

El Dorado County supervisor candidates outline goals

By Loretta Kalb, Sacrament Bee

One is a small-business owner. The other is a retired fire chief.



They are the runoff candidates in the Nov. 6 general election for District 3 of the El Dorado County Board of Supervisors, and both want to strengthen the community's business climate.

Candidate Brian Keith Veerkamp, the retired fire chief, finished the June 5 primary election with 33 percent of the vote in a field of six. Candidate Richard Barb, the small-business owner, placed second with 22.5 percent of the vote.

The District 3 post is being vacated by Supervisor Jack Sweeney since El Dorado County requires that its local officials leave after two full terms.

Here is what candidates say about the job and their qualifications, in order of their appearance on the ballot:

- Veerkamp describes himself as a fifth-generation resident with years of experience in public and community service.

He considers the local economy to be the biggest issue facing the community and describes his knowledge of how government works, his connections and his community affiliations as assets in tackling the job.

"We obviously have issues relative to permit fees and regulations that we need to review and to scale back where we can and to try to make it affordable to build in the county,"

Veerkamp said.

“One of my goals is to work with other supervisors to build a strong governance team where we can strategically plan, set priorities and move our county forward instead of into a tailspin,” he said. “We’ve been stagnant for quite some time.”

Veerkamp prides himself on “knowing the players” and says he can step into the role without a steep learning curve.

As a supervisor, he said he expects to work cooperatively with all agencies, local, state and federal.

Veerkamp spent an early part of his career in the private sector on construction and other jobs, he said. And he spent 30 years in fire protection service, beginning as a volunteer firefighter and later becoming chief of the El Dorado Hills Fire Department.

His background includes years in public service and as a member of community organizations such as the Placerville Kiwanis Club. He served 14 years on the board of the Camino Union School District, eight of those as president.

He was a three-year board member for the El Dorado County Emergency Services Authority, a joint powers authority for which county supervisors have fiscal oversight. For two of those years he served as the authority’s board chairman.

He spent 22 years as director of the emergency medical services training program for the El Dorado County Fire Chiefs Association.

“I’ve got a lot of those connections, a lot of experience,” Veerkamp said. “I know how to work and understand the system. I can hit the ground running.”

Veerkamp said he would refuse salary and benefits for the post. “It’s not about making a career for myself,” he said. “To me it’s all about community service, and that defines me

as a person.”

- Barb, a 17-year county resident, is a small-business owner who describes himself as dedicated to public service.

And he said he is eager to eliminate county policies and rules that impede business.

“We’re going to review where we are,” he said. “El Dorado County is one of the least friendly counties in the state for business.

“We’re going to reform, to revise those ordinances and policies that have contributed to the unfriendly business climate.

“When we’ve figured out those issues – and I have a good handle on some of them because of my construction business – we’re going to reduce fees, the regulatory burden and some of the bureaucracies that have kept us from being business friendly.”

An example of the burden on business, he said, is the lack of clear requirements and costs when a permit is issued to a business or for a project.

“The permit is issued,” he said. “The project moves forward. Then the county decides to change the rules because the policy or code has changed.

“That has brought a profoundly uncertain working environment. And it has cost many people their life savings.”

Barb said he has long been committed to community service and spent the last 17 years as a leader in 4-H. He also spent 14 years volunteering weekly at a local senior care facility.

For the last six years, he served on the senior staff of the U.S. Air Force Auxiliary Civil Air Patrol, Squadron 85, a civilian group that provides leadership training programs for

young people.

Barb said he has spent his career in small business in the private sector. As an independent contractor, he provides custom shutters and draperies for the interior decorating industry.

Among his strengths, he said, is the ability to organize and define work project requirements, manage and place staff, and eliminate inefficiencies.

A county supervisor should not be political, he said. And he or she should be easy to approach.

“It’s truly about meeting the needs of the community,” Barb said. “It’s not just asking the community what they want, it’s knowing it from the inside out and being accessible.”