



Supervisor candidates weigh in on PALCO proceedings

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Second District Supervisor candidate Estelle Fennell challenged recent statements made by incumbent Roger Rodoni and called for more action by the county to weigh in on the bankruptcy proceedings of Pacific Lumber Co. in Texas.

In a statement released this week, Fennell said that the proposed restructuring of PALCO opens opportunity for two plans pitched by its creditors with community partnerships and the Mendocino Redwood Co. that would bring a long-term focus to management of its land.

Fennell took issue with a comment made recently by Rodoni in an article in The Eureka Reporter that stated when it comes to PALCO “all we can do is hope for the best.”

Because she said the issue is critical to the future of the district and is being decided in Texas — far away from the communities most affected — Fennell urged Rodoni and the other members of the board to take action by authoring a letter that supports the alternative proposals that aim for a higher standard of environmental stewardship and opposes the highly speculative proposal being offered by PALCO parent company MAXXAM.

“Under the stewardship of the MAXXAM Corporation, unsustainable timber practices have brought this once-proud company to the brink of failure,” Fennell stated. “Too many employees have been laid off, lost their pensions, and are out of work. It is vitally important that we stabilize this resource-based sector of our economy, so our families can rely on steady employment in the future.”

In a response to Fennell’s remarks, Rodoni said he wasn’t ignoring the issue and referred to correspondences from MRC’s bankruptcy lawyers to Humboldt County officials that indicate there is an appropriate and effective time for the county to weigh in on the matter.

“When you’re a political hopeful, sometimes ignorance can be beneficial,” Rodoni said of Fennell’s statement.

In correspondence with the county by MRC officials, Rodoni said MRC’s bankruptcy lawyers clearly indicated the best time for the county to weigh in would be on Feb. 28, when the parties in the bankruptcy had finalized and filed the court-ordered joint disclosure statement containing complete descriptions of all three of the submitted reorganization plans.

Sandy Dean, MRC’s president, said in a telephone interview Friday the information Rodoni alluded to was part of a written document to the supervisors highlighting the principles MRC wanted to ensure were maintained in the reorganization plan, which followed recent discussions between the company and supervisors Bonnie Neely and John Woolley.

Dean reiterated Friday that until that joint plan is completed and submitted to the court, it is

difficult to know what exactly is being proposed to comment on.

But Dean did say the board of supervisors would be the appropriate and most logical voice to speak for the county on the matter.

Candidate Clif Clendenen's camp also weighed in on the issue, stating that the MRC proposal has merit and offers a good hope for the preservation of the PALCO timberlands and the possibility of new jobs for the residents of the Second District.

"Supporting a plan that would keep the lands viable and opposing others that would not is exactly what your supervisor should do, not just standing in the wings, hoping for the best," stated Bill Thorington, Clendenen's campaign manager.

It is Clendenen's belief that a supervisor's job is to protect, to the degree possible, the value of the forests and timberlands and doing all that is possible to keep them in a sustainable and productive condition.

"My promise is to fight hard to see that our existing (agriculture) and timberlands remain productive and sustainable," Clendenen stated.

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