Novasel not waiting to be sworn in as supervisor to be a leader in El Dorado County



Sue Novasel is working to help District 5 even before being sworn in as the next El Dorado County supervisor. Photo/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

MEYERS – A half eaten muffin and near empty coffee cup sit in front her. She pauses to excuse herself to take a phone call. She steps into the cold where others can't hear her.

This is Sue Novasel's life. She is transitioning from candidate to supervisor of El Dorado County. On this particular day Freel Perk in Meyers is her de facto office.

Before *Lake Tahoe News* arrives she was consulting with a board

member of the Tahoe Paradise Resort Improvement District.

Helping to resolve their problems is a top priority of Novasel's after she is sworn in the first week of January. But already she is listening, gathering information and getting further acquainted with this and a variety of other issues.

"I study every night. I've called every supervisor. I'm meeting with as many electeds and department heads to get up to speed," Novasel tells *Lake Tahoe News*.

Tahoe Paradise Park is near and dear to her. Her daughters played there. Her husband is a former board member. Novasel knows it could be a real community asset if some structure, direction and vision could be brought to the board and park.

With having lived in the area for 38 years, she brings a history of Meyers and the entire South Shore to the Board of Supervisors.

Setting priorities

Another major task for her is to get the Board of Supervisors to be a more cohesive unit.

"There's some dysfunction and a lot of distractions with a supervisor being ousted and the fact the board has two new members," Novasel said. (Michael Ranalli was elected to District 4. Shiva Frentzen is also new, having replaced Ray Nutting in September.) "I will try to get our board to act like a board. The board needs to develop strategies, policies and plans for the future."

What she doesn't know is if the current board or the one taking office in 41 days will be hiring the next chief administrative officer.

"They have every right to hire (someone) before the new board is sworn in," Novasel said.

It would be a bit of an expedited process, especially with the holidays, if that were to occur. Terri Daly resigned this fall as CAO and Assistant CAO Kim Kerr is leaving at the end of December.

Novasel has experience in hiring a top official, having been on the LTUSD board when Jim Tarwater was selected.

Novasel's other initial focus will be on economic growth – which was her mantra during the campaign.

"They should set a policy regarding business development,"Novasel said of the supervisors. "The permit process in Tahoe can always be improved."

She said it's all about growing the tax base.

Public safety and public health are other concerns of hers. She believes her 12 years on the school board will help her bring child centered issues to the table.

Being accessible

During the interview a couple Meyers residents approach Novasel.

Constantly being interrupted is likely something she will have to get used to. If she thought getting stopped in the grocery store to be asked about Lake Tahoe Unified School District issues was distracting, she will now have a much broader constituency to be held accountable to. Besides a larger geographic area that stretches to Pollock Pines, the District 5 supervisor is usually on the board of the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency, Tahoe Transportation District, California Tahoe Conservancy, Waste Management JPA, Recreation JPA and others.

While Novasel is bound to be busy once she takes office, she is going to be taking a few things off of her plate. She is resigning from several boards including Lake Tahoe South Shore

Chamber of Commerce and Lake Tahoe Wildlife Care.

She hopes to have regular office hours in Placerville and Lake Tahoe.

But being a supervisor isn’t just representing a specific district. The West Slope has its own issues, which Novasel has been brushing up on. This includes having read the General Plan more than once.

She realizes there is a disconnect between Tahoe and Placerville. But she also said Tahoma, Pollock Pines and El Dorado Hills don’t always feel well represented.

Novasel would like to have more combined meetings with entities like her new board and the South Lake Tahoe City Council. She also wants various city-county employees to be meeting more so people are working together better.

“We all need to understand the issues,” Novasel said. “The Board of Supervisors needs to make sure the lines of communication are open. We need to know the needs of different communities.”

One thing that should make Novasel’s job easier is that Judi McCallum has decided to stay on as the District 5 assistant.