

Letter: Naysayers' wasting EDC time, money

To the community,

Like in today's national political climate, the "flamethrowers" causing a stir tend to be the minority with the loudest voices. Few who support or are indifferent reach out to send their praise for the ideals that are legitimately making their way through the system. As such, we are seeing a similar situation play out on a local level in El Dorado County (EDC).

As our Dollar General development in Georgetown makes its way through EDC's approval process, we get to see first hand the inner workings of role and responsibility local government plays in the protection and improvement of the community. The "Historic Design Guide", put in place to preserve the history of the town was created to guide responsible development, not stifle it. It was created to ensure that responsible development improves the community.

EDC's role is to review a project for its adherence to the historic guidelines and ordinances, not to pick economic winners and losers. Our great nation was founded on many freedoms, including the freedom of enterprise so that we as citizens, can open a business of our choosing and let the market decide if it succeeds or fails. To that end, the EDC Planning Commission approved the Dollar General development in Georgetown with a resounding 4-1 vote. The approval was of no surprise as the development strictly adhered to EDC's and the state of California's historic and development guidelines. Unfortunately, EDC's approval was appealed by a local citizen.

The pending appeal of the project to the Board of Supervisors cited that the appeal was filed "on the grounds that the

project violates the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), the applicable general plans and zoning laws, and that the comments submitted to the Planning Commission contained accurate statements of significant legal violations that were not addressed at the hearing." This statement contains no specific information to support those claims and has been continuously disproven with fact and expert testimony at several previous Planning Commission hearings.

During testimony at the most recent hearings, the appellant and corresponding political lobbyists, raised concerns specifically relating to the design and conceptual approval of the alternative septic system, EDC's ability to approve such a system per state regulations and the particulars of the methods of mitigation for storm water runoff with regards to the effect on the nearby creek. Despite very specific factual counter testimony by EDC engineering staff, citing specific technical details of the systems in question and how they work, the appellant continues to waste taxpayer dollars by bringing claims of fraud and legal violations. It is also prudent to note that EDC's experts and our own consultants have put their licenses on the line when they review and approve the plans we create.

As the staff at EDC can attest, our team has worked tirelessly to create a better project for the community. We have gone back to the drawing board not less than six times to create an elevation that meets and exceeds the historic guidelines. We have met with dozens of community representatives and groups in Georgetown to try and create a better project whether it's through better lighting, design, landscaping, etc.

The amount of money spent by EDC on dealing with frivolous appeals is wasteful at best. I think we could all agree that those funds would be better spent fixing real problems faced by the residents of the local communities. For example, in Georgetown itself, the local fire station is made of mostly volunteers who use aging and outdated equipment to protect the

residents paid firefighters and a new fire truck could and would help protect the upcountry way of life.

There continues to be a lot of support for the project, but in today's world we hide behind our smart phones and computers and hastily type negative responses and attack anyone with a different opinion, rather than debating it in a fair and respectful way. There will always be people on either side of every ticket who support or don't support a political project or point of view, but it seems to be built into our current political culture that it's ok to tear people or things down, simply because you don't understand them or like them.

Over the past few decades, the Georgetown area has suffered economically through the loss of much of its industry and numerous jobs, while the Northern California region has prospered. We can all agree that our project will help the economy in Georgetown. We recently had an economic update study done to survey the prosperity of nearby stores where Dollar General had recently opened. We found that before Dollar General opened, local merchants were concerned about the impact to their businesses, but have conversely seen no negative impact to their sales. We had this study done on our own accord to show our commitment to the prosperity of the community.

As I mentioned before, change can be a tough pill to swallow for some and this has proven itself on several occasions when other developments came to the area. When the gas station, El Dorado Savings Bank and Mar-Val were proposed in Georgetown, there was a similar reaction to those projects as there has been towards Dollar General coming to town yet in the time they have since been open and have been embraced by the community as a benefit.

Respectfully,

Joshua Simon, president SimonCRE – proposed developer of the

Opinion: When friends are 'like family'

By Deborah Tannen, *New York Times*

"My friends are the sisters I was meant to have," a woman told me. Another said that her friends are more precious than her sisters because they remember things from her past that her sisters don't and can't, since they weren't there. And a man commented that he didn't enjoy a particular friend's company all that much, but it was beside the point: "He's family."

I interviewed over 80 people for a book I'm writing about friendship, and was struck by how many said that one or another friend is "like family."

