

J. Connolly Consent Calendar
BOS 1/3/2023

January 3, 2023

From: Joseph Connolly, M.A.

To: El Dorado County Board of Supervisors

Copy: El Dorado County Chief Administrative Officer
El Dorado County Counsel

Subj: Objections to El Dorado County Board of Supervisors 2023 Chair Election

Dear Supervisors:

I object to the election of Supervisors Hidahl, Turnboo, Thomas and Parlin as Chair or Vice-Chair of the El Dorado County Board of Supervisors.

Since January, 2020 each of them has appointed and defended the assignment of three commissioners with pre-existing ties to extremists who conspired to attack the U.S. Capitol on January 6, 2021.

In particular I object to the election of Supervisors Turnboo and Thomas for the additional reasons stated herein.

Supervisor Turnboo has failed to disclose a personal relationship with commissioner Linda Grimoldi, demonstrating an apparent conflict of interest in her appointment.

Supervisor Thomas' constituents include the chapter president of the Hangtown Proud Boys, whose logo includes a person hanging from a noose and the words "Placerville CA," the name of the El Dorado County seat. A noose is a terroristic symbol under California law but Supervisor Thomas remains silent about that matter, including her parent's support for the display of nooses at their family owned business.

El Dorado County deserves Supervisors who are persons of unquestionable integrity that uphold the law and the County's expressed core values, not those who uphold seditious conspirators and terroristic symbols for profit, while failing to disclose relevant conflicts of interests.

Sincerely,

s/Joseph Connolly

I.
SUPERVISOR TURNBOO CONFLICT OF INTEREST
UNDISCLOSED PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH COMMISSIONER GRIMOLDI

Among Supervisor Turnboo’s commissioner nominations was that of Linda Grimoldi to fill a vacancy on the El Dorado County Commission on Aging. Grimoldi was appointed in March, 2022 despite public objections and her failure to disclose existing relationships with Proud Boys and other extremists.

On May 24, 2022 Turnboo and his assistant Todd White attended a “surprise” birthday party for Grimoldi, which was held at the home of then sheriff candidate Jeff Leikauf. Leikauf is now the current sheriff of El Dorado County.¹ (See Figure 1.)

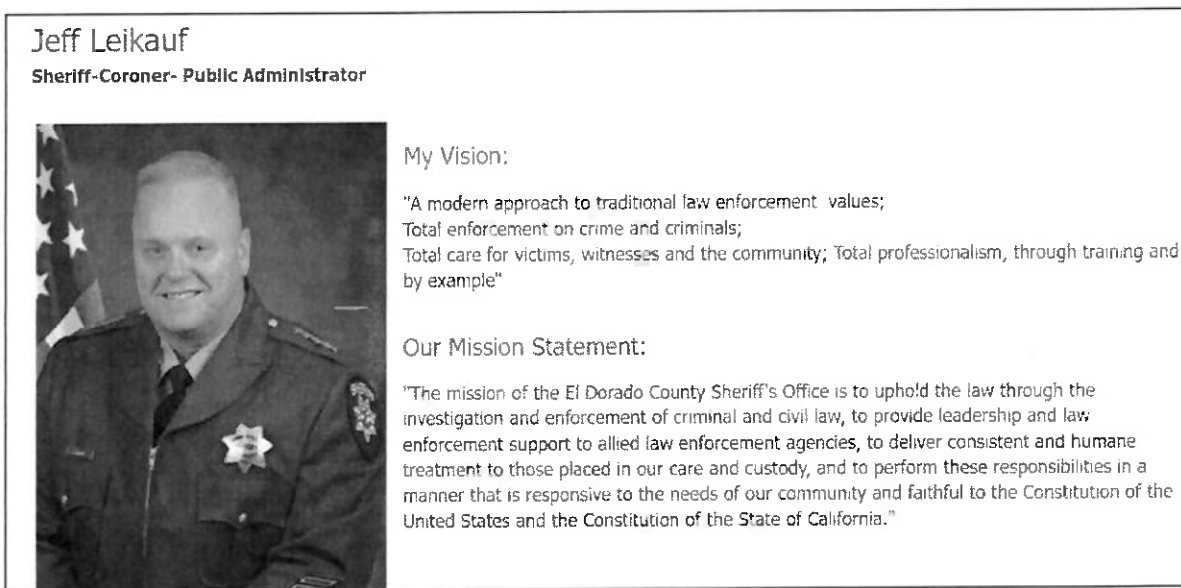


Figure 1
El Dorado County Sheriff Jeff Leikauf - January 3, 2023

Grimoldi posted an account of her birthday party on her personal Facebook page, along with several photos of the small group in attendance, including Leikauf, Turnboo and White.

