

# Opinion: When will EDC learn it needs to do background checks?

By Larry Weitzman

El Dorado County recently hired Shannon Lowery, an outside consultant, for \$190,000 without not only a background check, but not even checking references. It happens when you have a government policy that goes by the motto: "Share the wealth, hire your friends."

It appears that was the situation with Lowery. Even former CAO Larry Combs wasn't properly vetted by the Board of Supervisors and look what he hath wrought. That policy gave us the likes of the inept ACAO Kim Kerr and put Kelly Webb in charge of the IT Department for which she wasn't qualified.



Larry Weitzman

That policy goes for appointments to county commissions and committees. There has been a reformation of the Charter Review Committee, a county body with the charge to review the county Charter (our constitution so to speak) for "necessary" changes (usually quite political). It had its first meeting on June 26. The new five-member committee has three new members and two holdovers from the last committee from 2014. I doubt any background checks were performed with respect to the new members and that goes for all the prior charter review

committees as the members are appointed by their respective district supervisor. But perhaps that should be a requirement as this position can recommend changes to our county governing documents and many appointees to the committee have political agendas.

My research demonstrates why background checks are necessary. A person who calls himself Christopher (Chris) Alarcon was appointed to the Charter Review Committee back in 2010 and became chair of that committee. He was later hired as an election inspector for the November 2011 elections. But what would a background check have revealed about Alarcon? First, we are unsure of his real name as in high school according to official witness reports his name was Christopher Price.

But there is a lot more to this story about Alarcon/Price. It seems A/P doesn't like to pay for vehicle registrations and has been cited three times since March 2009 for driving without his vehicles being properly registered in California. In all three citations issued to A/P in 2009, 2011 and 2012, the vehicles of which he was the driver were out of registration for several years. In fact, according to police reports, Alarcon doesn't even have a valid California driver's license and has not had one since 1999, although the police reports say he lives basically full time in California. He uses an Arizona license.

In the third citation issued on Feb. 12, 2012, according to the district attorney investigator, A/P had his California driver's license "suspended or revoked as of 1985 and 1997 with a notation of fraud." But that is just the tip of this massive iceberg with respect to Alarcon's criminal activities regarding the vehicle code. In fact, the arrest report reflects that A/P's offenses were so serious the officer arrested A/P for violating Vehicle Code Section 4463, a felony, which is falsification of a vehicle registration among several other charges. At the time of this report, the officer knew of two priors where the registrations were falsified and

the Arizona driver's license was used to "avoid" being in violation of driving without a license.

But let's go back to the first run-in with the law brought on by a bad license and/or tag. Alarcon was driving a green 1990 Saab which had a 2009 registration tag. The patrolling sheriff's deputy ran the plate and found that it was expired since 2005. The officer made a stop because of the discrepancy. You should know that officers on patrol routinely spend some of their day running plates at random. A/P told the deputy "there were several years it (the Saab) was not paid, but that he just mailed the stuff in to register it." The officer asked both A/P and his wife, Sherilyn Lumalarcon, a passenger in the car, why the Saab had a 2009 registration tab. Both said they didn't know how that could be. Remember A/P admitted it wasn't registered but now didn't know how the current 2009 tag appeared on the license plate. He was cited for several violations of the Vehicle Code, including displaying a fraudulent license tag, lack of proof of insurance and expired registration. The deputy removed the expired tag for evidence.

But having registration tags on your vehicles that belonged to other vehicles seemed to be a pattern for A/P. On Jan. 4th, 2011, A/P was stopped driving a Mercury Grand Marquis by the CHP and issued a citation of violating CVC 4000 (a) for not having a valid registration.

We have a pattern developing here as A/P was again stopped driving the same Grand Marquis on Feb. 6, 2012. A sheriff's deputy noticed that the registration sticker was not attached as it normally would be. After running the rear plate, the officer found that it belonged to a 1990 green Saab. A traffic stop was made and then things got real unusual. The officer found that the front plate belonged to the Grand Marquis, but the rear plate showed a current registration sticker not from the Saab which registration had expired in 2009, but to another car owned by a woman who lived at Eskaton Elderly

Living.

Turns out that sticker and plate were stolen from the elderly woman's car according to a theft report on Nov. 25, 2011, about two months before this stop of A/P. When interviewed, the woman said the theft caused her extensive hardship getting the matter straightened out (another reason for the county senior legal program) and requested that the perpetrator be prosecuted to the full extent of the law. A/P was arrested for violating CVC 4463, a felony among several other charges.

The plates and registration from the first stop when A/P was driving the green Saab, were taken from a Toyota on or about Dec. 19, 2008, as the owner went to the DMV and was issued new plates on that date. The Toyota belonged to a person who was related to A/P's wife and lived for several years on the property which A/P lived with his wife. But the owner of the Toyota never gave permission to A/P to use the plates and registration. There is only one plausible way those registrations migrated from the Toyota to the Saab.

There is only one way the plates and registration tag made it from the older woman's automobile to A/P's car. According to several witness statements, A/P doesn't live in Arizona but has an Arizona driver's license. A/P in one of the reports told the officer that he did live in Arizona. Perhaps he thinks it's a game to acquire other people's license tags so he doesn't have to pay California license fees. For cars that old, it isn't very expensive, probably much less than \$100 per vehicle per year.

How did this guy (A/P) get to be chairman of the Charter review committee with this kind of activity and pursuant to his claims in the various police reports, he isn't even a California resident, never mind a resident of El Dorado County? California residency would be a requirement for such activities. I wonder if he votes in California and if he has, has that activity broken any laws? Is that evidence of lying

to a police officer considering what A/P said in the police report?

Anybody who serves in any official capacity in El Dorado County needs to have a background check or it will be more of the same. This is certainly not good governance which the county claims they are striving to reach.

*Larry Weitzman is a resident of Rescue.*