These comments, and how people explained them, shed light on the nature of friendship, the nature of family, and something that lies at the heart of both: what it means to be close.

For friends, as for family, "close" is the holy grail of relationships. (In both contexts I often heard, "I wish we were closer" but never "I wish we weren't so close.")

Read the whole story

Letter: Community makes Drug Store Project a success

To the community,

So, how did you spend your day? I spent mine with the most amazing group of people who care about our youth. I am humbled by the amount of work and effort provided by so many community members, our service clubs, and agencies that serve the Lake Tahoe area.

On March 29, we had our 13th annual Drug Store Project at the campus of Lake Tahoe Community College. This is a comprehensive anti-drug and alcohol program for our sixth-grade youth. It takes a lot of people and resources to make this event occur. To each and every person involved; I thank you from the bottom of my heart.

Not sure why, but this year's event was met with more challenges, yet as the day concluded, it proved to be the most powerful.

Our kids are faced with so much these days; our families are under more stress. Drugs and alcohol for many are seen as a fix. It is our belief that they are not. The message to our youth is simple; the choices they make will ultimately be theirs. They have the choice to ignore negative peer pressure when something doesn't feel right. They have the choice to choose the direction they want to take their lives. They have the choice to let adults know when they need help with tough situations. They have the choice not to get involved with drugs and alcohol.

Drugs and alcohol are a problem. They are a problem for our kids and a problem in our community. The adults at our program kept a close tab on our youth throughout the day. We could visibly see the many who struggle because the information we

are talking about is something they know too well. Many have siblings, parents, and people they love whom use and abuse. We make it very clear to our kids that good people can make bad choices. We want them to stop and think before acting.

As I sit here and think of what the day was like, I am overwhelmed with the passion everyone shared that day. On behalf of the kids, I thank you. The hope is that the parents of youth that attended our event will begin to openly discuss drugs and alcohol. We know that many of you do because your kids tell us so. Our message to you is to keep it up. Learn together what the problems are in our community. Learn from the vast amount of information on the Internet. Learn together.

Trust me when I say no family is safe from the pain of losing a child to drugs and alcohol; no one. This is a problem that crosses all spectrums in our society. Don't be complacent. I've been in prevention for more than 30 years and I've learned something: drugs and alcohol will always be a problem if we are unable to change the choices of our kids. Our 14th annual Drug Store Project will be on April 4, 2017, at LTCC. If you would like to volunteer, you may sign up now and I'll be in touch. Simply go **online**.

I'd like to share with you the many who made March 30 possible: Atwater DSP, Barton Health, Barton Health Foundation, California Conservation Corps, California Highway Patrol, Calstar, Douglas County Search and Rescue, Douglas County Sheriff's Office, El Dorado Community Foundation, El Dorado County District Attorney's Office, El Dorado County Mental Health, El Dorado County Probation, El Dorado County Public Health, El Dorado County Search and Rescue, El Dorado County Sheriff's Office, El Dorado County Sheriff's Office-STARS, El Dorado County Superior Court, Harrah's Harveys Lake Tahoe Foundation/H.E.R.O.s, Joint Task Force Domestic Support-CD, Kiwanis Club of Lake Tahoe, Kiwanis Club of Tahoe Sierra, Lake Tahoe Community College, Lake Tahoe Resort Hotel,

Heavenly, Lake Valley Fire Protection District, Lake Valley Fire Fighters Association, McFarlane Mortuary, NAS Fallon, Optimist Club of Lake Tahoe, Pro Leisure, Rotary Club of South Lake Tahoe, SLEDNET, Soroptimist International of Tahoe Sierra, South Lake Tahoe Fire Department, South Lake Tahoe Police Department, SLTPD Explorers, SLTPD K9, South Lake Tahoe Police Officers Association, South Tahoe Drug Free Coalition, South Tahoe High School, South Tahoe Middle School, Tahoe Douglas Fire Protection District, Tahoe Douglas Rotary Club, Tahoe Turning Point, and Tahoe Youth & Family Services.

Lisa Huard, Drug Store Project

Opinion: New Golden Rule of playing outside

By Christopher Solomon, Outside

Earlier this season, ski tracks appeared on Josies Ridge above Jackson, Wyoming. Ski tracks around Jackson usually aren't news. But the Forest Service closes Josies and other areas to recreationists from December through April to give deer and elk a break from human disturbance during the winter. Signs announce the closures.

One week later, skiers poached Josies again.

