

Opinion: TPRID needs to be wary of county

By Michael Clark

There is an important meeting of the Tahoe Paradise Resort Improvement District planned for the evening of Dec. 11 at the CCC building. There is an effort being made to approve an memo of understanding (MOU) with El Dorado County. The purpose of this MOU are unclear to me and to many others. Since the TPRID was formed under the auspices of El Dorado County, they are already obliged to assist the TPRID with administrative functions, and they already do.

The TPRID does not have a checking account. El Dorado County keeps all records, writes all checks, retains all monies and provides oversight of their finances. It has been this way since the TPRID was formed in the 1960s. When the TPRID spends any money, the spending is approved by the TPRID board, there is a check request form submitted to El Dorado County by the TPRID, signed by at least two members of the TPRID board of directors, then El Dorado County sends the funds to the vendor(s).

What exactly will be changed by the MOU? Nothing will materially changed with this process and someone will still need to provide vendor numbers, addresses, coding and signed check requests to the El Dorado County bureaucracy. So why is an MOU needed and how will it provide any further assistance to the TPRID?

Further, the TPRID wisely chose to invest in using their asset to provide space for weddings and other functions on their property about a decade ago. It has proven to be a significant revenue source for the TPRID. The scheduling of these events has been difficult at best. Anyone who has planned an event,

especially a wedding, knows how important a local contact can be.

The MOU proposes to cede this scheduling to El Dorado County.

Currently, the TPRID manager schedules these events and receives a portion of the proceeds as part of his compensation and motivation. Should an administrator in El Dorado County take over this scheduling, there will be far less motivation. It is difficult to understand exactly how El Dorado County can be expected to manage administrative functions from Placerville for a district in Tahoe Paradise with their current staffing.

My understanding is that they are facing a \$20 million deficit and will likely have to reduce staff. And, the on-site manager will still have to interface with those who wish to use the facilities. The TPRID manager will have to do all the work that was done previous to the MOU, but will have no compensation and motivation. It is difficult to see how this will result in success. Again, there is little benefit to the TPRID.

When I served on the TPRID board, myself and every other director visited the park once or twice a week. We discussed what was being done, the priorities and provided direction to the TPRID manager on an almost daily basis. We accomplished a lot: built a playground that was funded 50 percent by a grant, repaved the parking lot, improved the clubhouse, etc.

One manages employees by providing solid direction, definable goals and specific instructions, not by second-guessing after the fact. I see this MOU as nothing but an attempt to abdicate responsibility to El Dorado County.

The directors of TPRID have to realize what their oath means and agree to act in the interests of the district's members, the property owners within the TPRID boundaries. I strongly recommend that the TPRID board consider focusing their efforts

on working within themselves to provide clear, concise direction to their employee and to focus on the operation of TPRID rather than look for ways to decrease their involvement.

The TPRID is the only entity that has any official status in El Dorado County here in Tahoe Paradise in regards to recreation. And yet, they have no Internet presence and little support from El Dorado County. While, at the same time, the various permutations of the "Meyers Plan" has a website hosted by El Dorado County. One must really wonder about that reality. Why would the unofficial "Meyers Plan" group be supported by El Dorado County when the official TPRID is not? Considering that there is an El Dorado County supervisor on the TPRID board, this is hard to understand. Do the members and organizers of the "Meyers Plan" have an MOU with El Dorado County? If so, why? And if not, why not?

What I find incredible is that this MOU is extremely contentious within our little community. There are many property owners within the district that are opposed to it. There must be those who are supportive of it as well. But absolutely no information has been released to the public in any meaningful way, through public sources like newspapers or blog sites, by any interested party. One would expect that responsible property owners, TPRID directors or El Dorado County supervisors would want to provide information and rationale for such an agreement before it is proposed. But that is apparently not the case. Hence, my attempt to put this MOU vote into some perspective.

Part of this MOU may be understood in the context of the structure of the TPRID. The way that the district was structured when it was founded is no longer used as it has proven to be difficult to manage. There is legislation available under California state law which allows the TPRID to be changed to a different form of district, a community services district. Many have interpreted this change as "giving up the park" or allowing El Dorado County to "take

over” the park. I had a lengthy conversation with El Dorado LAFCo (Local Area Formation Commission) Director José C. Henríquez, who authored the state legislation. After our conversation, I understood the conversion process in far more detail and found it to be sensible. The application to convert the TPRID to a more efficient model would be beneficial to the district without “giving up” the TPRID to anyone, in my humble opinion. This conversion would offer similar administrative advantages in the form of assistance from El Dorado. However, it requires serious study and consideration by the TPRID board of directors to initiate the process.

I attended the El Dorado County Board of Supervisors meeting at the Lake Tahoe Airport in October. I made two appeals to the supervisors at that time, requesting that the TPRID be made a larger part of their focus on recreation, attempting to bring the TPRID into their discussions.

There was little interest and, in fact, the BOS cited the limited budget of El Dorado County for being unable to provide such assistance.

It is difficult to understand how El Dorado County would wish to enter into an MOU if they clearly have no interest in being involved with the TPRID. Although assistance is greatly needed, this MOU is entirely too broad and without specifics to be of any real use to the TPRID or its members. In addition, the relationship already exists. So why is this so important again?

In conclusion, I believe that the proposed MOU is not in the best interests of the property owners within the TPRID boundaries and will prove to further complicate the relationship between El Dorado County and the TPRID. Adding layers of government bureaucracy has seldom proven to improve matters.

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Paradise Resort Improvement District board member.

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Note: *Lake Tahoe New earlier this week requested from the District 5 supervisor's office an agenda for tonight's TRPIP board meeting but was not provided one.*