

# Novasel: Wanting to build on accomplishments

**Publisher's note:** *Profiles for the four El Dorado County District 5 supervisorial candidates will be running on May 6 and May 7.*



Sue Novasel

**Name:** Sue Novasel

**Age:** 62

**Occupation:** Incumbent – El Dorado County supervisor

**Education:** Bachelor's degree from University of Nevada, Reno; AA degree from Lake Tahoe Community College; high school diploma from Salinas High School

**What elected, civic, nonprofit boards or groups are or have you been affiliated with and in what capacity?:**

El Dorado County – County supervisor (2015-current) and vice chair

Lake Tahoe Unified School District – School board trustee (2003-15); past president

TRPA – current Governing Board member

California Tahoe Conservancy – current board member

Tahoe Transportation District – current board member

South Lake Tahoe Solid Waste Joint Powers Authority – current board member

First Five Commission – current commissioner

EDC VHR Ad Hoc Committee – current member

EDC Cannabis Ad Hoc Committee – current member

EDC Broadband Ad Hoc Committee – current member

EDC Human Rights Committee – current member

California State Association of Counties – current board member

Lake Tahoe Wildlife Care – current board member and past president of the board

Soroptimist International of South Lake Tahoe – current member and past president

Meyers Community Plan Team – past member

Meyers Roundtable Committee – past chair and member

Lake Tahoe Community College Foundation – past board president.

**Why do you want to be supervisor?:** I am running because I want to continue to protect and improve the quality of life for our county and our local communities. I believe my 15 years of public service experience and 30 years on various public and private local organizations, my integrity and my continued commitment to work for our community make me the best candidate for the job.

**This is a nonpartisan position. How will you conduct your**

**duties in a nonpartisan manner?:** I listen to all sides of an issue before making a decision. It is important to keep an open mind in this job and to understand that there are lots of differing views and opinions on any one subject. Party politics should not play a role in the decision making process – it's about doing what is best for our county – not what is politically correct.

**Why should people vote for you over one of the other candidates?:** The most important qualifications to this job are possessing the skills, professionalism, and experience to work with others on a board. I feel I am the most qualified and skilled as I have over 15 years as a public servant and an excellent working relationship with the current board. I was recently made vice chair of the Board of Supervisors, which is an honor and an important job for the future of our board. I have the unique skill set needed to collaborate and successfully reach consensus with my fellow board members.

**How are you going to resolve the CalPERS issue?:** Since the Great Recession, CalPERS (California's state public pension system) has made it difficult, if not impossible, for most of the state's jurisdictions to fully fund future retirements of our public workers. This has left our county with a huge retirement fund debt – and one that our board has acknowledged and is working to solve. Over this last year, our county put away \$5.7 million to help with funding this debt. We are expecting to add \$1.3 million to a "prefund" account this year in the hopes that we can keep this issue to a minimum. The biggest difficulty is that CalPERS keeps changing their model, thereby adding more debt to jurisdictions around the state. We continue to watch closely these changes and will be proactive in working for solutions to the pension system issue.

**Should the government be responsible for solving the affordable housing issue as well as homelessness? Why or why not to both? If yes, how would you solve those issues?:** Affordable housing and homelessness are not mutually

exclusive. With the average rental in South Shore well above the “30 percent rule” that says that paying more than 30 percent of your income on housing is “unaffordable,” it’s easy to see why affordable housing is such a huge problem. Government needs to help wherever it is possible since taxpayers end up paying for social services for those who can’t afford to pay for services associated with homelessness. I recently created a Housing Task Force, convening local jurisdictions from around the lake to see what government can do to help. From that task force, a group of private and public members have decided to start a pilot project that is aimed at creating affordable workforce housing. I have agreed to chair the new Housing Tahoe project and am looking forward to starting the project. The goal is to build a new “toolbox” of ways to combat the lack of affordable housing in our community. Our large private employers have also stepped up to be a part of the solution – one such employer, Vail Corporation, has current employee housing and seeking additional property locations for their workforce.

**To date the county has not been able to fix the traffic issue in Meyers with tourists clogging up residential streets. What is your solution?:** Meyers traffic is nothing new. What is new are the apps and smart GPS in cars that now route more and more traffic into our local neighborhoods. We have tried warning tourists about dangerous snow conditions on local roads through new signs and ordinances but that is difficult to manage and enforce. Our transportation director has created a new “nudge” program that diverts travelers away from North Upper Truckee by using flashing signs and traffic cones, thus making the route looked closed; although it is illegal to actually close the roads to “through” traffic. Nudging has helped but we all know this is not a permanent solution. We have been in talks with CHP for two years about other possibilities – the latest idea is to create an “electronic blackout.” There are still concerns about this idea but the county and CHP are now looking into the legality of the idea

as we continue to search for a solution.

**What are your thoughts of making Lake Tahoe its own county?:**

In 1984, a Tahoe County Formation Review Commission was formed and a 108-page financial analysis of a proposed Tahoe County was developed. I have read the report and it sits in my office, if anyone is interested in looking at it. It failed to gain enough support – and that was back in the '80s when South Lake Tahoe was a large contributor to the county for revenue. We took a down turn when Indian gaming started to pop up in California and Tahoe revenues have dropped dramatically ever since then. With less revenue, a new county would have the effect of reduced services and revenue then what we currently receive from El Dorado. For that reason, I do not support the idea of a Tahoe County.

