

## **CAMTC Process Synopsis**

### **By ABMP Chairman Bob Benson**

Based on unusual changes to processes, as well as information gleaned after the fact, it is my belief that the decision to raise licensing fees for massage therapists was tactically baked in advance of a November 29, 2022, California Massage Therapy Council (CAMTC) board meeting.

A published original meeting notice referenced a possible consideration of a fee increase. ABMP members who called CAMTC seeking clarification of intent were told the board “might consider” fee changes. I believe that statement was disingenuous, as CAMTC had already commissioned Capital Accounting Partners, LLC, to construct a study to support a fee increase and had fed the consultant data to try to justify a specific increase.

Other actions were taken to limit public input on this topic, including:

- The board meeting was scheduled for 8:00 a.m. on Tuesday, November 30, right after Thanksgiving weekend.
- Though virtually all prior board meetings over the last 13 years were held in populous areas such as Los Angeles, Sacramento, and San Francisco, with easy air access, this one was set for Palm Springs, allowing for fewer efficient travel choices.
- The substantive background materials, including a proposed 2023 budget and a 21-page outside consultant fee study, were only made available to the public on Friday, November 25, two business days prior to the meeting.
- Only six board members out of the 11 authorized showed up (barely a quorum)—likely a product of Thanksgiving and limited flights to and from Palm Springs.
- The agenda, published in advance, showed “2023 Strategic Priorities, proposed budget, and possible vote on increase in fees” as item number 19 of 24 total agenda items. Once the meeting opened and roll was taken, that agenda item was moved from number 19 to number 1—a change which was attributed to the consultant’s schedule (though the consultant actually remained at the meeting site for eight more hours).
- Despite many ABMP members emailing CAMTC with comments opposing a fee increase at this time, none of those letters were entered into the meeting record or read aloud during the meeting.
- CAMTC’s treasurer presented a 2023 budget and fee schedule. Except for Bernadette Murray, ABMP’s appointed representative on the CAMTC board of directors, directors offered virtually no comments despite a proposed 2023 budget up 10 percent and a proposed key certification fee increase of 50 percent. In other words, it is my belief the outcome was pre-cooked by senior staff. Other board members essentially had nothing to say.
- A motion was crafted to combine budget and fee approvals which, in effect, limited public comment to 2 minutes per person as, per meeting rules, members of the

public may only testify once per motion. Such a rule felt out of proportion to the weight of the matters under consideration.

- There was no opportunity for members of the public to question the fee study consultant, whose work product reflected a poor choice of comparable state experience—utilizing geographic proximity rather than choosing states also enjoying scale economies in ways similar to California’s situation—and stating on page 121 of the board packet that CAMTC cash reserve levels were inconsistent with CAMTC figures published on page 79.

Based partly on history (CAMTC executives previously seeking \$300 fee levels in 2018) and partly on post-meeting conversation with the Capital Accounting Partners consultant, it became apparent that CAMTC’s CEO started with a \$300 fee conclusion and then steered the study to support that result. Also apparent: Both the budget and the new fees are the product of a CAMTC-dictated result, not a product of thoughtful exchange.