a County Strategic Plan Communications Cluster Group as a part of the County's Strategic Planning efforts, it appears that the County has again come to a realization of its need to implement procedures that will improve communications within the County. Reevaluating the implementation and current utilization of the Master Calendar of County Events not only in terms of how it was envisioned in 1998, but also in terms of current information requirements and how existing technology can be employed to more effectively fulfill this requirement, is a major step in assessing the effectiveness of county communication efforts.

### **The Challenge**

The problem, as it was identified in 1998, lies in developing a means to improve the communication and coordination on event planning among a large number of departments and agencies, including the Board of Supervisors. Although a master calendar was developed and implemented in response to this need, a recent review, which is discussed below, shows that its current utilization fails to post the events as proposed in the 1998 memo. The reasons for this limited utilization, which include non-participation by departments, limited availability of resources to maintain the system properly, and a technologically outdated system, severely limits the county's ability to achieve the objective of expanding the availability of information. It is evident that the problems that the 1998 effort attempted to resolve continue to exist.

It appears from the conceptual design of the events calendaring process that, if it were implemented as it was envisioned in 1998, would have responded to many of the issues and needs for informational coordination that are being raised in this review. Unfortunately, Los Angeles County continues to need a shared calendar that not only provides information to the public regarding events that are planned throughout the County, but also to encourage County organizations to post their event information through ease of use, thereby encouraging better event planning. The County requires a solution that fulfills this need for a master calendar and offers the administrative capability necessary to empower each of the organizations to post their event information directly into that calendar with non technical personnel.

### **Reasons to Review the Implementation of a Master Calendar**

It has become ever more vital to county operations, particularly during the tumultuous times currently facing the nation that the county maximizes its ability to:

- ◆ Coordinate the delivery of its message -- The County is comprised of numerous departments, commissions, offices, agencies, etc. Many of these organizations have as part of their mission considerable internal interaction and extensive contact with the public. For internal events it is important to insure that the county presents a coordinated message to its employees. To the extent that this interaction takes the form of public meetings, decision makers would be well served by knowing those meetings have been scheduled, those that are currently scheduled and those that are being planned to insure that they fully understand the material and the positions that are being presented. In both instances, this foreknowledge of events allows for adjustments in the manner or content of the material being presented to more effectively meet the goals of the organization and to further enhance county communications.

- ◆ Reduce the possibility for the duplication of efforts -- There is a real possibility that one organization would be able to maximize the efforts of another in the preparation of an event. Using information residing in this central repository may well result in making available valuable resources to all county organizations. The use of such considerations as venue setup, vendor selection, material preparation, expressed citizen comments/positions, lessons learned, etc., could give rise to meaningful resource savings for the County.
- ◆ Insure that the individuals that need to attend an event have advanced notice of a posted date -- This factor is particularly critical when it comes to the allocation of executive management time. Often these individuals are invited to conflicting events/meetings, each of which may be very important. When this happens these individuals are placed in the difficult position of making a choice between two equally desirable events. The existence of a county master event calendar would enable the scheduling organization to recognize the scheduling conflict at the very beginning of the event planning process. At this point, such conflicts could be easily resolved. Utilizing a master event calendar approach would be enhanced if both county and public meetings of county interest were incorporated into the calendar.
- ◆ Insure that desired venues are available -- The creation of a master event calendar would enable the event planner to review the availability of sites, secure the date of the event and, where necessary, make any necessary adjustments relative to the site desired or the scheduling of the event to minimize event conflicts. In many instances, the availability or non-availability of a specific venue may have a serious impact on the nature and/or conduct of an event.
- ◆ Simplify collaboration within and between organizations -- A master calendar would provide everyone within the county with a central repository of information on the scheduling of events. This repository would further expand efforts to enhance countywide communication. It would also serve to improve awareness and encourage participation at these events by county organizations/employees. The participation of organizations/employees would not only contribute to the success of events, particularly to those events for county employees, but would also communicate opportunities for employee involvement, thereby stimulating employee morale.
- ◆ Inform the public of upcoming events -- A master events calendar will serve to improve communications with the public by informing them of scheduled events within the county. This will raise awareness of county activities and advancing the philosophy of openness in government. It would also provide a means of advancing the positive image of the county, serve as an enhanced vehicle for public education and encourage public support, all of which serve the objectives inherent in holding such an event.

## **Review of the Existing Calendar**

### Events Listing

As part of this review, the Economy and Efficiency Commission considered the existing calendar which is presently posted on both the internet and county's intranet. From this calendar the items included throughout the thirteen month period that is currently available were identified (Attachment 1). For the purposes of this review the events listed on the existing calendar were divided into five

categories, Board Meetings with 15 events listed, Public Hearings with 2 events listed, Health Budget Meetings with 2 events listed, and Other Events with 6 events listed. The fifth category is Holidays with 20 listed.

