

CAO process not handled properly

Letter to the Editor – from Scott White Lewiston, March 18, 2026

The March 3 Board of Supervisors meeting was another disappointment. The public raised numerous questions about the process used to recruit a new CAO and then re-appointment of the existing CAO. I made four specific points, none of which were about Mr. Tuthill or his qualifications for the position. My points:

1) The agenda noted “no additional fiscal impact” for the re-appointment which was misleading on one point and factually incorrect on another.

2) In the staff report, the Board argued that throughout the recruitment it had “remained genuine in its commitment to the process, ensuring transparency and fairness.” Yet during the meeting, the board noted that Mr. Tuthill had been part of establishing and managing the process. No explanation was provided as to how the board fairly managed a process where an applicant was part of developing it while also participating in it. The public only found out last week he was to be re-appointed. There would have been no violation of anyone’s rights if the Board had told the public he was actually competing prior to them just telling us he got the job.

3) In the staff report, the board stated they had “determined it is in the best interest of the county to take the time and train a successor to continue this mission (of the CAO). They spent considerable time telling the public how important it is to develop staff. I support succession planning. My comments were specific that the way the county does so raises significant issues in regard to the California Constitution and state law. In particular, grooming (training) an existing employee for a department head position and then only conducting an in-house recruitment and interview process to promote them into the position, as has been done in the past.

4) I noted specific sections of the base contract that limited the public and future board’s authority and that leave the county open to financial risk. I made specific

suggestions to modify the contract to better protect and serve the public and future boards. They were ignored.

Maybe Mr. Tuthill is the right choice for the people of Trinity County. What is not right for us is the process the board uses to make decisions and communicate with us.