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Fw: DOT Reorganization Recommendation 4/5/11 attachment
The BOSTWO to: Cynthia C Johnson
Sent by: Kitty J. Miller

04/04/2011 01:25 PM

4/5/11 agenda
Thank you,

Kitty Miller, Supervisor's Assistant
El Dorado County Board of Supervisors
District II, Ray Nutting
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----- Forwarded by Kitty J. Miller/PV/EDC on 04/04/2011 01:25 PM -----

DOT Reorganization Recommendation

Sam Koch to: bostwo

04/04/2011 12:50 PM

April 4, 2011

Dear Chairman Nutting,

A hot button issue recently before the Board is the reorganization of the DOT. The Board directed the Director of Transportation (hereinafter the Director) to review the structure and effectiveness of the Department and provide them a recommendation leading to improvements. To that end the Director presented his recommendation to the Board on March 15, 2011. His recommendation included a recommendation that flattened slightly the management structure leading to a slight decrease in Department overhead costs. He also recommended the elimination of a number of support positions which will undoubtedly lead to a less efficient operation.

I believe that this recommendation and actions by the Department leading up to this recommendation exemplify DOT management's inability to act in a manner that result in decisions that are in the best interest of the County. Because of this belief I presented the Board with a recommendation that they reject the Director's recommendation and direct that the CAO retain a consultant to review the structure and operations within DOT and return with a recommendation not influenced by personal gain.

The Board directed that the CAO consider taking responsibility of conducting the study herself and if she thought the task was greater than could be handled within her Department to return with a recommendation for a consultant. In structuring the work direction in this manner the Board set up the only outcome that the CAO could possibly make; that the Board approve the original recommendation as presented by the Director of Transportation.

The CAO is new to this County, not familiar with the history of the DOT or circumstances leading up to and necessitating the reorganizing of DOT. Under these circumstances, and not wanting to create a possible strained relationship with the Director of Transportation, her best

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option was simply to return to the Board with her support of the original recommendation.

The CAO presented the argument on March 29th that changes to the Department should be made incrementally and the Director's recommendation was the first step. This position exemplifies her lack of historical knowledge. All members of this Board are acutely aware of the overhead and structural problems that have plagued the DOT and been a pain in the Board's side for more years than any care to admit. But the facts are the facts.

Over the past 20 some years many departments complained about DOT's charges for engineering services often refusing those services and opting to contract with private engineering firms. The underlying cause of the exorbitantly high overhead is excessive management and administration.

The culture that has developed within the Department over the years is structured to carefully protect this hierarchy. Asking those in control within the Department to "fix" the problems they helped to create only results in "smoke and mirrors" solutions. However, I believe a close look at recent actions by the Department and close analysis of the Director's recommendation will serve to reveal how true and endemic the problem is.

The recent filling of the Traffic Control Maintenance Supervisor position is an example of the DOT management's apparent inability to exercise good judgment in selection and assignment. The position has historically been a technical position filled by unlicensed staff. Due to changes in requirements associated with the position it has become increasingly necessary that the position be filled by a licensed and registered engineer. As reflected in the title, the position is responsible for "traffic operations and safety". Therefore, the ideal candidate would have a good background and knowledge in transportation engineering. A thorough familiarization with the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices and a familiarity with traffic signal operation are highly desirable. Applicants for the vacancy included a variety of disciplines. Among the applicants was an individual who possessed all the necessary knowledge and traits most desirable for the position. Notwithstanding, the person selected to fill the position had no more than the necessary licensing. He did, however, have good relationships with the individuals responsible for making the selection. Now, since his expertise is in construction, he will have to be trained to do the job. (Specific information available upon request.)

Another example of the failure of management will manifest itself shortly after the Board approves the Director's recommendation. DOT will be requesting the Board approve a two (2) year engineering contract in the amount of approximately \$840,000 for engineering services associated with signalization of Green Valley Road at North Shingle Road and the replacement of the Tennessee Creek Bridge on Green Valley Road. If the DOT were properly staffed and managed contracting out these services would not be necessary. In addition to the contract cost there are other associated costs such as contract administration, administration costs, inspection and oversight. Too many of the engineers in the DOT are little more than contract administrators. This is very poor utilization of talented staff.

A final example of a failing on the part of the Department involves discontinuation of a traffic

signal maintenance program. Management has decided to relinquish nearly all responsibility for signal maintenance to Republic ITS, the contract maintenance provider. Some years ago the County began furnishing select signal equipment for all signalization projects. The reason the County began furnishing the equipment was that the County could furnish superior equipment for approximately 40% less than similar but inferior equipment furnished through the contractor. Further, the County could insure the consistency and compatibility of the equipment being installed. Choosing to abandon an established program will disadvantage the County financially in the long run.

I would like each and every member of the Board to keep in mind that it is not possible to make any sort of comprehensive presentation in the three (3) to five (5) minutes afforded the public to speak during Board session. Further, that it is not in the best interest of anyone to have the County's dirty laundry aired in public. These are the reasons that it is so important that the Board make considerable effort to be well and properly informed before making a decision as critical as reorganizing a department as important as DOT.

It is also important to recognize that some of the problems that exist within DOT are the Board's responsibility and can only be resolved by the Board. At this point a good place to start is the retention of a qualified consultant tasked with reviewing the structure of the Department, assessing operational efficiency, and recommending improvements.

DOT has been suffering from a functional deficit for a very long time. To apply now what might be characterized as a "quick fix" is not going to prove to be in anyone's best interest. There is considerable "dead wood" in upper management within DOT and the recommended reorganization does not do anything to correct the deficit for which the "dead wood" is responsible. I hate to say this but, with the exception of the Auditor Controller who I believe is all too often right, the Board has surrounded itself with under achievers that will say and do anything they think will placate the Board at least in the short term.

While I know you have nothing but good intent, your decision on this item will have far reaching implications. Therefore, before you act think carefully about what harm may result from your action. And proceed carefully.

Sincerely,

Sam Koch