

# Opinion: Fresno could become California's Austin

By Joe Mathews

Could the San Joaquin River, long a dividing line in our state, unite Central California in pursuit of a better future?

In Madera County, across the river from Fresno, a new unincorporated city of multiple planned communities is under construction. Within a generation, it seems likely to swell to more than 100,000 people. On the Fresno side, the county is developing open space, and the city of Clovis is expanding. Rising together, the new Madera town, Fresno, and Clovis could constitute a tri-cities area in Central California.



Joe Mathews

If those three cities cohere into a stronger and wealthier region by mid-century—and that's a gigantic if—greater Fresno, now a relatively poor place of 1 million people, could transform into California's answer to Austin, an inland metropolis capable of spreading the Golden State's coastal prosperity to its dusty interior.

Of course, such a transformation would require extensive regional planning of the sort that Fresno's leaders sometimes talk about, but rarely do. That would mean stronger regional governance bodies and funding for transportation, economic development, water management, recreation, and air quality.

And such structures would require collaboration among local governments that have fought bitterly in court.

Unfortunately, the very structure of California, and its land-use planning, work against turning Fresno into a regional powerhouse. In our state, local jurisdictions are weak and have little power to raise their own revenues; so they must compete with other local governments, often using questionable subsidies, in the chase for development and the taxes it brings. The game is: support development that provides revenue for your city, while spreading the costs—in traffic, water, and air quality—onto your neighbors.

Madera and Fresno counties, and Fresno city, have often sued each other to block their respective development plans. But most of that litigation is over, offering an opportunity to build together.

The region needs a more resilient water infrastructure (the new Madera developments tout their water efficiency), and tax-sharing to improve the river itself and support a regional transportation network. The area also needs to develop and recruit more local government officials who have deep training and experience in regional planning.

The new river city ought to inspire these efforts. After all, Madera, the county on Fresno's northwestern flank, is saying via its new development that it doesn't want to be small, poor and isolated anymore. That's the same message all of greater Fresno must embrace.

Indeed, Madera County is pitching its new developments as a huge step forward for central California: master-planned communities with trails and schools and job centers and water recharge facilities wrapped in, providing the greater density and smaller lots of urban living.

The signature project, now under construction, is Riverstone, with commercial space and 6,600 homes of various sizes across

six themed districts, along Highway 41, best known to most Californians as a road to Yosemite. "The new-home community of Riverstone," boasts one brochure, "will be a celebration of California living where people of every generation can enjoy the relaxed and informal spirit of the Golden State."

Other developments in the pipeline—with names like Tesoro Viejo and Gunner Ranch—are supposed to offer a similar approach; county officials suggest they might be incorporated one day as the county's third city (after Madera city and Chowchilla). These developments are close to Fresno County projects—like a town-size development near Friant Dam.

"This is going to be a new town and we have this opportunity with a blank canvas to do it right," Madera County Supervisor Brett Frazier told a local TV station.

Much could go wrong. If the new river city doesn't produce promised jobs and inspire better transportation, the expanded development could fuel sprawl, add to air pollution, and turn 41 into a traffic nightmare.

Successful regionalization will require outside help. The state's climate change regime must prioritize infill development in central Fresno, so that the urban core isn't weakened as people move to the new river city. The ongoing revival of Fresno's downtown needs the added momentum of the state's high-speed rail project, which is already under construction across Fresno County (a signature rail bridge is being built across the river, linking Madera and Fresno in another way).

Greater Fresno will gain if high-speed rail provides faster connections to Northern California and Southern California, making it an affordable crossroads between two world-class regional economies.

And Fresno has a large population of undocumented immigrants who badly need legal status so they can advance themselves,

and their region, economically.

You should not bet the farm on the grand project of turning greater Fresno into the next great region. But if Madera's new development can inspire progress in that direction, California would have reason to celebrate—and perhaps call the new river city Future Town.

