

Opinion: EDC survey is more government waste

By Larry Weitzman

El Dorado County executives are at it again. After the Board of Supervisors and CAO spent about \$200,000 last year on a witch hunt and other diversionary tactics to cover for the many failings of the then CAO Terri Daly, such as the budget deficit, failure to follow BOS directives and the huge cost of the employee raises, Daly recommended an anonymous survey of past and present county employees by Vandermyden Maddux.

It became known as the “climate of fear.” As a result the BOS on the CAO’s recommendation hired a consultant, the Municipal Resource Group. Now the BOS has hired another consultant, Laree Kiely, founder of the Kiely group. The contract must have been signed under the authority of the CAO, as I haven’t seen anything on the BOS agenda. The good news is that the contract must be less than \$64,000 which is the signing authority for a CAO. The bad news is that it is another extravagant waste of money, never mind the time cost of county employees which will substantially add to the cost.



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The “climate of fear” didn’t accomplish what the then CAO wanted, which was to destroy any opposition to her unbridled spending and power mongering. Instead it backfired as the survey clearly showed the problems all resided in her office

where fear was rampant and employees were covering. Instead it help destroy her and her cohorts as the survey showed they were the "bullies." There are still many of Daly's henchmen left that must be removed from EDC government.

That said, the purpose of this new Kiely study is to develop a strategic plan for EDC. Even though the county has a detailed General Plan going out decades, is the Kiely study a duplicate with underlying political motivations or perhaps a delay to solving EDC's budget deficit?

On Oct. 2 on *Lake Tahoe News* there was information announcing the development of a three-year strategic plan asking for citizen engagement by taking a survey online. It is a wish list of what you, the citizen, want from the county and what you think are its most vital functions. The bias of the survey becomes clear when one of the more important questions asks the survey taker to rate 12 county functions in order of importance, 1-12 with the most important function getting a 12 and the least important getting a 1, the second least important a 2 and so on. It's biased and slanted in that about half the functions (in my opinion) had zero importance and having to give preference of one over the other will create misleading results. The results would have been more precise and concise if each of the 12 functions were rated separately on importance on a 0-10 scale.

Other areas of the survey were like having a wish list (as asking for "free" stuff from the government). Therefore, I asked for a new county loan program for \$100,000 loans with zero interest with no payments for 30 years and then a 50-year repayment schedule after the first 30 years. Heck, why not \$500,000? My point being is that 95 percent of EDC residents want the county to provide three basic services: public safety, land use planning, and roads and road maintenance, otherwise they never have contact with the county except for paying their property taxes (ouch) or voting. Property taxes, sales taxes, hidden development fees and even DMV car

registration fees should be a reminder to everyone of the expensive cost of government and paying for services that you never use.

Before this survey was developed there were also several meetings of high ranking public officials, mostly county department heads, the Kiely people and some members of the public to create a written matrix of what constitutes good governance, public safety, infrastructure, community health and economic development and other topics. I was on the good governance committee. At the first meeting Kiely gave a Skype presentation and took questions from those present. I made this comment that to have good government there were six words that if adhered to would solve most of the problems of governance without the necessity of matrixes, meetings or the rest of the highfalutin government speak that will be created by the good governance and the other committees. These words are: Absolute Honesty, Pristine Ethics, Complete Transparency. Just those six words if followed to the full extent of their meaning, government will operate at amazing efficiency and effectiveness and without bias. Government will become selfless as it should be and only about EDC residents.

Government and some of its (higher level) employees forget that they are a fiduciary to the people, like a bank acting as a trustee to a family trust. We don't have that in EDC. We have people in the administration, building a power base, always wanting a higher salary (and pensions), hiring their friends, covering up mistakes and to make matters worse our Board of Supervisors are absolutely derelict and feckless. (I am not speaking of the rank and file employees who generally do a great job serving the public).

The good governance committee basically copied what other jurisdictions claim to be the model in government speak language: "Achieving the best possible process for making & implementing decisions; characterized by honesty, integrity, accountability, transparency, responsiveness, equitability,

inclusion, effectiveness, efficiency and following the rule of law." Notice how the words honesty and transparency are buried and make it feel good. There are levels of honesty and transparency and that's why when you take an oath you are sworn to: "tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth." That is why we must demand "absolute honesty, pristine ethics and complete transparency." Everything else in government that the public expects will fall into place. We certainly don't have it now.