

Swanson: 'Jobs and economic development are my top priority'



Angela Swanson

Publisher's note: *Lake Tahoe News asked the six El Dorado County supervisor candidates a series of questions. All are the same except for one that is specific to each candidate. This is the final installment.*

Name: Angela Swanson

Age: 53

Occupation: City councilwoman, school facilities planning consultant, and grant writer

Education: B.A. political science, University of California, Berkeley

Post graduate coursework

What elected, civic, nonprofit boards or groups are or have you been affiliated with and in what capacity?: Councilmember, city of South Lake Tahoe 2010-14

- Vice chair and board member, Tahoe Transportation District 2011-14

- Board member, California Tahoe Conservancy, 2011-12
- Board member, CalTahoe Emergency Services Authority, 2011-14
- Board member, South Lake Tahoe Basin Waste Management Authority, 2010-11
- Board member, Tahoe Prosperity Center

Board member, Lake Tahoe Unified School District 2005-09

- Clerk of the board
- Approved two-way immersion program
- Protected class-size reduction

Member, Lake Tahoe Collaborative

Board member, Lake Tahoe Educational Foundation

Board member, Boys & Girls Club of Lake Tahoe

Member, Rotary Club of South Lake Tahoe

Member, Zawadisha

Steering Committee, 56-Acre Project (Lakeview Commons) 2008-10

Co-chair, Measure A/G Steering Committee, a \$64.5M school bond

PTA president, Sierra House Elementary and South Tahoe Middle schools

Site Council member, Sierra House and South Tahoe Middle schools

“Team Mom” for numerous Little League and football teams

“Dance Mom” for 14 years with Academy of Dance Arts

Lifetime member, Ladies Auxiliary, Veterans of Foreign Wars

Traffic is horrible on Fridays and Sundays throughout the county. Will you commit to not voting for any big subdivisions unless there is a plan to widen Highway 50? Why or why not?:

El Dorado County has traffic congestion caused by population centers along the 50 corridor compounded by tourists trekking to Lake Tahoe and Apple Hill. I've driven that route for 20 years and have watched the traffic increase. I am an advocate for a multi-pronged approach reducing congestion that includes expanding light rail rapid transit westward from El Dorado Hills, improving public transit to tourist centers, and tying residential growth to traffic mitigation.

I think it is oversimplifying to tie all future residential development decisions to the plans of a behemoth state agency, Caltrans. There needs to be a strategy to develop a transportation capable of handling resident and tourist needs that is state-funded without adding miles of highway lanes.

What is your opinion on a proposed November initiative to control growth?: There are currently several competing initiatives gather signatures to qualify for the November ballot. Years of high-density residential development along the Highway 50 corridor have led to gridlock. We must fix traffic first. I support the efforts to limit residential growth in favor of business and commercial growth.

What are your thoughts of making Lake Tahoe its own county?: I haven't seen a groundswell of support for the region seceding from El Dorado and Placer counties to form a new Lake Tahoe County. What problems do we solve and how many more do we trade for?

After years of neglect, we recognize that we are not going to settle for mediocrity. This beautiful region is stepping into a new generation, and is already redefining a more robust economic base, rebuilding a sense of local pride and becoming an active and engaged community. We can demand more from and give more to county government.

What entities would you not take money from?: I would not take money from an individual or organization whose values or behavior I consider illegal or unethical. Due to the controversial nature of development politics on the West Slope I will not take funds from large developers.

What would you do to boost the economy?: Local job opportunities need to be broad-based and offer long-term viability. Thoughtful and effective government can help ensure our community can invest in its families, education and future. We begin, first, by stabilizing and expanding existing business. Second, we need to develop the infrastructure necessary to draw new economic growth. That infrastructure begins with adequate cell and broadband coverage, continues into infrastructure renewal. This includes private property both commercial and residential. Why would anyone invest in the South Shore if we don't ourselves? The investment moves on to recreational facilities including bike paths. Third, we utilize the resources of the county's Economic Development Division and jobs creation network, Sierra Economic Development Corporation, to partner with local business and community leaders to recruit new business. It's time to harness county resources to build a vibrant, viable community.

What is the No. 1 issue facing District 5 and how do you propose to resolve it?: Jobs and economic development are my top priority, as I just discussed. Just as important is my commitment to return our fair share of the county's budget and resources to District 5. The county is the primary provider of all human services, including senior services, child protection services, public health, corrections, and bus service. Our community deserves more return for its tax dollars.

For example, we talk about restoring bus service to Meyers. That can be done through social service program funding intended to support transporting those in need. A second example, the newly reformed recreation department only

recently catalogued the recreation facilities on the East Slope. We've lost thousands of dollars in maintenance and equipment funding because they didn't know what's here. It's time for parity in spending.

