

LET THE PUBLIC SPEAK

Ensuring fire safety

EDITOR: Your Feb. 1 editorial about the Guenoc Valley Resort in Lake County notes the friction between developers, the county that stands to fill its coffers and concerned residents fearing wildfire evacuation risk (“Fire safety must come first with proposed resort”).

We are seeing similar issues play out with the Sonoma Developmental Center specific plan, which also puts communities at risk when it comes to wildfire evacuation.

The environmental impact report found that adding 2,400 residents and about 1,000 jobs at the developmental center site would have virtually no impact on travel time: “Evacuation traffic added by the proposed plan would increase travel time to areas beyond the evacuation areas by up to 1.2 minutes ... although the average increase will be 0.2 minutes (less than 15 seconds).”

This analysis defies logic as well as the real-life experience of thousands of Sonoma Valley residents desperately attempting to evacuate during the 2017 Sonoma Complex Fires and the 2020 Glass Fire. While efforts have been made to improve the evacuation process, minimizing the possibility of lengthy evacuation times is a potential death trap in the making.

Hopefully, a revised EIR will result in full recognition of the dangers and numerous flaws represented in the current plan.

REUBEN WEINZVEG

Sebastopol

The debt fight

EDITOR: Have you been following the debt limit fight in the House of Representatives? Republicans are threatening to not allow the government to pay for the expenditures Congress approved. Suddenly, now that there is a Democrat in the White House, they are concerned about the national debt. If you have been following their argument, you should read Sunday’s article about Navy ships (“Jobs and the budget collide over ship”).

Santa Rosa

Comparing costs

EDITOR: There is a continuing push to reduce the usage of natural gas in favor of electricity, with the aim of reducing emissions of carbon dioxide. This may be ecologically sound, but how does it do for economics?

We start with electrical costs. One kilowatt-hour is equivalent to 3,412 British thermal units. To make one therm, or 100,000 Btu, we need 27.3 kWh. At PG& E’s cheapest rate, \$0.32 per kWh, that is \$8.74 per therm. But if you use a lot of electricity, it will cost more.

One therm of natural gas (roughly 100 cubic feet) costs 90 cents for the gas, plus \$1.40 for PG& E to deliver it — a total of \$2.30. Which means that it costs about 3.8 times as much to use electricity instead of gas to cook your dinner, heat your bathwater or dry your clothes.

For heating your house, you can use baseboard heating, or reduce the cost by using a heat pump (cost, several thousand dollars), which will give you cooling as well. These move about 3 Btu of heat for every Btu consumed, which reduces the cost considerably; electricity is only about 30% more costly in this scenario.

ROBERT A. SAUNDERS

Rohnert Park

Tax uncertainties

EDITOR: Kurt Dunphy makes a convincing argument that the Middle Class Tax Refunds many of us received are not going to be taxed on our California tax returns but are, indeed, going to be taxed by the IRS (“Taxing tax refund,” Letters, Saturday).

Curiously, on the internet I found an article by the San Francisco Chronicle that quotes Lisa Greene-Lewis, a spokeswoman for TurboTax as saying, “Based on currently available information, and our own expertise, our understanding is that these payments are not taxable at the federal or California state level.”

In my case, last November, I asked that my tax refund debit card be canceled and said I’d like to receive a check instead. I was told I would receive the check in 10-14 weeks. Sure enough, the check arrived 11 weeks later in February. Since I received no tax refund in

The Navy has some ships it wants to retire. They aren't old. In fact, they are quite new. They were acclaimed to be nimble, superfast vessels designed to operate in coastal waters and hunt down enemy submarines, etc. They were conceived after 9/11. They cost twice the original estimate, and it took 12 years longer than expected to get them operational. And it seems they are lemons. The Navy determined the cost to repair and maintain these vessels was unreasonable and it would be better off without them in the fleet.

2022, my plan is to wait until next year to report it on my 2023 tax return and see how it goes.

GRANT SYPHERS

Rohnert Park

But keeping the ships operational will provide jobs in Republican districts. So amendments were adopted as part of the December budget that stymied the Navy's efforts to save money. And now the Republicans don't want to raise the debt limit? Crazy, isn't it? Find the article. Read it and you will understand so much about government waste.

LEW LARSON

Sebastopol

Pedestrian trails first

EDITOR: How about making those SMART folks finish the promised walking/biking trails before they get to expand the route of their nearly empty trains?

ISAAC WINGFIELD

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