

Hiding in the daylight

The time has come for the governing boards in Orange County to face the public.

For some reason, the Board of Supervisors and the School Board, the two most powerful groups in the county, refuse to meet at night on a regular basis.

Occasionally the boards will hold public hearings in the evening. This is simply not good enough.

Our Opinion

By having the routine government meetings during business hours on a normal work day, the two boards are in effect conducting their business out of sight of the public.

The daytime meetings may be convenient for the members of the boards, but the timing effectively denies the county's working people access to their own government. It is often these working people who are most affected by the actions of the supervisors or School Board members.

It is true that the vast majority of business conducted at daytime meetings is routine and dull. That is no excuse to deny the public the maximum access to a meeting.

In fact, it is often the mass of dull, routine details that have the greatest impact on the common people. More than one free society has been subverted by a mass of tiny routine and dull details without the people even noticing.

When the members of the Board of Supervisors are elected, or the members of the School Board are appointed, they are charged with serving the public interest. That should include serving at the convenience of the people.

The supervisors and School Board members should not have the right to declare that the business of government will be conducted at their convenience.

If that means meetings at night, so be it. If the board members can't handle the inconvenience of night meetings, then they should get out of the business of government.

If the members of the two boards have nothing to hide, they should be unafraid to face the scrutiny of the public at any time, least of all at a supposedly public meeting.

The people of Orange County deserve the right to be present at any given meeting without undue inconvenience. Whether or not the people exercise that right is irrelevant. The right must be preserved.