Letter: Valhalla season begins with sold-out show

The the community,

Opening night [June 25] at the Valhalla Boathouse was a huge success. This was our first sell out at the theater for opening night.

Thank you to our new festival director, Evangeline Elston, as well as all those who made this happen.

An evening of blues and roots music with Ray Bonneville and Lance Canales and the Flood, a roots-blues influenced Americana trio from California's breadbasket, were both fantastic.

We are excited about our season and invite you to come check out the summer concerts as well as our plays.

For more information, go online.

Thanks,

Bob Sweatt, South Lake Tahoe

Letter: Kiwanis give back at Bread & Broth

To the community,

Bread & Broth would like to thank the Kiwanis Club of Lake Tahoe for the June 2 sponsorship of an "Adopt a Day of

Nourishment”.

Unfortunately, many members of the South Lake Tahoe community struggle with the basic needs of everyday life. By hosting an Adopt A Day, the Kiwanis Club of Lake Tahoe provided the funds to cover the cost of food, meal preparation supplies and utility costs needed to provide a hot, full course meal to over 90 dinner guests at their adopted Monday evening dinner.

Kiwanis Club of Lake Tahoe members Jerry Klosterboer and Katie Fagan, joined the B&B volunteers with the preparations, serving and cleanup. They were there to represent the Kiwanis Club motto in that “one can make a difference”.

“This is why I do it,” Klosterboer said “It is better to give than to receive and better to serve that to be served.”

In addition to supporting B&B’s goal of feeding the most needy of our community, the Kiwanis Club of Lake Tahoe performs many community service projects in South Lake Tahoe, especially to help serve children. Bread & Broth commends the Kiwanis Club of Lake Tahoe for their commitment to the community for all of their generous financial donations and giving of their member’s time, which is as valuable as giving money.

Carol Gerard, Bread & Broth

Editorial: El Dorado County CAO playing games

Publisher’s note: ***This editorial is from the June 25, 2014, Mountain Democrat in Placerville.***

> *Multiplication … that’s the name of the game!*

And every generation … you know they play the same!

— Bobby Darin, from the 1960 Movie "Come September"

The 2013-14 El Dorado County Grand Jury must have been watching Turner Classic Movies when they wrote in their report about the "proliferation of elected officials in El Dorado County."

There are seven persons elected countywide for their special expertise to run county departments: the sheriff, district attorney, assessor, auditor-controller, recorder-clerk, surveyor and treasurer-tax collector. Despite criticizing the "proliferation of elected officials" three times in its report, there is no evidence that any new elected positions have been created. More's the pity.

Terri Daly

All offices but the recorder-clerk have specific qualifications outlined in state law. The grand jury didn't inquire about this, only noting the "specialized and sometimes esoteric duties of these offices." Esoteric? None of these officials has esoteric duties. The duties are all contained in California Codes, embellished by county ordinances.

Besides "proliferation" what is the grand jury's beef? It seems to be the chief administrative officer's beef. The CAO doesn't like democracy, doesn't like independent analysis, doesn't want any officials who are not under the CAO's fickle finger of fate (Urban Dictionary: "An unseen and unforeseeable force that controls the direction of all living things").

We should note here that the grand jury also criticized members of the Board of Supervisors for interfering with the CAO’s running of the county.

But the real aim is to eliminate as many elected department heads as possible. Here is the CAO’s gripe as expressed by the grand jury: “When a department head, elected or appointed tells the board it should ignore the budget and augment that department’s programs, the board is being told that its policies are meaningless and its role as policy maker is meaningless.”

In other words, the CAO wants the Board of Supervisors to rubber-stamp her budget and dispense with any budget hearings. This is providing the board a tunnel vision.

The grand jury continues the orchestrated attacks on the auditor-controller. Admitting that the grand jury did not look even at the Workplace Climate Assessment Survey, it joins the Sacramento Bee, which in its May 25 editorial made clear that it did not read the survey, but relied on the hearsay of CAO Terri Daly and board Chairman Norma Santiago, who visited the Bee’s editorial board.

After all but calling El Dorado County voters a bunch of hicks, the Bee said El Dorado County “government is still stuck in Hangtown.” To prove their point the Bee ran a photo of the hanging dummy from the old Hangman’s Tree Bar in Placerville.