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

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## **Opinion: Consequences of Air Force expansion in Nev.**

**By Tay Wiles, High Country News**

One morning in January, I accompanied a group of environmental advocates to the northern tip of the Desert National Wildlife Refuge, 100 miles north of Las Vegas. A short hike brought us to a boulder with a petroglyph of bighorn sheep, eroded after thousands of years of exposure. A more recent traveler left a mark nearby as well, etching the letters “U” and “S.” “I wonder who did the ‘US,’” said Christian Gerlach, the Sierra Club’s Nevada organizer. “Was it the Air Force or one of the cavalrymen?” By cavalrymen, he meant federal troops encountering bands of Paiute in this region in the 19th century. By Air Force, he meant the entity trying to gain control of this land today.

President Franklin D. Roosevelt first protected the area in 1936, as a game range for bighorn sheep. But just four years later, the U.S. War Department began using part of it as a bombing and gunnery range. Since then, the Air Force has

gained a total of 2.9 million acres for its Nevada Test and Training Range.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service co-manages 846,000 of those acres as part of the Desert National Wildlife Refuge – the largest federal wildlife refuge in the Lower 48. Now, the Air Force hopes to gain sole jurisdiction and expand its range to include another 300,000 federal acres, most of it refuge land, leaving the refuge with less than 500,000 acres.

**Read the whole story**

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## **Letter: EDC needs to cool it with the brine**



The brine application in El Dorado County on Feb. 16. Photo/John Adamski

**To the community,**

Today, Feb. 16, the El Dorado County road maintenance

department decided to do a horrific soaking of brine solution on North Upper Truckee Road and many other side streets for safety or tourists over the weekend.

There is the possibility of a light dusting of snow coming late Sunday, maybe.

The county has absolutely no conscience or consideration of local resident having to drive through this absurd over-application of brine solution for two days as sacrifice to allow tourists to never have to exercise winter driving conditions or slow down on our side streets.

This is typical El Do road maintenance arrogant bone-headed, way over-application days before a tiny possible snow event purely to allow tourists to drive down our side streets 60 mph with their phone app in one hand. They endanger locals and tourists walking the streets with their kids and dogs, ruin locals private property, and allow tourists privilege over locals to never be concerned to slow down for winter conditions.

The brine corrosion causes millions to locals expensive vehicles when they're rusted to pieces after four years.

This county doesn't give a crap for locals' personal property and they need to be sued for damages for this purposeful neglect and carelessness.

**John Adamski, 44-year resident**

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**Opinion: Politicians can't**

# have it both ways

By Dan Walters, CALmatters

Suing oil companies for causing climate change has become a popular exercise in California's coastal communities.

Officials in five cities and three counties have filed suits, alleging that the companies knowingly emitted greenhouse gases that will damage those communities as oceans rise, and should pay for it.



Dan Walters

As CALmatters environmental writer Julie Cart says in a recent article about the phenomenon, "California is the epicenter of so-called climate-attribution science." She quotes Peter Frumhoff, director of science and policy for the Union of Concerned Scientists, on the theory behind the suits: "There's really a quite robust ability to characterize the extent to which climate change impacts have worsened."

Moreover, Frumhoff told Cart, by combining data from oil companies' annual accounting and reports from environmental monitors, "one can then connect the dots and assign a cost."

It's easy to file a lawsuit that pleases "progressive" local voters. However, winning in court is another matter, and by just filing the actions, California governments may be risking their ability to borrow money at low rates.

Jay Newman, a former hedge fund manager specializing in

governmental debt, points out in a recent Wall Street Journal article that localities alleging calamitous effects of climate change are not mentioning those supposed effects in the required disclosures accompanying their debt issues.

“By the end of this century Oakland, Calif., will be experiencing a ‘100-year flood’ every week,” Newman writes. “At least that’s what the Oakland city government argued last year, when it filed a lawsuit against several oil companies for contributing to climate change. The city forecasts that rising water levels in the San Francisco Bay will threaten the sewer system and other property ‘with a total replacement cost of between \$22 billion and \$38 billion.’

