

EDC supes resist spending millions on lake clarity

By Kathryn Reed

El Dorado County supervisors practically mocked the idea of spending \$11 million a year for the next 15 years to improve the clarity of Lake Tahoe.

Supervisor Ron Briggs said if the county even had that kind of money, “lake clarity would not be on the list.”



Jack Sweeney

Supervisor Jack Sweeney said it would be on his nice to do budget list, but not need to do budget list.

Supervisor Ray Nutting questions why the Lake Tahoe watershed has higher standards than others in the state and doesn't believe the area is entitled to the federal funding it has received over other jurisdictions.

Supervisor John Knight said overregulation in the basin is responsible for the area missing out on economic growth and equated it to being like Eastern Europe.

Supervisor Norma Santiago tried to provide some depth and understanding to the Lake Tahoe-specific issues that some of her colleagues clearly were not well versed in.

The five-member board came to South Lake Tahoe this week for

the annual meeting in Tahoe. The other 51 weeks of the year the board meets in Placerville.

Lahontan Water Board Executive Director Harold Singer got an earful from some of the supervisors in regards to his agency's desire, and probable future mandate, that the county come up with \$11 million a year to stem the flow of fine sediment into the lake.

Ironically, it's an \$11 million shortfall the supes are trying to contend with when it comes to the 2011-12 county budget.

The county currently spends about \$6 million a year on stormwater projects in the basin.

What wasn't brought up until Joanne Marchetta, executive director of the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency, gave her spiel was that working with private landowners the county might be able to attain the total maximum daily load thresholds Lahontan expects to adopt at its Nov. 6 meeting.

After the morning started with Wendy David of Lake Tahoe Collaborative giving a presentation about the woes of social agencies in the basin, the supervisors pointed to her statistics as more pressing issues than the transparency of Lake Tahoe.

David spoke of the 32-member Collaborative's start in 1992 and its evolution through the years into an advocacy group for those less fortunate. The agencies in the collaborative are dealing with 25 percent of the children in South Lake Tahoe being at the national poverty level, while 80 percent of the Latino population is poor.

Mental health issues will be the Collaborative's focus this coming year.

"We do not have adequate transition care for patients coming out of jail or Barton Hospital," David told the supervisors.

“We don’t have a 23-hour hold facility here.”

The situation for emotionally disturbed children is precarious with the recently passed state budget that eliminated money for counties to provide aid for this population. Now it could fall onto school districts to pay for these children to receive services.

Chief Administrative Officer Gayle Erbe-Hamlin said, “The school districts don’t have the systems in place to take it on.”

That evening at the Lake Tahoe Unified School District board meeting CFO Deb Yates mentioned the issue to her board.

Both women believe more needs to come out of Sacramento before either body can begin to figure out how to financially meet the mandate to care for these youngsters.

Back at the Board of Supes meeting, Sweeney said he wished he would have known Singer was going to be at the Oct. 12 meeting before he received his packet Oct. 7. Had he been reading *Lake Tahoe News*, he would have known based on an Oct. 4 story.

In the end, it was agreed a workshop will be scheduled in Tahoe between the supervisors, county staff and Lahontan officials to hash out the lake clarity mandates.

In other action:

- TRPA’s Joanne Marchetta spoke of her agency’s new philosophy of not being the “just say no” agency and instead creating a culture to work more collaboratively with others.
- The supervisors during a lunch stop at Lake Tahoe Golf Course were given an overview of the Upper Truckee River project at that site. The TRPA Governing Board will discuss the matter Oct. 27.