Anybody who has read the survey as released to the board and the public can see: 1) Auditor-Controller Joe Harn received a 92 percent positive rating from his employees. 2) This doesn’t qualify as a survey, because it interviewed past employees as well as current employees, but doesn’t distinguish between them. 3) The quotes, such as the one the Bee used, are taken out of context and are meaningless. 4) The consequences of this hack survey are to turn over management of the departments to the minority of whiners.

What happens if, as the Bee suggested, the surveyor and recorder-clerk are eliminated as elected positions? A board member can pressure an appointed surveyor to pass through a developer’s subdivision map or a friend’s four-by-four split without proper review. An appointed recorder could be pressured to backdate a recording or worse. When the clerk was combined with the recorder three elected officials ago, the clerk no longer ran the court staff and provided a check on the administration of the judges. Now two appointed administrators are paid much more than the County Clerk Billie Mitchel ever earned, and she ran elections also.

What happens if the treasurer-tax collector is eliminated as an elected position? Experience has shown individual supervisors will want county treasury money invested in banks they favor and financial planners that are friends of theirs. One supervisor pressed to sell the delinquent tax roll to a lawyer that could lead to the county running short of cash and making payroll. The grand jury complained the current treasurer-tax collector, a certified public accountant, has been in office since 1985. In that time the incumbent has won four contested elections. The voters have chosen.

Eliminate the auditor-controller and there will be no one to stop the CAO from breaking the rules, sneaking raises through and ignoring the charter.

The grand jury may be confused, but the CAO isn’t. She has attacked elected officials in a four-pronged assault: 1) Cut their pay and deny them the 15 percent raise the CAO kept for herself. 2) Sic the grand jury on them. 3) Hustle up a Charter Commission to eliminate the elected positions. 4) Attack the voters as too ignorant to decide who is qualified to be “esoteric.”

Grand jurors generally have more ego than expertise, which allowed the CAO to play them in her reach for total, absolute power.

Letter: Heavenly helps at Bread & Broth

To the community,

Representing Heavenly Mountain Resort, Heavenly Tahoe Vacations sent a crew from its reservations office to work side by side with Bread & Broth volunteers to help serve 108 meals to the guests attending the evening dinner on June 16.

Returning for another Adopt A Day dinner serving were Kari Natividad, Connie Yee, Michele Beall, Trace Kment and Mary Hajdas.

These experienced sponsor volunteers were "glad to come back and have this opportunity to serve" according to Kment. Natividad also added, "It's fun to come in together from the office."

The reservations crew members kept busy and helpful with bagging "give aways", line serving, setting up and handing out desserts and drinks, and cleanup.

Bread & Broth would like to acknowledge and thank Heavenly Mountain Resort for their financial sponsorship and providing excellent volunteers who are always helpful, positive and enthusiastic. Our B&B volunteers and our grateful dinner guests are truly thankful for Heavenly's monthly sponsorships which on average feed over 90 needy members of the Lake Tahoe South Shore community.

To help B&B as a donor or sponsor, contact me at 530.542.2876 or carolsgerard@aol.com.

Carol Gerard, Bread & Broth

Opinion: Score 1 for the state, -13 for homeowner

By Kathryn Reed

Thirteen inches. That's how far our shed extends into the California Tahoe Conservancy lot. Altogether, it's about 9 square feet.

We have to remove it, or cut it back. That was the conclusion of what has now become more than a yearlong dispute with the state.

Shawn Butler with the California Tahoe Conservancy goes over the lot encroachment diagram. Photos/Kathryn Reed

A year ago this month, a rude CTC employee engaged me about the property line, which led to me to write a nasty column and to speak before the board.

At the time we had been here for more than 10 years and there had never been an issue. In fact, the shed in question came with the house. It looks a lot older than 11 years. Conservancy employees had been at their property multiple times. Not once was the property line mentioned.

In the past year a surveyor came out and marked the property line. No dispute now. The official boundary survey map we were given last week shows the stepping-stones going from the back gate to the shed are also on state property. (I removed those last weekend.)

While Shawn Butler, program supervisor of the land management program for CTC, was kind and professional, there was no way he was going to give us 13 inches.

“We want to be consistent with encroachments,” he said as he walked the property. Joining us was Tom Davis, the South Lake Tahoe city councilman who is on the CTC board.

Butler said the Conservancy wants to work with us and would help to remove the shed. We may take them up on that offer.

We’re researching whether it makes more sense to reconfigure the existing shed, buy a new one or some other option.