“Suppose you hold some of Oakland’s municipal bonds. This climate apocalypse sounds like a serious risk, right? Yet a recent prospectus for Oakland’s general-obligation bonds shrugs off the threat. ‘The city is unable to predict when seismic events, fires or other natural events, such as sea rise or other impacts of climate change or flooding from a major storm, could occur,’ the prospectus states. And even if such events occur, the city can’t be sure ‘whether they will have a material adverse effect on the business operations or financial condition of the city or the local economy.’

“Other California localities have told courts one thing and investors another regarding climate change. In a similar lawsuit, San Francisco claims it faces ‘imminent risk of catastrophic storm surge flooding.’ But in a bond offering last year, the city said it is ‘unable to predict whether sea-level rise or other impacts of climate change or flooding . . . will occur.’ San Mateo County claims in another suit that there is a 50 percent chance that a ‘devastating three-foot flood . . . occurs before 2030.’ The county uses boilerplate similar to San Francisco’s to play down such risks in its communications to bondholders.”

Newman notes that Exxon is citing these discrepancies in



fighting the suits in a Texas court, arguing that they “indicate that the plaintiff municipal governments do not actually believe the allegations in their complaints and that the allegations were not made in good faith.”

The bigger effect, potentially, is what happens when the plaintiff localities seek additional loans. If they include their apocalyptic projections of their lawsuits into their debt disclosures, they might find that they can't borrow or will be paying much higher interest rates. But if they don't, they will undermine their lawsuits.

They can't – or shouldn't – have it both ways. Actions, even filing lawsuits, have consequences.

*CALmatters is a public interest journalism venture committed to explaining how California's Capitol works and why it matters.*

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## **Letter: LTUSD making school sites safer**

**To the community,**

Our hearts go out to the families and victims of the inconceivable act of violence at Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Fla. We are deeply saddened over the senseless loss of so many lives.

In the wake of this tragedy, the district would like to ensure families and staff that district leadership, in partnership with local law enforcement, continues to make school safety a top priority. Each time a mass casualty incident (MCI) occurs

in this country, the school site and district safety and security teams review and refine their security policies and procedures according to information gleaned from an incident.

Just this week, the district completed an active shooter event training facilitated by FBI Agent Glenn Norling. Additionally, the district maintains an assessment and list of recommended strategies for the safety and security of students, staff, visitors, and property, for each school site and will be making recommendations to the board of education for enhanced security measures.

In addition to performing regular lock-down, shelter-in-place, and evacuation drills at our school sites, the district currently:

- Employs one full-time school resource officer (SRO/police officer) at South Tahoe High School/Mt. Tallac;
- Employs three full-time campus security assistants at South Tahoe High School/Mt. Tallac;
- Maintains 52 active cameras on and around South Tahoe High School/Mt. Tallac.
- Employs one full-time and one part-time campus security assistants at South Tahoe Middle School.
- Maintains one on-call school resource officer at all schools.
- Maintains 24 active cameras on and around South Tahoe Middle School.

The district will soon be recommending the following security enhancements to the board of education:

- A full-time school resource officer at the middle school who will also support the elementary school campuses on-call.
- Additional part-time campus security personnel at the elementary campuses.

- Fencing and barriers intended to restrict entry and exit areas at the middle and high schools.
- New procedures for entry and exit at middle and high schools.
- Additional signage for visitor entry, wing, and classroom identification.
- 28 additional cameras to be installed at the middle school.
- 20 additional cameras to be installed at the high school.

However, beyond the aforementioned safety and security measures, LTUSD recognizes and firmly believes that the grass roots issue plaguing our country and our schools is mental health. The district intends to augment its existing counseling, intervention, and wraparound services programs, by adding social workers at the elementary schools, and by continuing to forge valuable partnerships with the Family Resource Center, Tahoe Youth & Family Services, Tahoe Turning Point, Live Violence Free, Mental Health, Barton Health, and our local law enforcement agencies.

With education, preventive intervention, treatment, and enforcement, Lake Tahoe Unified School District is doing all that it can to ensure the safety and well-being of its students and staff. Please do not hesitate to contact the Office of the Superintendent with any concerns for your child or the safety of your campus.

