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Ebbetts Pass Veterans Memorial District
by email

All:

After four years of service, I resign as both Chairman and as a member of the Ebbetts Pass Veterans Memorial District. Both resignations are effective immediately. Both resignations are necessitated by the unbridgeable gap between my view of the Board's duties and the views expressed by the remainder of the Board.

The District was created by statute to provide services to veterans. The District is provided with a small portion of local property taxes to fund the provision of these services. Section 1192 of the Military and Veterans Code describes and limits how those funds can be spent. In short, the Board has a moral and fiduciary duty to use the money provided by taxpayers to provide services to veterans. The Board has, for a couple of decades, utterly failed to meet its duty. The current Board has amply demonstrated that it has no intention of meeting its duty.

Since 2014 the District has spent approximately \$300,000 on the Old Schoolhouse and paying the Lions Club's bills. During that same period, the District has spent about \$30,000 providing services to veterans, which includes money spent expanding the Memorial. None of the money spent on the Old Schoolhouse has benefited a single veteran. In short, the District has spent ten times as much money on non-veteran projects as it has on veterans.

In the past year, the only new initiative undertaken by the District was the no-strings gift of \$3,000 to the Murphys Tennis Club. The Tennis Club is run by Tom Eising, the former coach of Noah Glanville. Noah was the Board member who pushed for the District to make the gift to the Tennis Club. The gift did not benefit a single veteran. In sum, the only new initiative undertaken by the District in the past year was a gift to a club run by Noah Glanville's former coach.

Rather than viewing the District as an entity dedicated to serving veterans, the current Board has amply demonstrated that it views the District as a sort of community chest that can fund any project it wants, regardless of any connection to veterans. Earlier this year, for example, Ward Redman unsuccessfully insisted repeatedly that I add an item to the agenda for a donation to rebuild a softball field. The project would not benefit a single

veteran, but Ward said that he had a soft spot in his heart for the field because his family helped build it. I have nothing against softball fields, but I do have something against using veterans' money to fund personal nostalgia.

There are alternatives to softball fields, no-strings gifts, and the historic preservation of schoolhouses. While Chair, I offered several suggestions that would actually serve veterans. For example, I suggested opening a veterans' meeting place in Arnold. The Board's support for this idea died when the Lions Club complained that the project would take money away from the Old Schoolhouse. More recently, I suggested giving a grant to Habitat for Humanity to subsidize veterans' housing locally. Board members raised a number of objections, including the concern that the District could not legally award the grant. I addressed each of the concerns, including obtaining a letter from Calaveras County Counsel that made it clear that the grant was not only lawful, but clearly fell within the statutory purpose of the District. Regardless, the Board refused even to discuss the grant, with the implicit goal of saving the money for historic preservation instead of services for veterans.

I recognize the District's obligations to maintain its assets, including the Old Schoolhouse. I voted in favor of every motion regarding repairs and maintenance of the building. At the August 2024 board meeting, at least four board members, including myself, announced they would support spending money to preserve the building by painting, caulking and making carpentry repairs to the exterior of the building. Consequently, I obtained a bid from a reputable, veteran-owned, local painting company. However, the Board refused to discuss the bid at the September 2024 meeting. The Board made it clear that it is only interested in a much larger project to rebuild the schoolhouse, even though such a project does not benefit a single veteran.

I am tempted to stay and work for my vision: that veterans' funds should be spent on veterans. There are times, however, when the honorable action is to resign in an attempt to draw the public's attention to a political entity's failings.

Sincerely,
Don Padou