

# Kearney talks about hot plant controversy

By Nick Baptista/ The Valley Springs News/ Wednesday June 24, 2015

District 5 Supervisor Steve Kearney discussed his thoughts concerning the proposed asphalt plant at Hogan Quarry in an interview Monday with The Valley Springs News.

Two items regarding the proposal are on the agenda for Thursday's meeting of the Calaveras County Planning Commission. The meeting begins at 9 a.m. in the Board of Supervisors Chambers, 891 Mountain Ranch Road, San Andreas.

"I think it is important to let all the public know how I see a county supervisor's position in the application process, including this one (the asphalt plant)," Kearney said.

"A common complaint to me from the community during the last many months is that often applications sit on our county staff's desk and do not get addressed in a prudent manner. If someone contacts me and relates that this is happening I have been following through by relating to our staff what the applicant tells me, then ask them to please have their issues addressed. After that I trust the expertise of our staff and my job at that point is done other than to say thank you."

It was after such a contact that Calaveras County Planning Director Peter Maurer on April 30 decided a hot plant was a permitted use at the Foothill Materials Inc. quarry located at 3650 Hogan Dam Road. Foothill Materials is a subsidiary of Ford Construction.

Maurer's decision is being appealed at Thursday's planning commission meeting by the Calaveras County Water District, MyValleySprings.com, MVS.com President Joyce Techel and local homeowner John Walker.

"My concern was simply that any determinations the applicant was seeking from Planning be timely processed," Kearney said. "I have not questioned or been involved in any of staff's actual decision-making process nor should I be. Should (a Planning Commission decision) be appealed to the board level it would be my duty to understand everything about the issue and make a legal decision based on the facts and law in front of me without any preconceived notion one way or the other."

In addition at Thursday's meeting, Ford Construction is appealing a decision by the county's Air Pollution Control District that the hot plant project is subject to preparation of an environmental document.

“In the instance of the asphalt plant, I wrote an email, related everything to staff that was told to me, and asked them to address it,” Kearney said. “Yes, I was excited to hear there were jobs involved. Putting people to work is always good news and something I have been working for. But in no manner did I advocate or insist on the issuance of any permits, to insinuate otherwise is simply a falsehood and a political attack. I advocate for the process, that is my job and will continue to be.”

Kearney is in the middle of his first year of a four-year term on the Board of Supervisors. Assisting in creating more well-paying employment opportunities in Calaveras County was one of his campaign goals.

“I have lived in Rancho Calaveras for many years,” Kearney said. “The value of my home and quality of the environment is just as important to me as it is to all of my constituents. Of course, with my political hat on, I want the economy to flourish and the thought of an employer that brings local people to the working force is always an exciting possibility. This being said, I have not researched or delved into the legal intricacies of the project or planning process and I have no intention of interjecting myself into this process until or unless it comes to the Board of Supervisors on appeal.”