

# Opinion: Measure M is misleading

By Larry Weitzman

During a presentation at the always-spunky Taxpayers Association of El Dorado County meeting, District 4 supervisorial candidate Howard Penn said he believed in a free market. But when asked to explain that philosophy with his contradictory support of Proposition M, Penn said something to the effect that he was not “that free market.”

A few days later during an interview with Penn he admitted that Measure M would not stop 33,000 homes, as there are about 17,500 buildable lots currently. Of those 17,500 lots many have unbuildable topography and many more have no utilities and need expensive offsite improvements, so the number of buildable lots is much less. But Measure M will only stop about 15,500 additional proposed lots if the conditions of Proposition M are not met. More on those conditions later.



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Mike Ranalli, also vying for District 4 supervisor, says he is a free marketer as well and opposes the layers of bureaucracy and regulation that Measure M will bring, but he favors the General Plan as approved by the voters in 2004 and says that any General Plan amendment needs to be approved by the voters and that would include any zoning changed needed for large developments which Measure M seeks to prevent.

Ranalli said, "The General Plan is our contract with respect to our quality of life in EDC and we should live by it."

Most, if not all, of those proposed 15,500 dwellings are now prohibited by the current existing General Plan anyway. To say that Ranalli is for the development of 33,000 homes because he is not for Measure M is absolutely untrue. The question becomes who is not telling the truth.

But that didn't stop Penn from creating a campaign sign addition to his larger campaign sign that says, "Stop Mike Ranalli's 33,000 Home Plan." Penn knows it's an exaggeration at best and at worst it's slimy, sleazy and dishonest politics. In a phone interview when asked about the sign Penn admitted to it being a bit of an exaggeration. Ya, think? According to Ranalli, he has no plans to build any houses and he has nothing to do with Marble Valley, San Stinko or any other EDC development.

An analysis of Measure M shows it is fraught with pitfalls, the first being where, when, why and how Level of Service F, which is poorly defined in the measure, is controlling. The measure says "If Caltrans determines that traffic on any Highway 50 road segment west of Placerville has reached, or is forecast to reach, Level of Service F (LOS + F stop and go, gridlock) during weekday, peak-hour commute periods, then the county shall not approve single-family detached housing subdivisions of five or more parcels until cumulative Highway 50 traffic levels are improved and stay below LOS F."

The first problem is Measure M becomes effective if anywhere on Highway 50 is declared LOS F, whether that problem is near downtown Sacramento, Rancho Cordova or Folsom or anywhere in between. Such a problem has nothing to do with El Dorado County. So if Rancho Cordova with new development creates LOS F at Sunrise or Mather, then El Dorado County suffers under the guise of Measure M. That is untenable. And LOS F doesn't have to be real, it only needs to be forecast. It only needs

to be prognosticated by a bureaucrat with a crystal ball and that could be very political.

Second is the fact Measure M does not prohibit attached or other higher density housing, it only prohibits single-family detached housing. That means Measure M will encourage even higher density development, which is the opposite effect of trying to stop development. Can you imagine El Dorado Hills full of townhomes and condos. Measure M would not prevent that, and by the elimination of single-family detached homes from the development palette, Measure M would encourage such higher density housing (townhomes, condos and apartments). In other words, Measure M would have the opposite intended effect.

Developers would love it and most residents of El Dorado County would loathe it. And developers would claim townhouse/condo development would certainly be more affordable and satisfy the demand for moderately priced housing. What politician doesn't love the phrase "moderately priced housing and homes."

Third, Measure M gives all discretion of determining LOS F to a giant bureaucracy, Caltrans; meaning people outside of EDC will make the decisions. The problem with that is that government is political and just a forecast of LOS F would stop development. Forecasts are nothing more than guesses. And then there is the adage that "liars figure and figures (can be made to) lie." This provision will cause wasteful and costly litigation. And with telecommuting on the rise, LOS F will even be more difficult to forecast.

There is also a provision in M that forever freezes zoning of the current general plan. What if the General Plan gets amended by the voters, then what? More expensive and wasteful litigation. Measure M is a poorly written dangerous idea. It hasn't been vetted as it should have been and it certainly shouldn't be a litmus test of whether a candidate is for or

against development and what kind of development.

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