Wild wood rose abutting and taller than a 6-foot fence.

I need to start getting my wood split and stacked for next winter, so the decision will come soon.

What I’m left with, though, is feeling screwed. Where was our real estate agent? Shouldn’t he have known the property line? Did the previous owners know they had gone over the property line and didn’t disclose it? Why does the CTC care about this now?

It’s not that the shed is great. In fact, it’s pretty crappy. But it still does its job to keep our primary heat source dry until we need it.

Still to be resolved is who owns a large pine tree that seems to be in the middle of the property line. Butler said the forester from his agency would come take a look.

Another thing that needs to be done is cutting back all the wood rose that is growing against our fence. According to the South Lake Tahoe Fire Department, it’s a fire hazard. Some of these wild roses are more than 6-feet-tall.

And instead of immediately saying CTC would remove it, Butler said the forester likes this plant and would have to look at it. Davis took a look around and couldn’t believe how thick it is.

I'm not disputing the shed is on CTC property. But at the end of the day I'm still left scratching my head. It seems like that overgrown state lot that looks like a fire hazard should be more of a priority. But what do I know? Today, is only the seventh anniversary of the Angora Fire.

Letter: Meyers plan transparency questioned

Publisher's note: ***This letter was sent to El Dorado County CAO Terri Daly on June 15. It is reprinted with permission.***

Dear Ms. Daly:

I am writing to you on behalf of California's South Tahoe Chamber of Commerce President George Alm and the board of directors and residents and business owners in Meyers.

I learned within the last day that the county is scheduling a "public" meeting on June 26, 2014, to discuss the draft Meyers Area Plan. The party in question who informed me received the card from the business owner of her property. It began, "Dear Meyers Area Resident." The card came from county offices at 924 B Emerald Bay Road, South Lake Tahoe, CA 96150. The party in question did not receive a card at her residence and other Meyers residents, I am told, have not received a similar notification. The card asks those receiving it to return comments on their online Plan to the "address above" or to MeyersAreaPlan@edcgov.us. I can send you a copy of the card notice received if you wish? I was told that the *Lake Tahoe News* online media outlet received the same advertisement, and Ms. [Kathryn] Reed was good enough to place a notice in her fine publication. However, this notice is not "legal" notification.


Dave Jinkens

In regard to this scheduled meeting, please let me bring up a few comments and concerns. As the chief administrative officer of our county, I know you will be interested in them, and I hope you know that our chamber and Meyers residents only what is best for the entire community. We know that you have many matters of county business to address, and the details of our concerns on this particular matter may not be ones with which you are familiar.

1. Public Notification Process – It is my understanding that the county did not publish a "legal notice" of the meeting: The notice given was not sent to all residents some of whom have been involved in Meyers planning issues for many years: The notice thus appears to be sent to select groups; and the notice and date of the meeting does not give enough time to review the draft plan and come prepared with informed comments and questions. In addition, members of the public who signed up for the email list to be notified about the plan have not received any email notifications.

The draft plan is apparently available online, but for some people they may not use computers and thus the draft is inaccessible. I know of no hard-copy available to the public at any public location which over the years is a customary practice of local government. In addition, for persons with certain types of disabilities and sight impairments who have access and use computers, reading large documents online are difficult and hurt their eyes. I am one of the latter people. I have requested a hard copy, and I will pay for it.

A major issue in this particular planning process has been and remains the perception of a lack of transparency, meetings on plan components with less than inclusive notice, a limited number of special interest parties invited to meetings with County officials, reported consensus on plan components where no vote was taken or manually recorded and meetings of the MAC held on the topic where no Brown Act advertisements were made. In my long experience in local government, I must admit being perplexed by the process used and the lack of broad-based community involvement for a Plan that will lay out the future of the historic Meyers community for many years in the future.

Because of the lack of community notice and verified community involvement, the current process and projected outcomes have generated suspicion, mistrust, and alarm by members of the Meyers community. As requested by the South Tahoe Chamber of Commerce in previous correspondence, approval of any plan should only come after commonly accepted public notice for land use matters are made, a “validated” survey of the entire Meyers community on major plan components taken, serious public engagement with the entire community, and time is taken to allow the district’s new supervisor to be part of the final approval process.

The absence of a legal notice for a major community planning meeting as the one to take place on June 26 is of grave concern a customary local government practice.

