



LOCAL GROUPS SUE SUPES OVER TOWN CENTER APARTMENTS

Citizens for Sensible Development in El Dorado Hills, in partnership with Save Our County, has filed a petition with the El Dorado County Superior Court in an attempt to reverse the decision by the El Dorado County Board of Supervisors to approve the El Dorado Hills Town Center Apartments.

The groups are objecting to what they say is the Board's approval of the high-density apartments against the recommendations of the El Dorado Hills Area Planning Advisory Committee and the County Planning Commission, plus public concern over the impact this project will have on the entire county.

They say that the Planning Commission was primarily concerned about the project density (they say that 55 dwelling units per acre is too dense), traffic, and water.

The Board also received recommendations to deny the project from several community groups, including the Four Seasons Civic League and Save Our County, according to the groups.

Among the concerns expressed by the suit filers are: 1) The Board is amending the General Plan to accommodate the project. This causes concern that the Board will create new policies to accommodate any future project in the county. This defeats the purpose of having a General Plan; 2) The Board based its findings for approving the project on outdated environmental impact analysis documents completed in 1987 for the El Dorado Hills Specific Plan and for the 1995 Town Center East project; 3) Impacts on traffic congestion, water supply, the loss of commercial land use, and public services

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NEW YEAR, NEW LAWS

More than 900 new laws will go into effect in California this year. Here are some of the higher profile laws for 2015, from the office of California State Senator Ted Gaines.

Driver's Licenses for Illegals: Assembly Bill 60 allows undocumented immigrants to obtain a driver's license from the Department of Motor Vehicles.

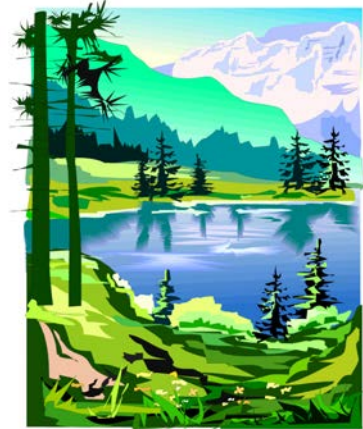
Plastic Bag Ban: Starting July 1, Senate Bill 270 bans plastic bags and imposes a minimum 10-cent tax on paper bags.

Paid Sick Leave: Assembly Bill 1522 requires all businesses in the state to pay full-time and part-time workers a minimum of three days sick leave per year.

Fire Fee Break: Assembly Bill 2048 eliminates a requirement that the state's annual \$150 fire-prevention fee will increase each year based on inflation, lowers the 20 percent per month late payment penalty to 10 percent and waives the fee for homeowners who lose their residence to a wildfire or other natural disaster. The bill also changes the definition of "structure" to "habitable structure" as the term defining which buildings can be assessed the fee. The new definition includes buildings that can be occupied for residential use, and excludes detached garages, barns, sheds and other, similar buildings.

Gun Control: Senate Bill 505 requires law enforcement agencies to encourage officers to search the state's database of gun purchases before conducting routine welfare checks on people. Assembly Bill 1014 allows a judge to order that firearms be temporarily taken away from people found to be distraught and in an emotional state in which they may be a danger to themselves or others.

Youth Football Practice: Assembly Bill (continued on page 2)



TAXPAYER GROUP TACKLES COUNTY WATER RIGHTS

In what was largely a reprise of the last meeting of the El Dorado County Water Agency, members of the Taxpayers Association of El Dorado County debated the pros and cons of pursuing additional water rights at their December meeting.

With Dave Eggerton, the outgoing general manager of the El Dorado County Water Agency providing an overview, the audience peppered him and each other with questions about the project.

At present the Water Agency, in conjunction with El Dorado County and the El Dorado Irrigation District, make up a joint powers authority called the El Dorado Water & Power Authority or EDWPA.

Together the three agencies are splitting the cost of an application to the State Water Board for an additional 40,000 acre-feet of water rights. The expected cost of the application is between \$8.1 million to \$11.7 million, with the big-ticket items being an environmental impact report, consultants and legal help.