Respectfully,

**Jim Tarwater, superintendent Lake Tahoe Unified School District**

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# Opinion: The history of 'In God We Trust'

By David Mislin, *The Conversation*

In his address to the National Prayer Breakfast on the morning of Feb. 8, President Trump emphasized the centrality of faith in American life. After describing the country as a “nation of believers,” Trump reminded his audience that American currency features the phrase “In God We Trust” as does the Pledge of Allegiance. He also declared that “our rights are not given to us by man” but “come from our Creator.”

These remarks come a week after Trump linked religion with American identity in his first State of the Union address. On Jan. 30, he similarly invoked “In God We Trust” while proclaiming an “American way” in which “faith and family, not government and bureaucracy, are the center of the American life.”

But the history of such language is more complex than Trump’s assertions suggest.

The place of “In God We Trust,” and similar invocations of God in national life, have been a subject of debate. From my perspective as a religious history scholar they reflect a particular view of the United States, not a universally accepted “American way.”

## The Civil War

Political rhetoric linking the United States with a divine power emerged on a large scale with the outbreak of the Civil War in 1861. M.R. Watkinson, a Pennsylvania clergyman, encouraged the placement of “In God We Trust” on coins at the war’s outset in order to help the North’s cause. Such language, Watkinson wrote, would “place us openly under the

divine protection.”

Putting the phrase on coins was just the beginning.

In 1864, with the Civil War still raging, a group supported by the North’s major Protestant denominations began advocating change to the preamble of the Constitution. The proposed language – which anticipated President Trump’s remarks about the origin of Americans’ rights – would have declared that Americans recognized “Almighty God as the source of all authority and power in civil government.”

If the amendment’s supporters had succeeded in having their way, Christian belief would be deeply embedded in the United States government.

But, such invocations of God in national politics were not to last. Despite lobbying by major Protestant denominations such as the Methodists, this so-called Sovereignty of God amendment was never ratified.

Though “In God We Trust” was added to coins, it was not added to the increasingly common paper money. In fact, when coins were redesigned late in the 19th century, it disappeared from coins as well.

As I demonstrate in my book, these developments were related to the spread of secularism in the post-Civil War U.S. For many people at the time, placing religious language in the Constitution or on symbols of government was not consistent with American ideals.

### **The revival of ‘In God We Trust’**

The 1950s, however, witnessed a dramatic resurgence of religious language in government and politics. It was that decade that brought “In God We Trust” into widespread use.

In 1955, President Dwight Eisenhower signed a bill placing the phrase on all American currency. One sponsor of that

legislation, Congressman Charles Bennett, echoed the sentiments that had inspired the Sovereignty of God amendment during the Civil War. Bennett proclaimed, that the U.S. “was founded in a spiritual atmosphere and with a firm trust in God.”

The next year, “In God We Trust” was adopted as the first official motto of the United States.

Both of these developments reflected the desire to emphasize Americans’ religious commitment in the early years of the Cold War. Historians such as Jonathan Herzog have chronicled how leaders ranging from President Eisenhower to the evangelist Billy Graham stressed on the strong faith of the nation in setting the U.S. apart from the godlessness of Soviet communism.

Recently, however, Princeton University historian Kevin Kruse has shown that religious language was not merely rhetoric against communism. “In God We Trust” reflected domestic concerns as well.

The belief in American religiosity that put “In God We Trust” on coins and made it the national motto in the 1950s had emerged over several decades. Conservative businessmen had allied with ministers, including Billy Graham, to combat the social welfare policies and government expansion that began with Franklin Roosevelt’s New Deal. These wide-ranging programs, designed to tackle the Great Depression, irked many conservatives. They objected to government intervention in business and Roosevelt’s support for labor unions.

As Kruse notes, this alliance of conservative business leaders and ministers linked “faith, freedom, and free enterprise.”

In this way then, Trump’s repeated assertions of “In God We Trust” could be said to reflect certain American values. But, as my research shows, for much of U.S. history, the acceptance of such values ebbed and flowed.

“In God We Trust” is a not a motto that reflects universally shared historical values. Rather it represents a particular political, economic and religious perspective – one that is embraced by Trump and the modern GOP.

