Letter: Paradise lost in El Dorado County

To the community,

My wife moved up to El Dorado County in the 1980s to raise her children in a safe bucolic environment, sending them first to Buckeye School and eventually Ponderosa High School. She bought a lovely little house on 2 acres in Shingle Springs along French Creek Road, which was close to the schools and yet very rural across the street from a cattle ranch. She bought a horse, a lifelong dream. In 2002 I retired and moved up to the foothills from the Bay Area seeking peace and quiet. We met and were married in 2003 and moved in together in her little house in Shingle Springs where I took over the upkeep and maintenance of our little "ranch." I soon fell in love with El Dorado County.

All was happiness and light until San Stino threatened to destroy all that we had worked for for so many years. We became involved in the Shingle Springs Community Alliance, gathering signatures on the green (Measure O), yellow and purple initiatives, speaking to thousands of people during that time period that felt the same as we did. They all wanted to keep our rural quality of life. We've attended countless Board of Supervisors meetings and written countless letters asking them to please represent our interests not those of the developers (Parker Development, Sierra Pacific Industries, Gallo, and Joel Korotkin the San Stino and Dixon Ranch developer). All along we have held out some hope that they are listening to us.

In the run up to last November's election developer interests and their enablers in county government and the Chamber of Commerce spent over $1,000,000 spreading lies about our Measure O initiative. You remember the No on MNO Campaign?

They lied to the voters and spread enough confusion in their minds that of course folks were compelled to vote no on all three of them. Despite all of that, we soldiered on still hoping for a miracle. Most recently a new group calling itself the Alliance for Responsible Planning has come forward spreading more lies for the pro-development community. It is never ending.

For us, the bubble finally burst at the Board of Supervisors meeting on Feb. 24. That is when we finally realized that the county is in bed with the developers too deep and no matter what we do we are probably going to lose. My wife and I are now seriously considering moving out of El Dorado County for good before the value of our property plummets and we cannot afford to leave.

One of the things that broke our hearts was how quickly folks giving testimony were willing to throw us under the bus as long as the high-density development wasn't slated for their backyards. Well, let me tell you, they're coming for yours next. Don't believe me? Watch the first couple of minutes of the following YouTube video where Kirk Bone of Parker Development gleefully compares upgrades to Highway 50 in El Dorado Hills to the Golden State freeway between Los Angeles and Orange County.

If you don't think it's coming, you're more deluded than I was.

We are angry, very, very angry. If you are feeling the same, I suggest you follow the money. To begin with you might want to take a look at the following YouTube videos:

First this one and then this one.

If you want to stay and fight, you might want to join us. Think David and Goliath. We still have two more initiatives (the yellow and the purple) on the 2016 ballot and we need your help. Get involved. Join us online.

Edward Mattson, Shingle Springs

Opinion: Good nutrition makes a difference

By Lynn Norton

In January, studies in the Journal of American College of Cardiology and JAMA Internal Medicine discussed heart disease. Some findings are familiar: poor diet, an inactive lifestyle, smoking, heavy alcohol consumption, and obesity are all linked to heart disease. But another risk factor is gaining attention: chronic inflammation.



Lynn Norton

Chronic inflammation is not a swollen knee or a full stomach. It relates to our body's ability to combat disease. Our bodies have an immune response to fight injury or sickness, but chronic inflammation occurs when these messages go on for too long and cause healthy cells to be attacked and destroyed.

Just being overweight or obese can increase the body's inflammatory response. By shedding some pounds, exercising, and eating a nutrient-rich diet, you can reduce chronic inflammation. This, in turn, reduces your risk of heart and

other serious diseases.

Here are five goals to reduce stress on the immune system and maintain a healthy heart.

Find healthy fats. Eat foods rich in Omega 3 and 6 fatty acids, such as salmon, sardines, anchovies, olive oil, nuts, seeds and avocados.
Goal No. 1: Avoid coconut oil, palm oil, and trans-fats as well as saturated fats that come from meat and dairy.

Eat antioxidant-rich foods. Choose a diet rich in fruits and vegetables, including citrus, berries, cabbage, greens, onions, garlic, carrots, melon, broccoli, cauliflower and tomato products.
Goal No. 2: Eat at least five fruit and vegetable servings daily.