In his presentation, Eggerton described an earlier attempt to pursue additional water rights. That application cost \$3.1 million but ran into considerable opposition from other water agencies. Staff at the State Water resources Control Board also described the application as "weak" because of the

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PRESIDENT'S LETTER

Hello All,

While the advent of the New Year encourages us to look forward into 2015, perhaps prompting us to make New Year's resolutions, a look back into the past few years can be somewhat satisfying.

Recall in 2010 that Woodridge homeowners collectively received a refund of \$366,000 for erroneous landscaping and lighting district assessments on their property tax bills. Since then, Woodridge homeowners have altogether seen a savings of about \$375,000 in assessment fees from what they would have been had not BLAC complained.

Also in 2010 BLAC and other members of the Bass Lake community struck a five-year deal with JS West Propane to obtain lower propane rates for the neighborhoods of Bridlewood, Sierra Crossings, and Woodridge (plus the folks in Hills of El Dorado who converted to propane). Negotiations are now ongoing to extend that agreement another five years, and it appears that we shall be able to do so.

There are also signs that work to improve the condition of Bass Lake Road is now in the foreseeable future. Some of the stalled housing projects along Bass Lake Road may be reactivated, and if so, the southern portion of the road from the firehouse south to Highway 50 should be improved. The northern portion of the road, from Serrano Parkway to Green Valley Road, is scheduled to be repaved under a federal highway grant, an action which we hope will be forthcoming this summer.

So we have a lot to be grateful for, and some things to look forward to, in 2015. In any case, please accept my heartfelt wish that you have a Happy and Prosperous New Year.

Best regards,

John E. Thomson

President

APARTMENTS *(continued)*

were not addressed by the Board.

The groups' attorney Tom Infusino's letter of December 1, 2014, states: "Given the unusual decision of the Board of Supervisors on November 4 to defy the recommendations of their advisory bodies, and to direct the Planning Department to prepare for project approval, it has become necessary to explain why this project approval is not only ill-advised, but also unlawful at this time."

Their website states that, "Citizens for Sensible Development in El Dorado Hills and Save Our County are working together to see that public concerns are addressed and environmental law is followed. It is up to citizens to take action and hold officials accountable when the law is ignored."

Persons interested in further information about the suit can visit Save Our County's website <http://saveourcounty.net> or contact Sue Taylor at 530-391-2190. ~

NEW LAWS *(continued)*

2127 seeks to protect young players by limiting high schools to two full-contact practices a week during the 2015 season and beyond.

Sexual Consent on Campus: Senate Bill 967 requires colleges and universities to adopt a standard of clear consent for students engaging in sexual activity. "Affirmative consent" is required by both participants.

Privacy Rules for Drones: Assembly Bill 2306 allows the prosecution for invasion of privacy when aerial drones are used to photograph or record another person in a private setting. ~

WATER *(continued)*

approach taken.

Last year the EDWPA board approved pursuing a revised application and authorized funding phase one of the project. But in October of this year some members of the county Board of Supervisors had second thoughts and asked county staff to analyze whether they should continue participating in EDWPA.

Eggerton went on to explain that the application is for water stored in Loon Lake and the Union Valley and Ice House reservoirs. Sacramento Municipal Utility District currently has the right to generate power from the water but doesn't have consumptive rights. The new application is for consumptive rights to the water even though it's not currently needed.

However, Eggerton repeatedly stressed that the water will be needed in the future. According to an update to a water resource

management plan conducted by the Water Agency, at build-out the county will be short 69,000 acre-feet of water without additional sources.

"Technically we're not pursuing a new water right," he said. "It's an existing water right EDWPA wants formally transferred to the county." Eggerton added that one advantage of the new application is the water is already stored so no new dams would have to be built.

It's actually more productive to talk in terms of additional storage rather than water rights, he said.

Mike Ranalli, an incoming member of the Board of Supervisors, questioned why a collaborative group was "smarter" in terms of negotiating and seeking funding and what was the county's portion of the agreement.

Eggerton explained that EDWPA was originally formed during negotiations with SMUD as the utility district went through relicensing its 688-megawatt "Stairway of Power," also known as the Upper American River Project. EDWPA then turned its attention to pursuing additional water rights from the 400,000-acre UARP.

Eggerton said in addition to the existing storage facilities, the new application would allow EDWPA to store some of the water in groundwater basins in the Sacramento area instead of draining out to sea. The concept of groundwater banking is very popular right now, he continued, and is a selling point for the new application. Replenishing those basins would help other water agencies dependent on groundwater, but EDWPA would receive credit for the water.

