

A vote for the cap takes away property rights

by Peter Beekhof
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Did you vote for the 280 Sustainable Growth Initiative growth cap? If you did what were your thoughts when it was explained to you? Did you understand what impact it would have to you, your neighbor or community? Did you understand that by voting for it that you would be taking away your neighbor's right to build his home on the vacant lot next door, down the street or at the end of the road? Did you understand that you have removed the right for the rancher down the road to do what he felt best for himself and his family? Did you realize that by limiting the growth in the Valley you have shackled the ranching community in Carson Valley to possible development of 19-acre parcel home sites leaving the minimum amount of water rights with the parcel and then selling off the remaining water rights to neighboring communities? Did you consider the community in general at all?

The building industry in this Valley contributes such an enormous amount of income to the county and to the people that live and work here. Where is this short fall going to come from? Did you think about where the county will have to go to make up the deficit to keep the services that you currently enjoy? How are these services that are taken for granted like police, fire department, parks, roads, etc. to survive? Well, let's think for a minute. The county can cut staff across the board. The majority of the county funds are spent on payroll and payroll benefits for employees. Do you know anyone that works for the county? This is, in part, going to be a reality. The county has another option also at hand. This option is what government entities do so well and it is what the government usually does before they lay people off. They raise taxes. But as the costs of government rise faster than their income and with a 280 growth rate looming in the distance the spread between county income and expenses will rise.

People of Douglas County, you need to think for yourself and research what 280 means to you and your county at large before you get led down the garden path. If the SGI group was so bent on saving Douglas County why did they not come up with a solid plan to raise moneys by taxes or otherwise to purchase open space and water rights and have them set aside? I believe that they would like the ranchers in the Valley to continue farming and keep watering the fields so everything remains green and not cost them a dime. This assumption is probably not far from the truth.

Douglas County at large doesn't like to vote for tax increases. I don't blame anyone for not wanting to pay more taxes. I don't know anyone who wants to stand up and say "tax

me some more." The people of Douglas County need to wake up and smell the coffee because, if you don't, ranching in this county will be a thing of the past and your future will be nothing but higher and higher taxes.

What can we do? We should encourage the county to get large ranch owners to come forward to master plan their land for the future. This will help plan open space and keep it green, keep our water in the Valley and help with planning future roads. This also keeps the lands from being piece-mealed together with no regional planning possible. This also helps the ranchers with estate planning as well as keeping more lands in agriculture. Before you jump to the incorrect conclusion that this will encourage growth in the Valley, I believe this conclusion to be an incorrect. Speak with almost any rancher and they will tell you, "We don't plan on selling but we do need to plan for the future." If we plan now we will know what the Valley would look like if and when some of these ranchers call it quits or pass it on to younger generations who may have no desire to ranch. People of Douglas County; please research both sides of this very important issue before you decide what side of the fence you are going to stand on.

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