*David Mislin is an assistant professor in the intellectual heritage program at Temple University.*

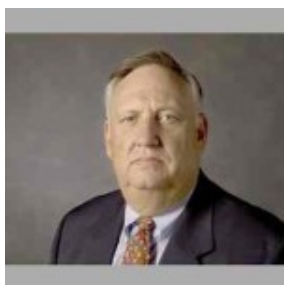
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## **Opinion: Time to fess up about taxes, pensions**

**By Dan Walters, CALmatters**

California’s political leaders don’t have to look very far to find a stark example of the pension cost crisis facing the state’s 482 cities.

Three blocks from the Capitol, in Sacramento’s city hall, Mayor Darrell Steinberg – a former leader of the state Senate – and other officials are seeing pension costs skyrocket.



Dan Walters

“Over the past nine years, the city’s pension expense has increased by 28 percent or \$14.5 million,” says a passage in the city’s 2017-18 budget. “Over the next eight years, the

city's pension cost is expected to more than double what is currently paid."

The California Public Employees Retirement System (CalPERS), which handles pensions for virtually all Sacramento city employees, says in its most recent "actuarial evaluations" that the city's costs will rise from \$92.8 million in 2018-19 to \$159.4 million by 2024-25, a \$66.6 million increase.

Keep that number in mind because it bears an uncanny resemblance to another figure.

Immediately after explaining the rising pension costs, the city's budget talks about Measure U, a half-cent increase in the sales tax that city voters approved in 2012 and that will expire next year.

Based on current retail sales activity in the city – \$6.4 billion in 2016, the last year for which complete data are available – the half-cent tax now generates about \$32 million a year, mostly dedicated to police and fire services.

City officials not only want to ask voters to renew that tax, but Mayor Steinberg and other officials may ask them to double it to a full cent, which would raise at least \$66 million a year as taxable sales rise.

Sound familiar? It's very close to the projected increase in the city's annual pension costs, driven primarily by those for police officers and firefighters. By 2024, CalPERS projects, Sacramento will be paying 61 cents into the pension fund for every dollar of police and fire salaries, up from 43 cents in 2018-19. For non-safety "miscellaneous" employees, payments will rise from 19 cents per \$1 of payroll to nearly 28 cents.

Of course, rising pension costs aren't being mentioned as a reason why the city may be asking its voters to pay more taxes.



During his State of the City address in January, Steinberg talked about creating a multibillion-dollar fund to pay for infrastructure, affordable housing, cultural amenities and incentives to attract new business.

“With more capital, we can direct and lead more of the change we want to see,” Steinberg said.

He said money for the new city improvement fund would come from a new tax and/or sale of unneeded city property.

Facts, however, are facts.

CalPERS is making ever-increasing demands on Sacramento and other local governments for more money to prop up its trust fund, which has scarcely two-thirds of the money it needs to meet current pension promises.

The city of Sacramento’s two CalPERS accounts are similarly short, with the police/fire system just 66.5 percent funded and the one for other employees only slightly better at 70.8 percent, its actuarial statements say.

Renewal of Sacramento’s expiring half-cent tax would cover perhaps half of the projected increase in annual pension costs, but crowd out other services the tax now finances. Were voters to double it to a full cent, virtually every new dollar it generated would be needed to pay increased CalPERS demands.

Asking voters to raise taxes for popular services without mentioning rising pension costs has become a common tactic in California’s cities.

The League of California Cities has raised the alarm about “unsustainable levels” of pension costs. Isn’t it time for the cities themselves to be truthful when they ask voters for new taxes? And isn’t Sacramento the right place to begin the truth-telling?

*Dan Walters is a columnist at CALmatters.*

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# Letter: Rotartians give back to Bread & Broth

To the community,

Bread & Broth really appreciates the support the Tahoe Douglas Rotary Club has been giving our Adopt A Day of Nourishment program. The Rotary Club signed up for five Adopt A Days and on Feb. 5 we were sent another great team to volunteer while hosting their fourth AAD in the past seven months. Representing the Rotary Club at the Monday meal dinner were Rotarians Linda Bellotti, Keith Endlich, Bob Fehskens, Greg Felton, Roberta Stillwell and Brian Williams.

