

# Opinion: EDC wasting money on river committee

By Larry Weitzman

In case you are wondering, RMAC is the acronym for the River Management Advisory Committee, a committee set up in the early 1980s by the Board of Supervisors to help advise them on river and nearby land use issues. It is composed of more than five members who have a vested interest in the river: an outfitter, a commercial rafter, a resident land owner, two members of State Parks, a business representative, a private boater, and two members at large.

Meetings are attended by a few people. At the one I attended on Aug. 14 about 10 interested people were there, mostly from the rafting community.



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Adam Anderson is the chair and business representative. His connection is ownership of the Villa Florentino, which is under scrutiny regarding its special use permit because of complaints. A hearing is scheduled shortly in front of the Planning Commission. Anderson lives somewhere in Placerville, away from the river. I can't tell you the names of the four other members in attendance. Also in attendance were our very competent Deputy Chief Administrative Officer Laura Schwartz and Vickie Sanders of Parks and Recreation.

The committee meets about 11 times a year, which creates a huge problem for taxpayers. But first I must describe the meeting I attended which lasted nearly two and a half hours. My time watching Looney Tunes was better spent, it was so unproductive (maybe it was a live action Looney Tunes). Not only did not one panel member understand their charge, they didn't even understand their own agenda which consisted of three items. The first one was the approval of the prior meeting's erroneous minutes and the approval of the agenda for that night.

I also attended the prior meeting at the Marshall Gold Discovery Park Museum, which seemed to operate ultra vires. They were mostly concerned about the county's recommendation that RMAC be disbanded.

After listening to Schwartz's description of the nonfunctioning RMAC, many times not fielding a quorum, not understanding their duty or "job," not understanding their purpose, and certainly not understanding the Brown Act or how to conduct a meeting, it didn't take a rocket scientist to see the writing on the wall.

After two and a half hours, the meeting was done and nothing was accomplished but to set another meeting and perhaps another special meeting before the regularly scheduled meeting. The only thing I learned from the RMAC meeting was government dysfunction at its worst. But there is more.

Attending this meeting were two very highly paid EDC employees. In fact, their total annual cost to EDC including salary and all benefits as reported by Transparent California exceeds \$400,000. That's an hourly cost of more than \$200 an hour combined. I am not begrudging the fact that they are paid a lot of money. I am sure they work hard; I know Schwartz does. What I am pointing out is the fact that each of these meetings cost the taxpayer a lot of money.

You can be sure, with prep time, travel time, post mortem time after the meeting and actual meeting time, this meeting cost you and me at least \$1,000 or more for each one of these county dysfunctions. And they do this 11 times a year and have done so for years. You can do the math, but this RMAC thing is no free ride.

And now there is an outcry that the CAO staff, and Parks and Rec staff has recommended that RMAC be disbanded. Why did it take this long? To add some gasoline to the fire, RMAC has been nothing more than to protect the interests of the commercial rafting industry, the concessionaires along the river and other related enterprises. Have they solved any problems? No. The noise, crime, vandalism, and pollution are as big as ever. Have they ever told the board that it's many times out of control? Of course not. But they do tell the board what a boon they are to the county. Yeah, sure. So is Walmart, Big O Tires and every other business in the county, especially the hotels and motels. We get a special 10 percent tax off that tourist industry.

Let's determine what the "industry" really costs the county, sheriff, emergency response, environmental management, code enforcement, and SUP violations. We need to know the whole nine yards and then the causation needs to pay their way. Not the taxpayers. Disbanding RMAC is a great start. That alone will save the county over \$10,000 a year, more money that can be used for potholes and senior legal. Now let's get an accounting of and for everything.

*Larry Weitzman is a resident of Rescue.*