In an attempt to establish some benchmark of what events might be likely to be listed on the Master Calendar, this review compared the number of events identified on the County Events Calendar for the month of November 2002 with the number of events listed in the Press Clippings put out by the Public Information Office (PIO) (Appendix 2) for the same period. (Although this comparison may not provide a perfect correlation since it is time sensitive, in that the events listed in the Clippings are derived daily from the City News Service, it does indicate the types of events/meetings that would be responsive to the criteria that were established in the 1998 memo and that could reasonably be expected to be included in the Master Calendar.) During November the Los Angeles County Events Calendar indicates 8 events in four categories - 5 of these events are Board meetings. For this same month the County Press Clippings indicate 64 events in eight categories. These categories were expanded from the 5 categories established for the Los Angeles County Events Calendar to reflect the wider range of events that are listed.

It seems evident that if the inputs to the master calendar were appropriately expanded to include both the types of events identified in the Press Clippings and the events identified on departmental calendars, which is discussed in the following section, the potential number of events to be included for November 2002 would be far in excess of 8 items that had been listed as of December 23, 2002.

### Departmental Calendars

The objective of the Executive Office in 1998 was "...to link the calendars together, so that the County Master Calendar can be a starting point for researching events...". This review is expanding upon this objective by suggesting that all county events that meet the inclusion criteria be included in the Master Calendar with the link to the departmental calendar perhaps assuming the role of providing additional event detail. Currently departmental links are provided as indicated in the following table.

Table 1

<b>Links Currently on LA County Events Calendar</b>	
<b>Department</b>	<b>Comment on Link</b>
LA County Arts Commission	Links to Home Page. No clear events calendar. Reference to Open House Schedule of Activities
Beaches and Harbors	Links to Home Page. Clear link to Events Calendar
Department of Health Services	Page Unable to Display
LA County Museum of Art	Links to Home Page. Clear link to Events Calendar
Natural History Museum	Links to Home Page. Calendar link is subordinate to "Planning Your Visit" and at bottom of the home page
LA County Public Library	Links direct to Calendar
Department of Public Social Services	Links to Home Page. Clear link to Events Calendar
LA County Sanitation District	Links direct to Calendar

As of December 23, 2002

The information contained in Table 1 indicates that the current calendar has some problems in site maintenance, in determining a consistent approach to which page on the departmental site the links are to be made, and a lack of consistency within departments as to how event calendars are to be presented.

In addition, the following table indicates a number of departments that have an events calendar listed on their site that are not linked on the County Events Calendar:

Table 2

Departments with Calendars Not Linked	
Military and Veterans Affairs	Department of Children and Family Services
Community and Senior Services	Community Development Commission
Consumer Affairs	Coroner
LA County Office of Small Business	Parks and Recreation

As of December 23, 2002

Table 2 indicates that the linkage to departmental calendars is not complete and should be updated in a manner that is consistent with the establish linkage protocol for the site.

Each of the problems with departmental linkages, as with other aspects of the calendar, makes the site increasingly difficult for anyone who desires to access this information. As difficulty increases the usefulness of the site to the public and the County diminishes.

### Keyword Search

The current events calendar includes a link to do a keyword search. Is difficult to evaluate the effectiveness of this capability because so little exists on the calendar, but it did provide results of a sample search on the types of events that do exist.

### **System Requirements**

There are numerous requirements that should be considered in the further development of a master calendaring program. The system that is implemented should incorporate the following capabilities:

- ◆ The ability to connect with departmental, or potentially, other organizational calendars.
- ◆ If numerous calendars are involved, this system should enable the viewer to see the calendar(s) that are of interest to them.
- ◆ Notification to users of calendar changes
- ◆ Simplicity of structure that facilitates its use on the internet/intranet
- ◆ Ease of use so that calendar management can be delegated to non-technical users
- ◆ The ability to post, add and/or change events on the calendar

- ◆ The ability of management to approve events from calendar submissions
- ◆ The ability to avoid the duplication of efforts in the submission of information
- ◆ Provide for security in the management of calendar information
- ◆ Be able to provide expanded information on a specific event

### **Approach Overview**

In a report published in November 2002 entitled "Monitoring Current Audit Recommendations", the Economy and Efficiency Commission recommended the creation of a browser based system to monitor and coordinate departmental response to audit recommendations. The basic components of the browser based methodology recommended in that report is applicable to the implementation of a master calendar within the county. In the case of the master calendar, preliminary steps have already been taken to implement the County Events Calendar that is currently posted on the county's web site.

In the immediate term the Executive Office of the Board, as the office currently responsible for the maintenance of the county events calendar, should take action to utilize the current capabilities of the calendar system in an effort to address the issues that have been raised herein, e.g. departmental linkages, event identification, departmental participation. This approach will begin the process envisioned by the Commission and begin to effectively provide information that is needed by the County.

In the longer term it is important to pursue the objective of furthering the development of the calendar approach as set forth in both 1998 and to expand upon this concept using the principals set forth in this review. To accomplish this it will be necessary to expand/modify the capability of the software used, agree upon a countywide events calendaring protocol and revise the internal communication structure to report on the scheduling of events. The most effective approach to achieving these objectives would be to request that the Chief Administrative Office, working with the Chief Information Office, conduct a feasibility study to consider the fiscal, administrative and organizational impacts of the proposed system revisions.

