

Opinion: From 'No and Slow' to 'Fast to Last'

By Garry Bowen

Interesting that TRPA hired themselves a part-time COO with a PhD in psychology and management consultant as his shingle. Hopefully, he has some organizational development skills somewhere in the mix, as "streamlining" the various internal methods will take a lot of organizational skill, especially if part time.

A reasonable assumption could be made that this is a good move for [Executive Director] Joanne [Marchetta] to deal with the "externals", as she put it, as the contemporary function of a CEO (which rightfully she is) is to look to the future, strategizing where the entity is going in the distant future, leaving the daily delegations to others.



Interesting timing, though, as "streamlining the administrative process for residential permitting" comes at a time when they are diminishing the residential in favor of the development process of planning. It would appear that this is also at a time when they are several years behind in completing Pathway 2007 (P7 is now late P12). This diminishes the potential convergence of the TRPA emphasis on the near shore urban TMDL pollution issues of blighted areas with one fast-growing national green building trend: EB (in LEED EB is existing buildings) as an ongoing source for improving air, energy, and water quality simultaneously.

Encouraging either larger-scale commercial or more individual residential development will be better served through the establishment of building standards more immediately in

concert with the overall goals of lake clarity, which is itself in tune with what the citizenry says they want: a greener community.

So, it's OK to reorganize from a "No & Slow" emphasis to one of "Fast to Last" by establishing sustainable standards high enough to obviate the TRPA premise of eliminating unnecessary legal dilemmas. That premise was stated by Mr. [John] Singlaub at the outset of their "new" era, as the costs to TRPA in terms of staff time and/or legal costs were too high in squandering funds that could be used for other things.

In order to offer Mr. [Ed] Gurowitz some insight, I have my own story to tell: a number of months ago I was engaged by one of the areas prominent architect/engineers, who was asked by staff within the agency what green building programs they should be looking at, presumably to include in the Regional Plan we have not yet seen. It was decided that I would be an asset in helping them figure it out, being much more familiar with what's out there.

My colleague called TRPA as a next step and was never called back; knowing this as not unusual, I went ahead and contacted the CEO of the best global green building entity that I currently know of, and he graciously agreed to make a presentation here when needed – and then left the following day to make a series of presentations in Mexico City to several building consortiums. Well, unfortunately, too many of us know the outcome already – I never got a call back, so they never got the presentation so graciously offered, and it might have helped them, and Tahoe.

Presumably, this is at least part of the problem that Mt. Gurowitz was taken on for – and I wish him luck.

The renowned Hunter Lovins of Rocky Mountain Institute, author of the 13-million copy book, "Natural Capitalism," and her own prodigious sustainability career, was recently quoted as

saying, “Even if you’re a profit-maximizing capitalist who believes climate change is a hoax, you’ll do exactly what you’d do if you were scared to death about climate change, because we know how to solve it at a profit.”

She concluded, “You don’t have to believe in the problem to believe in the solution. There are opportunities to make more money while solving the problem.”

In short, the citizens are right to want a green community, and there is now no reason not to have one – any new direction should be guided by the idea that they will be “leaving money on the table” not to pay attention to the very prodigious advantages to “going green”. Even the CEO of Turner Construction, which built the basin’s only LEED platinum building routinely uses the figure 0.8 (less than 1 percent) as the “premium” paid for going green, after \$20 billion of green-built projects.

This would be streamlining at its finest, while satisfying all parties with a win-win for the treasure we know as Lake Tahoe, while satisfying my own craving for “policies equal to the scenery”.

And rebuild Tahoe’s image as a benefit – to all.

Garry Bowen has a 50-year connection to the South Shore, with an immediate past devoted to global sustainability, on most of its current fronts: green building, energy and water efficiencies, and public health. He may be reached at tahoefuture@gmail.com or (775) 690.6900.