

COMBATIVE START FOR NEW LODE LAWMAKER

By **Dana M. Nichols**
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SAN ANDREAS - Newly seated Calaveras County Supervisor Darren Spellman wore hip waders to his first board meeting Tuesday.

The visual gag was a reminder that Spellman won election by riding a wave of voter distrust of government, including county government. But Spellman proved he wasn't simply joking by immediately demonstrating that he and Supervisors Tom Tryon and Gary Tofanelli will form a new board majority on some issues related to transportation and land use.

They did that by removing Supervisor Merita Callaway from the Calaveras Council of Governments board and replacing her with Tofanelli. The Council of Governments is the county's transportation planning agency and has representatives from the Angels Camp City Council as well as some at-large representatives.

The vote was 3-2 with Callaway and Supervisor Steve Wilensky opposed.

Tryon, who also was a county representative on the Council of Governments, will remain on that board.

Tryon, Tofanelli and Spellman are all advocates for limiting government and have voiced displeasure with how the council has operated in recent years.

So have many residents of Rancho Calaveras, the subdivision southwest of Valley Springs where Spellman lives. Rancho residents spearheaded efforts to oppose a Council of Governments-backed community plan for Valley Springs.

That plan was funded by the California Department of Transportation and was intended to create a more compact, walkable Valley Springs that would keep down costs for roads and reduce air pollution.

Critics saw it as an effort to erode property rights and to prevent large landowners outside of town from building whatever housing or commercial centers they wished.

The Council of Governments and county officials in recent months also have tussled over which agency should carry out a variety of planning and infrastructure projects. Tryon has criticized the council and sought to shift projects to the county.

Callaway was more sympathetic to the council.

Callaway said that in her view Tofanelli and Tryon are "out to destroy the COG as it stands."

Spellman noted that Tofanelli represents downtown Valley Springs and other areas adjoining Spellman's district. "I think the people of the Valley Springs area deserve to have more representation," Spellman said.

In other business, the board voted unanimously to make Tryon the chairman for the year and to make Tofanelli vice chairman. Callaway served as chairwoman last year.

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