

# Opinion: El Dorado County on the right course

*Publisher's note: El Dorado County officials were not able to provide a record of this opinion piece being discussed in open session during a Board of Supervisors meeting. Therefore it was done so in a serial meeting, which is a violation of the Brown Act – California's open meeting law.*

To the community,

We ask the public to join the county Board of Supervisors in our commitment to create a renaissance regarding the county's reputation. For starters, Terri Daly has been working at our direction for almost four years and we want you to know that we support our chief administrative officer who is working effectively to advance critically important initiatives to modernize county government so it can be something we leave in good shape for the next generation.

It is time for a cultural transformation in El Dorado County and we want everyone on board. Collaboration is what leads to effective problem solving. It's what leads to innovation. We simply can't create the exciting future we want for El Dorado County without first establishing a positive culture to the benefit of employees, businesses (new and established) as well as our citizenry.

We are committed to improving communication channels – enhancing the frequency and extent to which we provide external outreach to stakeholders and the media. We want and need the public's involvement, and open communication will help get us there.

Without an informed public, we miss opportunities to “think outside the box.” Without a motivated workforce, we fall behind neighboring counties capitalizing on competitive

economic incentives and the type of “idea storming” that comes from colleagues and leadership working well together and displaying mutual respect.

We have directed the CAO to focus on five areas where we want available resources to net a return on our investment for the future:

- Human resources and risk management
- Information technologies
- Facilities
- Department accountability and culture
- Economic development

The CAO, at our direction, recently delivered on a recommended budget that keeps costs in line while embracing priority-based budgeting enabling government to reassess priorities in order to make sound, long-term funding decisions. The process clearly establishes the priorities of the county, then develops practices, processes and procedures that fund and advance those priorities. It puts into motion a mission-driven organization with local government leaders who are seeking service excellence, transparency and a strong desire to achieve the results that are truly important to their community.

We give our administrative team high marks for the following:

- Producing a responsible balanced budget for four years in a row, and successfully bringing the county out of the recession with healthy reserves and no debt.
- Trimming facilities costs by saving \$600,000 a year through termination or renegotiation of over-market rates on building leases (savings will continue annually starting this year).

- A total of \$6 million in one-time savings with construction efficiencies achieved that no one thought possible in the building of a new Animal Services Shelter.

One of our top priorities is the roll out of a workplace action plan that will transform the organizational culture of the county. Why should our citizens care about an internal culture change? For good reason. If we can tackle long-simmering workplace issues, employee morale will improve. Already, the Health and Human Services job turnover rate has improved from 50 percent to 15 percent; enabling us to better serve those clients. Customer service is improving.

New companies eyeing the El Dorado Hills Business Park and other commercial space are more inclined to bring jobs here because the professionalism and motivation of county employees will continue to improve. We'll also retain and attract employees empowered to create vibrant organizations serving the best interest of its citizens. With the labor market improving, we need to hang onto our best and brightest talent and be poised to attract more. Luck won't improve the county; it will be preparedness and meeting opportunity.

The above action plan gets under way as a grand jury report comes out taking a close and critical look at the County Charter. It proposes specific and controversial recommendations. We need to be cognizant that discord will keep us stagnant and unprepared if all it does is keep us looking in a rearview mirror whilst other counties around us power out of the recession. There is a process in place to address the issues. A Charter Review Committee, convened every five years to consider changes to the Charter will examine the recommendations.

Also, the Board of Supervisors will officially respond to the grand jury report within the mandated 90 days. We'll also

respond to the Charter Review Committee's recommendations. After that, it could be up to the voters to cast the final say over any modifications to the County Charter – potentially as early as the general election in November.

Let's let the administrative teams including the elected officials do their jobs. The Board of Supervisors keeps our taxpayers' interests in the forefront of our actions.

Until then, look forward, not in the rearview mirror, because the future demands we do so or El Dorado County may be left behind in the dust of counties more willing and able to move ahead. Join us as we build a better reputation for a county with so much to offer and the people who can make it happen. Together we can truly make a difference as we leverage the unique and amazing resources that make El Dorado County a great place to live, work and play.

**Supervisors Norma Santiago, Ron Mikulaco, Brian Veerkamp and Ron Briggs**