

EDC paying others to get message delivered

By Kathryn Reed

El Dorado County has an image problem. And it keeps throwing money at people to try to improve it.

The county spokesperson used to be someone in the chief administrative office. That went by the wayside even before Mike Applegarth went out on leave – and eventually took a job in Utah.

Then CAO Terri Daly hired Stephanie McCorkle on May 13, 2014, to do public relations work. The one-year contract was not to exceed \$25,000. McCorkle had operated McCorkle & Driscoll Communications for two months before working for the county. Prior to that she worked in communications for 17 years for California Independent System Operator.

She left before half the year's term was up, but billed for nearly the entire amount of the contract.

The county doesn't have one person to be the point person for the media, to send out press releases, to be a spokesperson. That is why consultants are hired to do so. And this is why it can be hard to get information from the county.

Steve Pederrti, head of the Community Development Agency for the county, thought a major upcoming project needed more help than staff could provide.

However, on Sept. 30, the Board of Supervisors removed Flint Strategies as a public relations consultant in what at the time was going to be a bigger, approximately \$600,000 contract with another firm to provide more than just email blasts. That was on a 3-2 vote with Supervisors Ron Mikulaco and Shiva

Frantzen in the minority.

At that meeting Auditor-Controller Joe Harn told the board the public relations aspect of the contract could be done by people on the payroll.

"I certainly think the county staff can send out emails. I don't think we need a consultant to do it," Harn told *Lake Tahoe News*.

But that decision did not last long.

The entire board on Dec. 16 voted for a \$516,995 three-year contract with Kittelson and Associates to provide public outreach for a five-year capital improvement program and traffic impact mitigation fee program updates. In the contract is a \$44,720 contract with Flint to be a subcontractor of Kittleson's.

To date Flint has sent out an email about a meeting that affects the West Slope. It was neither better written nor had more details than what has previously come from staff.