



BASS LAKE BULLETIN

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WEST EL DORADO COUNTY CITIZENS DECRY REDISTRICTING

A number of local citizens and local groups, dissatisfied with the proposed board of supervisors redistricting map drawn up by the county surveyor, have challenged the supervisor's hasty action approving what the supervisors called the final map. The map splits Cameron Park in two and leaves the present districts substantially intact. Pressed by the citizenry, the supervisors unanimously decided to postpone a decision on a redistricting map under discussion.

El Dorado Hills and Cameron Park residents, whose communities make up about a third of the county's total population – lobbied to have redistricting provide them with two representatives who would be directly beholden to the suburban communities rather than rural interests. They also objected to the placing of the community of Cameron Park into two districts, a frowned-upon redistricting ploy known as “cracking,” which in effect would leave Cameron Park split between districts dominated by rural populations.

Supervisor John Knight, who currently represents much of El Dorado Hills, was the only supervisor that showed any interest in placating the west county activists, who included residents and organizations such as Bass Lake Action Committee and the Four Seasons Civic League.

One of those opposed to the supervisors' map BLAC board member Hal Erpenbeck said: “The elephant in the room is the supervisors want to preserve their two rural

districts in the north and south of the county. They slice off pieces of El Dorado Hills and Cameron Park ... and disenfranchise everyone who lives there.”

Erpenbeck lives in one of the slices along Bass Lake Road in El Dorado Hills, which the June 27 map puts into District 2, along with Grizzly Flat, Somerset, Mt. Aukum and western Cameron Park.

The board instructed county Surveyor Rich Briner to work with District 1 Supervisor John Knight and District 2 Supervisor Ray Nutting to address concerns with the boundaries between their districts, but to leave District 4 alone.

Cameron Park's 18,000 residents combined with El Dorado Hills' 42,000 and some adjoining estate residential lands are nearly double Briner's target single-district population of 36,212.

Though supervisor Ron Briggs expressed opposition to any changes in the boundaries proposed for District 4, which he represents, the Board of Supervisors unanimously voted to have limited additional discussion on the maps at a meeting August 8th dedicated to the matter.

Assistant County Counsel Ed Knapp said that in order to make the statutory deadline to have all the changes in place, August 16 is really the very last day the board can make any changes. What Knapp did not say was that, under the Elections Code, if the board of supervisors fails to adjust the boundaries before November 1, a supervisorial redistricting commission shall do so before the end of the year.

The redistricting committee would be made up of the district attorney, the county assessor, and the registrar of voters. The adjustment of the district boundaries determined by the committee would be immediately effective the same as if the act of the supervisorial redistricting commission were an ordinance of the board of supervisors. ~



NEW STATE FIRE PREVENTION FEE IGNITES A FIRESTORM OF PROTEST

Opposition is mounting to a bill recently enacted that levies a \$150 annual “fire prevention” fee on rural homeowners. The fee legislation, authored by Bob Blumenfield (D-Van Nuys), is expected to generate \$50 million during this fiscal year and \$200 million annually in the future, thereby taking pressure off the state's general fund. Assemblymember Allison Huber (D-El Dorado Hills) voted for the measure.

Though most news reports have erroneously described the law as a “fire protection” measure, the fire prevention fee does not mean more money for firemen or firefighting equipment.

The new fee affects homeowners who live in what is known as a State Responsibility Area (SRA) for fire protection purposes. SRA status is determined by Cal Fire, using certain criteria. Generally, to be included in an SRA, property must be: (a) Land covered wholly or in part by forests or by trees producing or capable of producing forest products; or (b) Land covered wholly or in part by timber, brush, undergrowth, or grass, whether of commercial value or not, which protect the soil from excessive erosion, retard runoff of water or accelerate water percolation, if such lands are sources of water which is available for irrigation or for domestic or industrial use, or (c) Land in areas which are principally used or useful for range or forage purposes, which are adjacent to the land described in (a) and (b).

This definition covers almost all private

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PRESIDENT'S LETTER



Hello Everyone,

Sometimes I get the feeling that I am trapped in a runaway stagecoach. You know, the scene in the old western movies, where the robbers have shot the driver, the team of horses is running wild, and the stagecoach is careening towards a cliff. I usually feel like this just after I have read the newspaper or watched the news.

On the other hand, when I sit out on our patio in the evening with a glass of wine, and look out over the beauty of our region, I feel peaceful and serene. There is probably a word for this dichotomy—the term “cognitive dissonance” comes to mind, but that means my having conflicting thoughts at the same time, which is not the case. Hm.

