

Hi, Fred Nelson for Community Comment,

On Wednesday, April Sixth, the Times/Standard newspaper carried an article regarding Humboldt County's approval of a mental health contract with Traditions Behavioral Health located in Napa, California. The contract is tagged at Four point Three Million Dollars and continues Humboldt County's search to hire six or more psychiatric nurses and physicians for the next fourteen months. The County Board of Supervisors had previously agreed to a contract with the same company in Twenty Fifteen for an amount of Three point Five Million Dollars. My question is "What kind of return did we receive on the original Twenty Fifteen investment?" The article states that the Board did not discuss the Twenty Fifteen contract, or the staffing issue, in great detail at the meeting with Supervisor Mark Lovelace calling the staffing issue an ongoing process. I agree with Supervisor Lovelace and do not necessarily disagree with the renewal of the contract with the firm, Traditions Behavioral Health. I do question the lack of information provided to the general public about the progress, setbacks, or problems associated with the initial expenditure of the Three Point five Million Dollars. After all, this is a large amount of money and regardless of what department or budget the money comes from; it is still taxpayer expenditure. Just what was accomplished during the original contract? The new contract is increased by Point Eight Million. Why is the amount higher? Is a longer period of time involved in the new contract, did the county increase the demands? Was anyone hired during that first year as a direct result of the initial contract? More basic information as to what progress is being made always makes the taxpayer a bit more comfortable when looking for results from such a large investment. I think all of us realize that mental health problems exist far beyond county lines and I agree with Health and Human Service's Director Connie Beck who stated that "It's not just our county. It's a community issue". I can remember years ago when fire departments were very much autonomous (in other words "narrow minded") in some communities. If a conflagration occurred across the line in another fire district, the crew would refuse to cross over and would sit and watch it burn. Along came a thing called 'mutual aid' which is no more that inter community cooperation which has saved millions in lives and property over the years. No one unlocked a secret formula, only common sense was applied. Law Enforcement has followed the same path. History has recorded police chases that stopped at the county and state lines because of the lack of jurisdiction. Now, police and fire departments exchange mutual aid on a regular basis. No department has lost its identity as a result. There is no reason why other city, county and state agencies cannot do the same.

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