

Supervisor Kearney accuses paper of political agenda

By Nick Baptista / The Valley Springs News / Wednesday, April 27, 2016

Is one of Calaveras County's newspapers picking sides in the potential recall of a county supervisor?

District 5 Supervisor Steve Kearney is questioning why the Calaveras Enterprise last week published a two-month-old story on its front-page titled "Full impact of asphalt plant to be examined" by Editor Dana Nichols.

"I don't know why they would consider that newsworthy now," Kearney said. "This was decided back in February."

The opening paragraph in the April 19 article says: "Calaveras County officials are, after all, requiring that a full environmental impact report be prepared before a proposed hot asphalt batch plant goes into operation at Hogan Quarry near Valley Springs."

Kearney said it had been discussed at earlier public meetings on the asphalt plant proposal that it would be subject to the California Environmental Quality Act and possibly a full environmental impact review requirement before issuance of an "Authority to Construct."

The scope of such a study has been in the hands of the Calaveras County Pollution Control District, Kearney added.

Back on Feb. 19, 2016, County Planning Director Peter Maurer wrote a letter to the asphalt plant applicants' attorney announcing the county did indeed intend to prepare "a full-scope EIR that will address all potential impacts, not just those limited to air quality."

Rancho Calaveras resident Clyde Clapp on April 7 served Kearney with a recall notice and the first-term District 5 supervisor said he believes the April 19 article by the San Andreas newspaper was politically motivated and intended to show he and other members of the Board of Supervisors had belatedly succumbed to pressure for a full EIR on the hot asphalt plant.

"If I had known in February that a full EIR was to be done, I would have published the story in February," Nichols said in response to Kearney's comments. "I was not the only one who failed to grasp that Peter Maurer and Jason Boetzer had already decided to do the full EIR even without a conditional use permit. I wish I had grasped this nuance back in February. Mr. Kearney is to be congratulated for his more sophisticated understanding of land use planning and the intentions of the county planning and environmental management administrators. In general, The Enterprise runs stories because we believe they will be of interest to readers."

The San Andreas newspaper did publish a letter in Tuesday's edition from Maurer and Boetzer, the county's Environmental Management Agency director, stating the April 19 Enterprise article "contained some inaccuracies that we would like to correct."

"(T)he county has continually held that the air pollution permit, an authority to construct, is subject to the California Environmental Quality Act and a full-scope environmental impact report may be required for this project," said the April 21 letter from Maurer and Boetzer to the San Andreas newspaper.