

Letter to the Editor: Trinity Journal

## Governance excellence is a choice

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As Trinity County approaches another public decision involving executive leadership, it is worth pausing to reflect on what governance excellence truly requires. In small rural counties like ours, public trust is not an abstract concept. It is the foundation upon which effective government rests. Trust is built when decisions are transparent, processes are clear and the public can understand not only what was decided, but how and why.

Executive contract renewals and extensions are not routine clerical matters. They represent an affirmation of leadership performance, direction and accountability. When such decisions arise, the public benefits from clear articulation of measurable goals, performance benchmarks and evaluation criteria. These elements are hallmarks of good governance everywhere — in cities, counties, school districts and private-sector boards alike.

Technical compliance with open meeting laws is essential. But excellence asks more of us than minimum legal sufficiency. It calls for clarity in agenda descriptions. It calls for meaningful report-outs that inform rather than obscure. It calls for visible standards by which performance is assessed. And it calls for a culture that welcomes public engagement as a strength rather than a nuisance.

Strong institutions do not fear transparency or pay lip service to it; they are strengthened by it.

In recent years, Trinity County has faced significant challenges — economic pressures, regulatory complexity, infrastructure demands and changing state mandates. Navigating these realities requires capable leadership and a Board of Supervisors

committed to process integrity. The public's role is not to second-guess every personnel decision, but to expect that those decisions reflect thoughtful evaluation, clear communication and openness.

Governance excellence is not about personalities. It is about systems.

It is about ensuring that executive leadership contracts reflect publicly understood priorities. It is about demonstrating that performance evaluations are structured and substantive. It is about reinforcing that closed sessions are used only when legally required and are followed by meaningful report-outs so the community remains informed.

When citizens ask for clarity, they are not undermining government — they are participating in it.

The public's right to know and participate is not discretionary — it is foundational. Government functions best when its processes are visible and its standards clearly understood.

Trinity County is capable of setting a high standard, and we should expect nothing less. We can choose to model governance that is transparent, accountable, and confident in its processes. Doing so strengthens public trust and supports long-term stability.

Excellence is a choice — one worth making consistently and visibly.