I think that what this all means is that I should probably spend more time on the patio drinking, and less time reading or watching the news. However, if I ignored the news, then I would not know that some state senator from Los Angeles (Los Angeles!) convinced a majority of nit-witted state legislators to fleece home owners who have homes in rural counties with a \$150 annual “fire prevention” fee (tax) for Cal Fire. No matter that you have a perfectly good local fire department. No matter that you practice good fire prevention around your home. The money collected would naturally go to the state coffers, no doubt to offset the deficit “black hole” those same nit-wits have spent us into.

Excuse me, I must end my letter here – I have to go out to my patio for a glass of wine!

Sincerely,

John Thomson

President

FIRE FEE *(continued)*

home sites on the Western Slope, with two exceptions. Homes that are on property that does not meet the definition of being in an SRA are classified as being in a Local Responsibility Area (LRA) and are not liable for the fee. Homes that are on federal land are classified as being in a Federal Responsibility Area (FRA), and are not liable for the fee. Generally, all homes in El Dorado Hills are subject to the fee unless they are in (most but not all of) Serrano, Woodridge, Hills of El Dorado, or Bridlewood Canyon. To determine whether you live in an SRA, go online at www.bof.fire.ca.gov/sra_viewer/, launch the viewer, and search on your home's address. If you are shown in the yellow shading, you live in a SRA.

Money collected by the fee is supposed to be used only for the following *fire prevention* activities, which is supposed to benefit owners of structures within the SRA: (1) Local assistance grants for fire prevention activities designed to benefit structures within SRAs, including public education; (2) Grants to Fire Safe Councils, the California Conservation Corps, or certified local conservation corps for fire prevention projects and activities in the SRAs; (3) Grants to a qualified nonprofit organization with a demonstrated ability to satisfactorily plan, implement, and complete a fire prevention project applicable to the SRAs; (4) Inspections by Cal Fire for compliance with defensible space requirements around structures in SRAs; (5) Public education to reduce fire risk in the SRAs; (6) Fire severity and fire hazard mapping by Cal Fire in the SRAs; (7) Other fire prevention projects in the SRAs, authorized by the fire board.

State officials have acknowledged that there are problems with the new fire fee. One issue being discussed, according to Cal Fire officials, is the possibility of charging a lesser fee to residents who already pay for local fire protection, like those who live in El Dorado Hills and are served by the El Dorado Hills Fire Department. Cal Fire and the state Department of Finance are said to be in the process of “revising the language of the law,” whatever that means. Estimates of the time frame for the enactment of the so-called “cleanup language” point to mid-August.

Boards of supervisors of rural counties across the state are upset over the fee, since the counties already contribute millions of dollars to Cal Fire each year for fire protection, through property taxes. Rural county officials say that property owners in the SRAs are already paying to support both

local and volunteer fire departments and Cal Fire.

At its recent meeting, The El Dorado County board of supervisors was unhappy to hear that the fee will cost residents of El Dorado County about \$13.5 million. Norma Santiago, representing the Tahoe Basin, noted that some Tahoe residents are already paying \$400 for fire protection, and she said that an additional \$150 for no additional benefit is an outrage. She suggested that the board should draft a letter of opposition to the fee. Jack Sweeney opined that just because the state is broke, for them to suck \$13.5 million out of the county is “just terrible.” Ron Briggs called the state's General Fund the “black hole.” Ray Nutting observed that asking for \$150 for fire prevention, especially from urban or suburban residents, such as those living in the Four Seasons, is wrong. The board concluded the discussion by unanimously agreeing to a motion directing county counsel to prepare a formal legal appeal against the fee. ~



AUGUST BLAC MEETING HELD, SEPTEMBER MEETING TO FEATURE SHERIFF D'AGOSTINI

The regular monthly meeting of the Bass Lake Action Committee was held August 1, 2011. The guest speakers were from the El Dorado Irrigation District: General Counsel Tom Cumpston, who spoke about the the EID redistricting process; and Mary Lynn Carlton, Director of Communications and Community Relations, who spoke about Cost of Service Study now under way. Their formal presentation was followed by a question and answer session, and at the conclusion the attendees expressed their appreciation with a long round of applause.

The next BLAC meeting will be held at the Bridlewood Canyon HOA Clubhouse on Devon Way in Bridlewood Canyon on September 12, 2011, at 7:00 PM. The delayed meeting date is caused by the intervening Labor Day holiday. The September guest speaker will be El Dorado County Sheriff John D'Agostini. Persons wishing to attend may call Frank Sulzberger at 530-676-9500 for directions and the front gate code. All BLAC members are cordially encouraged to attend. For further information contact Kathy Prevost, 530-672-6836. ~



HIGHER PROPANE PRICES THIS WINTER?