Choose whole, unprocessed grains. Examples of whole grains include whole wheat, bulgur, brown rice, barley, oats, millet, wild rice, and plain popcorn.
Goal No. 3: Half the grain products consumed should be whole grains. Cook with it, bake with it, or, if eating out, order it.

Eat less animal protein and keep it lean. Reduce meat portions and go meatless several days a week. Beans, tofu, and nuts are healthy protein alternatives. Trimmed and lean meats, skinless chicken, fish, egg whites and skim or 1% dairy products are also healthy options.
Goal No. 4: Eat fish twice a week.

Manage life's stresses. Get a good night's sleep and exercise regularly. Smoking or drinking two or more servings of alcohol a day is not a healthy way to unwind. Also, the newest "super food" or supplement is not a solution. Spend your money on fresh foods and your time in fresh air.
Goal No. 5: Exercise two to three hours a week and increase intensity as time goes on.

These goals are something we all can strive to achieve. Commit to healthy changes and reap the benefits of a longer, healthier life.

Lynn Norton provides nutrition services to patients at Barton Health. She will give a free wellness lecture on March 4 from 6 -7pm at Lake Tahoe Community College.

Opinion: Daly's bumbling may cost EDC millions

By Larry Weitzman

On Feb. 10, a rather innocuous item was on the El Dorado County Board of Supervisors consent calendar agenda. It was item No. 5 and its purpose was to receive and file a development impact mitigation fee report for the fiscal year ended June 30, 2014, and authorize reimbursement to the El Dorado Hills County Water (Fire) District in the amount of $95,479.12. It doesn't seem like a big deal, it wasn't a general fund item, but it turns out it may be the biggest problem facing EDC in years and potentially costing tens of millions of dollars.

Sections 66000-66008 of the California Government Code are the enabling and governing provisions which allow local agencies like counties, cities, school districts or other types of political subdivisions to extract from home builders, individual or otherwise, fees to defray costs of public facilities related to their development project like schools, parks and other necessary public improvements as it relates to the development. TIM fees, school fees and fire fees are included here.



Larry Weitzman

This section of the law further requires that the local agency make certain findings on the reasonable relationship between the development and the fee's use and the need for the specific public facility created by the development. Also the cost of the public facility has to be reasonably related to the development as well. In collecting and depositing these fees, the law also provides that these funds be accounted for. So far, so good.

But the law also has specific requirements on the local agency to perform certain functions, findings and accountings with respect to these developer fees; otherwise they stand in violation of the very law under which they are extracting these fees from the home builder(s). There are two specific code sections which spell out these requirements, section 66001 (d) (1) (A-D) and section 66006 (b) (1) (A-H).

The former section (66001, et seq), says that every five years following the first deposit of a fee into a developer/home builder fund for public facilities, the local agency (in this case the county acting in place of the water-fire district) shall make certain findings which must do four things. First, is the identification of the purpose of the fee or fund money. Second, is that the county must demonstrate a relationship between the developer fee and the purpose for extracting it from the developer. Third, is that the county must identify all sources and amounts of funding anticipated to complete the financing of incomplete improvements and fourth is the designation by the county of the approximate dates the funding is expected to be deposited into the account. Doesn't seem too

hard to do, right? That may be so, but not for this county and more specifically Terri Daly and her 18 newly hired analysts.

The county has collected tens of millions of dollars from developers/home builders and within that same government code at 66001 (d) (2) it says with respect to these five year reports that: “If the findings are not made as required by this subdivision, the County SHALL REFUND (emphasis added) the moneys in the account or fund…”

Section 66006 (b) (1) puts an annual requirement on the county with respect to each individual developer fund created by the fees extracted from the developer that says at the end of the year, the county will within 180 days make available to the public a report that contains certain information with respect to each fund that includes A) a description of the fund, B) the amount of the fee, C) the beginning and ending balance of the account or fund, D) the amount of fees collected plus interest, E) identifying each improvement on which fees were expended and the amount plus a percentage of the cost funded with the developers fees, F) the approximate date the public improvement will commence if the county has determined they have sufficient funding collected or complete financing on an incomplete improvement, and G) a description of interfund transfer or loan and in the case of a loan, when will it be repaid and the interest charged.

