

This is Erin Dunn of the Fortuna Chamber of Commerce with a Community Comment.

Have you ever been in a meeting or listening to a speaker when something outrageous or offensive is said and it becomes hard to actually hear what is being talked about after that?

In the last couple of weeks, I've had to really work at listening after feeling affronted by somebody in a meeting.

The first instance was in a small group meeting. A manager-type from out of the area—from a bigger city where I thought there was more sophistication—was talking with an assembled group of community leaders about an important topic. He made the analogy that a particular organization might feel like it was “the red-headed step child.” I am not a step child nor do I have step children but for at least a couple of decades now I have found that phrase absolutely inappropriate. In this era of blended families and hyper-aware parents, I never even stop to think that step-children would be thought of or treated differently than the rest of the family.

He repeated the phrase a second time—albeit without the red-headed adjective—and I had a hard time taking the rest of his conversation seriously.

I don't want it said in my home. I'm sure it's a case of someone not even realizing what they are saying—it's just an old saying, right? But it sticks out in this century like the word “ain't.”

The second instance of having to get past what someone said so I could continue listening was when EPIC's director spoke at Chamber last month.

I went in with an open mind. My blood pressure was normal. I was ready to work together toward a solution to stop environmental degradation caused by large illegal marijuana grows. We had a good crowd, we were polite, we were listening.

And then, just a few minutes in—it was almost as if he couldn't help himself--Gary Graham Hughes put up a slide showing an aerial photograph of a mountaintop with countless bald spots where people were growing pot illegally. Right beside it was an aerial view of a Green Diamond Harvest Plan.

The statement was they are both bad for the environment.

I only worked in the timber industry for two years—and while I was living in New York City, I admittedly didn't know the difference between timber and lumber—but I do know the difference between a shot of illegal grows where the soil and young timber have been bulldozed aside, where poisonous chemicals are being used without regard and water is being diverted to help the plants grow and a picture of a legal business, in a heavily regulated industry that has sustainable certification.

After that slide it was hard to take EPIC seriously. I was ready for the out-of-context photos and the emotional use of the phrase clearcut--but that was low. Even for EPIC.

The sad thing about EPIC's visit to the Fortuna Chamber is that it was a wasted opportunity. We were ready to listen about how to get in step with EPIC's work on the issue of curbing environmental damage done by large illegal marijuana grows. We were ready. EPIC was not.

This has been Erin Dunn with a Community Comment.