Evidently, every one of the Rotarians had a great experience at their sponsorship dinner and they all wanted to share their thoughts. "B&B is so productive for our community and it deserves our support." "What a lovely enjoyable experience!" "You are the heart of our community." "Thank you for allowing us the opportunity to help our community." "Wonderful to help some of our local citizens have a great meal." "Looking forward to coming back soon – fun!"

Bread & Broth has thoroughly enjoyed the participation of all of the Rotarians who have been volunteering at the Rotary's AADs. Providing a hot, nutritious meal every Monday is a labor of love and having the support of so many of the Rotary clubs members is really a wonderful endorsement of the Adopt A Day program and how it not only feeds those in need but feels the souls of those who volunteer to help ease of the hunger of others.

**Carol Gerard, Bread & Broth**

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# Opinion: Transparency like a lead wall in EDC

By Larry Weitzman

If the new El Dorado County “Good Governance” manual were an airliner, it would have already crashed and burned. A total disaster, at least when it comes to conducting county business with transparency. All windows have been shuttered as if to protect from a coming catastrophic storm. It appears that such a storm is brewing.

Here’s the deal. Over a month ago, pursuant to a Public Records Act request, I asked for all outside legal costs and billing with respect to the Austin v/ El Dorado County, et al. litigation. As of the date of this writing I have received no information as to billing or payments since the June 2017 bills from the law firm Abbott and Kindermann, who is defending EDC. At that time the total billing amounted to about \$189,000.



Larry Weitzman

Since that date I have received nothing further. So, what seems to be the problem? Why hasn’t the county come forward with this expense? Who in the county would have the billing since June and why is it being kept secret?

An examination of the of the Abbott contract with EDC shows that the EDC contract administrator is the county counsel. He is the county official who deals with the outside lawyers. He should be receiving the billing and dealing with all questions regarding the contract and the services rendered thereunder. Oversight of the county counsel is the responsibility of the Board of Supervisors.

The contract provides in paragraph 4, "Billing" that "The law firm shall submit to county itemized statements of services rendered and costs monthly." The purpose being that EDC and the Board of Supervisors can keep track of the cost of this litigation so it can be properly managed.

In the process of writing this column and after much prodding, I finally received sanitized answers, but not complete answers. Instead of being given redacted bills, I received an email with some numbers stating the amounts due for the months in question, new billing for each month and one note of a payment being credited. The actual bills, redacted or otherwise are still being withheld. So much for transparency and open government.

In adding up the amounts paid through June 2017 and the new billing, it appears my estimate of \$300,000 was accurate with the actual amount totaling about \$286,000 from the unverified information received and that amount was for the filing of one demurrer and one court appearance. Imagine the cost of a trial. One could easily speculate a cost for the trial in the millions of dollars.

As far back as February 2015, three years ago, when I spoke to the Board of Supervisors and directly at my Fourth District supervisor, Mike Ranalli, I advised the board of this impending time bomb of the county's failure to comply with the law regarding the Mitigation Fee Act. I continued to advise the Board of Supervisors in speaking directly to them and in my columns, many of which were filed into the public record

and more specifically to my supervisor, Ranalli, especially after the Walker appellate court decision of August 2015 that said that a failure to file the continuing five year Nexus studies as required under the MFA mandates the county to refund all unexpended funds in the MFA accounts (money collected from home builders, whether individuals or companies for TIM fees, park fees, etc.). At that time of the Walker decision unexpended funds in MFA accounts amounted to over \$30 million which as mandated by the MFA and by the Walker court decision requires the county to refund to the property owners of record upon which properties those fees were collected from. It was cut and dry, no ifs, ands or buts.

County counsel of course told the board what they wanted to hear, that I am wrong and I don't know what I am talking about. Ranalli listened to what he wanted to hear, he didn't do his own research, for if he did he would have found out the county counsel was wrong. In the county's demurrer to strike the Austin complaint which cost the aforementioned \$286,000, the court said there was no statute of limitation defense and the county has already admitted in several official documents that they were in violation of the MFA's requirement to file Nexus studies which would then mandate the refund to the property owners of record all unexpended MFA fees collected by the county which at the time of filing the lawsuit totaled about \$33 million and that doesn't include later money collected or illegally expended. As the court said, every time the county collected money without the filing of a timely Nexus studied, it effectively restarted the SOL.

