

LETTERS

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40,000 on big holiday weekends. Let's double the staff number to be overly generous and that makes 80 staff members. Our Town staff, meanwhile, is grumbling because they have had to decrease from 126 to 100!

Park City is a good example of a town that hired a new town manager to get their act together before the Olympics. He was not afraid to clean house of some 30-year staff members, and the town was very successful in its preparation for and execution of the Olympics. He was backed up and supported by Park City's town council because they understood what was needed to be successful.

This is just one of the lessons learned from the Peer Resort Tour which was paid for by tax dollars. Let's put these lessons to work in our community.

I say that a town our size does not need a deputy town manager or a 6 person finance department. We do not need a community relations manager that sends out the weather report. These are only some cuts that could be made. This has nothing to do with individuals, but everything to do with smart management. Our Town Council needs to get some huevos and DIRECT our town manager to make the cuts necessary to get us on track.

And if he can't do it, then he needs to be replaced. And if the Town Council

can't make that happen, then we should replace them the very next chance we get.

I am not a politician and I am not running for anything. I am serving as a commissioner and want to see the best for this community. Don't be afraid to stand up and speak up.

Ruth Harrell
Mammoth Lakes

ERRATA

Kim Stravers from MLTPA pointed out a couple of omissions in our recent MCRAT story (The Sheet, May 16).

The story correctly stated that MLTPA and Friends of the Inyo would contribute \$11,500 each to the MCRAT budget, but should have explained that those amounts represent "in-kind valuation of equipment, staff time, and other services, not a cash contribution."

Also, that in-kind value has been factored into the cost of funding all three phases of MCRAT.

Finally, the last paragraph states that the Mono County Board of Supervisors voted to fund Phase 1. It should be noted that the Board only agreed to contribute \$15,000 toward funding Phase 1, not the original \$37,260 amount requested.

OP/ED

Whose law is it anyway?

By Geisel

Submitted for your approval, Sheet readers: a Mammoth Lakes without a police department. I didn't say without law enforcement, just without a police department.

Several weeks ago, we broached the subject of what might happen if what we now know as the Mammoth Lakes Police Department was folded into the Mono County Sheriff's Department. An interesting idea, with both pluses and minuses, depending in large part on how (assuming it goes ahead) it gets handled. Chatter in the community has been growing of late (albeit in modest amounts), and perhaps it's now time to at least kick the tires on the topic, even if only as "commentary."

A little history ... Before the MLPD came into being some 20 years ago, law was enforced in Mammoth Lakes largely by the Mono County Sheriff's Department, along with the California Highway Patrol. From what I gather, based on how it was incorporated, the Town of Mammoth Lakes' isn't legally required to have a PD, but for various reasons, the government at the time chose to create one. Of course, along with a new PD, the Town also needed vehicles, a separate 911 system, defined jurisdiction, uniforms, a station, jail facilities ... you get the idea. Lately, the PD is packed into an aging building, and plans for a new police facility are on hold pending better budget solvency that never seems to arrive.

It's been postulated that rolling the MLPD back into the Sheriff's Department could bridge the gap from June Lake to Crowley, and provide more linearity to coverage in through the entire area, not to mention streamline 911 and other services, boosting the flow of information and further paring down response time.

How would it work? Good question. Right now, that's mostly speculative. It would in all probability involve eliminating one or two positions,

though best guesses among some at the County level seem to lean toward retaining the majority of the force. They'd simply change uniforms and wear a different badge. Right? No ... not "simply" and not easy, either.

At least two major hoops would have to be jumped through: one financial, the other political.

First, let's talk politics. Even in light of recent Grand Jury investigations involving the MLPD, it's not as if the MLPD does not retain great support from its taxeating brethren within local government. Two decades of palling around does that, and you and I both know the bureaucratic atrophy also known as "status quo." No matter what the Town Council decrees, if the Town Staff disagrees, a lengthy battle of wills may ensue

And before it even gets to that point, community proponents would have to secure enough votes on the Council dais to kick start the process.

Assuming that's the case, no matter what happens with the Grand Jury, not much is likely to happen for at least a year, taking into account that the next election for Council seats isn't until next June. And the momentum may start in Mammoth, but it would have to end in Bridgeport — Mono's Board of Supervisors would have to approve the change, too, you know.

Next, there's the money. Potential savings to the County frankly pales in comparison to what all this may really hinge on: the Hot Creek litigation appeal. If the Town wins (a verdict may come within the next six months), it could feel empowered enough to fend off any such idea of ditching the PD, figuring it just saved \$30 million, so why bother? (Never mind that it's already in red ink without the decision.)

If it loses, however, that could play into the hands of those wanting to see the MLPD change its initials. A loss in the appeal would likely force the Town into reorganizing under bankruptcy protection. Depending on the orders from the court, the Town may need savings wherever it can find them.

In any case, don't expect a change to happen overnight. One comment suggested a "phased approach" would be most effective, allowing a smoother transition for either Scholl (assuming he's re-elected) or his successor.

Is it a good idea? Possibly. Is it doable? If done properly, probably. Is it a change perhaps only President Obama can bring? That, too, is also very likely.

Just letting you know that if the public decides to exercise its power, it should also be prepared to exercise patience.

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