

Opinion: AG proves EDC supes' incompetence

By Larry Weitzman

Fact is an overused word. Just because something is written or spoken doesn't make it a fact, as a fact must be proven to be a fact. Likewise use of the term "proven fact" or "known fact" is redundant as all facts to be a fact must be proven and therefore known. Without the acceptance of "fact," science or life as we know it would not exist. Two plus two equals four is a fact. In fact, (pun intended) all arithmetic is fact.



Larry Weitzman

It is unfortunate that some of our grand juries don't operate on fact and their inability to do so (too much politics injected) has now cost the public tens of thousands if not hundreds of thousands of dollars. I am referring to the 2014-15 El Dorado County Grand Jury report about which I wrote a column last year. The column's point was that the grand jury has become a political body and a kangaroo court. It didn't deal in facts, but hearsay. It called statements from witnesses' testimony, but since it wasn't sworn, it was nothing but hearsay and couldn't be considered fact. It was my third column discussing the grand jury's lack of credibility that clearly should be renamed the Gossip Jury. The first column was published July 2014 and the second in July 2015 entitled.

Grand Jury report item 14-12 was about several non-issues trumped up against the auditor. Most, if not all, of it was based on non-sworn interviews; hearsay in other words. One of those issues was not paying legitimate invoices from vendors or delaying those payments. There is a penal code section (424, 425) forbidding such practice. Notwithstanding the factual evidence to the contrary and the acceptance of a mountain of hearsay or gossip, the political grand jury recommended that the district attorney investigate auditor with the ultimate goal of the removal of our only county watchdog so he could be replaced by a county lapdog. The Board of Supervisors, in their unthinking style, accepted the recommendation anyway and eventually the attorney general did an investigation costing our county untold thousands of dollars, while county potholes continue to grow and proliferate.

The district attorney turned to the state Attorney General's Office for the investigation to prevent any appearance of a conflict of interest. The state attorney general has spoken. It completed its investigation and will take no further action. It was obvious there was nothing to this folly as I have repeatedly said in these columns, but at what cost?

Most of this started with former CAO Terri Daly and HR director and former interim CAO after Daly, Pam Knorr, spending perhaps hundreds of thousands of dollars trying show malfeasance of the auditor. The irony is that it was Daly and Knorr who should be fired with their wild spending and bullying of employees. Daly is already gone and even in her absence she couldn't keep her word with respect to the severance contract she executed with EDC for which she received a huge package of \$153,000. EDC should have filed a lawsuit for its recovery for Daly's breach of the contract, but our weak-kneed supervisors are afraid of their own shadows and have no bite. Maybe dental implants are the answer?

Knorr, as described in a June 2015 column more or less started

this second round of an expensive witch-hunt when she was hired in by our BOS as interim CAO. Knorr then hired in her friends from Alpine County, the same private investigator she used in Alpine, to wit: Ken MacHold. But instead of hiring him on a direct contract at \$50 an hour as she did in Alpine, she used the subterfuge of the Prentice, Long and Epperson law firm who allegedly hired MacHold as an employee and the fee more than doubled to \$110 an hour. The contract was probably illegal as there was no workers' comp insurance provided during the contract but that didn't stop Knorr. Incidentally, the Prentice law firm just happens to be the law firm hired by Knorr as Alpine County counsel during her tenure as Alpine County CAO. Meanwhile, MacHold, while at Alpine, worked with Knorr to help her get a large legal settlement (almost \$200,000, which is about 2.5 percent of the total Alpine County budget) which was approved by Alpine's County counsel, Prentice. It is a tangled web.

Knorr, as interim CAO, even tried to hide first invoice from MacHold of over \$15,000 by writing it off to the new courthouse project. Knorr even stonewalled the *Mountain Democrat* when it inquired about the contract and the invoice.

The bottom line is that the grand jury has now been proven wrong with respect to both reports cited above by the attorney general. The facts are that there was never anything to the GJ allegations as it was based on hearsay and not fact. It was gossip, not testimony under penalty of perjury, and that goes for both reports, GJ 13-20 and GJ 14-12. And now the attorney general found the reports as specious as the allegations. Both reports were concocted and pushed by politics and power by two CAOs. And at what cost? How many hours of county time were spent? How many hours of AG time? And then there are the hard costs. We don't know what was invoiced with respect to MacHold but it was over \$15,000 and up to about \$64,000, Knorr's executory contract authority without BOS approval.

Interestingly this same 2014-15 Grand Jury in Report 14-07

lambasted this same HR Director Knorr in a report entitled "Board of Supervisors Neglects Human Resources." It speaks poorly of Knorr's business practices. Maybe the AG should also investigate that department as well.

We know that CAO Daly spent a quarter million dollars on her bogus "bully reports." Daly is gone, but not forgotten. But why is Knorr still here? In Grand Jury Report 14-07 one of the several recommendations was "The Board of Supervisors should appoint a qualified manager of Human Resources." The GJ also said: "The BOS should aggressively seek a new and qualified CAO." It was Knorr who gave us the incompetent Larry Combs. It was time for Knorr to be gone over a year ago and the BOS has and had that power. So what did they do, make her interim CAO, rewarding incompetence and politics. Then the BOS doubled down with Combs based on Knorr's recommendation. What is the BOS afraid of? Where is the AG investigation of HR Director Knorr's practices?

"Everyone is entitled to his own opinion, but not his own facts." Daniel Patrick Moynihan, senator from New York, 1976-2000.

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