

Ramirez, Alice

From: Lederer, Steven
Sent: Monday, February 14, 2022 1:35 PM
To: Ramirez, Alice
Subject: FW: Public Comment

For public comment.

-----Original Message-----

From: Sandi Thompson <saludwi94062@yahoo.com>
Sent: Monday, February 14, 2022 9:53 AM
To: Lederer, Steven <Steven.Lederer@countyofnapa.org>; achouteau@cityofsthelena.org
Subject: Public Comment

[External Email - Use Caution]

Steve, please share with the JPA members ahead of today's meeting.

Member of the Upper Valley Waste Management Agency,

The letter below has been forwarded to our Congressman, Mike Thompson, by members of the concerned public. Similiar reports have appeared in the local press. I send you a copy today, to further inquire about self-dealing and conflicts of interest in our public agencies in Napa County. A father-in-law's interest is still an inside interest, regardless of mailing address, and recusal is the only path to instill confidence in the public policy process. I would also ask why it took a private citizen's forensics to uncover this breach.

I make a plea to you as members of this JPA to put the interests of your constituents ahead of your own as well as the business we have entrusted you to oversee. While Chair Pedroza and Member Dillon are retiring, it is incumbent that bright sunlight shine on all you do no matter who sits in your chairs. We depend on you as our fiduciaries.

Sandi Thompson
1457 South Whitehall Lane

Congressman Thompson,

I believe you endorsed Alfredo Pedroza for Napa County Supervisor during the last election and think you should be aware of these latest findings concerning Supervisor Pedroza's most recent behavior and clear conflicts of interest.

Pedroza's unflagging support of Walt Ranch—ignoring the testimony of climate scientists and the residents of Napa County who will be severely impacted—was presumed to be for the benefit of his major donors. And even though that should not be the case in the eyes of many people, such quid pro quo is not illegal.

However, documents recently uncovered reveal that Pedroza's support of Walt Ranch also includes benefits to members of his immediate family, if not himself. This new information, all public record, was uncovered by a private citizen and was sufficient enough for Pedroza to recuse himself yesterday's meeting of the Board of Supervisors where a final determination of Walt Ranch was about to be made. (It should also be sufficient to have Pedroza's vote to overturn the

Center for Biological Diversity's appeal against Walt Ranch, made last December, disqualified and any other decisions related to projects on Soda Canyon Road, Foss Valley, or Atlas Peak. It could also lead to a recall.

Documents on file at the county tax assessor's office, along with the attached Short Report, reveal that six parcels comprising more than 405 acres immediately adjacent to Walt Ranch (map attached) were sold for \$2,000,000 to an entity called Vinedos AP, LLC on May 28, 2021.

The Articles of Organization for Vinedos AP, LLC were filed with the California Secretary of State on January 29, 2021. The Statement of Information (attached) for Vinedos AP, LLC, filed March 17, 2021, lists Esteban Llamas as the manager of the LLC. Esteban Llamas is the father of Brenda Llamas Pedroza, the wife of Supervisor Alfredo Pedroza. Esteban Llamas is a member of Pedroza's immediate family.

The Statement of Information also lists the business address for Vinedos AP as 1241 Adams Street, MP 1022. This is a mailbox at the Adams Street Shipping Center in St. Helena.

However, the Grant Deed (attached) for the sale of the 6 parcels to Vinedos AP, LLC lists the personal residence of Supervisor Pedroza, at 332 Troon Ave. in Napa as the mailing address for the Grant Deed. Additionally, no alternative address was given for the mailing of any tax statements related to the deed other than Supervisor Alfredo Pedroza's home address.

The Deed of Trust related to the six Vinedos AP properties, filed May 28, 2021, lists the Trustor as: "Vinedos AP, LLC, a California limited liability company whose address is 332 Troon Drive, Napa CA 94558." This is the home of Supervisor Alfredo Pedroza.

On a side note: The original mortgage on the Vinedos AP parcels was held by the seller, Circle R Ranch, for \$1,700,000. Six months after the initial purchase, on October 12, 2021, Vinedos AP, LLC refinanced its six parcels adjacent to Walt Ranch, for \$2,700,000, as shown in the attached History Report and Deed of Trust #2. Presumably, after paying off Circle R Ranch, Vinedos AP came away from this transaction with close to \$1,000,000 in cash and is \$2,700,000 in debt to Poppy Bank, a debt that is secured by the six parcels adjacent to Walt Ranch. This refinancing occurred at about the same time that the County's planning director signed off on certain mitigations related to Walt Ranch and before the Supervisors voted to basically clear the way for the Walt Ranch development in December, with Pedroza casting the deciding vote. Indeed, the BOS meeting of December 14, 2021, was the last meeting at which Pedroza served as Chair of the Napa County Board of Supervisors. As such, he set the meeting's agenda and put the Walt Ranch decision on the agenda, despite cries from the public that they needed time to research and comment on the proposed mitigation measures.

As Supervisor Pedroza recused himself from the meeting on Feb 8, he stated that the lands in question were owned by his father-in-law. Therefore, he admitted he knew there was a conflict of interest. Even so, Supervisor Pedroza felt no legal or moral compunction to disclose his personal interest in Vinedos AP, until he was exposed in a public forum by the research of a private citizen.

But these documents, revealing that the real address for Vinedos AP and Alfredo Pedroza are on and the same, reveal that Supervisor Pedroza has a more direct and personal interest in the lands adjacent to Walt Ranch and perhaps to Walt Ranch itself. Should Walt Ranch be finally approved, any adjacent properties, including the six parcels owned by Vinedos AP, will increase in value and attain certain benefits, including any public or private services brought to the Walt Ranch property. Indeed, within a few short months the property seems to have appreciated by 74%, as indicated by the refinance.

Pedroza's actions have also exposed the County to numerous lawsuits, as many of the land use decisions he has participated in may now have to be revisited.

Given that Supervisor Pedroza did not feel he had a legal or moral obligation to disclose his connection to Vinedos AP and his disqualifying conflict of interest with Walt Ranch, numerous citizens asked the county to conduct a thorough investigation into Supervisor Pedroza and that he be censured by the board. However, many of us are concerned that the County will not be as rigorous in their investigation as they should be. At yesterday's meeting, for example, there were suggestions that any investigation be conducted "in house" and that the only regulating body that should be involved is the FPPC.

We disagree and are asking for your support in seeing that a complete and thorough investigation is carried out, going as high as the State Attorney General's office. I think that's the only way to restore the citizens of Napa County's faith in democracy and, quite frankly, in you. You did, after all endorse Alfredo Pedroza.

There are some who will pass this off as "business as usual." If it is, it shouldn't be. And if it is not, I am sure we can count on you to give this matter the attention it deserves and insist that a complete and thorough investigation takes place.

Thank you for your time.