2. California’s South Tahoe Chamber of Commerce Letters – On May 2, 2014, and May 21, 2014, letters were sent to the Board of Supervisors discussing the concerns with the timing and

process for adoption of the Meyers plan. The letters were sent in support of Meyers residents and Meyers business owners and operators. To date, the follow-up letter of May 21, 2014, to the Board of Supervisors did not receive a reply of any kind from either the Board or staff. In addition, since the South Tahoe Chamber has also communicated directly with county staff on behalf of Meyers residents and business owners, yet we too did not receive a notice of this meeting as well as no reply to our May 21, 2014, letter

Conclusion

I am respectfully requesting your help, assistance and involvement in this matter to ensure transparency in decision-making for Meyers residents and a process that ensures true public engagement and participation in the planning for Meyers future as proposed in this email and the South Tahoe Chamber's previous letters. Our Chamber does not question the motives of anyone in this process. We simply believe that the suggestions we are making on behalf of Meyers residents and business owners will improve the process and the outcome.

I am copying the members of the Board of Supervisors as a courtesy on this important land use matter since previous correspondence has been directed to the board. Copies are being sent to TRPA officials as well. We all would appreciate your help and assistance with this matter. We want the process and outcomes to be a success for all parties.

Thank you for your time and attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Dave Jinkens, South Tahoe Chamber of Commerce volunteer board member

Opinion: EDC's No. 2 person has terrible track record

By Larry Weitzman

"She left the city in rubble," said Lloyd Oneto, an Ione city councilman speaking of former Ione City Manager Kim Kerr. "When she was hired in 2007 the city had $8 million in the Local Agency investment Fund (the city's main bank account). When she left in 2011 it had a negative balance of $800,000. "When I ran for city council in 2010, I ran on fiscal responsibility," continued Oneto.

Kerr is now assistant chief administrative officer of El Dorado County.

Oneto went on to say Kerr has been a nightmare for Ione, a city of less than 8,000 people, more than half of whom the city is not responsible for as they are involuntary guests of Mule Creek State Prison whose walls are located within the 5 square miles of the city limits.

Kim Kerr is assistant CAO is El Dorado County.

With roots going back to the Gold Rush, Ione was incorporated in 1953. It has a small staff that includes a city manager, a couple of finance people including a finance manager, a front counter person, a few city maintenance people, a now part-time city building inspector and part-time city clerk. It also has a small police department and a fire department. It's a small city.

In my investigation I interviewed at least three city employees, a city councilman, Amador County officials, other city managers within Amador County and people in El Dorado County involved with the hiring process of Kim Kerr as assistant CAO. I also examined the Ione independent CPA's auditor reports during Kerr's tenure and several Amador County Grand Jury reports relating to Kerr as the Ione city manager. It paints a very ugly picture of incompetence and more.

The grand jury report of 2012 made its No. 1 finding relating to the city of Ione the most damning when it stated, "1. The Grand Jury finds that the City Manager for the fiscal period 2007-2011 (Kim Kerr's tenure) did not demonstrate she possessed the proper qualifications and expertise to perform the duties required for that position." There were other findings, most relating to Kerr's incompetence, like No. 3: "On many occasions the City Manager provided insufficient or misleading information making it difficult or impossible for the City Council to cast intelligent votes." You can interpret "misleading" as not telling the truth or lying. The City Council also pointed the finger at Kerr, saying, the "Former City Manager Kim Kerr budget documents were difficult to decipher, were inaccurate and contained errors."

Perhaps even worse, "The Grand Jury found … the City Manager and City Council disregarded the findings and recommendations of the 2010-2011 Grand Jury report."

There are many more scathing findings regarding her spending and mismanagement of funds, such as the finding that the city manager had not done a bank reconciliation for two years, wasting millions of dollars on a wastewater plant or that the CPA audit reports for the years 2006-09 had such significant financial shortcomings that the CPA, Larry Bain, could not render an opinion. In his letter to the City Council he wrote, "Since the city did not have the supporting documentation to support cash and investments, capital assets, compensated absences, accounts receivable, deferred revenue and deposit liabilities as noted above we were unable to apply other auditing procedures to satisfy ourselves as to the scope limitations, the scope of our work was not sufficient to enable us to express an opinion…." but there are other issues that should be revealed.

