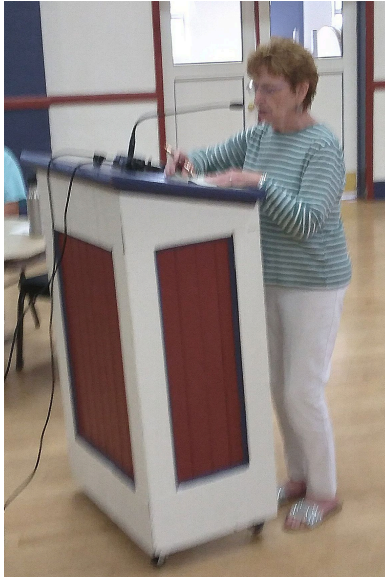


City, County, Harbor vote to continue Tri-Agency

July 26, 2023





The city of Crescent City, county of Del Norte and the Crescent City Harbor District met Tuesday, July 25, at 5pm to discuss future funding for the beleaguered and financially-troubled Tri-Agency Economic partnership. The meeting took place at the Veterans Hall, 810 H St.

On hand for the Special Meeting of the Tri-Agency Joint Powers Authority were the following:

Del Norte County Board of Supervisors, full board: Chairman Darrin Short, Valerie Starkey, Chris Howard, Joey Borges and Dean Wilson.

The City was represented by Mayor Isaiah Wright and councilors Blake Inscore, Kelly Schellong and Ray Altman.

The Harbor Commission produced a bare minimum quorum of three: Wes White, Brian Stone and Gerhard Weber. Commissioners .

The city previously set aside \$30,000 in its new budget. The county had already allocated \$70,000 in its 2023 /24 budget. Harbor commissioners agreed to contribute \$10,000 as its share for continued support for the beleaguered and financially- challenged Tri- Agency Joint Powers Authority. The highly partisan opposition audience of about 30 public were none-to happy with the expenditure of \$110,000 of the three governances. The funding is reported to be dedicated to hiring support staff to manage the JPA.

The public dissonance was palpable when board chair Short introduced the first of the abbreviated two agenda item calendar: the discussion of support (or opposition) for the Federally- advocated wind turbine energy program. After a lengthy presentation by consultant Bob Brown of HSN and Redwood CORE consultants, the public and many of the elected saw the wind power program as wasteful, frivolous, unproductive and not in Del Norte county's best interests.

The public discord continued by those who opposed the funding of Tri-Agency. Emotions ran strong by those who hoped to persuade the elected to disband the JPA.

Supervisor Howard touted the successes of Tri-Agency. He stated the JPA must move on and cannot dwell on past mistakes. His comments were met with discontent by several in the audience.

Supervisor Short concurred and spoke of all the good deeds accomplished by the JPA and deflected blame for the delinquent debt to the USDA as “not all our fault.” Short proffered the excuse the lender permitted the poor lending policies which created the debt.

City councilor Kelly Schellong whose tenure on the Council enveloped decisions she partook in, resulting in the subsequent fiscal chaos. Schellong underscored her support of Tri-Agency as a formidable economic driver. When it time to cast her vote, on support or opposition to Tri-Agency, she deflected her decision seeking an addendum to invite the three Tribe’s into the JPA. When that gesture failed, she finally cast her vote.

The Elk Valley Tribe was referenced several times by different members, joining the JPA. Tribal Chair Dale Miller was in the audience and spoke at the public dais, expressing good wishes to the Tri-Agency but did not request an invitation to join the economic partnership.

Wilson stated, “ Tri-Agency is broken.” He offered no remedy on how to fix this JPA.

Borges and Starkey were resolute in opposition to Tri-Agency.

Altman was also resolute in opposition to the JPA. Altman attempted to offer a motion to “terminate”Tri-Agency but did not attract a second.

Public Speaker Linda Sutter was furious the Tri-Agency dug a \$290,000 debt hole in favor of the United States Department of Agriculture. The loan had gone delinquent due to, in Sutter’s words, “ ... mismanagement, corruption and malfeasance.” Public Speaker Elizabeth Freeman, whose family has resided in Del Norte County for five generations, pleaded with the decision makers to disband the Tri-Agency. The mild-mannered Freeman labeled the Tri-Agency “ a joke.” Her pleas apparently fell on deaf ears.

Public speaker Mario Westphal was similarly disappointed with Tri-Agency. When Westphal brought the failures of Tri-Agency to the current elected, he was greeted by at least two members, Stone of the harbor and Inscore of the city who, at different occasions, reminded the public those elected can always be voted out of office; Westphal addressed that comment with both surprise and disappointment when he inquired why those of you in office have such difficulty in listening to your constituents.

Public Speaker Sam Strait lamented, “...so many in the public have lost confidence in those elected to serve. The public is being ignored.” Strait called supervisor Howard’s praise of the Tri-Agency as “ pure fabrication.” Strait continued, Short’s comment of defecting blame for decisions made shows a lack of accountability.

Speaking in support of Tri-Agency was community business leader Kevin Hartwig who credited Tri-Agency for developing the business retail zone within the inner boat basin.

In the end, each JPA governance voted to continue Tri-Agency.

Board of Supervisors, 3-2:

Borges, NO

Starkey, NO

Howard, YES

Wilson, YES

Short, YES

Crescent City Council, 3-1:

Altman, NO

Schellong, YES

Inscore, YES

Wright, YES

Councilor Jason Greenough was absent.

Crescent City Harbor District, 3-0:

Weber, YES

Stone, YES

White, YES

Commissioners Harry Adams and Rick Shepherd were absent.