Grimoldi wrote about the group, “These people are my “family” and I love them all.” (See e.g., Figures 2-6.)

¹ See <https://www.edcgov.us/Government/sheriff>.



Figure 2
Grimoldi Facebook post - "surprise" birthday party - held May 24, 2022



Figure 3
Grimoldi kissing sheriff candidate Jeff Leikauf - May 24, 2022



Figure 4

Grimoldi Facebook post - "these people are my "family" and I love them all"



Figure 5

Grimoldi showing "FRESH BULLSHIT SERVED DAILY" ball cap present
Observed by Supervisor Turnboo and his assistant Todd White

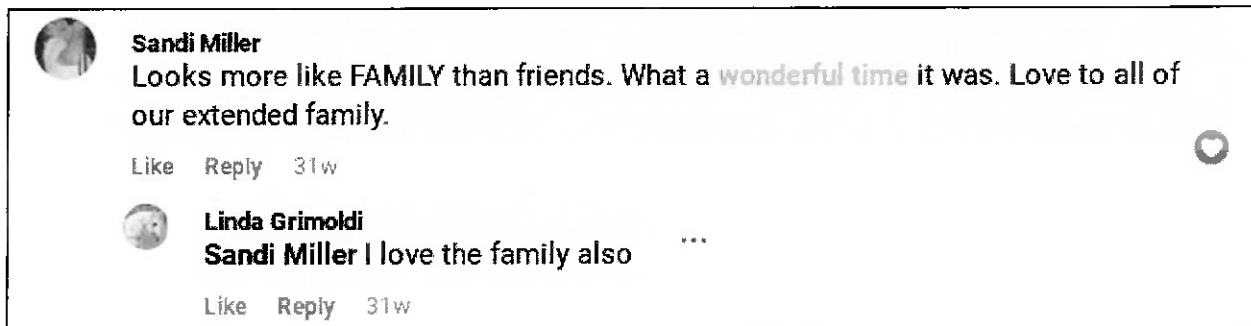


Figure 6

Grimoldi's reaffirmation of "family" gathering - "I love the family also"

II.

SUPERVISOR THOMAS CONFLICT OF INTEREST PERSONAL AND FAMILY SUPPORT OF TERRORISTIC NOOSE SYMBOLS

The subject of noose symbols, and a hanging effigy on Placerville's Main Street, have been controversial for decades, but especially so in light of the December 8, 2020 appearance of a newly formed "Hangtown Proud Boys" chapter of the Proud Boys International, LLC.²

The Hangtown Proud Boys logo features a person hanging from a tree at the end of a noose, and the words "Placerville, CA." That logo is featured on the group's attire and its online media accounts, including in the display of violent images. (See e.g., Figures 7-8.)

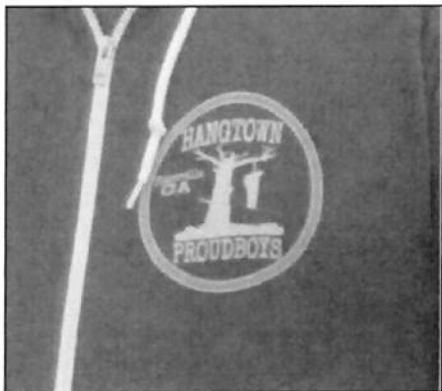


Figure 7
Hangtown Proud Boys logo



Figure 8
Logo featured in violent imagery

² See e.g., Joseph Connolly letter, "Review of Chris Cockrell Controversies," dated March 15, 2021.

In April, 2021 a sizeable contingent of Proud Boys gathered on the steps of the El Dorado County Superior Court in Placerville. They joined a local protest of the Placerville City Council’s decision to remove a noose from the city logo, some fifty years after its 1970s addition.³ (See e.g., Figures 9-10.)



Figure 9
Proud Boys “Keep the Noose” protest – Placerville, CA – April, 2021



Figure 10
Hangtown Proud Boys president (left) – former commissioner Keeley Link (right)

³ See e.g., “ ‘Preserve the Noose’ Proud Boys, Placerville residents call for symbol’s return to city logo” at <https://www.abc10.com/article/news/local/california/proud-boys-placerville-residents-call-for-noose-city-logo/103-b12c9b85-2998-4de9-85c0-583173d367ac>.

A noose is a terroristic symbol under California law and is defined as “a symbol representing a threat to life.” Unlawful displays of a noose, including at public places and places of employment, are subject to fines, imprisonment, or both.⁴

Thomas and her family reportedly own several properties in Placerville, including the Hangtown Village Square shopping center, located at 1200-1252 Broadway.⁵

Besides its intentional “Hangtown” name, the shopping center’s main entrance features a custom sign featuring a noose hung from a tree, in which the noose is displayed across the entire width of the sign.