**What entities would you not take money from?:** I will not accept campaign contributions from any organization or business whose integrity is questionable; anyone whose activities bring harm to District V or our quality of life; and/or threaten the safety and well-being of our children, neighborhoods, schools, or businesses. I expect to receive support from a wide variety of individuals and entities. Anyone providing financial support must understand that supporting my candidacy does not mean having the expectation of getting my vote on an issue.

**What is the No. 1 issue facing District 5 and how do you propose to resolve it?:** Affordable housing is a critical issue throughout my district. Development and redevelopment needs to focus on how to address the lack of housing by offering projects that give our citizens the ability to live and grow in walkable, bike-friendly communities – ones that offer plentiful recreation while meeting the infrastructure needs. As a Governing Board member to the TRPA and member of the Housing Tahoe program, we are currently searching for ways to allow incentives for affordable housing. A necessary component of proper housing is transportation. Reliable and free

transportation systems not only benefit our communities by reducing traffic, they also serve as a viable alternative for a cleaner environment while allowing for better transit options when planned with housing projects. This, however, requires state and federal funding which is not so easy to find. As a board member on the Tahoe Transportation District, I support the search for new funding mechanisms that enhance reliable alternative transportation in our communities. A Meyers bus is now being proposed as part of the newest Transportation Plan. I support this bus service as being a critical link in the basin and our district's ability to move forward in long-term transit solutions.

**Do you believe supervisors should meet in Tahoe more often?**

**Why or why not?:** I would like to meet more often in Tahoe. Logistically, it can be difficult and costly for the staff and other board members to travel and finding a large enough room can be difficult, too, as we recently experienced. I do find that since we have digital services which include videotaping of our board meetings, access to the board meetings and specific topics is much easier for citizens in El Dorado County, increasing citizen engagement and accessibility in a very efficient way. I also attend regular joint meetings with the City Council where the city of South Lake Tahoe and county both present their major issues and discuss items where joint effort is needed. This is an important element to proper city/county collaboration.

**Would you support having more tax dollars from the county coming to the South Shore? Currently, more dollars leave the basin than come back.:**

I want to be sure that District V is getting its fair share and have fought to be sure it happens. However, I don't know of any study or analysis showing that more dollars leave the basin than come back and have my doubts that this is true. For example, the basin, with about 20 percent of the county population, has its own set of secondary offices for more general departments than any other district

or any other jurisdiction in the basin. El Dorado County is the only local jurisdiction to have a local juvenile hall and jail facility. When you add up the costs for those direct and indirect services and facilities, our local expenses and revenues are not far from equal.

**What is your vision for the 56-acres in South Lake Tahoe?:** My vision the 56-acres area is the same that it was when I participated as a community member on the 56-acre Design Review Committee many years ago. That committee process came up with the Lakeview Commons design and envisioned the entire 56-acres as the “Central Park” of South Lake Tahoe. The design also called for a new farmers market area and a re-design of the entire campground. And although there are issues ahead as to how the county and city work together to fulfill those plans, the plans are there and should be reviewed as we entered into a new agreement between the two jurisdictions.

**Do you support having vacation home rentals? Why or why not?:** When I travel, I prefer to stay in family homes rather than small, cramped hotel rooms. That being said, I realize that this ballooning type of travel has created some real issues when dealing with unruly, rude and/or over-bearing home renters. I feel that the biggest issue for the county is how to create new regulations so that enforcement can work to regain quiet, peaceful neighborhoods once again. As a member of the County Ad Hoc Committee for VHRs, we are studying enforcement issues and programs throughout the state, looking for viable solutions. We have already established that a new system of enforcement – one done through our code enforcement department rather than the tax collector – is an important first step in the right direction. We have identified seven other areas that will be corrected in the near future. Other issues such as clustering, total occupancy, bans and moratoriums are all to be studied and decided upon soon. A public process has been established where all sides of this contentious issue will be allowed to voice their concerns and

issues.

**What have you accomplished in the last four years?:** When I was first elected to the board, our county leadership was in turmoil. Since hiring a new CAO nearly two years ago, the culture and workings of the county have vastly improved. Our board developed a new strategic plan and has attached those goals to our budget, thereby ensuring that our top priorities are funding properly. One of those priorities is to improve our deteriorating infrastructure. Our recent purchase of the old Al Tahoe Post Office will improve the El Dorado Center in South Lake Tahoe and proves that we are keeping our promise to infrastructure improvements. In Pollock Pines, we purchased a local park, ensuring that our youth continue to enjoy a proper baseball field as well as improving other recreational programs. As the First Five Commissioner to the Board of Supervisors, I worked to create a new Community Hub program, which will bring critical services to needy families who visit our libraries. In Tahoma, when a road project didn't go as expected, I held a series of meetings and worked on securing funding to fix the problem. I also pushed for new funding for our local roads by making sure that a new compact with our local tribe includes the ability to use the money we receive for badly needed road work – nearly \$2.5 million per year in funding. In the future, I will continue to work to make sure our district receives our fair share of funding and needed infrastructure work.

**Tell us something about yourself that people might not know:** I have been married to my husband for 34 years and have two amazing daughters. I was a ski instructor at Heavenly and went on to own and operate my own business.

I'm an avid skier in the winter, mountain biker in the summer, and love to use my kayak in Tahoe as often as possible. Many people don't know that I was an Olympic torch runner when it came through town in 1984 on its way to the Summer Games in Los Angeles. The beauty and recreation of Tahoe brought my

family here when I was growing up and it is still the most beautiful place in the world.