

March 4, 2014

This is Erin Dunn of the Fortuna Chamber of Commerce with a community comment.

Humboldt County can be deeply divided—the north and the south, the liberals and conservatives, business friendly and “not in my backyard.”

I can break down the County into two distinct camps. Everyone falls into one or the other, there is no middle ground.

There are the people who say Highway 101 and those that say “the” 101.

I am in the former camp. I grew up on 101. In the 60s and 70s no one in Oregon ever uttered “the” 101 or “the” 5 for I-5 as far as I knew. And the same held true for Northern California when I first arrived. Only on the rarest occasion did I hear someone say “the” 101. And you could generally count on those people being from south of San Francisco.

I’m alarmed at the growing number of people saying “the” 101 instead of Highway 101. I hear it on the radio and in conversation. In spite of my protests, the change seems to be happening.

I suppose that’s not the only divergence in our county. The County Planning Commission is having a similar shift in political direction.

When I first moved here, Supervisor Bonnie Neeley was considered conservative and pro-business. She and Roger Rodoni were often on the same page. Jill Geist was new on the Board and was perceived as promoting the liberal agenda—I’m going to say liberal and conservative even though it’s more complex than that—and then this weird shift happened. Ms. Neeley became the voice of the liberals and Ms. Geist became much more moderate and an ally to Rodoni. Then Roger was no longer there. For many business people, it seemed like the Planning Commission and Supervisors were no longer considering the needs of business and voted more times than not to stop progress.

Politics runs on a pendulum. It swings one way for a while and then naturally comes to the middle then heads the opposite direction.

I was watching the Planning Commission meeting and I found it interesting to hear the tone of outrage from the liberal sector of the public who cried foul because the last election brought new perceived conservative appointees to the Planning Commission. That the General Plan had become “political.” And that HumCPR was directing the Planning Commission on how to vote.

Tina Christensen pointed out just before adjournment, that she has been attending meetings on the General Plan Update for 12 years and there has always been a sizable group of people that were unhappy with how the General Plan was being developed. That group now has a voice.

The moral of the story is, it never seems like “politics” when your voice is the majority, only when your voice is the minority.

Politics is kind of like the weather in Humboldt County. If you don’t like it, wait a while, it will change.

This has been Erin Dunn with a community comment.