

Grego: 'I listen more than I speak'



Gerri Grego

Publisher's note: *Lake Tahoe News asked the six El Dorado County supervisor candidates a series of questions. All are the same except for one that is specific to each candidate. The responses are being run in the order they were received by LTN. One candidate chose not to answer the questions.*

Name: "Gerri" Geraldine Grego

Age: 61

Occupation: Resort manager

Education: Associates degree in management, leadership and facilities training

What elected, civic, nonprofit boards or groups are or have you been affiliated with and in what capacity?: There are too many to list, but will give an overview. Currently I am the city appointee to the El Dorado County Commission on Aging. I also serve as an advisor to the Lake Tahoe Sustainability Collaborative, specifically the Human, Health and Social Well Being Workgroup working on community gardens and growing domes. I am co-chair of Gardens for a Healthy Tahoe, and am treasurer of South Lake Tahoe Republican Women Federated. I

served on the General Plan Committee for the city, and as a planning commissioner I had the privilege of working on the Aspens Project providing workforce housing. On a more personal note, in the past I have participated in many organizations including Bread & Broth, parent teacher groups at Bijou Elementary and South Tahoe Middle School, been an officer of a dance club, and have served in many different church appointments. I am also a notary public, and my background has been checked by the FBI.

Traffic is horrible on Fridays and Sundays throughout the county. Will you commit to not voting for any big subdivisions unless there is a plan to widen Highway 50? Why or why not?:

Infrastructure to support any project should be required before approval. We cannot overextend our resources without damaging the rest of the community. However, the last person to buy a movie ticket shouldn't have to buy all the popcorn. Laws should be passed to improve our community without punishing those who provide new jobs. They should pay for reasonable improvements that are not so onerous that we get no improvements because no one can afford to do business here.

What is your opinion on a proposed November initiative to control growth?: Tahoe is a prime example of no growth scenarios. South Lake Tahoe has been frozen into a museum of the '60s. Just as in the previous question improvements happen as a result of progress, it also follows that reasonable growth means economic and environmental improvements. What inspires me most about these initiatives is that the people of this county are standing up for what they believe. They feel that their leaders have not been listening to them, or that they are making "sweetheart deals" with developers. Rural Communities United, the Shingle Springs Community Alliance, Save Our County, and Residents Involved in Positive Planning are all trying to save a rural lifestyle by closing "gaps" where they feel their leaders have taken advantage. Those initiatives leave out the Tahoe basin as it is under the

jurisdiction of the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency.

What are your thoughts on making Lake Tahoe its own county?:

If we were to become a county, then the residents of Meyers would not feel disenfranchised, as they do now. I am not against the idea. It would have to be seriously considered – and all of its implications. There was a time when South Lake Tahoe produced a large portion of the county revenue. The advent of agri-tourism and the wineries as well as the growth in El Dorado Hills has evened that out. If that trend continues, then what was once a disparity one way could be reversed. I certainly haven't forgotten how much business dropped in Placerville when the mudslides closed Highway 50 at Kyburz. A county is much more than roads, police and fire. The county has 59 different departments ranging from libraries and elections to fish and game and the court system. I would be concerned that we would not have the resources to support all of these services. On the other hand, it would create good year-round jobs for people in our community.

What entities would you not take money from?: Any person or entity that would expect special consideration for their donation.

What would you do to boost the economy?: First, we need less government regulations over business. Government should provide for roads, safety and equal rights – then stay out of the way of the American entrepreneur. Second, our senior sector is growing rapidly and will have many needs for which we are currently unprepared. This could become an “industry” providing many year round jobs in our communities. I would also promote eco-tourism and the amazing outdoor opportunities that our county has in spades. Paddleboarding, sailing, fishing, kayaking, hiking, camping, golfing, skiing, the Rubicon and extreme sports which creates Olympic athletes. Marketing is what we pay for, publicity from things like the Olympics is what we pray for. Casinos can be built anywhere now, but there is only one Lake Tahoe.

