

Opinion: EDC's problems are with its CAO

By Kathryn Reed

Something is terribly wrong in El Dorado County. A survey of county employees and the latest grand jury report point to dysfunction that is startling.

While it isn't always a boss' fault, it is her responsibility to fix the problems. And when the boss is the problem, it's time for her to go.



Terri Daly

The grand jury report said part of the county's problem is that it has too many elected department heads. The report stated this creates an atmosphere where those people, and others, circumvent the normal chain of command by bypassing the chief administrative officer and going directly to the Board of Supervisors.

But the glaring hole in that assessment is the grand jury didn't look into the effectiveness of the CAO and why people go directly to the supes. Perhaps Terri Daly, the CAO, is the problem. A problem the current supervisors aren't dealing with.

As Colin Powell said, "Leadership is solving problems. The day soldiers stop bringing you their problems is the day you have

stopped leading them. They have either lost confidence that you can help or concluded you do not care. Either case is a failure of leadership.”

Clearly, there is a failure of leadership in El Dorado County.

By the end of the year Daly won't have her buddies in office. There will be three new supervisors. Ray Nutting is gone; his seat will be filled in September via a special election. Norma Santiago and Ron Briggs are termed out; their replacements will be elected in November.

Daly became CAO in December 2010. She was assistant chief administrative officer for El Dorado County from July-December 2010, prior to that she was CAO in Amador County.

She has a penchant for hiring friends, awarding contracts that never have to go before the supervisors that in some cases buy her favoritism, and pointing fingers at those who don't walk lockstep with her.

Daly has the authority to sign contracts up to \$50,000 without going to the Board of Supervisors. She is the one who signed the contract with One Globe for what became known as the Catalyst Project in Meyers. She did this because Santiago wanted it. One Globe was also supposed to work on economic development in the basin. Because the work was not completed the county auditor-controller did not pay One Globe the full contractual amount.

In the employee survey, the Auditor-Controller's Office had a 92 percent approval rating. But for some reason part of the county's corrective action is doing a management audit of this office. (The Human Resources Office, which is led by a friend of Daly's, is also being audited. But that office didn't do well in the survey.) Is Daly singling out Joe Harn, who has been the county auditor-controller for 20 years and was just re-elected June 3, because he isn't afraid to say no to her?

Harn can be abrasive. Some don't like his style. He can say "no" and back up it up with reasons why he came to that conclusion. "No" is not a popular word when you want a "yes". Harn is anything but a yes man. Is he a bully? I don't know. His staff doesn't think so. The real question should be: Is he doing his job effectively? Yes, because he can say no – and for a whole lot of other reasons.

Daly allowed an employee in her office, Mike Applegarth, to work for Mike Owen, who was Harn's opponent in the recent election. Applegarth on May 12 had a letter published on www.inedc.com asking people to attend a future supervisors' meeting to complain about Harn.

Days after Harn won the election, Applegarth went out on an indefinite leave.

One of Applegarth's duties was to be a liaison between the county and media, or a public information officer of sorts.

However, Daly is now using an outside firm for those duties. Without going to the board, she hired Stephanie McCorkle on May 13 to do public relations work. The one-year contract is not to exceed \$25,000.

McCorkle has operated McCorkle & Driscoll Communications since March. Prior to that she worked in communications for 17 years for California Independent System Operator.

When McCorkle was contacted about a story on the Meyers Area Plan she told this reporter she didn't have the answers and that I could ask the questions at next week's meeting. I'm sure that was billable time.

Daly needs to stop pointing fingers and getting people sidetracked about where the real problem in the county lies. It's staring her in the mirror.

If the Board of Supervisors keeps the leadership status quo,

the public can only hope the next grand jury will do some digging into the CAO's handling of county affairs. The public deserves more than it has been getting out of El Dorado County and its so-called leaders.