

Planning by default amounts to poor planning

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Who's in charge here?

That question arises in light of these Calaveras County news items:

- On Nov. 24, a group of developers called Friends of Valley Springs convinced Calaveras County Water District directors to OK a study on how to furnish water to thousands of acres in the area proposed for residential development.

The developers somehow knew that CCWD would be the "lead agency" for expansion and that the Valley Springs Public Utility District would handle distribution. But CCWD directors, without all the details, complained they had been "left out of the loop."

- A storm of protest broke out after Calaveras County supervisors last week voted 3-2 to maintain a questionable Tulloch Reservoir policy under which submerged acreage is counted in density calculations. It works like this: If zoning allows 10 units on five acres, the owner of a parcel with four acres underwater could cram all 10 on the remaining dry acre and on stilts, over the reservoir.

Under pressure, the board was to reconsider the policy today.

- A boat ramp, dock, gazebo and parking lot built on Tulloch Reservoir by Calypso Bay developer Lenny Doubinski without county permits is going before the Calaveras County Planning Commission for retroactive legalization later this week.

How and why it happened in the first place is still unclear.

These fishy episodes took place in the Valley Springs and Copperopolis-Tulloch areas, the fastest growing regions. Although extra care and caution are needed in handling growth issues in these two communities, these three cases reveal a startling nonchalance on the part of government.

Friends of Valley Springs, that group of developers together planning nearly 2,500 new homes in the area, calls CCWD the "lead agency" in

ambitious plans to furnish water to all these future residents. But CCWD seems more like a dog being wagged hard by the tail.

Shouldn't the water district, the county and the other government agencies be deciding what's proper for Valley Springs and who will supply water? Instead, CCWD seems to have abdicated to developers.

Then there's that underwater acreage at the increasingly crowded Tulloch Reservoir. Although some homes have been built under this inexplicable policy, it deserves revocation before any more go in.

Finally comes the illegally built Calypso boat ramp. But it isn't the developer who will suffer if the county makes him remove the ramp and other amenities; it's the residents.

The Planning Commission should show **compassion, but must also make it clear there will be no tolerance for** such shoot-first-ask-later shenanigans in the future.

Isolated incidents?

Maybe. But all three illustrate the worst kind of planning- planning by default. And that all three arose within a week is cause for concern. The Tulloch and Valley Springs areas deserve better.

Please, share your thoughts on the issue. Write to letters@uniondemocrat.com.

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