Kerr loved spending millions of dollars on consultants and engineers. It's not her money; it's other people's money (OPM). One small example was a 100-square-foot restroom at a park. The building inspector related the story of what should have been at best a $50,000 project that ballooned into a $200,000 monstrosity. Instead of using local people and volunteers, she contracted for a pre-engineered concrete structure manufactured in Oregon which took two trucks to ship to Ione. Although it was already engineered to California codes, Kerr hired an engineer to re-engineer the structure for tens of thousands of dollars.

In this park of nearly 90 acres, Kerr wanted to place it on a surface of dumped grindings, a surface that was clearly not suitable for such a building. She was advised by the city building inspector to put it anywhere but there because of soil problems. What did Kerr do? She hired more people and consultants at a cost of tens of thousands of dollars to put the structure where she wanted it. What should have cost tens of thousands of dollars in total and built by local contractors ended up costing hundreds of thousands with much of that directed to Oregon.

Kerr spent more than $2 million on engineers and consultants for an unneeded wastewater system that was never built. Almost $2.5 million down the toilet.

Near the end of her tenure, Kerr took the job of record keeping from the finance manager and kept most of the records, if you could call them that, on her personal computer, which she would not surrender to the grand jury.

According to Oneto, Kerr made deposits and credited two accounts to make it look like the city had double the money. Ione also was mistakenly sent county sales tax revenue. The state directly deposits these checks, but anyone in Ione finance would have seen the mistake because of the large size of the deposit. Kerr, who was keeping all the financial records, should have seen the mistake, but it wasn't discovered by the state until September 2011. By then Kerr was long gone. Now the cash-strapped city is stuck paying it back. If Kerr was reconciling the bank accounts or reviewing the deposit records, such an error would have been obvious.

According to Ione city records, Kerr was making $140,000 annually, with a "me too clause" that pegged her pay to any increases given union employees. When she was hired she also brought with her from Humboldt County two friends, a new police chief named Johnson for $110,000 a year and a police sergeant. When Kerr left in 2011 a few months later the Police Chief Michael Johnson took up residence in Anderson or someplace close as the police chief and shortly thereafter the sergeant was invited up to serve as a policeman or sergeant as well.

We are just warming up here, there is much more.

So how did Kerr get rewarded? She got a job got as the assistant CAO in El Dorado County, which has a population of 181,000 people and 1,788 square miles at a salary of about $165,000 with a raise of about $10,000 due next year. Since effectively bankrupting Ione, Kerr has taken about $500,000 in taxpayer money as salary from the citizens of El Dorado County.

From the grand jury reports, the outside audits and through interviews of Ione employees, Kerr should not be employable in a high level municipal or other government position, yet here Kerr is making a cool $165,000 a year in a position that is over two of the lowest employee satisfaction ratings in the entire county, the Community Development agency and the IT Department, respectively sitting at 22 percent and 41 percent worker satisfaction. See the Van Dermyden Maddux report.

Every employee I interviewed in the city of Ione said the happiest day of Kerr's tenure was the day she left. One employee said he never met anyone in his life like Kerr and hopes he never will again. "It was the worst four years of my life. She was full of vengeance and evil." All the employees interviewed still work for Ione (some part-time now) saying they all weathered the storm Kerr created in her fiscal destruction of the city.

In an interview with Terri Daly to learn how Kerr was hired she said there was a "committee." Daly, who is the CAO of El Dorado County, denies recommending her to the Board of Supervisors, adding that the selection of Kerr was their doing. Daly said that she was not privy to the issues Kerr had with the Ione. Three or four candidates were interviewed. Daly only admits to inviting Kerr to apply for the job of assistant CAO.

Daly also said she was not aware of the problems the Amador County Grand Jury had with Kerr, saying those reports happened long after Kerr was hired. Daly said she was unaware of Kerr's problems with Ione.

Daly also said in the telephone interview that she would hire Kerr knowing what she knows now about Kerr.

I doubt anyone else would.

From the facts, it appears Daly steered Kerr's application to completion. Daly asked Bernard Carlson of the EDC Taxpayers Association to "investigate" Kerr. In my interview with Carlson, he said he went to Ione and talked to two people, the manager of Castle Oaks Golf Course and a person on the street. They knew little, if anything, about Kerr. They did not talk to anyone connected to the city, no employees and no one from the City Council. Carlson admitted it was a cursory investigation and he was unaware of the grand jury reports.