What is the No. 1 issue facing District 5 and how do you propose to resolve it?: The inability of districts, agencies, groups and people to work together for the greater good rather than for personal agendas. I work well with others – whether I agree with them or not I will listen to them and provide my own thoughts on the matter. If we are ever going to get beyond our differences, we need to search out common ground and then work together for common goals. Any of those who witnessed my style when I was a planning commissioner would attest that I am a proponent of seeking the truth and the right thing, and then building consensus to get it done. One does not have to have enmity just because they disagree with someone else. I have the ability to disagree without being disagreeable.

Supervisors meet only once a year in Lake Tahoe. Do you believe this is fair representation? Why or why not?: By the numbers it would seem that several times a year would be better, especially when the agenda item particularly affect our constituents. I would imagine that the cost/time of the supervisors and staff coming to Tahoe is a major consideration. The supervisors would also not have easy access to the resources that they might require. With that being said, with today's technology, I don't see why it is not possible for the county to set up a meeting room in South Lake Tahoe and have the public participate in supervisor meetings by Skype.

Would you have voted for Red Hawk to be built and to divert Caltrans funds for interchanges? Those decisions are still negatively affecting the South Shore. Is there anything you would do to change the status quo?: Red Hawk should have never been approved. If you think of our districts as children in need, when a family has five children they do not starve one child so the rest have more. Everyone knew what the impact on the Tahoe area would be. There is a fund that the casino has to support improvements in the county. However, South Lake Tahoe and El Dorado Hills is excluded from being able to apply

for the monies. I would like to change that exclusion.

Would you support having more tax dollars from the county coming to the South Shore? Currently more dollars leave the basin than come back.: Yes, I would. If the county invested more into infrastructure and supported the promotion of tourism, it would also benefit the West Slope. Currently, businesses in Pollock Pines are also affected by the lack of snow and tourism in Tahoe.

The county and city of South Lake Tahoe have a long history of not getting along. How would you propose to improve the relationship?: I would improve the relationship with the rest of the county by working well with others, by taking the time to appreciate their position and work together for a better economy. There certainly is a need for more joint meetings. By looking each other in the eye instead of trading barbs from afar a better relationship can be formed. Also, I would travel the entire county to understand the problems of other districts and to better relate with the problems the other supervisors need to address. I think this kind of effort would create bridges of cooperation between the supervisors.

What is your vision for Meyers and how will you make it a reality?: The people of Meyers want their community to remain rural for the most part, with emphasis on its natural resources by focusing on recreation. I would like to see new types of recreational opportunities in the area – from indoor rock climbing, shooting range, fishing derbies, to a roller rink. There are a lot of possibilities. What is important is that we listen to the people who live there, and then work with them to bring new opportunities to improve their community. Our county has simply left Tahoe planning to TRPA. The county General Plan has a blank spot where it comes to Tahoe. They have just given it all over to TRPA. In the final analysis the vision should be the people of Meyers vision, not mine. My job is to represent the people to the county government, not represent the government vision to the people

of Meyers.

Why should someone vote for you over someone else?: I am a bridge builder, with broad range involvement. I am not tied to any special interest. I will look at all the issues objectively. When on the Planning Commission I gained a reputation as someone who thoroughly studied the issue, asked questions and made practical decisions based on the facts. As a manager, I report to both a board of directors and the owners. I have proven that I have the ability to achieve optimal results among often competing interests. Some might see the county as another political stepping stone or as a place to push their political agendas and beliefs. I am the one person who sees the supervisor as a public servant versus a ruler. It is not about me. It is about you, the citizens.

Your husband is running for South Lake Tahoe City Council. If you are both elected, how will you work to avoid conflicts?: To start, if we are both elected, we will not be seeing much of each other, and I imagine our precious time together will be spent not talking business. All relationships have conflicts, it is how you work to resolve them that matters. Active listening and forgiveness are major necessities. Both of us have worked in industries where we were unable to talk about specifics of our work – he as an attorney and me as a police dispatcher. We both understand the necessary confidential boundaries. The city and county are two different entities, autonomous from each other. Both Sen. Ted Gaines and Assemblywoman Beth Gaines have served our area with integrity. When you consider equal rights, why should one partner in a marriage exclude the other from serving?

What do you do for fun?: Gardening and spending time with my grandchildren. In the past I have also enjoyed dancing – but it's been a while.

Tell us something about yourself that people might not know.: I am not a typical politician because I listen more than I

speak.