

# Opinion: El Dorado County on a path of success

By Sue Novasel

El Dorado County and its Board of Supervisors have been in full stride throughout the last year solving critical issues, making important changes to protect tax dollars and providing expanded services to the public.

I am proud that in my first year in office on the Board of Supervisors we have become a well-working board, formulating a new strategic plan for our communities based on public input. My four colleagues and I represent more than 180,000 residents and oversee a budget of over \$500 million. El Dorado County District V reaches from the shores of the South Shore, past Emerald Bay to Tahoma and down to Pollock Pines.



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El Dorado County employs over 1,800 employees, working in more than 100 divisions from animal services, child protection and probation to the department of transportation. We operate public services such as snow removal, elections, land use planning, and libraries while taking care of our most vulnerable populations and ensuring proper child and health care. One of our most important services is public safety. Our sheriff's office works mostly behind the scenes to create a safe environment, which provides peace in our neighborhoods by protecting the lives of our citizens.

On the day I took office in January 2015, our county faced a \$19 million budget deficit. A delicate balance between maintaining critical services and balancing the budget was a top priority for our board. I am happy to report that the county diligently delivered a balanced budget by June, allowing for improved reserves while adding oversight on expenditures. And 2016 looks to be another year of improving revenues and services to our county residents.

As your District V supervisor, I am appointed to critical local boards such as the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency, California Tahoe Conservancy, Tahoe Transportation District, county Mental Health Commission, First 5 El Dorado, South Lake Tahoe Recreation Facilities Joint Powers Authority, South Lake Tahoe Solid Waste Management Authority, South Lake Tahoe Redevelopment Oversight and the Tahoe Paradise Resort Improvement District. With these additional job assignments, come many local projects and goals.

My focus in representing you has been and will continue to be facilitating projects that benefit the lake, the county and our communities, such as:

- Planning and completing projects that improve our communities and provide better recreation. Biking and hiking promotes clean air and good health. Community connectivity is vital to our communities as well as stimulating economic vitality. In 2015, our county completed the Sawmill Bike Path, connecting Meyers to South Lake Tahoe.
- Improving the permit process by working with local agencies and listening to consumers to better streamline administration to create greater efficiencies.
- Supporting boat inspections to prevent invasive species. Boat inspections needs to continue as we strive to keep Lake Tahoe clear of invasive species that could devastate ecosystems.

- Assuring that the Meyers community planning process is in good hands by attending community meetings, speaking with the business owners and residents to hear their concerns, and encouraging community advisory groups formed by locals who are concerned about how their community works and grows together.

- Clearing the way for improvement projects that are ready to launch as funding becomes available, such as recreation and road improvements, erosion control projects, library hubs and small business expansion.

Another important priority to me is bridging communications between the West Slope and Lake Tahoe. Collaboration between agencies such as the city of South Lake Tahoe, Caltrans, USFS, and TRPA are not only important – they are vital to coordinating environmental and community projects. Agencies that work together accomplish more. I look forward to great things happening by increased collaboration on future projects.

As the Mental Health Commission representative, I am pleased to report that a hard working team of staff and volunteers has secured transitional housing for our mental health clients, expanded therapies and services, and improved communications and coordination with Barton Hospital and law enforcement. How to care for our homeless and our residents with mental health challenges will always be difficult but progress is being made by a collaboration of public and private citizens clearing the way for this vulnerable population to be better housed, fed and understood.

My pride and joy project has been the Tahoe Paradise Resort Improvement District, also known as Tahoe Paradise Park. I took the reins as president of the board of directors this year and thanks to the work of our board and many hard working volunteers of the Meyers community, we have:

- cleaned up the park

- brought in new events, concerts and activities
- coordinated a community election for the first time in over 10 years
- aligned the budget with new priorities, which has set an exciting course to revitalize our local community park.

Tahoe Paradise Park has been a special place for my family and me, and it's inspiring to see the young families coming back to enjoy it as we always have.

South Lake Tahoe seniors are among the hardest working volunteers, contributors, networkers and solution-oriented community groups. When they speak, I listen. And they gave me an ear full this year that made sense. I am taking steps to deliver the South Lake Tahoe Senior Center to the city of South Lake Tahoe and get it into the hands of the correct operators – the seniors and the city. While communications toward solutions can sometimes be a bumpy road, I will never take my eye off the goal and we are now within reach of creating a new road for a more vibrant senior facility.

Finally, I am very proud of our residents of my district, our employees, our businesses, and the people and places we share with our visitors. This last year has been a year of hard work and I'm looking forward to working with you in 2016 to bring about even greater solutions to create the legacy our community deserves. Thank you for allowing me to serve you as your local representative. Please call my Tahoe office if you ever have any concerns or questions at 530.573,7918.

*Sue Novasel is the District 5 rep on the El Dorado County Board of Supervisors.*