

Opinion: EDC's misplaced trust

By Larry Weitzman

After at least a dozen columns describing the mismanagement of El Dorado County business by county Chief Administrative Officer Terri Daly, the CAO resigned under pressure from the Board of Supervisors, who finally recognized that an immediate change was necessary.

The light bulbs finally went off when the BOS recognized that because of the actions of the CAO, EDC was facing perhaps a \$100 million deficit over the next five years, among other issues. It was beyond time for Daly's departure.



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But Daly still had friends on the BOS in the likes of Norma Santiago and Ron Briggs. On the day of Daly's resignation (I wasn't present in the closed session, but it must have been "resign or get fired") Santiago said after saying the BOS accepted her resignation, "Terri Daly was a loyal champion of El Dorado County employees." Santiago still doesn't get it.

First, according to the VanDermyden Maddux report, departments under the CAO, such as the Community Development Agency had some of the worst employee ratings. According to the report's data, if there were a climate of fear, it was located there. Perhaps Santiago thought she was a loyal champion of the

employees because she hired lots of them and gave them big raises. But the CAO's job is not to be the loyal champion of the employees; the CAO is supposed to be the loyal champion of the taxpayers and residents of EDC. Daly didn't work for the employees, she worked for us; we are the ones who paid her salary and benefits of a quarter million dollars annually.

Daly in the last two years of her wasteful, spending tenure hired about 170 employees, most of them given jobs that did nothing for the citizens, with the plurality of them in her departments. Yes, Santiago was actually telling the truth; that is how you buy loyalty. If that wasn't enough, it was Daly who gave most county employees a 15 percent raise during a time when most wages and incomes across America were stagnant or declining. They are less than they were six years ago. That's how you buy loyalty. Hopefully, the new BOS will understand their No. 1 priority is the taxpayers and residents of EDC.

If Daly were the loyal champion of EDC employees, why did she fire three good employees or otherwise force them out of the county. Greg Sly, Randy Rafoth and Larry Roth were all competent employees serving the residents of EDC, but as soon as they crossed Daly or the ACAO Kim Kerr, they were gone. Maybe Daly realized that their loyalty was to the people EDC and not to the CAO. Big mistake. Perhaps Daly was afraid of their competence.

Then there was a column in *Lake Tahoe News* on July 4 signed by the four members of the BOS. According to CAO records, this column praising Daly's performance as CAO, was ghost written by Stephanie McCorkle. Who hired McCorkle? That's right, Daly on a one-year \$25,000 contract. Who is McCorkle? According to the contract executed by Daly and McCorkle, she was "to provide expert communication consulting service for the Chief Administrative Officer." In other word, McCorkle was a PR person. One of her first jobs was to write the aforementioned column.

Billing statements obtained pursuant to the California Public Records Act showed an eight hour billing on June 23, 2014, that said, "CAO communication priority meeting. Met with Norma, Brian and CAO. Drafted op/ed for Mountain Democrat to clarify support for CAO from board."

Three other subsequent items also reflected significant work (almost two dozen hours) on this column. The column was a huge puff piece as it was mostly filled with half-truths at best.

If things were so good, why did Daly become such a pariah and had to be effectively terminated by the BOS only four months later? That's because CAO Daly wasn't a loyal champion of the residents and taxpayers of EDC. Her power trip included excessive hiring, huge pay raises and an inability to administer county business such as purchasing motor graders. Daly was also in charge of a department that violated the California Public Contract Law at least 48 times (it appears ACAO Kerr who was head of the CDA is equally responsible as she signed most of the change orders) and in the forcing of good employees to leave.

As a result of Daly's spending she has left EDC in an untenable fiscal position with at least five years of projected budget deficits (especially since claiming that she was responsible in the July 4 column for four balanced budgets in a row) does not make up for being a loyal champion of EDC employees. That is supposed to be the job of county labor representative Local No. 1, Jere Copeland.

How soon will Santiago and Ron Briggs, who supported Daly and more than likely the July 4 column, publish a column retracting what they said in that column? Hopefully the new BOS will do a better job of vetting prospective employees. A simple Google search could have prevented the problems that have been created over the last four years.

News flash: It was reported by a high ranking respected public

official that Kim Kerr has resigned her position as ACA0 on Nov. 12 effective Dec. 26.

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