About 20 years ago the Board of Supervisors chose to make an ordinance that would also require the county administration to do the five-year study of Section 66001 (d) (1-2) every year as with the requirement 66006 (b) (1) above. It is EDC ordinance Sec. 13.20.020 which requires on an annual basis that the BOS shall review developer fee amounts are reasonably related to the impacts of development and whether the described public facilities are still needed.

The problem is the county hasn’t done many of the developer fund studies as required by law since Feb. 3, 2009, the date

of the last EDH Water (Fire) District study. EDC has collected tens of millions of dollars in TIM fees, schools fees, fire district fees, rec fees and more without following the law. The TIM fee study is two years delinquent and who knows about the annual reports and compliance with the county ordinance.

Remember who ran the county since about 2010 when the next annual reports would be due, that's right Terri Daly. In fact during her tenure as CAO, not one special district annual report or five-year report was done and there was little, if any, compliance with county ordinance 13.20.020.

But it gets worse. Guess which CAO analyst was charged with doing this job for the fire and rec districts? You guessed it, the sniveling and political campaigning Mike Applegarth as he was assigned to the job of special district liaison. Maybe he was too busy participating in the recent political campaigns to complete the vital task that are mostly done by the districts themselves. What are the consequences of this malfeasance? An examination of the law says specifically that the county has to pay the fees back to the developer/home builder. One hopes the county still has the money in the various accounts as the law requires. But it gets worse, much worse. On the morning of March 12, 2013, Joe Harn, the county auditor, wrote a memo to Daly and others members on the county staff that EDC has violated state and county law with respect to the administration of developers' fees that are collected by the county for the county's special districts and that as auditor, he cannot release any of these funds until the county is in compliance.

Two and a half hours later Daly replied saying, "Perhaps we could write a memo explaining what the problems are with the Nexus studies (the code section reporting requirements above) then put it on the board agenda for direction. I think we might already have such a memo already."

Harn, the auditor responded, "The law requires that the BOS

review the CIP's once a year. Further, the law requires that a report of the financial transactions related to these fees be reviewed by the BOS once a year. If the nexus studies are inadequate, we need to quit collecting the fees."

This was one of several communications from the auditor regarding this problem.

And now you know why the now ex-CAO dislikes the auditor and is still trying to ruin him. It appears Daly was incompetent, especially considering these reports as required by law were actually easy to do. But neither Daly nor her minions could accomplish these perfunctory tasks, even after hiring 18 new staff employees in her office at almost $2 million a year. And what did the BOS do, give her $150,000 on her termination, while this failure on her part could leave EDC liable for tens of millions of dollars.

What brought these fees to the surface again was a request from the El Dorado Hills Fire District for $95,479.12 of these fees. It was placed on the consent (sneak it through) calendar on Feb. 10, but the day before the hearing, Harn sent emails requesting this matter be continued for obvious reasons; that there hasn't been a study done as required by law since Feb. 3, 2009. Harn said he would not pay this request even if ordered by the BOS as it would be illegal. The matter trailed until the end of the day at which time it was continued to Feb. 24.

It has already been continued again as the law requires 15 days notice be given for such a public hearing. But there is still the underlying problem of the failure of EDC to follow the law by failing to file reports and the nexus studies since 2010. Since that time the county has collected $3,984,000 in developer/home builders' fees for El Dorado Hills fire district alone. Without the reports, the county may not be entitled to keep the fees. And there are more than a dozen other special fee districts. How many others are out of

compliance? And you thought Daly, who left Amador County holding the bag on a $20 million lease, or the Climate of Fear study was a big deal.

Larry Weitzman is a resident of Rescue.

Opinion: Violent crime decreasing in SLT

By Brian Uhler

Police officials recently completed the official Uniform Crime Report for 2014. Overall, violent and property crimes are down.



Brian Uhler

Here are some details comparing 2013 and 2014 in the South Lake Tahoe Police Department:

Violent Crime	**2013**	**2014**
Homicide	3	0

Forcible Rape	8	14	
Robbery	16	21	
Aggravated Assault	89	77	
Violent Crime Total	**116**	**112**	**Down 3.4 percent**
Property Crime			
Burglary	171	147	
Larceny	368	332	
Motor Vehicle Theft	46	37	
Property Crime Total	**585**	**516**	**Down 11.8 percent**

During 2014, the police department focused attention on habitual, repeat offenders and drug related crime.

