

EDC gathering input on strategic plan



Few people turned out Oct. 15 to hear Laree Kiely from the Kiely Group talk about El Dorado County's future. Photo/Jessie Marchesseau

By Jessie Marchesseau

El Dorado County Supervisor Sue Novasel hosted a community meeting at South Lake Tahoe council chambers at the airport on Thursday evening as part of the process to develop a three-year strategic plan for El Dorado County. The focus of the meeting was to inform citizens about the planning process and to encourage participation in the countywide citizen engagement survey.

Excluding county employees and media, community attendance Oct. 15 amounted to less than a dozen.

Novasel explained to those present that the Board of Supervisors, along with county department heads, created a draft of the strategic plan outlining what they deemed to be important topics. Now they want to know what the community thinks is important. This is where the survey comes in.

“This survey is going to do a lot for me to try to understand what those top issues are,” said Novasel.

The county has hired the Kiely Group to conduct the citizen engagement survey, which will be available to the public until Nov. 2. It asks questions like, “Do you use county government services?” and “Which county services have the most impact on your quality of life and why?” It also asks for suggestions about each of the five areas of focus the county has identified for the plan: economic development, public safety, infrastructure, healthy community, and good county governance.

Laree Kiely of the Kiely Group reported that so far they have received about a thousand surveys, paper and online. While she did not reveal the results of the surveys, she did offer some demographic information about who has taken it thus far:

- 32 towns are represented
- 64 people from Lake Tahoe
- Majority of respondents are in the 50-65 age group
- 66 percent are women
- 29 percent are government employees (the survey was sent out to them first)
- 26 percent are retired
- 50 percent said they do not use county services.

Kiely said that last statistic confirms what she suspected is going in: a lot of people don't even know what county government does. She pointed out that if they are simply driving on the roads, they are using county services.

“The really positive outcome, kind of the unintended consequence of this survey, is if they even read the questions of the survey, they will be more educated about what county

government does, and that is a win all around," she said.

At one point, attendees were asked to voice what their main concerns for the county are. Responses included the environment, public safety, Tahoe Paradise Park, happy and healthy residents, open space, adequate services for tourists, public transit, and maintaining the status quo. A sign-up sheet was also passed around for anyone wanting to be in a future focus group.

Sherman Fox, training and organizational development specialist for El Dorado County, explained the process moving forward: once the surveys are completed and results are in, the data will be analyzed and focus groups formed to delve deeper into the most popular topics. The information will then be given to the goal-setting team who will determine if the county's original objectives need to be altered to coordinate with public concern. The intention, he said, is to have all this done and for the board to have a new three-year El Dorado County strategic plan ready by Christmas.

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Note:

- To participate in the survey, go **online**.