

Property rights proponent selected to planning panel

By Nick Baptista

The Valley Springs News, Friday, January 23, 2015

A familiar face at Calaveras County Board of Supervisors meetings, who frequently challenges local officials concerning the public employees retirement system and debacle of working with the Federal Emergency Management Agency regarding flood insurance, has been selected to serve as the District 5 planning commissioner.

David Tunno of Rancho Calaveras, a semi-retired trial consultant and author of “Fixing the Engine of Justice – A Diagnosis and Repair of Our Jury System,” was recommended to the county planning commission post by newly elected District 5 Supervisor Steve Kearney and unanimously approved by the board at the Jan. 13 meeting.

“I got to know David during the campaign,” Kearney said. “At times he would nip at my heels, but I came to appreciate his insight on many matters. I found him to be thorough in his research. He looks into everything and will bring that acumen to the planning commission.”

Tunno gained notoriety at the board level for warning about the liability to taxpayers to maintain an under-funded public employee retirement system and alleging FEMA was trying to save the national flood insurance program by forcing thousands of Calaveras County property owners and many others across the country to buy flood insurance when it was unnecessary.

If the Board of Supervisors were looking for a “yes man” on planning matters, they picked the wrong person.

“I’m not a subterfuge guy,” Tunno said. “I’ll tell you where I stand.”

Tunno said he applied for the post knowing it would be a controversial period as the planning commission and the board began the process to approve an update of the county’s General Plan.

“It will not be a cakewalk. It will take a lot of hours by all of us and putting our grindstone to complete this task, but it is a necessity.”

Even before his first official meeting as a commissioner, Tunno has devoted more than 60 hours going over the recently released General Plan update draft and he has plenty of questions concerning the document.

He foresees potential problems with the way the document has been written, especially when it comes to private property rights, which seem to take a backseat to planning concepts such as “open space” and “scenic viewsheds.”

“I’m a private property rights proponent.”

Much of the language in the update is open to interpretation, he added, and future development is balanced with so many other considerations that it could be virtually impossible to meet them all.

He's also interested in seeing whether the existing General Plan can simply be updated to conform to state law instead of undertaking a wholesale change of the planning document.

Kearney and Tunno are on the same page to see the recently updated Rancho Calaveras Specific Plan become a part of the final General Plan.

Kearney credited former District 5 Supervisor Darren Spellman with submitting the 2014 Rancho update to the county.

"The changes are so small," Kearney said. "It's just a continuation of the existing Rancho plan with legal updates."

In addition to Tunno, the board approved Lisa Muetterties as the new District 3 planning commissioner. They join Ted Allured, District 1; Fawn McLaughlin, District 2; and Kelly Wooster, District 4, on the panel.

A series of public workshops on the draft General Plan begin next week. Staff and consultants will be available to answer questions on the draft general plan, review the draft land-use map and assist citizens in identifying land use designations for their property.

The workshops will be from 5 to 8 p.m. and begin Wednesday, Jan. 28 at San Andreas Town Hall, 24 Church Hill St. District 5's workshop is scheduled for Wednesday Feb. 4 at the Rancho Calaveras Property Owners Association Clubhouse, 3995 S. Highway 26. No workshop has been scheduled for Valley Springs at this time.

Tunno encouraged the public to get involved in the General Plan update process and go to the upcoming meetings to insure their property rights are maintained.