On Jan. 30, 2018, Item 18 was an agenda item for the re-appointment of county counsel. The same county counsel who said the county would prevail in the Austin matter. He's been wrong about that. The same CC who said the Walker case didn't apply to EDC. He was wrong about that. The same CC who told the board not to worry about the MFA or the problems stemming therefrom. He's been wrong about that. The same CC who said he

would get the \$6 million in the Missouri Flat Master Circulation and Financing Plan fund for road maintenance and upon which the board increased the budget for road maintenance by \$2 million. It didn't happen. The same CC who didn't follow the law in the annexation of Latrobe Fire by EDH Fire. And I am sure I am just scratching the surface.

But that didn't stop Ranalli from waxing poetic about the fine qualities of CC during board discussion which was effectively no discussion of his legal abilities and counsel. You can be sure Ranalli had no idea of the legal defense costs regarding the Austin case and perhaps that was by design of the CC. Ranalli voted not only yes to CC's reappointment but also gave him a raise to an annual base salary of \$200,000 plus benefits which adds another 25 to 30 percent to county costs. The county would be better off without this CC than with him. But Ranalli voted yes to the CC's reappointment plus the raise. Ranalli loves to spend other people's money. But you will have a vote with respect to Ranalli continuing his job as supervisor in four months. Supervisors should not take their jobs so lightly.

*Larry Weitzman is a resident of Rescue.*

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## **Letter: Ex-mayor, journalist critical of SLT council**

**Publisher's note: *This letter was sent to the South Lake Tahoe City Council and Lake Tahoe News.***

Mayor David and members of council,

I am outraged at the seemingly underhanded manner in which

council is handling the termination of a highly valued city manager. Nancy Kerry has been an exemplary city leader who has put the greater good of the city as her sole priority. I am not sure I can say the same about council, whom seem hell bent on needlessly destroying her excellent reputation.



Claire Fortier

As the former managing and opinion page editor of the *Tahoe Daily Tribune*, I often worked with Nancy when she was the communications officer for the city. She was readily accessible and always forthcoming with information, even as she protected the reputation of the city and its employees.

As I approached my first year on council, Nancy was thrust into the very difficult position of assistant city manager during the tenure of a contentious city manager and a budget crisis that resulted in mass layoffs. I watched her navigate angry unions reps, disgruntled city workers, egotistical politicians and a myriad of citizen complaints, all with unflappable calm and kindness. She drafted a strategic plan, held council workshops to focus on priorities and helped draft a budget that eventually resulted in a positive cash flow for the debt-ridden city.

I was mayor when Nancy was given the role as city manager, and I still feel it was one of the best decisions we made as a council. During that year, Nancy managed to accomplish more than I could have imagined possible. From working with a devastated and greatly reduced city staff, she found compromise and commitment to move forward. She was

instrumental in lobbying efforts that resulted in the passage of the Tahoe Regional Plan through two deeply divided states. She oversaw a pathway to revitalizing the city through such efforts as special events, infrastructure rebuild and incentives for small businesses. She worked with El Dorado County to find common ground on issues like the campground and the senior center. She often organized local agency leaders to focus on common goals and priorities. She redid the city's communication plan, organizational chart and capital improvement projects. She ended a decade-old deadlock on Harrison Avenue, which now enjoys an economic revitalization. She was successful in gaining the last low-income housing project to be built on the South Shore. She did all of this while graciously giving credit to everyone but herself.

Nancy Kerry has been the glue that has held the city together during some of its darkest days. For that, she deserves respect and support. It is certainly City Council's prerogative to determine the best person to manage the city. But don't, in the process, besmirch the reputation of a city manager who has been unfailingly faithful to her job and who has always sought the best outcome for the city and its future.

Sincerely,

**Claire Fortier**