Daly's next objective was to put Kerr's best foot forward to the BOS so she had Supervisor John Knight interview her. It was again a cursory interview as Knight knew nothing of Kerr's background. Knight said he trusted Daly's judgment and if Daly wanted Kerr for the assistant CAO position, so be it. Knight further said he interviewed Kerr out of respect for Daly and he did no investigation.

Daly said in my telephone interview that the BOS hired Kerr, not her and that she did not recommend her to the BOS. That's not what former Supervisor Jack Sweeney said. Sweeney flat out said Kerr was recommended to the BOS by Daly and on the surface Kerr looked OK. Knight concurred with Sweeney's assessment. Kerr's hiring was carefully crafted, orchestrated and arranged by Daly. It appears from Section 802 of the county Personnel Management Resolution that Daly's hiring of Kerr was solely Daly's decision anyway. It was Daly who hired Kerr, not the BOS. Daly is left holding this bag.

But wait, there is more. Daly has known Kerr well since 2007. According to Amador County Auditor Joe Lowe and confirmed by the city manager of Jackson, Michael Daly (no relation), Terri Daly as Amador County CAO had monthly meetings with all the Amador County city managers and then a luncheon (surely on the taxpayer's dime). At these meetings the city managers discussed problems with their respective jurisdictions and financial matters. These meetings were monthly, meaning that Daly met with Kerr at least 36 times. If Daly were above room temperature and considering her Stanford degree in psychology, she should have known of Kerr’s problems.

EDC faces a real problem and dilemma here. Kerr is clearly not qualified to do her job, especially at $165,000 to $175,000 a year. But after learning about the subterfuge of the CAO in getting Kerr hired, the BOS should show their vote of no confidence by showing her the door as well. At that point the alleged culture of fear in the county might just disappear and the county can save hundreds of thousands of dollars in studies.

More to come.

Larry Weitzman is a resident of Rescue.

Opinion: EDC’s problems are with its CAO

By Kathryn Reed

Something is terribly wrong in El Dorado County. A survey of county employees and the latest grand jury report point to dysfunction that is startling.

While it isn’t always a boss’ fault, it is her responsibility to fix the problems. And when the boss is the problem, it’s time for her to go.

Terri Daly

The grand jury report said part of the county's problem is that it has too many elected department heads. The report stated this creates an atmosphere where those people, and others, circumvent the normal chain of command by bypassing the chief administrative officer and going directly to the Board of Supervisors.

But the glaring hole in that assessment is the grand jury didn't look into the effectiveness of the CAO and why people go directly to the supes. Perhaps Terri Daly, the CAO, is the problem. A problem the current supervisors aren't dealing with.

As Colin Powell said, "Leadership is solving problems. The day soldiers stop bringing you their problems is the day you have stopped leading them. They have either lost confidence that you can help or concluded you do not care. Either case is a failure of leadership."

Clearly, there is a failure of leadership in El Dorado County.

By the end of the year Daly won't have her buddies in office. There will be three new supervisors. Ray Nutting is gone; his seat will be filled in September via a special election. Norma Santiago and Ron Briggs are termed out; their replacements will be elected in November.

Daly became CAO in December 2010. She was assistant chief administrative officer for El Dorado County from July-December 2010, prior to that she was CAO in Amador County.

She has a penchant for hiring friends, awarding contracts that never have to go before the supervisors that in some cases buy her favoritism, and pointing fingers at those who don't walk lockstep with her.

Daly has the authority to sign contracts up to $50,000 without going to the Board of Supervisors. She is the one who signed the contract with One Globe for what became known as the Catalyst Project in Meyers. She did this because Santiago wanted it. One Globe was also supposed to work on economic development in the basin. Because the work was not completed the county auditor-controller did not pay One Globe the full contractual amount.

In the employee survey, the Auditor-Controller's Office had a 92 percent approval rating. But for some reason part of the county's corrective action is doing a management audit of this office. (The Human Resources Office, which is led by a friend of Daly's, is also being audited. But that office didn't do well in the survey.) Is Daly singling out Joe Harn, who has been the county auditor-controller for 20 years and was just re-elected June 3, because he isn't afraid to say no to her?

Harn can be abrasive. Some don't like his style. He can say "no" and back up it up with reasons why he came to that conclusion. "No" is not a popular word when you want a "yes". Harn is anything but a yes man. Is he a bully? I don't know. His staff doesn't think so. The real question should be: Is he doing his job effectively? Yes, because he can say no – and for a whole lot of other reasons.