Supervisors meet only once a year in Lake Tahoe. Do you believe this is fair representation? Why or why not?: The Board of Supervisors needs to meet more frequently in South Lake Tahoe. I've already spoken to two supervisors about meeting in South Lake Tahoe quarterly. There is support, particularly if we also hold town hall meetings in other supervisorial districts as appropriate. The board needs to be accessible to the citizens it serves.

However, it takes more than holding the Board of Supervisors meetings in Tahoe to make District 5 truly present in county decision-making. I would immediately begin holding regular meetings with the county's chief administrative officer, Terri Daly, and South Lake Tahoe's city manager and mayor of South Lake Tahoe. These meetings build commonality and shared goals that will benefit families and build just representation.

Would you have voted for Red Hawk to be built and to divert Caltrans funds for interchanges? Those decisions are still negatively affecting the South Shore. Is there anything you would do to change the status quo?: I would have voted against the Red Hawk project as it was not in the best interests of my constituents. Moreover, the county failed to secure the compensation for first costs, long-term maintenance of the new infrastructure and community services. As for status quo changes. I think the ship has essentially sailed but the lesson must be remembered.

Would you support having more tax dollars from the county coming to the South Shore? Currently, more dollars leave the basin than come back.: Tax dollar leakage impacts all of District 5 and is a top priority. For instance, the majority of TOT in the county comes from the South Shore, but is

primarily spent on the West Slope. The same is true of specialized funds for parks and recreation, transportation, etc. Getting these dollars back into our district will require prioritizing opportunities for recapture with staff, and then negotiation with my fellow supervisors during budget discussions. One example: The South Shore accounts for about 40 percent of the District Attorney's Office caseload, yet the staffing has been reduced from five to just two assistant DA's.

The county and city of South Lake Tahoe have a long history of not getting along. How would you propose to improve the relationship?: I am uniquely qualified to bridge the relationship gap as I am presently a member of the City Council and have an excellent relationship with the city manager and my fellow council members. We now have a council built on local collaboration and problem solving. We developed a local government which listens to, engages the community and encourages participation. I am ready to bring that same level of collaboration and cooperation to the Board of Supervisors.

Having served on numerous board (TTD and Conservancy, etc.) I understand the perspectives of both agencies in major policy areas. I know where we have areas of agreement and disagreement. I've also had a close history with the 56-acre (Lakeview Commons/campground) property and am part of its emergence as our community's gathering place. It is the cornerstone for our shared recreation vision and an opportunity to shed old ill-will .

What is your vision for Meyers and how will you make it a reality?: It is the collective vision of the residents that matters. Meyers has a heart and soul; never more evident than at area plan meetings or when cheering locals welcomed home our Golden Girls. I have listened to many residents and understand the local pride, the local values.

Making those values real starts with a ZIP code. Meyers, CA

96155. Beneath the arguments over the area plan and Caltrans signal lights and the future of the Tveten property is an underlying hunger to be recognized as a community with places to gather and decision-making authority. Meyers, California, should be identified as an independent place. We would also look at creating a reasonable governance structure, such as a Meyers Community Services District, which would the local control issues such as bike paths, recreation and programs facilities and weigh in on development issues.

Why should someone vote for you over someone else?: I get the job done. My entire history in South Lake Tahoe has been about improving our community for the families that live and work here. From my first efforts at the Sierra House playground to the school bond to Lakeview Commons, I deliver. Second, I have the skills and experience to be effective from Day 1. I know the issues, have the relationships and the experience to negotiate with the four other supervisors from the Wet Slope. Third, I understand that making District 5 and El Dorado County successful requires relationships in Sacramento and Washington, D.C. They control the purse strings and we have to meet them head on.

How do you overcome a possible credibility issue when you gave up the seat you had on the Lake Tahoe Unified School District board, have spent the most taxpayer money of any City Council member on travel and took money for a nonprofit from a man now serving time in federal prison?: There is no credibility issue. The voters have elected me twice into office, proof of their confidence in my abilities. They understood that I stepped down from the school board a few months early because I was pursuing employment opportunities that could have taken me out of the region. By putting the needs of the community before my own and stepping down a few months early, I ensured that my seat could be filled and the school board would function properly with five members. Having served on the school board with only four members and more recently in the

same position on the City Council, I know that was the right choice.

My travel reimbursements are for council approved activities. I believe, as does the council, that it is important to be educated on policy issues and to build relationships with our elected representatives and agency heads in Sacramento. I cannot answer why other electeds decide not to. The last item deserves no additional follow up, as the county district attorney has declared there was "no wrongdoing."

What do you do for fun?: My latest passion is standup paddleboarding. Anything that gets me on or in the water is my idea of fun. I also enjoy biking and puttering in my garden.

Tell us something about yourself that people might not know: I rafted the Tana River in Kenya and rode a camel in the Sahara Desert.