Additional releases of water down the American River, which is also part of the new application, would help keep the water at the right temperature for the salmon, which Eggerton said is a big issue with environmentalists. And water exchanges with other entities would generate revenue for the county.

Eggerton noted there is no guarantee that the new application will be successful, but he said it has a much higher likelihood of success because it is designed to be "good for humans, the environment and the water system."

The application is expensive, he acknowledged, but the water will be needed at build-out and for agriculture if people want to maintain the rural character of the county, with about half of the 40,000 acre-feet slated for agricultural use.

Ranalli suggested that if the drought continues, those on wells could face health and safety issues and that might provide a

better justification for the application. He also asked again why a collaborative group was better in negotiating for the water rights.

Eggerton said the effort is stronger when the Water Agency does the planning; the largest water purveyor, EID, is part of the effort; and the county is included because of its health and safety obligations and land-use responsibilities. "It's powerful if these three entities are united," Eggerton said, "especially with groundwater legislation moving ahead, the next big issue will be land-use and water supply planning."

The discussion then turned to the sudden reluctance on the part of the county to be a part of EDWPA. One member suggested it was about the politics of growth in El Dorado County. However, Eggerton said he believed it was more about the cost of the application.

That comment brought responses from the audience who rushed to defend the application. Jack Sweeney, a former member of the El Dorado County Board of Supervisors, said having to build storage for the 40,000 acre-feet would cost at least \$100 million. So spending one tenth of that amount for water that is already stored made more sense, he noted. "Don't lose sight of the magic of this application," he said, saying the project cost was a "nothing."

"It is less than one-fifth what the sheriff wants to build a new home for himself and his staff," Sweeney argued.

EID board member Dale Coco said if EDWPA doesn't go through with the application, the Alder Reservoir would have to be built at a cost of \$200 million and the water rights would still have to be applied for. "We could also expand Weber Reservoir at a cost of \$200 million but again you'd have to apply for the water rights," he continued. "This is storage that is already there and that doesn't have to be built."

Eggerton went on to argue that the additional water would help prevent the cannibalization of the agricultural water supply. There would be a considerable change to the character and quality of life in El Dorado County if we don't provide affordable and reliable water supply for agriculture, he maintained. Eggerton also stressed that the beauty of the project is that the water is stored and those are the ultimate in water rights according to the State Water Board.

However, not everyone was convinced. One audience member suggested that the money EID was contributing to the application was coming from ratepayers and would expand development in the county. Coco responded by saying EID wasn't using

ratepayer money but rather fees from new connections. "Right now EID has about 44,000 acre-feet and uses about 30,000," he said. "So there's not much left for build out in the General Plan."

Another skeptic was Sue Taylor, who asked where the water would be banked. Eggerton said the area was not yet defined but would probably sit north or south of the American River. The water would be measured and accounted for, he said, and we would get credit for it. Agencies like Sacramento Suburban Water Agency are already doing groundwater banking and this water would be an asset in the bank with our partners, he said.

Eggerton closed his presentation by noting the state is already facing 20 percent conservation by the year 2020 and he expected conservation efforts to only increase with time.

Eggerton is now general manager of the Calaveras County Water District. ~

Credit: Dawn Hodson, Mountain Democrat



COUNTY SIGN ORDINANCE UPDATE MOVES FORWARD

El Dorado County has announced that a Notice of Availability (NOA) of a Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the proposed Sign Ordinance Update has been released for a 45-day public review and comment period. The purpose of this comment period is to solicit comments from public agencies and interested parties or persons regarding the content of the DEIR and potential environmental impacts that may result from the project implementation, not the positive or negative attributes of the proposed project itself.

Comments on the provisions of the draft Sign Ordinance Update itself (found in Appendix B to the Draft EIR) may be submitted any time before the Board of Supervisors finally approves the updated ordinance, which action is scheduled for this coming April.

