

Santiago looks back on time as supervisor and forward regarding El Dorado County's needs

By Kathryn Reed

STATELINE – Lean economic times forced El Dorado County to get smarter, according to Supervisor Norma Santiago.

Santiago, who will reluctantly be termed out of office at the end of the year, gave a recap of her experience to Soroptimist International South Lake Tahoe last week at Harrah's Lake Tahoe.

She said she is against term limits and hopes that regulation will one day be removed or be upped to three terms as a maximum.

"The bottom line is the county is well on its way to be a better partner with the community and finding sustainable solutions," Santiago said.



El Dorado County Supervisor Norma Santiago has a few months left in office.

Photo/LTN

Consolidating departments, she said, has made for a more efficient way of doing business. It also reduced redundancies.

The county is working on technological upgrades so all the systems talk to each other and therefore manual work would be decreased.

“We need an economic strategy. We need a workforce development strategy,” Santiago said.

She said county residents are finding jobs elsewhere – including in Douglas, Placer and Sacramento counties.

When it comes to the state, she said it’s imperative El Dorado pay attention to decisions about water.

“Agriculture is a big part of our county,” Santiago said. Water storage will continue to be a huge issue, she added.

She also said the county needs to be at the table for the gas tax discussions. A mileage usage fee is being talked about in Sacramento to fund road improvements. This is because the gas tax revenue is not enough to cover the costs to repair state highways as vehicles become more efficient and people go to the gas station less often.

When it comes to Meyers, Santiago again took full responsibility for causing angst over what was called the Catalyst Project. This is no longer an option.

But what the community has is a \$250,000 planning grant that will be used to figure out how to make Highway 50 more manageable, and work on improving trails and the connections to them.

What was missing from Santiago’s talk was any reference to the county’s dealings with the city of South Lake Tahoe. That relationship has for decades been precarious.

Santiago stressed the need for Lake Tahoe to elect one of

three candidates from the South Shore. Two are from the Pollock Pines area now that the district has been reconfigured to cover areas outside the basin. (Beginning March 25 *Lake Tahoe News* will be running profiles on the supervisor candidates.)

She said it's not just about representing Tahoe in Placerville, but how this position is also on the boards for the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency, California Tahoe Conservancy, Tahoe Transportation District, Recreation JPA, Waste Management JPA and other Tahoe-centric boards.

However, Santiago said she was not endorsing any particular candidate.

Three of the major challenges for the county, according to Santiago, are how it is going to define itself, building relationships with the state, and the economy.

She briefly touched on the no-growth initiatives being brought forth by West Slope interests that everyone in the county will have an opportunity to vote on in November.

As for her future, Santiago said she wants to take time off to explore the possibility of running for another office in 2016. While she did not specify which one, there is speculation it will be for state Senate.