

El Dorado County DA messing with lives without showing evidence

By Kathryn Reed

People with knowledge of the lingering investigation into potential criminal activity by South Lake Tahoe officials in connection with Gino DiMatteo have told *Lake Tahoe News* there are ulterior motives involved.

No longer is the El Dorado County District Attorney's Office using the word "bribery" or naming names in its investigation.

The district attorney, Vern Pierson, refuses to address the media in any way other than press releases. Only his secretary, Nancy Anderson, is allowed to speak for him.



El Dorado County
District Attorney Vern
Pierson

Anderson this week emphatically told *Lake Tahoe News* her agency did not use the word bribery to describe what DA investigators are currently probing. Nor would she say what the focus is or who the focus is on.

A Nov. 2 press release from Pierson's office says, "... the

investigation into certain South Lake Tahoe City officials as to their dealings with DiMatteo is ongoing.”

Former South Lake Tahoe City Manager Tony O'Rourke told *Lake Tahoe News*, “No one has ever contacted me in any way shape or form. So any investigation is not thorough or comprehensive. I don't think there was anything there. I think [Pierson] has hung [City Councilwoman Angela Swanson] out to dry. He needs to buy time to look like he did something.”

Swanson had previously been named by the DA's office as the city official DiMatteo is accused of bribing. But no evidence has been presented to the public, to Swanson or to DiMatteo's attorneys to substantiate the allegation.

O'Rourke was at many of the meetings where the city's pot ordinances were being written. Those meetings also included DiMatteo, who at the time owned the medical marijuana dispensary City of Angels II.

O'Rourke thought it would be fine for DiMatteo to move his business last summer to accommodate his landlord wanting him out. But the council changed its mind after O'Rourke left the city and information was presented about some questionable activities pertaining to DiMatteo's business.

(Swanson is no longer talking to the media. She continues to fulfill her duties on the council.)

At one time she had aspirations of running for El Dorado County supervisor. Keeping her name tied to a criminal investigation would thwart the likelihood of her being elected.

Swanson has been outspoken in her support for medical marijuana, so bribing her would not likely alter a vote. Those close to the case say if DiMatteo were to have bribed anyone, it would likely have been one of the men on the council because of their views about the pot clubs.

It is not known how much taxpayer money has been spent to-date on the various investigations involving DiMatteo.

Criminal complaint

DiMatteo at his first appearance in U.S. District Court in Sacramento on Nov. 6 was released on a \$500,000 bond and GPS monitoring. It was on Nov. 2 that the county dropped the state charges and federal charges were levied against DiMatteo. However, this does not mean state charges will not be reinstated. That is what happened in the Karsten Gronwold child molestation case that rocked the South Shore a few years ago.

The five-page complaint does not say a word about bribery.

DiMatteo faces two counts – possession with intent to distribute marijuana and manufacturing at least 100 plants.

Here is the full complaint.