In addition, the Board of Supervisors, in order to encourage participation in the calendaring process, should provide them with policy direction as illustrated in Attachment 3. This policy directs that each county organization scheduling events use the master events calendar process. Clearly, if organizations fail to use the system it will not work. A number of advantages accrue to departments that use of this methodology by being able to:

- ◆ Check for possible date conflicts
- ◆ Check for possible venues conflicts
- ◆ Check for potential conflicts with individuals that are to be invited.

The master events calendar process can also be utilized to notify the individual being invited through "a save the date notice" that an invitation will be forthcoming. This gives the invitee as much lead time as possible in planning their schedules. It would seem reasonable that the system should also provide the planner with the ability to do a search by such elements as department sponsor, event location, presenter, event purpose, date, or participants, e.g. Board Members, Department Heads, etc., to enable cross referenced searches to make best use of the available information.

### **Conclusion**

It appears to the Commission that the development of a master events calendar would provide the county with an effective tool to enhance communication, encourage broadly based participation in the processes of governing, and contribute in a meaningful manner to furthering the openness of government.

The Economy and Efficiency Commission recommends that the Board of Supervisors support expanding the utilization County Events Calendar to meet the objectives set forth in the 1998 memo from the Executive Officer and the expanded objectives set forth in this review. The Commission feels that this utilization will contribute significantly to the coordination of and communication on both internal and external events.

Sincerely,



Robert Philibosian  
Chairman

Cc: Each Supervisor  
Each Commissioner  
Chief Administrative Officer  
Executive Officer of the Board of Supervisors  
Chief Information Officer

## Attachment 1

Events Listed on the Los Angeles County Events Calendar					
Events Scheduled (As of Dec 9, 2002)					
Month/Year	Board Meeting	Public Hearing	Health Budget Mtg.	Other Events	Holiday
Oct 02	4	1		4 (Mall)	2
Nov 02	5	1	1	1 (Mall)	3
Dec 02	5			1 (Mall)	1
Jan 03	1		1		2
Feb 03					4
Mar 03					1
Apr 03					1
May 03					1
Jun 03					1
Jul 03					1
Aug 03					
Sep 03					1
Oct 03					2

## Attachment 2

<b>Events Noted in County Press Clippings</b>							
<b>Type of Event Scheduled (Month of November)</b>							
Day	Supervisor	Comm./Board	County	State	Federal	Community	Seminar
1	1					1	1
2/3							
4		2	1			1	
5	2	1	1				
6	1	1			1		
7		2	2			1	1
8	1		1		1		1
9/10							
11	Veterans Day – No Clippings						
12	1		1		1		
13	1		1			1	
14		1	3			3	
15				1		2	2
16/17							
18		1				2	1
19	1					1	1
20	1		1			1	
21				1			1
22			1				
23/24						1 (24 <sup>th</sup> )	
25	1	1	1				
26	1					1	
27	1						
28	Thanksgiving Holiday – No Clippings						
29							
30							
Totals	12	10	13	2	3	14	8

## Attachment 3



# *Los Angeles County* **BOARD OF SUPERVISORS POLICY MANUAL**

Policy #:	Title:	Effective Date:
0.000	MASTER CALENDAR FOR COUNTY EVENTS	00/00/00

### PURPOSE

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The purpose of the Master Calendar for County Events is to provide a comprehensive summary of events, programs, seminars, and other activities that are open to county departments and those that are open to the public. Calendar information will be available to county departments and the general public, as appropriate.

All departments and agencies will consult the Master Calendar while planning events to minimize conflicts

### REFERENCE

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Memorandum, Joanne Sturgus, Executive Officer, to Department Heads, Subject: Master Calendar of County Events, November 25, 1998

Memorandum, Joanne Sturgus, Executive Officer, to Department Heads, Subject: Master Calendar of County Events, March 25, 1999

### POLICY

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#### Administration

County departments, agencies, commissions and administrative units must calendar through the Executive Office of the Board of Supervisors. Publicity cannot be released until the event has been confirmed with the Master Calendar.

Procedures

A County event must be submitted in order for the event to be included on the Master Calendar in accordance with the requirements of the systems implemented to respond to this requirement.

Sponsor Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of the sponsoring department, agency, or other organization that calendars an event to comply with County policies and procedures including:

- Advertisement posting
- Alcohol
- Budget Preparation
- Contracts
- Facility Reservations
- Food and Beverage
- Service
- Fund Raising, when appropriate
- Parking
- Publicity/Promotion
- Outdoor Sound, if appropriate
- Security
- Technical Requirements
- Tickets/Cash Handling
- Vendors

It is the responsibility of the sponsor to notify the Executive Office immediately when a change or cancellation has been made.

The sponsor accepts full responsibility for costs incurred for the event including security and any damage to the facility.

Facilities

Facility managers are required to inform sponsors of their responsibilities for hosting events. Any organization holding an event must have calendared it on the County's Master Events Calendar before facilities are confirmed.

**RESPONSIBLE DEPARTMENT**

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Responsible Office to be determined.

**DATE ISSUED/SUNSET DATE**

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**Issue Date: January XX, 2003**

**Sunset Date: January XX, 2008**