

**MARGARET FORTUNE - SUPERVISOR, DISTRICT 1
CANDIDATE RESPONSES**

Instructions to Candidates: ***Please provide your written responses before the end of the Sunday before the scheduled Zoom call for your District.*** Your responses will be posted on our website and on YouTube for voters to review. The forum moderators will select one of your responses and ask for additional detail during the forum. Thanks in advance for your participation!

- With the County's on-going struggle to fund its budget, how would you propose to either reduce the County's expenditures and/or increase the County's revenues? What services could be reduced or cut, to reduce expenditures? Where and how might revenues be increased?

As CEO of a fiscally disciplined organization that under my leadership grew from \$2 million when I took the helm to \$52 million today, I am prepared to implement responsible fiscal management practices to ensure the County has a balanced budget. Budgets express a community's values and are best developed through a transparent process that engages all stakeholders. I have experience developing the Governor's Budget as a senior advisor in two Administrations, including writing budget proposals, bill language and testifying before budget committees of the California Legislature. Balanced budgets and transparent budget processes that engage stakeholders will be how I would measure success in this area.

California is facing a significant budget deficit that will impact local governments, including El Dorado County which has over a \$1 billion budget. There is never enough money to do what everyone wants to do, no one wants to pay more in taxes and fees, and every expenditure has its constituency. One thing that we can do as a local government when it relates to revenue generation is to promote business development. This means advancing the industries already in the region, like agriculture and also attracting new business in a very intentional way. One idea that I have is to engage local leaders in trade missions to attract the type of businesses that would thrive in El Dorado County and generate new sales tax revenues.

- What is your position on the proposed Costco development in EDH and why? What benefits & drawbacks do you see this project having on EDC?

While I'm not privy to all the details of the Costco plan in El Dorado Hills, it is important that BOS 1 residents and their elected representatives have a clear sense of the community's identity and how growth will best occur in accordance with the general plan. There is a lot of community concern over Costco being located in El Dorado Hills near a school and residential housing. Having knocked on thousands of doors during the course of my campaign, I have spoken to residents who worry about having Costco in their backyard. I believe those concerns to be sincere and it's important to listen to the residents. It is true that right now, the City of Folsom benefits from the sales taxes El Dorado County residents generate when they shop at the Folsom Costco. Is that a justification to build Costco in El Dorado Hills? I want to circle back to the idea that the residents and elected leadership of BOS 1 should have a clear vision for

what type of commercial development that generates sales taxes fits best in the community. Then we should approve commercial projects that fit within that vision, rather than just anything that comes along.

- In the last couple of years, the Planning and Building Dept has come under scrutiny to the point of there even being a Grand Jury investigation. What are your thoughts on the results of this investigation, the current BOS' response to this, and what would you do to improve the shortcomings of this department?

The Grand Jury Report is very concerning, documenting shortcomings of the Planning and Building Department.

The Grand Jury investigation focused on the following areas: mission statements, the permit process, permit process challenges, the role and duties of the Ombudsman, building inspections, home fire sprinkler inspections, performance measurements, and customer satisfaction. (El Dorado County Grand Jury 2022-2023 Building Projects, Can you help me please? Case number 22-23gj03 p. 2)

The report provides a series of nine recommendations with a deadline of December 31, 2023 for the El Dorado County Board of Supervisors to take action. The Board of Supervisors responded to the findings and recommendations—acknowledging some areas of growth and disagreeing with other findings and recommendations.

In my opinion, the response from the Board of Supervisors does not reflect the disposition of an agency that embraces the need for change. I have heard again and again from residents about their frustration with the Planning and Building Department.

I have worked with planning and building departments in various cities and counties throughout California, because I am responsible for building and renovating schools. El Dorado County is not alone in having their customers express frustration with the time, process, and cost of the planning and building process. I have, however, experienced local governments that own their shortcomings and take steps to improve. Getting a Conditional Use Permit and/or Building Permit should not be the thing of nightmares, undue economic impact, and lengthy delays.

- Here are several items that I think would be improvements that would benefit applicants and the community.
 - Let applicants know what can and cannot be done transparently
 - Ensure that applicants get clear and consistent direction and responses from Planning and Building
 - Ensure that processes are completed and conveyed in a timely manner
 - Ensure that Building and Planning and related branches of government (including special districts) are coordinated in the process
- Would you support the building of the proposed Alder Creek Dam? What are the benefits or detriments of this project as you see it?

I would have to learn more about the details of this proposal before taking a position.

- Wildfires are an ongoing concern for the citizens of EDC. CalFire has implemented what some might consider very restrictive and even intrusive regulations. The County is also looking at codifying its own set of fire prevention regulations. Do you feel this is appropriate, or not, and why?

Yes, CalFIRE is absolutely establishing, through the State Marshall, a set of statewide rules. Public Resources code 4291 is the 100 feet defensible space zone that has been on the books for a very long time. Cal FIRE has always had a very difficult time with enforcement. Now Cal FIRE is working through El Dorado County's 28 Fire Safe Councils to mount a volunteer community-based system to inform residents of the requirements of defensible space around their homes. There is concern that Cal FIRE is imposing regulations on landowners that would result a resident having to make costly improvements. El Dorado County is also considering an Defensible Space Ordinance. It is still in draft form. El Dorado County is likely to take a soft and slow approach to enforcement. It's important to support education before enforcing requirements home owners may not be able to afford. As this process unfolds it is important that the county build the public trust. In 2021-2022 there was a Grand Jury Report on Vegetation Management and Defensible Space in the county. Insurance rates are going up or being canceled. Home hardening and defensible space could help reduce insurance rates, however these improvements are expensive. We all want communities to be more resilient. Leading with education before enforcement is the best path.

- Do you support the concept of a 'constitutional' sheriff? Why or why not?

No, I do not support the concept of a constitutional sheriff. It risks blurring the lines between law enforcement and political ideology, potentially undermining the impartiality and professionalism expected from law enforcement agencies. There are serious concerns about the potential for subjective interpretation of the constitution, which could lead to selective enforcement and erode trust in the criminal justice system.

- Recently, the Ranch Marketing Ordinance has been under scrutiny because of the accessory uses allowed to ranchers and farmers "by right" such as non-agriculture events. In some circumstances land owners were taking advantage of the fact that specific use definitions were not defined. Do you feel that the matter is covered appropriately now or do you feel it needs to be explored more?

This is not an issue about which I have a lot of familiarity, beyond what I have read in public documents. However, as a business friendly candidate, I approve policies that create an ease of doing business in the county and are supportive of commerce.