A unique feature of propane is that it is not produced for its own sake, but is a by-product of two other processes: natural gas processing and petroleum refining. It is important to understand that the by-product nature of propane production means that the volume made available from natural gas processing and oil refining cannot be adjusted when either prices or demand for propane fluctuate. Therefore wholesale propane prices are based on several factors, such as: the cost of crude oil, the size of the gas reserves, the refining costs, and the old law of supply and demand. In California, and most of the nation, the price paid by the consumer is a function of how much the propane retailer marks up the wholesale price.

At the end of June, U.S. propane supplies were about 20% below last year's level, according to the July issue of *Butane-Propane News*. That June inventory level was also 20% below the five-year June average. In addition, current wholesale prices are far higher than they were a year ago. On August 2 of last year, the Intercontinental Exchange (ICE) posted price for benchmark Mont Belvieu, Texas, propane was \$1.1089 per gallon. On Monday, August 2, 2011, the ICE Mont Belvieu price was \$1.5715 per gallon.

Observers of the propane market point to the fact that crude oil had pushed well above the \$100 per barrel mark. It then sank into the low \$90 per barrel range in July and is back down to that level after a brief rise in July. However, the price of propane, which usually tracks the price of crude oil because propane competes mostly with crude oil-based fuels, did not fall at all.

Propane prices occasionally rise abruptly, increasing disproportionately beyond that expected from normal supply and demand fluctuations. The main cause of shortages appears to lie in the logistical difficulty of obtaining additional propane during the winter peak heating season. Because propane is produced at a relatively steady rate year-round by refineries and gas processing plants, there is no ready source of incremen-

tal production when supplies run low.

Propane wholesalers and retailers are thus forced to pay higher prices as propane markets are bid higher due to dwindling supply. Those higher wholesale prices are then simply passed on to consumers. Imports of propane from foreign producers do not offer much cushion for unexpected demand increases or supply shortages, due to the long travel time. On the other hand, when propane prices do spike, the petrochemical sector, which uses almost half of the propane supply, usually cuts back on its use because it can use other petroleum-based feedstocks, thus freeing up propane supplies for home heating use.

What does all this mean to the homeowner who heats his home with propane? It might mean that because inventories are low now, the shortfall may continue, and propane prices will be higher this coming winter. Though for most commodities higher prices usually act to increase supply, it remains to be seen if propane inventory levels remain low because of the unique way that propane is produced, which will certainly mean higher prices.

Those homes in Bass Lake (Bass Lake Village, Bridlewood and Sierra Crossing) served by propane provider JS West under the 2010 service contract agreement will continue to pay 50 cents per gallon over the laid-in price (the laid-in price is the wholesale price at Richmond plus not more than 10 cents per gallon of transportation cost). Other propane consumers will pay the then going rate of their particular suppliers. ~

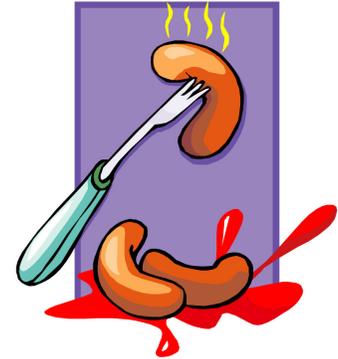
NEIGHBORS BOO TOWN CENTER WEST PLANS

Tony Mansour would like to add large retail stores to his Town Center West project, the 130 acres west of Latrobe Road and north of White Rock Road.

The site's current development plan allows 1.5 million square feet of building on the site, plus a hotel. The proposed plan amendment reduces the total square footage by one-third, but allows 350,000 square feet of retail — up from 66,000 — in addition to the other uses.

Mansour officials say that the 1995 development plan that specifies office, light industrial and ancillary retail uses is no longer feasible in today's market, and promised that the existing design standards wouldn't be lessened for the proposed large retailers. The site was originally planned to be an employment hub for electronics companies. The only current tenants are Blue Shield and another commercial business.

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LESS BANGER FOR YOUR BUCK: LABOR DAY BBQ COSTS UP

Due to inflation, your annual Labor Day BBQ bash may be a meager affair.

One sausage or two? You may be lucky to get half at this year's Labor Day cookout, which is set to cost 29 percent more than last year, thanks to inflation. Those thinking of hosting a BBQ—even a modest one—can expect to fork out an extra \$45 on food to serve a dozen guests.

That means the cost of the average BBQ will be \$199...and that's before soda and alcohol, according to the latest data for metropolitan New York.