The update to the sign ordinance amends the existing sign ordinance, which has not been updated since 1980. The update addresses key issues including (1) viewshed protection (particularly within designated scenic corridors), (2) the disposition of billboards and non-conforming signs, (3) the reduction of sign clutter with sign consolidation, (4) the limitation of displays on parked mobile vehicles or trailers, (5) lighting standards, (6) provisions for community identification, destination and event signs, (7) electronic (digital) changeable message displays, (8) signs in historic districts, (9) on- and off-site signs; and (10) exempt signs.

The deadline to submit written comments is 5:00 p.m. on Tuesday, February, 17, 2015. The NOA, Draft EIR and proposed Sign Ordinance Update are posted on the El Dorado County Long Range Planning website ([link here](#)).

You may email, mail or hand-deliver your comments to: Anne Novotny, Senior Planner, El Dorado County Community Development Agency, Long Range Planning, 2850 Fairlane Court, Building C, Placerville, CA 95667, email anne.novotny@edcgov.us. ~



COYOTE WARNING: BE EXTRA CAREFUL

Several daytime coyote sightings have recently been reported in and around Bass Lake. The following information on coyotes and their behavior is taken from a research paper from UC Davis by Robert M. Timm, et al.

Coyote attacks on humans, once thought to be rare, have increased in frequency. In expanding suburban areas, residential developments are often near steep, brushy wildland areas. Coyotes inhabiting such wildlands are drawn into suburban landscaped environments that can support an abundance of rodents and rabbits, and where they can utilize water sources, pet food, household refuse, and even house cats and small dogs as prey. Observations indicate that in the absence of harassment by residents, coyotes can lose their fear of people

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COYOTES *(continued)*

and come to associate humans with this safe, resource-rich environment. This problem is exacerbated by people who intentionally feed coyotes. In such situations, some coyotes have begun to act aggressively toward humans, chasing joggers and bicyclists, confronting people walking their dogs, and stalking small children.

Attack incidents are typically preceded by a sequence of increasingly bold coyote behaviors, including: nighttime coyote attacks on pets; sightings of coyotes in neighborhoods at night; sightings of coyotes in morning and evening; attacks on pets during daylight hours; attacks on pets on leashes and chasing of joggers and bicyclists; and finally, mid-day sightings of coyotes in and around children's play areas.

The safe environment provided by a wildlife-loving general public, who rarely display aggression toward coyotes, is also thought to be a major contributing factor. The termination or reduction of predator management programs adjacent to some urban areas has also served to contribute to coyotes' loss of fear of humans and to a dependency on resources in the suburban

environment. Corrective action can be effective if implemented before coyote attacks on pets become common. However, if environmental modification and changes in human behavior toward coyotes are delayed, then removal of offending predators by traps or shooting is required in order to resolve the threat to human safety.

Residents can reduce their vulnerability to coyote attack by carrying a walking stick or a canister of pepper spray as a defensive measure, particularly when walking pets. Daily routines and walking routes should be altered, as coyotes will learn and take advantage of people's routines. Exercising pets in mid-day may be safer than in early morning or late evening when coyotes are sometimes most active. ~



PROPANE PRICES DOWN

Propane prices continue to ease. The retail price for propane from supplier JS West was \$2.79 per gallon in the first week of January, while Amerigas was \$2.99 per gallon.

Propane was \$1.28 per gallon in the JS West contract price area of Bridlewood, Woodridge and Sierra Crossing during the same period.

The average retail price of propane in the US east of the Rockies was \$2.36 per gallon on January 5, 2015, according to the US Energy Information Administration. No data is collected by the USEIA for west of the Rockies. ~



BLAC BOARD WILL MEET IN FEBRUARY

The next regular board of directors meeting of the Bass Lake Action Committee will be held on February 2 at 7:00 PM at the home of John and Fran Thomson, 501 Kirkwood Court in Woodridge, El Dorado Hills, 530-677-3039.

As always, all BLAC members are cordially invited to attend all meetings. For further information about BLAC meetings and membership, please contact Vice President Kathy Prevost at 530-672-6836. ~



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January Morn

Bare branches of each tree
on this chilly January morn
look so cold so forlorn.

Gray skies dip ever so low
left from yesterday's dusting of snow.

Yet in the heart of each tree
waiting for each who wait to see
new life as warm sun and breeze will blow,
like magic, unlock springs sap to flow,
buds, new leaves, then blooms will grow.

— Nelda Hartmann

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