

## SHIFT TO NIGHT MEETINGS GETS A THUMBS-UP FROM PUBLIC

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SAN ANDREAS - Maybe night time is the right time for the Calaveras County Board of Supervisors.

In an effort to make the proceedings of the elected board accessible to people who work or attend school during business hours, the board this week tried meeting at 6 p.m. Tuesday. Measured by the fact that there were few empty seats in the board chambers, the experiment was a success.

And members of the public said as much during the public comment period at the start of the meeting.

"We want to thank you guys for moving your meeting to a time Calaveras High students can actually attend," said Leah Bayers, a student at Calaveras High School.

In recent years, Board of Supervisors meetings have usually started at 9 a.m. and run until the close of the normal business day. Some current and former board members had said that experiments with night meetings in the past had drawn few attendees and that many county residents are reluctant to drive at night.

But a wave of populism over the past two election cycles brought new representatives to four of the five board seats, and that majority decided to try night meetings again.

"Thank you," said Joyce Peek of Mokelumne Hill, who said her status as a person with full-time employment would otherwise prevent her attendance at meetings.

Educators and retired educators had lobbied for the occasional night meetings. Among those present Tuesday night was Calaveras County Schools Superintendent Kathy Northington. Northington vowed that she and other educators would continue encouraging students to attend meetings.

They've already had some success. Although Tuesday was only the second day of the school year for schools within Calaveras Unified School District, generally the northern half of the county, there were both elementary and high school age students on hand from Calaveras Unified campuses.

About a half-dozen of those students were from Rail Road Flat Elementary School, a campus in danger of being closed by that district due to shrinking revenues and enrollment.

Several of those children spoke and were rewarded when the Board of Supervisors voted its unanimous support for efforts to keep Rail Road Flat Elementary open.

Most Board of Supervisors meetings will continue to be held during business hours, with night meetings several times a year. County officials have said they will keep the night meeting agendas short. Typical day meetings often run eight hours or more.

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