

Correspondence

March 28, 2024

Board of Supervisors  
520 Main Street, Room 309  
Quincy, CA 95971

Dear Board of Supervisors,

I am writing to you because I am very concerned about the current state of our County government.

Recent events that are playing out in public at the Board of Supervisors (BOS) meetings are damaging to Plumas County.

Our county population is decreasing, and the historic financial issues exacerbated by the pandemic and Dixie Fire have resulted in people leaving the County. We need to work together in a constructive manner, and I don't see that happening.

The BOS decided to hire a Chief administrative Officer (CAO) to help manage the diverse aspects of County government. I am very pleased that you chose a competent person in CAO, Debra Lucero, who has made great strides to get County financial affairs in order while trying to address the deficiencies in County technology that are the basis of many of the problems with operations and finances in the County.

Recent issues such as the felony indictment of the HR Director, Nancy Selvage, questions regarding the performance of the Treasurer, and frequent and non-constructive involvement of District Attorney (DA) Hollister in BOS meetings and County matters that are outside the scope of the typical DA role, are disturbing.

From the public view, the DA has exhibited increasingly aggressive and critical behavior towards the BOS and the CAO. It appears that the DA does not like the fact that CAO Lucero has control over managing the County budget and is now running the HR department due to his actions against the HR Director. He regularly complains about actions taken by the Board and/or the CAO including, the recent survey of personnel who left the Sheriff's department which he called, "a political attack on our sheriff, and the return of about \$5M to the County general fund which was held in sub funds by the DA and Sheriff's departments. In addition, some time ago, DA Hollister expanded his role far beyond that of a typical DA by running the Alternative Sentencing Program and placing a hand-picked director, Stephanie Tanaka, in charge. This is a clear conflict of interest. The DA also frequently and often inappropriately accuses the BOS and CAO of Brown Act violations and a lack of transparency during Board meetings. In one example, the DA criticized the BOS for approving pay raises for appointed department heads, including the head of HR, Nancy Selvage. The DA indicted Ms. Selvage on 3 felony charges stemming from her presentation to the Board, and

subsequent Board approval of salary increases which were partially based on a purported 10-county salary comparison, when it was an 8-county salary comparison.

This may have been a mistake on the part of Ms. Selvage and the BOS; however, it could have been dealt with in a much more constructive manner than what looks like a mistaken felony indictment. I am very concerned that the indictment of Nancy Selvage was unnecessary and politically motivated, perhaps due to Ms. Selvage asking Treasurer/Tax Collector, Julie White, to provide information about her “functional limitations, if any,” that might limit her fitness to perform the Treasurer/Tax Collector. This inquiry as to whether Ms. White needed an accommodation to perform her job was appropriate considering that the FRTA (Feather River Tourism Association) and FRC (Feather River College) made repeated and serious inquiries and complaints to the BOS and the CAO regarding non-performance of Treasurer/Tax Collector White after she did not follow-up on their inquiries regarding interest payments due to them. The BOS carefully weighed this input and offered an accommodation to Ms. White based on the observation that she might need help. Ms. White responded by hiring a lawyer (Chris Backes) without contacting County Counsel or getting pre-approval from County Counsel and the BOS. Ms. White’s lawyer has disrupted BOS meetings 3 times and wasted a significant amount of County official’s time and resources. It is quite evident that Mr. Bakes strategy is to “bully” County Counsel and the BOS into acting against County Financial Policy in order to collect fees. No matter how many times Mr. Bakes threatens the BOS and County Counsel, the County Financial Policy applies and there will not be a 4/5 vote of the Board approving his fees. Mr. Bakes behavior is nothing but destructive to the County.

CAO Lucero has incorrectly been accused of being “friends” with HR Director Selvage who she only knows at a professional level. In addition, in a January 10, 2024, email exchange between the DA and CAO that was shared with the public, the DA essentially accused CAO Lucero of misinforming HR employees about the Selvage case and warned her to "discontinue any involvement in this case before doing any more damage."

It is no wonder CAO Lucero filed a complaint with allegations of a hostile work environment regarding behavior and actions taken by DA Hollister.

I appreciate it that the Board is following proper procedure by hiring a qualified unbiased outside consultant to review the CAO’s complaint. It is not helpful that the DA has publicly expressed a lack of confidence in the consultant in an apparent attempt to discredit the Consultant’s input before it has been provided to the County.

We need to get this behind us, not pay legal fees just to make disputes “go away”, and spend time and resources on the issues that will help Plumas County going forward.

Sincerely,

A Concerned Citizen