The sign is also stylistically represented on the shopping center’s website. (See e.g., Figures 11-12.)



Figure 11
Hangtown Village Square website - featuring prominent noose imagery
January 2, 2023

⁴ See [California Penal Code, section 11411](#), listed under the article heading “Terrorizing.”

⁵ See <https://www.hangtownvillagesquare.com/>.



Figure 12
 Hangtown Village Square main entrance sign
 Google Earth Street View image as of January 2, 2023

The owners of the shopping center are Thomas' parents, "Steve and Judy Puthuff." They advertise the shopping center as "Family Owned and Operated since 1976," when [t]heir goal was to create a place that reflected the charm of our city." (See Figure 13.)

HANGTOWN VILLAGE SQUARE

Placerville's Premier Shopping Center
 1200 - 1250 BROADWAY in PLACERVILLE, CA

HOME
Shops & Services
What Makes Us Special
More

About Us

We're hands-on!
 And you can tell the difference!

We care about our customers. We care about our tenants. We care about our city. And it shows in how we manage this shopping center.



Family Owned & Operated since 1976

Steve & Judy Puthuff were born and raised in Placerville, and in 1976, they bought a stretch of land on Broadway. Their goal was to create a place that reflected the charm of our city while giving residents and visitors alike a convenient place to shop and receive the services they need.

Since opening Hangtown Village Square in 1980, they are still going strong with hands-on management and a professional team in place to ensure that our customers have a pleasant shopping experience and our tenants have a robust place to do business.

Figure 13
 Thomas' "Family Owned & Operated" shopping center promotion

The Puthuff's view of Placerville's "charm" includes the noose as a symbol of Gold Rush "justice," which they stridently defended in response to public protests of the noose symbols at their property.

In October, 2021 a tenant, Rite-Aid Pharmacy, was notified that its corporate name was displayed under the shopping center's noose symbol. (See Figure 12.) The corporation requested their name be removed but the Puthuffs refused.⁶

Judy Puthuff cited history as a reason to maintain the noose symbolism. "Right or wrong, it is the heritage of the place," ... You know, we are a Gold Rush town. We can't deny our history and the noose represented a justice back then in those days."

Rite-Aid's vice-president of corporate communications replied, "While we understand the historical nature of old west 'Hangtown,' the noose symbol is divisive and widely considered a hate symbol that evokes violence, death and mob justice."

In late November, 2021 the Rite-Aid logo was replaced by a new logo of a miner, the same image currently shown on the shopping center's website.⁷ (See Figure 14; compare to Figure 11.)



Figure 14
Hangtown Village Square Sign - November, 2021

⁶ See "Rite Aid wants logo removed from Hangtown Village sign" at <https://www.mtdemocrat.com/news/rite-aid-execs-want-logo-removed-from-hangtown-village-sign/>.

⁷ See "Sign Switch" at <https://www.mtdemocrat.com/news/sign-switch/comment-page-1/>.

Prior to the sign's remodeling, the Puthuffs continued to vigorously defend noose imagery at their business property, through letters published in the local Mountain Democrat newspaper.

Judy Puthuff wrote, for example, "So, the self-righteous minority is taking offense at a logo on our property — so what?! ... There is no reason for me to respect this behavior that seeks to interfere with our business, our tenants and their relationship with us. You have a right to an opinion — not a right to attack and meddle. I have a right to ignore your contempt."⁸

Steve Puthuff's letter was more vigorous in his defense of the Puthuff's "right to run our business the way we believe is right." His comments included,

"The progressives in Placerville want to rewrite history. ... I remember complaining to the City Council that if we give into this small but very vocal group on the elimination of the noose logo from our city and police signs, that they will next come after our private property rights and want us to change the name of our center and eliminate our noose from our signs. ... This small group of radical activists have an opinion, but it is only that and I have a right to ignore it. I will stand up for the large majority of Placerville residents who believe in private property rights and want to embrace our rich heritage. I for one will never give up our principals and will fight to maintain our rights to run our businesses the way we believe is right."⁹

⁸ See Judy Puthuff letter to the editor, "Defense of the noose" dated November 8, 2021 at <https://www.mtdemocrat.com/letters/defense-of-the-noose/>.

⁹ See Steve Puthuff letter to the editor, "Sign language and private property" dated November 8, 2021 at <https://www.mtdemocrat.com/letters/sign-language-and-private-property/comment-page-1/>.