Daly allowed an employee in her office, Mike Applegarth, to work for Mike Owen, who was Harn's opponent in the recent election. Applegarth on May 12 had a letter published on www.inedc.com asking people to attend a future supervisors' meeting to complain about Harn.

Days after Harn won the election, Applegarth went out on an indefinite leave.

One of Applegarth's duties was to be a liaison between the county and media, or a public information officer of sorts.

However, Daly is now using an outside firm for those duties. Without going to the board, she hired Stephanie McCorkle on May 13 to do public relations work. The one-year contract is not to exceed $25,000.

McCorkle has operated McCorkle & Driscoll Communications since March. Prior to that she worked in communications for 17 years for California Independent System Operator.

When McCorkle was contacted about a story on the Meyers Area Plan she told this reporter she didn't have the answers and that I could ask the questions at next week's meeting. I'm sure that was billable time.

Daly needs to stop pointing fingers and getting people sidetracked about where the real problem in the county lies. It's staring her in the mirror.

If the Board of Supervisors keeps the leadership status quo, the public can only hope the next grand jury will do some digging into the CAO's handling of county affairs. The public deserves more than it has been getting out of El Dorado County and its so-called leaders.

Opinion: Californians want access to public records

By Joyce Terhaar, Sacramento Bee

Voters in El Dorado County said “no.” So did those in Amador, Sutter and Calaveras counties.

But voters throughout most of this region – Sacramento, Placer, Yolo, Yuba and Nevada counties – said “yes” to Proposition 42 on June 3, making it clear they want local governments to provide public access to meetings and records. Statewide, 61.9 percent of voters approved Proposition 42, compared with 38.1 percent opposed.

It’s been a little hairy watching public access to records and local government meetings get caught up in a fight between state and local officials over who, exactly, would pay for such access. Judging from many of you who contact the Bee, Californians want information and they want access. And when it directly affects their lives, they want both passionately.

Read the whole story

Letter: City misleading public regarding retirees

To the community,

The article in *Lake Tahoe New* on June 18 is, as usual, misleading to put it mildly and I would like the public to hear the truth.

Health insurance

Retirees who turn 65 do and always were required to join and personally pay for Medicare Parts A and B. The city’s plan then became secondary to Medicare and the city’s plan only paid 80 percent of the 20 percent Medicare did not pay.

This past January the city shifted all retirees 65 and older to Medicare supplement plans and discontinued Health coverage for these retirees under the city's plan. Therefore the city is currently not paying one dime in medical claims for retirees 65 and older.

The city is paying their portion of the Medicare supplemental plan's monthly premium as agreed to in the retirees memorandum of understanding (employment agreement) that was in place when the retiree retired. What percentage the city pays of the premium is based upon years of service with the city. You have to work 25 years for the city in order to get the premium paid at 100 percent by the city. Which, by the way, currently isn't close to the $1,500 stated in the article even at 100 percent premium paid by the city? The most costly plan is about half that.

Yes, this benefit of the city paying a percentage of the monthly health insurance premiums was agreed to years ago between the different employee groups (fire, police, public works, general) and management, including the City Council was given this same benefit. It was agreed to with the employee groups because the city didn't have money for raises for years and years and this was something the city could give that wouldn't cost them for years to come. But the city never funded this liability and in fact when they did have surplus in the health insurance reserve they robbed it to balance the general budget along with many other tactics too involved to go into.

City discontinued giving this benefit several years ago to new hires and now there are very few city employees still working that have this. Last year it was said that getting the 65 and older retirees off the plan would save thousands and thousands. What happened to those savings?

PERS

Just for the public's information, the city contracts with PERS for the level of retirement pay, not the employees. Non-safety employees (not fire or police) that retired 10 plus years ago get an average of somewhere between $1,000 and $2,000 a month in retirement income. Yes, we get a 2 percent raise every year, but 2 percent on $2,000 is $40 a month. What city employee is living on that?

City stop blaming all your budget problems on retirees.

What about looking at your current spending and salary levels and try to be more honest to the public about what really is the truth. The retirees appreciate the benefits we have but most of us are just getting by like everyone else.

Thomas Fay, Quartzsite, Ariz.

Fay was a 52-year resident of South Lake Tahoe and a 28-year employee of South Lake Tahoe who has been retired for 19 years.