When we play in the mountains and forests, we think we're simply having fun. (Leaving no trace! Communing with nature!) But whether we're in closed or open areas, studies show that even Sierra Club-approved activities like hiking, cross-country skiing, and bird watching can negatively affect the environment more than you'd think. Take research in Boulder

that discovered a roughly 100-yard “death zone” for songbirds on both sides of a trail, as one scientist put it, pointing to low nesting success and lower populations. Moose increased their movement by 33 percent, burning more energy, after encountering skiers, a study in Scandinavia found. In one not-yet-published survey of 218 studies that looked at the effects of recreation on wildlife, researchers found more evidence for impacts by non-motorized activities than by motorized ones.

Nature once had plenty of elbowroom. Today natural places—those places we like to play in—are increasingly squeezed by climate change and a booming human population.

Read the whole story

Editorial: What are Nevada lawmakers hiding?

Publisher's note: *This editorial is from the March 27, 2016, Reno Gazette-Journal.*

In the final hours of last year's Nevada Legislature, a bill was rushed through and passed unanimously making almost all communications by lawmakers secret.

This harms the public's interest in understanding the actions of their representatives.

The state Senate and Assembly have the ability to temporarily change the policy themselves each session. They should do this if they believe in the government transparency so many of them trumpet – and they should make the change permanent.

This law only recently came to light when the Associated Press

asked top elected officials in each state for emails using their public accounts in the first week of February and for their calendars showing whom they met with during that time.

Read the whole story

Letter: Filipino cuisine a hit at B&B

To the community,

Once a year, the Filipino community comes together to host a Filipino themed meal that is thoroughly enjoyed by every diner who attends their Bread & Broth sponsorship dinner. Normally the Monday evening dinners are prepared by the B&B volunteer cooks. However, due to their wonderful cooking skills and the amazing Filipino cuisine they prepare, the Filipino sponsor volunteers were in charge of the cooking for their March 21 Adopt a Day dinner.

The word from the folks who attended the dinner was that the food was plentiful, delicious and a wonderful way to share their Filipino culture. The menu for the evening included honey mustard chicken, sweet and sour pork ribs, stir fry green beans, Filipino style chow mein, steamed rice and popsicles for dessert. It definitely was a wonderful feast lovingly prepared and served by members of the Filipino community.

“The Filipino community would like to express our gratitude for giving us once again the wonderful experience of hosting an Adopt A Day of Nourishment,” wrote Mila Seal. “An experience that always gives each and every member of the

Filipino community the feeling of fulfillment and appreciation of life.”

Bread & Broth would like to thank the wonderful Filipino community members who were involved in every aspect of putting their meal together. They were a generous, fun loving and caring group and Bread & Broth always looks forward with great anticipation to their annual sponsorship.

To partner with B&B as a donor or sponsor, contact me at 530.542.2876 or carolsgerard@aol.com.

Carol Gerard, Bread & Broth

Letter: ZCTCF grateful for Soroptimist grant

To the community,

Zephyr Cove Tennis Club Foundation is extremely grateful for the generous grant from Soroptimist International of Tahoe Sierra.

We will use this money to expand our junior tennis program, which starts in May and runs through August. It is open to all first- through eighth-graders. The Soroptimist award will allow us to offer scholarships to youths who otherwise would not have been able to attend either the after school or summer program. We also will be able to purchase rackets and other tennis equipment for youngsters to use.

Multiple studies have proved that participating in sports improves self-esteem and leads to better academic performance.

Zephyr Cove Tennis Club Foundation is an all volunteer nonprofit that operates Zephyr Cove Tennis Club on Warrior Way off Highway 50 in Zephyr Cove through a multiyear contract with Douglas County.

Thank you,

Carolyn E. Wright, ZCTCF president

Opinion: Nev. has its own toxic water troubles

By John L. Smith, Las Vegas Review-Journal



John L.
Smith

The water crisis in Flint, Mich., has gone national with blanket media coverage. The problem is as plain as the brown muck that's been flowing from kitchen faucets.

President Obama and a long slate of lesser political figures have sounded the alarm and weighed in on the subject with promises to devote expertise and resources to resolve the health threat. And, in the meantime, there will be plenty of bottled water for folks who call Flint home.

Although you won't find nearly the degree of political hand-wringing and media analysis, there's no shortage of environmental crises in Nevada.

