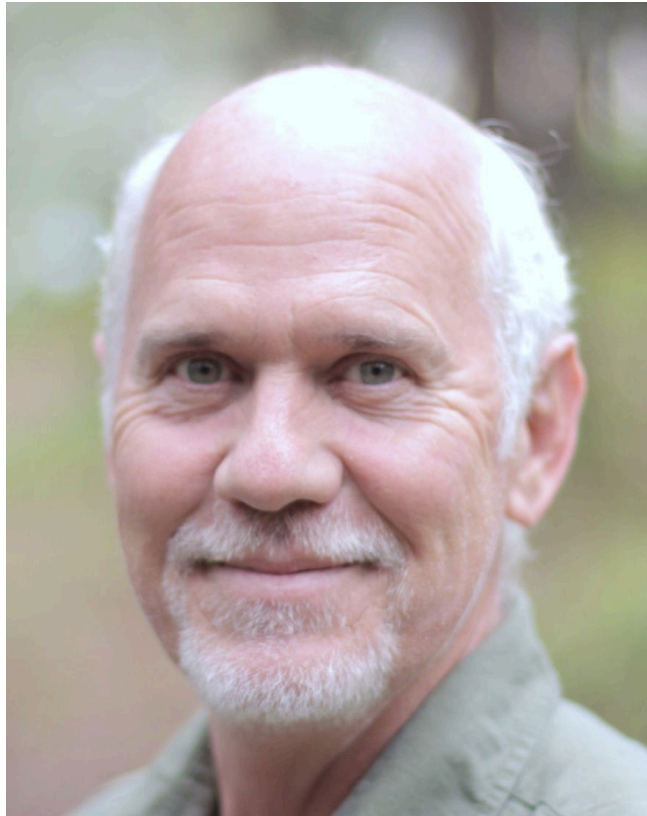


Guest Column: Tri-Agency, try again or try something new?

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Most people agree that there is a great need for an agency that can take the lead in promoting business development and job creation in our community. However, it is reasonable to ask whether the Tri-Agency Economic Development Authority (Tri-Agency) is still the right vehicle to lead our community's economic development.

Despite many successes, Tri-Agency also has some baggage. This includes a perception that Tri-Agency is the same as the Del Norte Economic Development Corporation (DNEDC). Tri-Agency and DNEDC are two different organizations. Tri Agency is a government agency, subject to fiscal transparency and open meeting laws. DNEDC is a private entity, with whom Tri-Agency has severed ties and no longer has any working relationship.

After Tri-Agency pays off its past debt, they will have a clean slate. Now is a good time to evaluate the viability of Tri-Agency and possible alternatives. "This is how we have always done it," is not a good reason

to resist change. This is especially true if what you are doing is not working optimally.

I can think of at least five options for what to do with the Tri-Agency Economic Development Authority:

- 1) Make no change. Keep doing the same thing and hope for a better result;
- 2) Dissolve Tri-Agency and let it pass away;
- 3) Dissolve Tri-Agency and form a new regional economic development agency;
- 4) Reform the current agency and amend the current joint powers agreement to further clarify its mission; or
- 5) Complain about how everything is messed up, never offer a solution, and predict that we are all doomed.

I would recommend that option four is likely the most expeditious way to get this foundering ship upright and steaming forward, but options two and three should also be considered. Following are a few suggestions for improvements.

I think it would be a great idea for this reimagined agency to expand membership to include tribal partners. All our local tribes have demonstrated an adept capacity for economic development, and they have access to separate pools of economic development funding.

In the interest of transparency and accountability, Tri-Agency should contract with either the City of Crescent City or Del Norte County to hold its money and track its finances. This way we can be assured that government accounting practices will be followed.

It would also be advisable to put in place policies to prevent a recurrence of past mistakes that resulted in the financial jeopardy that Tri-Agency currently finds itself. Tri-Agency should look at best practices used by other economic development agencies.

It is understandable that the Tri-Agency board members are frustrated trying to clean up old debts. They want to press ahead to make progress on actions that will result in economic development. We have a plan for this.

The County has a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategic Plan (CEDs) which “provides an action plan for collaboration between government, private sector businesses, non-profit community organizations and the public to accomplish shared goals for economic development in Del Norte County.”

It’s time to take the CEDs off the shelf and start making progress on the many goals and objectives contained in this strategic plan.

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