

Letter: EDC should deny Meyers gas station

To the community,

One, do we really need another gas station in Meyers? Meyers has about 10 percent of the population of South Lake Tahoe, but 15 percent of the gas stations. The market isn't expanding, so why dilute the existing market?

Two, by diluting said market, the existing businesses in Meyers will see a reduction in revenues, and they will then reduce employee hours/wages. How is this helping struggling locals?

Three, do we really want to give the existing owner a third chance to pollute our groundwater, then declare bankruptcy when he gets sued by the state again? The taxpayers had to pay for the cleanup of the Beacon gas station. The owners have left that bill on the backs of the people.

Just how foolish are our county representatives?

In December 2001, the *Tahoe Daily Tribune* reported about a 1997 leak at the Meyers Beacon gas station that threatened water supplies. The leak at the Meyers Beacon has been labeled one of the worst spills of that time, and the ***Lake Tahoe News*** reported in May 2014 that several Lake Tahoe gas station owners are being sued by the state of California for allegedly mishandling underground storage tanks.

The 30-page complaint says the owners, Azad Amiri and Sarbjit Singh Kang were the masterminds behind everything, including using family and friends as "strawmen" as a way to "conceal their actual ownership, operation and control of the real properties."

The Attorney General's Office was "seeking a permanent injunction, civil penalties, and other equitable relief to remedy numerous violations observed at the facilities." The State Water Resources Control Board has been after many of these defendants for years, with fines being levied in the past. I guess permanent doesn't mean the same as when I went to school.

According to the **latest article in *Lake Tahoe News*** regarding the Meyers location, the state Water Board spent \$1.1 million to clean up the site.

"We worked with the attorney general to request reimbursement and we received a fraction of that amount back. The state is no longer pursuing reimbursement of funds," Lauri Kemper with the Lahontan Water Quality Control Board told *Lake Tahoe News*.

According to the lawsuit filed by the state, many of the defendants are residents of the Bay Area and Sacramento. An internet search on those named shows court filings for bankruptcy which included violations of §523(a)(2) false pretenses, false representation, actual fraud, and receivership lawsuits brought by various suppliers and banks as recent as July 2016.

In addition, the suit alleges that defendants Azad Amiri and Sarbjit Singh Kang hired family members to run businesses, used corporate funds as their own, and set up multiple businesses that employed the same employees and drew from the same funds.

The complaint also alleges they: comingled funds and other assets, failed to segregate funds of the separate entities, diverted corporate funds or assets without authority, failed to maintain adequate corporate records, used the corporate entity to procure labor-service-merchandise for another person, manipulated assets between entities, and used a

corporation as subterfuge of illegal actions.

Companies with Tahoe ties that have been named include: Ameri Oil Company, Dara Petroleum Inc., Emerald Business Group Inc., Kang Property Inc., Meyers Holding Co., North Tahoe Station Inc., South Tahoe Station Inc., Tahoe 3208 Highway 50 Corp., Tahoe Blue LLC, Tahoe Blue Property Inc., and Tahoe Station Inc.

What is all the more interesting is that a discussion in July on the app named "Next Door" complained about the eyesore that station has been and what can the county do to enforce codes? Supervisor Sue Novasel responded, "We (the county) have been trying for many, many years to get the owner to comply with the law but he has not complied and has, indeed, been avoiding the community's insistence to fix up or sell the property." But she briefly mentioned, "Last time I checked, the owner was still planning to rebuild a gas station with a food mart...." but failed to state that the owner had already started the formal process with the county to reopen another gas station. The *Lake Tahoe News* article indicated it has been in the works since last fall.

Supervisor Novasel also stated, "The new owner hasn't been responsive to law enforcement or our community – the legal system isn't working to get compliance from this owner." Well, the county planning and development system shouldn't be working to provide this owner the opportunity to do more damage to our area to his financial benefit.

We need better investments that are economically viable and diverse, with sustainable business plans that add to our community. Enough of the outside investments by dubious business groups that look to rape our resources and then run to the bank or use our legal system to shield their ill-gotten gains. Are our representatives asleep at the wheel or cronies working for the establishment?

Jeffrey Spencer, Meyers