Read the whole story

Letter: Library thanks service clubs for help

To the community,

The South Lake Tahoe Library would like to thank our community, Soroptimist International of Tahoe Sierra and South Lake Tahoe Optimist Club for supporting our upcoming Summer Reading Challenge. Through donations from the community both of these organizations were able to sponsor performers for the Summer Reading Challenge. Soroptimist International of Tahoe Sierra is sponsoring Wild Things Inc. and the South Lake Tahoe Optimist Club is sponsoring Mad Science and the Magical Ventriloquist.

On behalf of the South Lake Tahoe Library, I want to say thank you again to the community and these two organizations for so generously supporting our library and the community that we serve.

Sincerely,

Kimberly Diebolt, library assistant South Lake Tahoe Library

Opinion: Sun always shines on Calif. Empire

By Joe Mathews

The sun has set on the British Empire. Its successor, America, is showing signs of decline. But one empire still has plenty of battery life: California.

This is true even in the capital of the old empire. When I visited London earlier this month, the newspapers were full of stories about the United Kingdom voting to leave the European Union in a June referendum. But what caught my eye as I walked and took public transportation around London were the garrisons of the Golden State.



Joe Mathews

“London Has Fallen,” a dumb new Hollywood thriller, might as well have been the city’s new slogan, given the ubiquity of its advertising. Within blocks of where I was staying, I encountered two Hollywood production studios and testing space for films and TV that would play overseas. And on the telly, our TV shows—“The Muppets,” “Last Man on Earth,” “American Horror Story”—were everywhere.

When I wanted a bite, I stopped at Tortilla, which served me “real California burritos” as I scrolled through my iPhone. And for most of one day, I wandered around Silicon Roundabout, a cluster of technology companies in Central and East London.

British Airways had blanketed Underground stations with ads for its new direct flights to San Jose.

An old friend took me around the perimeter of the property near King's Cross where Google has planned to build its giant new U.K. headquarters. He also recounted the drama involving proud British architects prostrating themselves before the men from Mountain View to earn this commission.

The building of such a bold public monument to United Googledom would be a reminder that the California Empire is something different than the timid American Empire, which the British historian Niall Ferguson described in one book as "an empire in denial" because it "lacks the drive to export its capital, its people and its culture to those backward regions which need them most urgently."

The California Empire is thus more like the British one, unapologetic in its conviction that it represents a better way of thinking. The cult of California technical "disruption" bespeaks a confidence that we can do your work better than you can, no matter how long or expertly you have been doing it.

Hollywood has prospered by making big, nasty pictures designed to obliterate the senses of people around the world. Californians are busy colonizing the world with inventions in social media, food, bioscience, and energy. While the American government is withdrawing from space travel, Hawthorne-based Space X is leading a renewed global push for cheaper space exploration.

One could argue that California-based tech executives have assumed some of the "leader of the free world" space once occupied by American politicians. While the lame-duck Illinois president leads from behind, Golden State CEOs—most notably Apple's Tim Cook—practice foreign diplomacy and wage cyber-war against everyone from American intelligence agencies to European regulators to censors and hackers in the employ of

the Peoples Liberation Army. Facebook's Mark Zuckerberg made a point of learning Mandarin, as successful would-be colonizers do.

California will never amass all the colonies and protectorates that the British did. But our reach is greater. At its height, the British Empire held sway over only one-fifth of the world's people, while California firms have convinced more than half the people on earth to carry phones that allows us to track their movements, choices, and behaviors. California's virtual empire controls the hearts and minds of more people than any previous empire in history.

Both empires have been delivered big blows by Washington. In the British case, it was George Washington, and the revolution he led, that robbed it of a crucial piece of the empire. In California, it is Washington, D.C.—and its gridlock on energy and immigration policies, not to mention the intrusive surveillance of its intelligence agencies—that have slowed the state's progress and threaten the credibility of Silicon Valley around the world. European continentals whose ancestors once warred with the British now fight the California empire with European commissions and anti-trust regulations.

The California empire, like when Elizabeth I authorized British raids against Spanish shipping, is not above piracy. And the California empire is finding it difficult to relate to the former jewel of the older empire: India. Recently, the Silicon Valley investor Marc Andreessen, angry at a decision by India's telecommunications regulatory board that went against Facebook, recently started a firestorm by tweeting that India was better off as a colony.

There are many books offering many reasons why the British lost their empire: arrogance, overreach, wars, doubts about the wisdom of colonization. It remains to be seen if California's empire can learn from those mistakes, or whether its days too are numbered, on account of its hubris.

Joe Mathews writes the Connecting California column for Zócalo Public Square.