

Calaveras Enterprise: Letters To Editor

Board made right call on Sawmill

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In response to Bruce McClenahan's letter of March 5 complaining about the Board of Supervisors' denial of Sawmill Lake, we invite anyone interested to watch the Feb. 26 project hearing video on CalaverasCAP.com and to view staff's Sawmill Lake Project PowerPoint presentation on the Calaveras County Planning Department website to determine if the board should have approved the Sawmill Lake project.

Contrary to Mr. McClenahan's assertion, the Board of Supervisors did "find a way to make this work" when they told the developer to make the Sawmill Lake project better and then bring it back.

Yes, the Sawmill Lake project was "fatally flawed." Hours of presentation and testimony by the Planning Department and concerned citizens made that clear. Planning staff explained that there were critical issues "inherent with the project" that could not be fixed with a mere "continuance." It is not in the public interest to approve a new subdivision that conflicts with the current General Plan, forecloses future planning options, lacks a secure water source, removes up to 8,000 oak trees, urbanizes a regional wildlife corridor, and leaves Calaveras taxpayers to subsidize mitigation costs for Copperopolis infrastructure including roads.

Demanding approval of a flawed project in the name of jobs and economic development makes no sense, because "paper" subdivisions don't create jobs. If they did, Calaveras County would be thriving. There are 20,000-plus approved but undeveloped residential lots in Calaveras County right now, and there are over 7,000 vacant lots in approved subdivisions in the Copperopolis area alone. With that many approved lots, Calaveras County is already in a position to take advantage of a housing market that is gaining strength as the recession recedes.

Continuing the project would have taken more staff time away from the General Plan update and broadened the scope of the General Plan environmental impact report (EIR), which would increase costs. Ironically, the Sawmill Lake project has already cost the county \$100,000 in staff time and distracted staff from other projects over the past six months. Supervisors made the right decision – the only decision possible – to deny the Sawmill Lake project without prejudice.

Joyce Techel, president

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