

Letter: Meyers residents speak out

Publisher's note: *This letter was sent to the El Dorado County Board of Supervisors in July.*

Dear Chair Santiago and Members of the Board of Supervisors:

We are writing to you to express our concerns about the Meyers Area Plan process. We are writing not as land speculators seeking project approvals. We are not writing as paid consultants advocating land use changes to benefit clients. We are not writing to you as out-of-area advocacy groups seeking favors for large corporate interests. We are writing to you as people who live and work in Meyers and ones who care about the community's character and future.

Our concerns and comments about the Meyers planning process and outcomes are not new. We want the community plan for Meyers to be one that is acceptable to a majority of the community and the result of a plan update process that actively engages the entire community in arriving at a plan acceptable to them. We do not want a staff-driven plan where deals are made behind closed doors between small groups of invitees in a non-transparent process. We want a community plan that is acceptable to a majority of the community that we can live with over the next 20 years. We want a Plan that is our Plan not a special interest and self-serving document for development interests in or outside our community.

We acknowledge that there is a great diversity of opinion regarding how residents, property owners, and business owners and operators view the future of Meyers as well as great confusion and lack of understanding of proposed land-use changes. This diversity of opinion about the future is in itself the core condition that must be assessed and evaluated

in a manner that helps County officials to arrive at a verifiable and democratically-based decision on land use and restores faith that the entire community has had its voice heard.

Specifically, we continue asking for the following:

- 1. To be placed on the agenda of the Board of Supervisors on an item to discuss our concerns below at a time that is convenient for the board and those of us who work for a living;**
- 2. A verifiable method for the county to determine that it has gained a wide-range view *from the community within and directly impacted by the proposed Meyers Area Plan.* A “validated” community-wide survey of all residents and property owners is needed to guide and shape the final Meyers Area Plan. Such a survey would allow all interested parties in Meyers to have a voice in this 20-year plan. It would also provide the opportunity for all community voices to be heard. This request has been made in the past and is reiterated herein. We are researching the cost of such a survey by a nationally-recognized survey company at this time.**
- 3. Defer any final action on the plan until a new county supervisor is elected and seated to allow him or her input on the new 20-year plan.** The voters of the 5th District will elect a new supervisor in November and the man or woman elected should have an opportunity to be heard and decide on a final area plan. Our new supervisor will have the benefit of being recently elected and accountable to the people of the district.
- 4. Verification in the plan document that available incentives provided under the plan will be applicable to existing business and property owners.**
- 5. Specifically define height limitations in all planning**

areas. The previously staff agreed height standard of 35 feet should be made part of any final. Include specific language in the Meyers plan that limits height and density to those selected by the Meyers community. In other words, variances allowed by TRPA's Code, but not discussed in the Meyers plan, cannot be used to exceed the maximum heights desired by the Meyers community. This request is of course subject to the results of a validated community survey that we are requesting.

6. **Affirm in writing in any adopted plan verbal assurances made by staff to make available to all existing business and property owners incentive allowed under an area plan.**
7. **Eliminate mixed land-use additions to the plan that could compromise existing business uses (e.g. motel next to an industrial use).** Do not allow the creation of uses near existing businesses that compromise the ability of owners to conduct their businesses.
8. **Ensure in language of the plan that all existing business will be permitted uses in any new Plan adopted and that the owners of the businesses can sell their property for the same use to a subsequent owner.**
9. ***Include in specific language in the plan that the County does not support and will not use eminent domain*** (acquisition of private property over the objection of the property owner) to achieve plan goals and objectives nor will the county support the use of this extraordinary confiscatory power by other agencies.
10. **Include specific language in the Plan that maximum new Commercial Floor Area will not exceed the 33,650 sq. ft. noted in the Meyers Plan, period.** We have been told by TRPA staff that although the community discussions and presentations have centered on a 33,650 sq. ft. limit, in reality, the TRPA would not prohibit CFA above this

limit if it were transferred or converted per TRPA's Code, Chapter 50. If the community wants a limit, it should be a true limit.

11. **Define in the Plan that County and TRPA officials must carefully explore with Caltrans alternative ways to ensure safe passage of pedestrians and cyclists across SR 50 including installation of a traffic signal.**
12. **Maintain community character while striving for community improvements.** Community members do not oppose new development in Meyers. They do want to retain the rural character of the community and help existing and new small businesses flourish.
13. **Write the language of the Plan in plain English,** not "planners speak." Make the document user-friendly and informative.
14. **Let the people of Meyers decide if current open space lands owned by the California Tahoe Conservancy should remain open space or sold for development. We have been told that CTC officials have made this commitment in the past.**
15. **Formation of a community-selected advisory council or group that operates under California's Open Meeting Law and is subject to the Brown Act.**The existing Meyers Community Advisory Council is not subject to the Brown Act. This lack of public notice requirement in the past has helped to create the lack of awareness of the community to date about important issues relating to Plan development. The currently comprised MCAC Board is made up of good people but not structured in a way commonly accepted to conduct the public's business.
16. **Let the people of Meyers decide their future.** Comments have been made to Meyers' owners and operators over the course of the current planning process by certain policy makers and planners that Meyers should be changed and allowed to develop like "cities" in Europe living and working in a "Pack & Stack" world. Meyers is of course not a city. This "Pack & Stack" notion and "European"

future scenario needs to be tested against what the people who live and work there think and want. It is the people of the community's future that is being planned, and they need the ultimate say in the decision.

It came to our attention during our community-led meeting last February, and in subsequent meetings, that many community members are unaware of the land use/zoning changes plugged into the Meyers Plan through the 2012 RPU Update, including this mixed-use/pack & stack concept and changes to boundaries and special districts in the plan. We believe the community should have the opportunity to be adequately informed of any changes, and to discuss and decide upon them, before any land uses not prescribed in the **1993 Meyers Community Plan** are adopted or implemented.

The Board of Supervisors needs to hear from the community in a verifiable and inclusive way before making changes that impacts them. *We look forward to hearing from you on our request for a meeting date before the Board of Supervisors and for the remedies we seek in the Meyers Area Planning process.*

Sincerely,

Angela Olson, Jennifer Quashnick, Moya Sanders and Diane Verwoest