

State ruling: Supervisor Novasel not banned from all aspects of Meyers Area Plan

By Kathryn Reed

El Dorado County Supervisor Sue Novasel is allowed to engage her constituents in discussions about any topic. The same is not true when it comes to staff or other board members. And some items she won't be allowed to vote on.

At the urging of county counsel she asked the Fair Political Practices Commission to rule on potential conflicts of interest. The FPPC made its decision in late June. Most electeds at the local level recuse themselves from time to time on issues. This is because they are not allowed to vote on a matter that could financially benefit them.



Sue Novasel

With Novasel, her two big issues – that are known today – are the inability to vote on the Meyers Area Plan and the proposed courthouse in Placerville. The former is because she has property in the plan area, the latter is because her husband through his company has given a loan to the property owner.

What the FPPC said is Novasel may discuss these issues with the public and media, but not with staff or other supervisors. The limit on staff-board interaction is so she is not

influencing them in their work and decision making. She is allowed to receive all material that is available to the public.

“County counsel still advises me to be careful when discussing things with the public to avoid even the perception of influencing,” Novasel told *Lake Tahoe News*. “I can listen so when the plan goes through in whatever form I could help with specific projects that the community wants. I will be part of helping in any way.”

She wants to set up town hall meetings and/or coffees to hear what the residents of Meyers want.

“There are structural and design standards; what do we want for our roadways; if people want the bus station moved, I want to help. There are a lot of things in that plan,” Novasel said.

Once the plan is adopted, Novasel wants to be an integral part of moving it forward.

The supervisors will be having their annual Tahoe meeting on Aug. 31 starting at 9am at Lake Tahoe Airport. The Meyers Area Plan is anticipated to be one of the topics.

Novasel recognizes the frustrations constituents have with her not being able to vote on the Meyers plan, but it's the law. She pointed out, though, that everyone in the county is represented by five electeds – not just one. And then each vote carries the same weight.

Her inability to vote on the Meyers plan will also carry over to the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency Governing Board. However, the county has an alternate for that board.

As for the courthouse, the 88,000-square-foot facility is slated to be built on land owned by El Dorado County adjacent to the existing county jail just off Forni Road in Placerville

as well as on an adjoining 5.2 acres owned by John Briggs, father of former El Dorado County Supervisor Ron Briggs, grandfather of ex-Placerville Planning Commissioner Brian Briggs and father-in-law of Superior Court Judge Steve Bailey.

Novasel & Schwarte Investments Inc. has loaned money to the Briggs Family Trust. This is the company her husband is a part owner and principal of. The supervisor has never worked for the company, but because she financially benefits from the company there is a conflict of interest that prevents her from voting on the courthouse issue. Since her election last November, she has had to recuse herself once.

While the company is incorporated in Nevada, it has filed the paperwork to exist in California as a foreign corporation. This keeps everything legal. The main office is in Meyers, with a branch in Zephyr Cove. Kelly Krolicki, step-daughter of Dick Schwarte, is part of this company. She is married to Brian Krolicki, former lieutenant governor of Nevada. All of the vetting of this financial company has been done multiple times because of Brian Krolicki's various political offices.