

# Opinion: EDC's hollow road maintenance promises

By Larry Weitzman

El Dorado County is still suffering from a multitude of management issues from the legality of funding road maintenance from the Missouri Flat Master Circulation and Funding Plan (CFD for the Missouri Flat Corridor), which is evidently waiting for a legal opinion from county counsel, to awaiting new numbers from CalPERS of the county's unfunded liabilities regarding the its pensions and the new \$60 plus million non-voter approved obligation for the sheriff's headquarters



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In a Sept. 30, press release about the new EDC budget from the Board of Supervisors there was a bullet point that said the BOS is putting "\$2 million additional funds for road maintenance and improvements, increasing the road maintenance and operations budget ...." It was only a year ago that this very same BOS, including both Mike Ranalli and Sue Novasel voted to end General Fund road maintenance. And when the issue of using General Fund road maintenance money was agendized a few months later by Supervisor Shiva Frentzen, it was voted down by the rest of the BOS again.

More important is that the voters by a margin of 65 percent to 35 percent mandated a portion of General Fund money for road

maintenance with the passage of Measure H 16 years ago. How the BOS forgets and ignores.

The reality is that EDC is not adding any General Fund money from General Fund revenues to road maintenance, but that EDC hopes to raid the Missouri Flat Master Circulation and Funding Plan or legally known as Community Facilities District No. 2002-01 which is essentially a Mello-Roos District. Connected to this CFD are a series of at least a half a dozen development agreements with the large landowners. This is a very complex deal and therein lies an insurmountable problem.

The other reality is a political one. EDC's largest asset is its nearly 1,100 miles of roads. After public safety the largest priority for the county is the maintenance of this asset. And that is a huge job considering the heavy truck traffic, and hot and cold weather. So the press release was for the purpose of making the BOS look good to the public and hopefully the re-election of two county supervisors, Ranalli and Novasel. Politics is all about perception and has nothing to do with what really happens. This CFD was formed in about March 2002 by Resolution No. 074-2002 which established CFD No. 2002-01. It was created by a special tax allocation giving 85 percent of the increase in sales and property tax within the district to fund the district. That money now amounts to about \$6 million in the bank and growing.

At a recent BOS budget meeting, head of the CDA, Steve Pedretti, said that essentially there was more than enough money in the CFD for the balance of needed road improvements, the purpose being that the BOS could make a finding that they could use the money for general fund road maintenance as stated in the aforementioned press release. The idea is to dissolve the CFD and grab the money at the detriment of every county resident who uses the road, never mind the businesses in the CFD who paid into the fund on the promise of a much improved traffic circulation plan for the Missouri Flat Corridor. If the BOS can't get to the money for road

maintenance, no problem, they will blame Pedretti whose last day at the county is in two weeks.

It must be assumed that no one has read the 22 pages of Resolution No. 074-2002 (the CFD formation document) except for probably former BOS member Jack Sweeney (he seems to read everything) who was not even on the BOS at the time of passing this resolution. Considering the amount of typographical errors and slipshod paperwork on the document that was executed by the chair of the BOS and clerk of the board, I doubt anyone other than the typist read the document when it was passed in 2002, otherwise the more than a dozen typos and other errors would have been at least corrected.

How do I know about the typos and other mistakes? I printed and read Resolution 2002-01. The work required under the CFD has been barely started as two of the biggest projects haven't even begun construction and another is in need of a redo. The three large projects were the "fixing" of the 1) Missouri Flat/Highway 50 interchange which while ostensibly completed is still in need of a retrofit as the two shopping center exits on the north side are clearly inadequate, 2) Missouri Flat Road Widening-Phase B: Forni Road to Future Pleasant Valley Connector, and 3) the Pleasant Valley Connector Roadway: Missouri Flat Road to Hwy 49/Fowler Lane Intersection.

These two major improvements have yet to break ground and the merchants in the corridor want them built to increase the ease of access to their stores. It is mandatory that these improvements be finished before any disbandment of the CFD take place and any left over money is available to the general fund for road maintenance or any other purpose. On top of that this CFD has a 40-year lifespan, until June 30, 2042.

The county counsel said he would write a legal opinion saying that the BOS could get \$2 million from the CFD bank account. County counsel has also not read the formation documents

either or he would not have made such a promise. Most of his recent "legal opinions" are replete with misstatements of the law, poor legal construction and general balderdash. But there is a real reason for this charade and it is political and that is the BOS wanted to tell the public they were going to do lots of road maintenance and fix our decaying infrastructure which is destroying our vehicles every day. They are not going to do that. This road maintenance promise is very important to the reelection campaign of Mike Ranalli and Sue Novasel. They wanted to tell their constituents, "look, I am fixing the roads. See what a good guy (gal) I am." Politicians love to brag about their promises, not their real accomplishments.

The only way this No. 2 county priority was going to get handled was "cut spending" but instead the county continues with more of the same as spending continues to grow. And if that doesn't get you aggravated, our new total of unfunded CalPERS pension liability and unfunded county employee health costs will probably more than triple the new sheriff's facility obligation while the county continues to spend like a drunken sailor with the rank of admiral (they make good money and is meant as no derogation to any of our dedicated Naval Personnel.)

As another example of wasteful spending, the BOS approved the job description and salary of a new hire at the Oct. 11, the new public information officer at between a cost of about \$130K to about \$160K annually. The sole purpose of this new spin doctor is to make the BOS and higher county officials look good even though they continue to make bad decisions, especially with your money. What do they care, it's not their personal money and they know how to get more of your money. I wonder what kind of press release the new PIO will write when the BOS can't take the \$2 million from the Missouri Flat CSD? I doubt you will ever see that press release.

If EDC hires anyone it should be a butcher from Archer's, Raley's or Safeway to trim the fat from our budget spending.

He would do a much better job than what EDC BOS has done.

*Larry Weitzman is a resident of Rescue.*