

Supervisor Howard and Our Local Einstein's New Toy

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Opinion

For whatever reason there is always someone on an elected board who thinks he or she has all the answers. The current front runner on the Del Norte County Board of Supervisors is Supervisor "Einstein" Howard.

Following the August 2023 loss of the County's sole source of electricity due to fire, it has become Supervisor Howard's primary focus to make sure something is in place such that it never happens again. Initially, trying through the resurrected Tri Agency, Supervisor Howard, one of its chief proponents, pushed for off-shore wind as solution. With the ultimate demise of the Tri Agency, the wind fizzled and "Einstein" went looking for a shiny new toy.

Now there are many ways of generating electricity, but few are economical and reliable. Much to his credit, "Einstein" Howard has managed to avoid advocating for anything producing electricity that is remotely economical or reliable. Once off-shore wind was dispatched, a new toy appeared on Howard's horizon, biomass generation of electricity.

Like off-shore wind, Biomass electrical generation, is neither economical nor reliable. Even if circumstances were economically optimal, biomass generation suffers from lack of efficiency as well. And another of "Einstein's" well thought out toys quickly lost its luster. How strange, it was sooooo shiny!

Barely a month passed and “Einstein” was at it again. A sure-fire winner, micro-grids! What could possibly go wrong? We are dealing with “genius” after all. The shiny “new toy” pushed by “Einstein” Howard was barely out of the box when it magically appeared on the County’s “Strategic Plan” as a “priority”, to be completed in the next 12 months. Wouldn’t we want a closer examination of that new toy? After all it is shiny, comes with the possibility of \$3 to \$4 million in grant funding, and is neither economical or reliable. What more can you ask for?

Oh yes, that, it is being pushed by the man, Supervisor “Einstein” Howard, with such a great track record in redundant electrical power generation.

The current “new” toy being proposed is solar panels, a battery farm and a backup diesel generator. Solar panels properly maintained with a life expectancy of twenty years, a battery farm of five to six years, and a generator powered by diesel fuel, all to cover the brief inconvenience of a few days’ loss of power every sixty years or so. No thoughts of maintenance or replacement cost, all on the County’s future dime. No thoughts of, is it a “necessary” expense or necessary in the first place? Just the rush to have “somebody else” pay for it. It’s somebody else’s money after all. Soooooo shiny!

As with nearly everything our Board’s resident genius proposes, the toy starts out looking oh so shiny, then cost, reliability, maintenance, and is it truly a vital need for the County comes into play?

As has been spoken numerous times before, “We are a poor rural County and our needs should be much more modest.” If we cannot afford the next new shiny object in the first place, should we make the purchase, knowing what will happen following the purchase. More local dollars to keep the new toy operating, so that the few, micro grid after all, can have lights, most who already have backup generators in the proposed grid, while the majority of the County’s residents sit in darkness. Swell! Just the thing for our resident “Einstein” to advocate for.