This work included:

- **Felony drug arrests 67**
- **Illegal marijuana grows 24**
- **Habitual offender arrests 56**

These efforts appear to have had a positive influence on crime; however, it is important to recognize that crime rates are heavily influenced by many factors such as overall economy, demographic change and more.

So, why are crime rates important? Crime rates are always considered an important factor for publications like, “best places rated” (to live, visit, retire, etc). When crime is a problem, community attractiveness suffers. While this is a critical factor for South Lake Tahoe as a tourist destination, crime rates are important for all of us to feel secure. High crime rates affect things like insurance costs and can have a devastating effect on the overall economy.

I am hopeful that next year we will see a continuing downward turn in crime. The effects of Proposition 47 (e.g. lowering crimes from felonies to misdemeanors and letting criminals out of prisons) may make this prospect difficult. Given this challenge, your police department has plans to focus resources to counteract these negative effects.

Brian Uhler is the South Lake Tahoe chief of police.

Letter: Stop Heavenly’s fire break plans

To the community,

An emergency snowcat access route would be cleared at strategic locations along the (Heavenly Mountain Resort) gondola line below the gondola midstation. This access route would facilitate evacuations of the gondola during emergency situations. It would allow Heavenly employees to deliver rescue supplies and personnel and transport passengers in the event of a gondola evacuation. It would be used during the winter in times of operational emergencies.

The clearing would be 25-30 feet wide to allow a standard-

sized snowcat to access the gondola line in key locations. The route would begin to the southwest of the gondola midstation at the existing midstation access road and terminate near gondola line tower number 16, for a total length of approximately 6,830 feet, resulting in approximately 4.7 acres of tree removal. The entire route would be located on National Forest system lands. No permanent ground disturbance or development of a new permanent road prism or platform would be necessary for the emergency snow cat route. Tree stumps would be cut at a height of approximately 6 inches – up to 12 inches on steeper slopes – and large rocks/boulders would be reduced to a height of approximately 12 to 18 inches.

A Cat track down the Fire Break.

Please read the full plan at the TRPA's website.

1. Tell everyone. The TRPA vote is March 11 and March 24. Please act fast.

2. Let the TRPA know how you feel.

3. Let the Forest Service know how you feel.

4. Tell everyone you know no cat track down the fire break.

Sean Rutkowski, Stateline

Editorial: U.S. needs to rework food safety system

Publisher's note: ***This editorial is from the Feb. 24, 2015, Los Angeles Times.***

The job of keeping our food wholesome has become more difficult as food itself has become more complicated. Because processed foods include ingredients from many sources, it is hard to trace the origin of pathogens. A package of ground beef, for instance, is no longer put together by a butcher pushing a single hunk of meat through a grinder; these days it includes trimmings from many cattle and multiple slaughterhouses. That means even a small quantity of meat contaminated with E. coli has the potential to taint tremendous amounts of hamburger meat sent out across the country.

Then again, if anything is more complicated than our food, it's our byzantine system for checking its safety. At least 15 agencies are involved, but sorting out the responsibilities of just the two main ones – the Food and Drug Administration and the Department of Agriculture – is hard enough. Consider a frozen pizza: The cheese is inspected by the USDA, the other ingredients and toppings by the FDA. (Though if you buy your pepperoni separately, it is the USDA's job.) The FDA regulates produce, but the USDA oversees the agreements under which growers police.

Read the whole story

Opinion: California Republicans – evolve or die

By Brian O'Leary Bennett, Los Angeles Times

Delegates to the California Republican Party state convention

that begins Friday in Sacramento should be asking themselves just two questions: Why can’t they find an electable U.S. Senate candidate and how do they revive a state party that’s become irrelevant?

This state went from red to blue because the California GOP lost its Reaganesque compass and, alarmingly, a willingness to discern between moral absolutes and generational evolution. Ronald Reagan brilliantly never let himself be the captive or defender of the status quo or party orthodoxy. He embraced broad principles and found ways to solve problems without selling out.

