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See Mountain Echo on the web at MountainEcho.com Published every Tuesday Vol. 38, No 51 December 23, 2014



OPINION

"To sin by silence when they should protest makes cowards of men."

President Abraham Lincoln

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First and foremost —MERRY CHRISTMAS from Donna, our entire crew, and myself !!

Second — I normally let the front page news speak for itself and don't feel it necessary to push people to read it. This week is different. People often skip over the news about meetings and such, there was a lot of "meat" in the meetings this last week and people need to be aware of it.

Second, I apologize in advance for the abnormal number of stories that have been continued, but I didn't have any choice.

Third, there was so much that took place in these meetings that I had to break them up into smaller stories. Some of those stories wouldn't fit on Page One so I tried to get them on the same page I used for continued stories.

Fourth, my observations on LAFCO, primarily its board, and their treatment of executive officers. Years and years ago, when I was a special district alternate on that board and the late Julie Howard was the executive officer, things were pretty cut and dried and there wasn't a whole lot of dissension until Julie's health began to deteriorate and she began having a difficult time with one of the members of the board. I wasn't on the board any longer and had lost touch, but as I remember it, she retired or quit.

Amy Mickelson-Beadle was hired and spent better than 8-years with the organization, then the board bowed to pressure from the Fall River Community Services District and eventually reached a mutual separation agreement. One of Mickelson's most outspoken critics, a CSD consultant, Jan Lopez, was hired to replace her and now she's experiencing the wrath of some of the board.

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That's the history. I don't have any problem with governmental or other boards disciplining or terminating managers or executive directors. That's their job. They supposedly have all the facts, including inside information. They are supposed to evaluate, discuss and reach an intelligent decision. If that had happened in Mickelson's case I wouldn't have had a major problem. That is not what I observed. It appeared that political pressure had been applied to a few of the board members that were much more concerned with keeping this or that special interest appeased by publicly humiliating an employee. I could have been wrong, but that's the way I saw it.

Now, the current exec, Jan Lopez, is beginning to feel the brunt of the same type of thing. The Cal Fire/ County Fire Chief and Lopez have had a bitter history, and the Chairman of the board, Les Baugh, has gone into the public attack mode and is starting to get support.

Again, I don't know all of the facts, but I've been on two special district boards over the years, and put one manager in jail, but I didn't jump out and belittle a manager or other employee in public, nor did the boards I was on. We discussed the problems in executive session, with the "offender". We gave the "offender" fair hearing and when possible, a chance to correct the problem, we didn't humiliate them in public. It makes me glad I'm not a big time politician.

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Déjà vu - LAFCO board attacks exec.

After last exec. forced out and new one hired, they start attacking her

By Loretta
Carrico-Russell

Mountain Echo reporter

The recent Shasta Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) meeting started off on a contentious note stemming from the proposed joint sphere of influence (SOI) for the Fall River, McArthur and Northwest Lassen fire protection districts. Commissioner Les Baugh began by calling attention to the executive officer, Jan Lopez, and the chairman of the Commissioner's behavior since Shasta County Fire Chief Mike Hebrard's objection to the joint SOI at a previous meeting.

Baugh said Lopez called Hebrard a "liar," and that in an e-mail exchange did suggest one county fire company, Cassel, leave the Shasta County Fire Department. He said the executive officer has been doing things that she was not directed by the Commission to do. Baugh said Lopez even contacted Hebrard's boss. Whether Lopez and the commissioners agree with the comments made during a public hearing or not, they are not to try and stop the individual (Hebrard) from speaking, Baugh said.

Hebrard, with 24 years with Cal Fire, said his statements from the Nov. 6 meeting that Lopez took offense to are factual, detailed and "I stand by my comments." He challenged Lopez's statement that Shasta County Fire Company 10, Cassel, was not and never was within the proposed joint SOI. He took exception to Lopez's dismissive attitude and suggested the Commission review this behavior. Hebrard referenced a map he printed off LAFCO's website intended to be part of the current meeting's agenda packet that continues to include Cassel in the SOI.