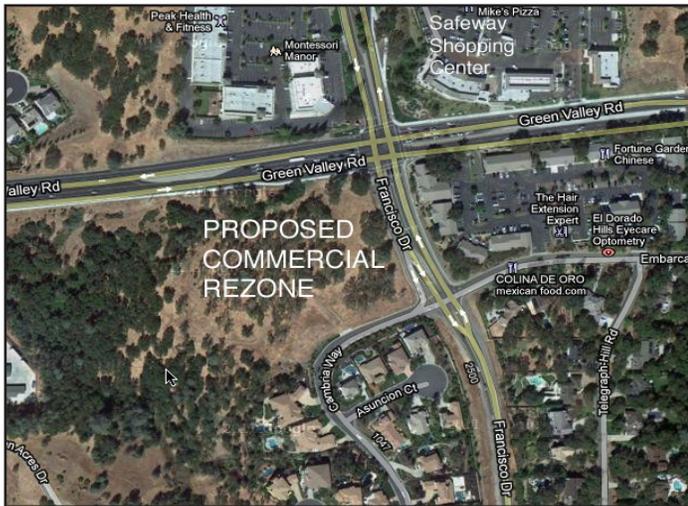
Lettuce has sky-rocketed 28 per cent since last year's traditional BBQ, while an ear of sweet corn is now 50 cents, up from 20 cents last year. Those who don't like tomatoes are in luck though: they're up a staggering 86 per cent over last year.

Nationwide the story is the same. Ground beef is up 12.1 per cent over last year and sausages are up 6.2 per cent, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

And don't even think about potato salad. The apple of the ground is up 13.4 per cent. Ice cream is up 5.1 per cent, beer up 2.4 per cent and coffee has increased by 13.8 per cent nationwide.

The ever-increasing price of gasoline is being blamed for the hike in food prices. Over the past year the cost of gas has increased by 33.6 per cent, along with similar diesel hikes nationwide. This is squeezing the food industry to the maximum and farmer and food markets are being forced to pass on their growing costs to consumers at the fastest pace in several years, according to analysts.

Growers are also abandoning their usual crops of grains and vegetables in favor of acres of corn for ethanol in gas blends. A record 43 per cent of the U.S.' corn crop went into gas tanks in 2010, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. ~



FRANCISCO DRIVE COMMERCIAL PROJECT GETS COOL RECEPTION AT EDH APAC

The El Dorado Hills Area Planning Advisory Council (APAC) recently voted against a change in the zoning from residential to commercial on a 6.85-acre parcel on the southwest corner of Francisco Drive and



Midsummer Joys

Give me the joys of summer,
Of Summer Queen so fair,
With wealth of lovely flowers
And fruits and sun-kissed air!

Talk not to me of winter
With ice and frost and snow,
Nor changing spring and autumn
When howling winds will blow.

No, I will take the joys
Of Summer every time,
So to this Queen of Seasons
I dedicate my rhyme.

— Winifred Sackville Stoner

Green Valley Road.

Winn Communities of Folsom proposes to put a 16,000-square-foot drug store, plus 5,000 square feet of fast food and 7,000 square feet of office space on the corner. A General Plan amendment would be required to change the land use designation to commercial use. A rezone to commercial planned development use is also needed.

Reasons given for the rejection included the traffic impact near the intersection, the proximity of Marina Village Middle School, the removal of oak trees, grading requirements, and the negative impact on the value of nearby homes. APAC members also mentioned their policy of limiting fast food restaurants to the Highway 50 corridor.

Access to the project would come from Green Valley Road and Cambria Way, off Francisco Drive, near the entrance gates to Francisco Oaks. Residents of that community were loudly vocal in opposition to the project.

Francisco Oaks residents gathered over 300 signatures on a petition in opposition to the rezoning proposal. A spokeswoman for the neighborhood stated that, "We just don't need any more commercial here. The three retail projects on that intersection are already struggling."

Since APAC enjoys but an advisory capacity, the developer can decide to move forward with the project and take it to the county Planning Commission; however, the Planning Commission usually gives much weight to APAC recommendations. ~

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TOWN CENTER WEST (cont.)

Roughly 70 neighboring residents turned out at the Holiday Inn recently for a presentation on plans for the site hosted by Chamber of Commerce President and CEO Debbie Manning. While they concede that they bought homes adjacent to the 130 acres of clearly marked commercial zoning, they also cite the fact that Mansour created a detailed development plan, which was approved by the county, that specified uses for the property they deemed acceptable at the time they bought into their neighborhood.

Mansour's stated reason for asking for the change is that Town Center East's retail is mostly smaller specialty shops. He maintains that there remains a demand for more major retail here, in excess of what's available, even now, coming out of the recession, and that merchants are opening stores again.

The plan amendment process for Town Center West is only in the preliminary or exploratory phase, with no official plans or drawings yet on the table. ~

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