Voters, popes, presidents and even some elders have evolved. The state party has not and seems to be perversely proud of it. Political parties are meant to win elections, not be martyrs to lost causes of bygone eras.

Read the whole story

Opinion: The promise and failure of community colleges

By Eduardo Porter, New York Times

There are two critical things to know about community colleges.

The first is that they could be the nation’s most powerful tools to improve the opportunities of less privileged Americans, giving them a shot at harnessing a fast-changing job market and building a more equitable, inclusive society for all of us. The second is that, at this job, they have

largely failed.

When President Obama stood at Pellissippi Community College in Knoxville, Tenn., last month and offered every committed student two years' worth of community college at the government's expense, he focused on the first point.

With open enrollment and an average price tag of $3,800 a year for full-time students, community colleges are pretty much the only shot at a higher education for those who don't have the cash or the high school record to go to a four-year university. And that's a lot of people: 45 percent of the undergraduate students in the country.

Read the whole story

Letter: League helps out at Bread & Broth

To the community,

"I look forward to coming every Monday to enjoy the food and see all of the wonderful volunteers," said David, a regular guest at Bread & Broth's evening dinner. He had just finished up his meal, gathered his bags of food and "left over" containers, when as usual, he stopped by the serving line to thank the B&B and sponsor crew volunteers.

David is typical of the many guests grateful for the meals provided every Monday by B&B at St. Theresa Church Grace Hall.

Through B&B's Adopt A Day of Nourishment program, staff members from the League to Save Lake Tahoe were the hosting sponsors for David and the other guests at the Feb. 16 evening

dinner. In addition to their generous donation of $250, Cozette Savage, director of operations, and Shannon Echkmeyer, policy analyst, represented the League to Save Lake Tahoe staff members at the evening's dinner.

"We had a great time," said Echkmeyer. "We appreciate the hard work of all the B&B teams, you made our part easy. Everyone was grateful and left full. Happy to see such a great event for our community."

B&B dinners are great events thanks to our great sponsors like the League to Save Lake Tahoe staff members. B&B would like to thank the League for their advocacy to Keep Tahoe Blue and improve the quality of life for the less fortunate in Tahoe.

Carol Gerard, Bread & Broth

Opinion: Climate change is killing us

By Larry Weitzman

Climate change, a term used in place of anthropogenic, global warming (AGW, meaning human produced carbon dioxide is causing the world to warm which will cause disastrous effects to the Earth) has come to the forefront of California politics again, like it wasn't already every other word out of a liberal politician's mouth already. It seems that the new president pro tem, Kevin de Leon, of the California Senate has announced new proposals to "fight" global warming. As if humans think they can change the climate any better than Don Quixote can battle windmills.

You've heard the story, if we don't "fight" global warming, humankind will be inundated in unnatural disasters, more storms, more intense storms, heat waves, cold snaps, droughts, famine, pestilence, disease, islands will be enveloped by the oceans, and coastal cities will be inundated by a dramatic rise in sea level and so on. Of course the only solution to "fighting" global warming is more government, more unelected bureaucracy, more restrictive laws, less choices, more taxes and a lot less freedom. And of course these same politicians have all the answers to all problems. Just ask them. But we are all willing to give up some freedom for some alleged security, right?



Larry Weitzman

While our populace has been literally flooded with potential horror stories from the mainstream media or blathering politicians of ever more intense weather events being caused by global warming, none of it is true, either in there being more frequent or more intense storms or as to a dramatic sea level rise. But like Don Quixote, politicians just see it as a way to destroy America as more restrictive laws, less choice, less freedom and more taxes are nothing more than creeping socialism. Remember environmentalists are like watermelons, green on the outside and red on the inside.

As more data and reports come out that scientists are producing selective data to fit the theory of climate change by cheery picking, more scientists are also learning that the actual data both anecdotal and scientific doesn't support the theory. As the evidence that AGW is just not factual becomes

more apparent, the proponents will become so high pitched that everything that happens will be caused by AGW, including the latest hangnail you got two days ago.

