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HEADLINE: 'Maddy Books' get people involved;  
County open-government resource to go online

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BODY:

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Say you want to try serving on a city or county government panel.

Contra Costa County Supervisor Mark DeSaulnier believes you should be able to learn about any committee opening with a quick look at the county's Maddy Book.

Named after former Fresno Assemblyman Ken Maddy, the Maddy Books are required by state law to be kept current by every county and city in the state. The volumes are to make sure people from all walks of life take part in local government affairs.

On Tuesday the Board of Supervisors will take a brief look at the ongoing efforts to build a county Maddy Book Web site before sending the item to the board's Internal Operations Committee for study.

Having a Maddy Book Web site would permit anyone with Internet access to learn about the latest openings on any of the county's 826 citizen-advisory committees and commissions.

The Maddy Act says counties and cities can't make such appointments until after the public has been given word of the vacancy for at least 10 days.

DeSaulnier, who chairs the Internal Operations Committee, said he takes a special interest in open-government laws, adding that he is the only supervisor who was serving on the prior board that adopted the county's Better Government Ordinance. The ordinance requires, for instance, 72 hours' advance word of a public meeting, while the state open-meeting law requires just 48 hours, he said.

DeSaulnier likes the idea of both a well-maintained paper copy of the Maddy Book and also one on the Internet.

"People are busy enough now, and I want to make it easier for them [to find out about any openings]. The easiest way would be on the Internet," he said.

The county's Maddy Book has come in for some criticism for the 4-inch, loose-leaf binder having out-of-date information, as did the Web site information.

That criticism was uncalled for, according to Julie Enea, a senior county administrator and the main staff member for the Internal Operations Committee.

The county has not finished working on the new Web site, with which it is getting help from a private Napa County Internet design company. The Web site should be launched soon, Enea said. She added that once the new Web site is up, anyone will be able to manipulate the information -- not just read what's there -- to produce custom-made reports.

The county has kept a Maddy Book ever since the state Legislature adopted the Maddy Act in 1976, according to Enea. With the county responsible for making appointments to about 80 different advisory bodies, that's a lot to keep track of, Enea said.

QUOTE I don't think any staff involved in the process are at fault, ENDQ he said.

--->For DeSaulnier, keeping the Maddy Book accurate is part of keeping government open. "It's to guarantee that the people's voices are heard by government bodies."

The Board of Supervisors will take up the Maddy Book discussion sometime after 10 a.m. Tuesday. The board meets in Room 107 of the first-floor board chambers of the County Administration Building, 651 Pine St., Martinez.