

In the interests of full disclosure

Ward La Valley | Posted: Friday, February 10, 2012 9:20 am

"In the interests of full disclosure," said Rebecca Willis, Calaveras County's newest planning director, at a study session last November, "the number is actually larger ... like 400,000."

The number Willis referred to, 400,000, is the potential population of Calaveras County at full build-out under the current General Plan. Willis also said there are currently 27,000 approved un-built-on (she calls them "unimproved") parcels in the county, with hundreds more applications to create more parcels in the pipeline.

The current population of Calaveras County is probably around 45,000, an increase of over 40 percent since 1990, and it is no secret that the county's basic infrastructure - roads and bridges, freshwater and wastewater facilities, fire and police protection - is inadequate.

Several years ago, Jeff Davidson, a prominent Valley Springs property developer and an elected director of the Calaveras County Water District, said he estimated that it would take \$350 million to bring the county's infrastructure to the point it needed to be. Merita Callaway, Calaveras County District 3 supervisor, has plainly said that the county has "not accommodated the growth" the county experienced over the past 20 years.

All these different numbers can be looked at in another way. If over the past 20 years the county fell at least \$350 million behind in maintaining acceptable levels of infrastructure, it means there were many free riders during the county's population growth. It means the supervisors, while busily planning for a potential build-out population of more than 400,000 in some fantastical future, failed to protect the interests of the people who already live here.

To many, this is quite questionable. For many calm, rational people it begs the question: "What the hell were they thinking?"

It is an interesting question, worthy of further research.

On a completely different subject, and also in the interests of full disclosure, the law requires that persons running for supervisor - if they raise or spend more than \$1,000 - fill out forms showing how much was raised, and it requires itemizing contributions over \$99. In the past two election cycles for supervisor, 2008 and 2010, the amount of itemized monetary contributions reported by all candidates for supervisor for all five districts in Calaveras County was just under \$120,000. In the interests of full disclosure, this writer worked for some of those campaigns.

Interesting, perhaps, is the breakdown of these contributions by local segments of the economy in Calaveras County. The amount contributed by the Growth and Development complex (developers, Realtors, building supply, construction contractors, and mortgage brokers) was around \$33,200 or 28 percent of the total itemized amount of monetary contributions. No other identified segment of the Calaveras economy even comes close to this figure.

By comparison, agriculture interests (ranchers, feed and equipment stores, vineyards not associated with tasting rooms) contributed a combined \$1,848 or around 2 percent. Logging and mining interests chipped in just \$3,200 or 3 percent. Tourism and hospitality (including all restaurants, hotels, tourist activity providers, etc.) contributed just \$2,550, but to be fair this category shows up better in the non-monetary side of the total campaign contribution package. Manufacturing also contributed only around 2 percent.

The bottom line is, Growth and Development out-contributed agriculture, logging, mining, tourism, and manufacturing combined by three to one. Interestingly, these figures reflect contributions that were made either during or after the real estate bubble burst in 2008! Won't it be interesting to see what the numbers show this year?

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http://www.calaverasenterprise.com/opinion/article_6da39bac-540b-11e1-92d9-001871e3ce6c.html