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According to the Governor's Office of Planning and Research, LAFCO is required to prepare a written MSR statement of its determination for all governmental and special districts with the following information: infrastructure needs or deficiencies; growth and population projections for the affected area; financing constraints and opportunities; cost avoidance opportunities; opportunities for rate restructuring; opportunities for shared facilities; government structure options, including advantages and disadvantages of consolidation or reorganization of service providers; evaluation of management efficiencies; and local accountability and governance.

For this reason, Hebrard requested that a paragraph Lopez added to the joint MSR/SOI be removed as it is dismissive of the concerns expressed by the County and residents of Cassel. The paragraph in question reads: "One issue was the erroneous rumor, starting in midsummer 2014, that said the community of Cassel was included within the Fall River Valley Coordinated FPD SOI boundary for these three agencies. In October 2014, all three fire districts concluded that being in the Fall River Valley Coordinated FPD SOI agreed with this concept as being the most practical and appropriate Arrangement for identifying their service areas. Just a few weeks later, controversy about Cassel raised its head once again. A number of people have since worked to quell these divisive rumors."

According to California LAFCO's website, a SOI is: "... a planning boundary outside of an agency's legal boundary (such as the city limit line) that designates the agency's probable future boundary and service area. Factors considered in a sphere of influence review focus on the current and future land use, the current and future need and capacity for service, and any relevant communities of interest. ... Commissions cannot tell agencies what their planning goals should be. Rather, on a regional level, LAFCOs coordinate the orderly development of a community through reconciling differences between agency plans so that the most efficient urban service arrangements are created for the benefit of area residents and property owners."

"SOI do make a dif-"

[text ends at this point; from page 1]

Decision put off on local sphere

By Loretta

Carrico-Russell

Mountain Echo reporter

The Shasta Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) approved numerous municipal service review (MSR) and sphere of influence (SOI) for the intermountain area among others in the county at its recent meeting. The MSR/SOIs for County Service Areas (CSA) were approved.

The Belmont CSA 14 storm drain facility was approved. Shasta County Public Works Director Pat Minturn reported that the Belmont CSA required very little work. The County budgets for the year and in this case the budget was \$2,500 in revenues and the expenses fell within this amount, he said. Minturn added the CSA has operated at this amount for decades and will be solvent at the end of the year.

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Bella Vista Water District's MSR was approved with the stipulation that a correction be made. Bella Vista's general manager David J. Coxe requested the wording in the MSR be changed to reflect residential water use as well.

The City of Redding's MSR/SOI was approved with changes and corrections made to the information within the MSR.

The SOI for the Fall River Valley Coordinated Fire Protection Districts with McArthur and Northwest Lassen and the Fall River Mills Fire Protection District were continued to the February LAFCO meeting.

Alpine Meadows CSA 13, above Shingletown, is a water and wastewater system. Its MSR/SOI was approved as were Cottonwood sewer disposal CSA 17, Keswick water system CSA 25, and Jones Valley CSA 6 were all approved. Jones Valley's approval was based on the stipulation that public comments be removed from the MSR and placed in the public comment section of the minutes.

LAFCO executive officer Jan Lopez said it was common practice to put public comments in the MSRs. Commissioner Les Baugh said he reviewed previous MSRs/SOIs and none contained public comments in them. The only comments contained in MSRs/SOIs were on official letterheads from any given agency, he said.

Eight CSAs were lumped together as zero SOI and determined to be "nonfunctional" CSAs and approved by the Commission as such. The MSRs are a requirement of the Cortese-Knox-Hertzberg Local Government Reorganization Act of 2000. An update to this law required the MSRs be updated every five years. In Shasta LAFCO's case the updates had not occurred prompting a lawsuit by Fall River Mills' residents. In a settlement agreement to the lawsuit, LAFCO was to have all the MRSs completed by the end of the year.

In other LAFCO intermountain news, the Mayers Memorial annexation is still awaiting response to its circulated documents and the Burney Water District annexation is still awaiting a property tax exchange agreement with Shasta County.

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