A recent story about the work of Paul Homewood published in the Telegraph of the UK showed how those scientists including the biggest fanatical proponent of AGW, James Hansen have been "adjusting" data to fit the theory. Hansen recently produced data showing historical Arctic temperatures being lower than they actually were to claim that Arctic temps are rising. This wholesale temperature fibbing was exposed by statistician Steve McIntire from a paper Hansen published in 1987. Homewood called this temp manipulation by the U.S. sponsored Goddard Institute of Space Studies (GISS) and the government's Global Historical Climate Network (GHCN) the "real elephant in the room of the greatest and most costly scare the world has known. This really does begin to look like one of the greatest scientific scandals of all time."

Munich Re, the world's largest re-insurer, published its review of natural catastrophes in 2014. Its findings were lower losses from weather extremes and earthquakes. It noted the unusually quiet hurricane season. In fact it has been a quiet hurricane season for the last nine years. To jog your memories, shortly after Hurricane Katrina, a middle of the road class III storm, in 2005, we were told repeatedly by the climate alarmist fearmongers that hurricanes would increase in numbers and intensity and Katrinas would become commonplace. Of course they were wrong and the reason was those same alarmists had absolutely not one shred of evidence and/or data to back up such a statement. Most Katrina damage was from the failure of flood control devices.

Swiss Re, the world's second largest re-insurer said that 2014 global disasters events cost insurers $34 billion below recent annual averages.

Studies also showed that the most expensive losses were from

winter damage, not heat or storm related. Winter damages in the U.S. and Canada ranked fourth in losses. As to flood damage Professor Roger Pielke of University of Colorado says that “while the U.S. is prone to very large flood events, resulting in tens of billions of dollars in losses … the trend since 1940 is striking. As the nation has seen its economic activity expand by a factor of 13, flood losses as a proportion of that activity have dropped by 75 percent.“ Research has also shown very little evidence of increasing flood frequency or magnitude either in the U.S. or globally.

With respect to each year being the hottest ever is also misleading. According to the NASA satellite data and Remote Sensing System, last year was not the hottest, but even the claim that if it was the hottest, it was the hottest by 0.01 degrees, which puts it within the margin of error for several other “hottest” years. The attempt here by the alarmists fearmongers is to scare the public. If the temperature goes from 72 degrees to 72.01 degrees while you could say it is hotter, the truth is that it is such an insignificant increase it is hardly worth mentioning. The warmest recent year was 1998, an El Nino year which brought record rainfalls to California. Since 1998 temperatures have declined slightly notwithstanding the fact that CO2 has increased steadily by about 8 percent. So much for the validity of climate models that claim temperature increases of several degrees.

And notice how the winter weather isn’t mentioned in the same sentence as an Ice Age with respect to the Eastern two-thirds of the United States. Or the fact another boat, an Australian 207 foot fishing vessel, the Antarctic Chieftain, got stuck in the expansiveness of the Antarctic ice and had to be rescued last week by the heavy icebreaker, the U.S. Coast Guard’s Polar Star. The same thing ironically happened to a New Zealand research vessel last year studying AGW.

With respect to California’s current drought, history shows that as recently as the last several hundred years or so

California had even more severe long term droughts as Fallen Leaf Lake was dry and its current 415-foot deep bottom was filled with a forest. This drought was discovered by scientists from UNR were studying a fault line under the lake. They found a stand of trees upright on the bottom. It was more evidence that California went through a megadrought for hundreds of years during what is now known as the Medieval Warm Period. Graham Kent, a scientist in the study, said it was a megadrought that lasted 200 years where precipitation was 60 percent of what we now consider normal. And we also know this megadrought was not caused by humans, SUVs, oil consumption or any other of the ridiculous claims today.

But that hasn’t stopped politicians for using an unproven theory to pass laws to fundamentally change the essence of the United States, never mind destroy the economy of California, which is their real purpose.

And for those liberal/socialists now in control of the state Legislature, it will not create jobs. If wind, solar power and electric cars were so terrific, they wouldn’t need to pass laws to make us buy them or outlaw other forms of power and cars leaving such unreliable power systems and impractical vehicles as our only choice. They would sell on their own. The fact that politicians don’t say is that they are very expensive and impractical. As put by politician and Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel, “Never let a crisis (real or imagined) go to waste.”

Larry Weitzman is a resident of Rescue.