

Opinion: So, who is running the show in Del Norte County?

January 30, 2025

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The answer to this question has certainly become a mystery to all who attend Del Norte County Board of Supervisors meetings, never more so during the course of January 14th's meeting. As the current Board stumbles into the calendar year 2025, the Board proceeded with the expected changing of the guard. Out with the 2024 leadership and on to the new, which did not age well... less than a nano second in fact!

When serving on a governing board no matter where it might be on the planet, there should be an expected level of respect within such a governance in order for a properly functioning government to have an opportunity to exist. This does not mean the board members always have to agree; there simply has to be a level of respect for each board member. The Del Norte County Board of Supervisors is regrettably, not such a board, sad, but absolutely true.

In atypical fashion our bobble headed supervisors, at least three members: Supervisors Chris Howard, Chairman Joey Borges, and recent Chairman Wilson, forsook the normal board repetitive head bob to become Easter Island stone statues, unable to utter the words "I second the nomination." In that moment, a profound display of supreme disrespect amongst board members reared its ugly bobblehead like a butterfly landing atop Supervisor Valerie Starkey's head in a way I have not personally witnessed in my many years of attendance at Board meetings.

While Supervisor Starkey and I are more often than not at odds with our personal convictions about governance, Supervisor Starkey is entitled to form policies as a representative of District 2 and has done so with vigor for the entirety of her first four-year term in office. What has become obvious during Supervisor Starkey's time in office, is the clear impression she has been shuttled with regularity to a seat in the back of the bus. Never offered the chance of becoming Chair of the Board, or even vice-chair for that matter until the January 14th nomination by Supervisor Darrin, "who didn't get the memo" Short.

Before the public in plain sight, three members of the board of supervisors, Dean Wilson, Joey Borges, and Chris Howard sat in Easter Island monolith silence with a level of disrespect, incivility, discourtesy, rudeness, contempt, and 196 similar words towards the elevation of one of their members to be considered for the office of Chairperson of the Del Norte County Board of Supervisors. What a travesty!

Words cannot express this author's contempt for the three members of the Board, I will repeat: Joey Borges, Dean Wilson, Chris Howard who COULD NOT UTTER THE WORDS,

"I SECOND THE NOMINATION," for a colleague, Supervisor Valerie Starkey, who was nominated to be the Chair of the Del Norte County Board of Supervisors for 2025, and has served faithfully as a 5-0 rubber stamp bobble headed supervisor for a full four-year term and still gets no respect.

Becoming the chair of the Board, does not give the holder of the position anything more than to set the agenda and conduct the meeting, something ANY MEMBER OF THE BOARD SHOULD BE ABLE TO ACCOMPLISH AND BE AFFORDED THE OPPORTUNITY TO OCCUPY THE POSITION. So, in a nutshell, what is going on here? Who is it who chooses the leadership of the board? Who do they have to suck up to, to earn the right to be Chairperson?

I have long contended the unelected department heads of the County's bureaucracy appear to have substantially more sway in the governance of Del Norte County, the consent agenda being exhibit number one. Have the unelected anything to say about the election of the chair of the board? If so, this is a classic example of the tail wagging the dog. How did this happen?

More importantly, how can the citizens of Del Norte County allow the level of disrespect shown to Supervisor Starkey be acceptable in local government? The behavior is DNHS 2.0. I am quite sure when the spin and excuses for the abysmal behavior by Howard, Wilson, and Borges follow, "nothing to see here folks" should be unacceptable and has to change. While some say there is "no law, North of the Klamath River", perhaps civility has died as well.

There is likely to be no apology offered for this excretable behavior by Starkey's fellow members of the board, privately or publicly, but it should happen by each, Howard, Wilson, and Borges. In 2026 there should be no repeat of this appalling behavior by members of the 2026 Board, and Chair of the Board Valerie Starkey should receive her second on the way to a 5-0 vote. Is this Board listening? Do Easter Island statues wear hearing aide devices?

Without violating the “ spirit of the Brown Act,” perhaps this trio can meet after nutrition on the campus of Del Norte High and graduate from the childish, immature, adolescent behavior so prevalent among teenagers.