

## HEALTHCARE

# Supes continue to tinker with county business license program idea

By Kimberly Horg

KHORG@LEDGER-DISPATCH.COM

There were mixed feelings over a county business license program at the Amador County Board of Supervisor's meeting on Tuesday, Sept. 21.

Over the past several months, County Administrative Officer Patrick Blacklock, County Planning Director Susan Grijalva and County Treasurer and Tax Collector Michael Ryan have been gathering information from a fiscal viewpoint to bring to the board for discussion.

The three came up with an estimated number of businesses that are in unincorporated areas of the county by contacting the assessor's office, the auditor's office and the Amador County Chamber of Commerce. The assessor's office stated that their unsecured property tax records show that there are around 700 businesses assessed in unincorporated areas. The State Board of Equalization sales tax records that were received by the auditor's office and the information from the chamber of commerce reinforced that estimate, Ryan said.

"First we did some investigating to

come up with an approximate number of businesses in Amador County. There are 700 business and 100 that might be in incorporated areas of the county but that may be a conservative number. There is no way to substantiate but 800 is the best number we can come up with," Ryan said.

If the number of estimated businesses is right on track, the fee for any county business license would have to be \$60 a year if it was to only recover the annual tax collector costs. If the implemented costs were added on to that number then it would be \$75 and if other departmental costs for review, approval or enforcement are taken into consideration, then that number would drastically go up so that the county can recoup costs. The annual fee would be \$175 if annual code enforcement and planning costs are included in that scenario, Ryan said.

"Susan gave a figure at what the estimate would be and I took the figure assuming 800 licenses and did the math," Ryan said.

"This cost we anticipate would be felt for the first couple of years but then it would go into a normal realm of

procedure. The amount of money would be reduced over a period of time but costs also go up in time. There are probably businesses out there that shouldn't be so I can see code changes taking place," Grijalva said.

"I think the numbers are quite conservative, \$175 is a minimal cost. If someone can't pay \$15 a month then they shouldn't be in business. This is a worthwhile project and it will make for uniformity. I think the board should also consider a sliding scale depending on the number of employees. This project needs a lot more work and discussion," Jacqueline Lucido, executive director for Amador County Chamber of Commerce, said.

"I am not ready to get tarred and feathered by businesses," Richard Vinson, District Three Supervisor, said.

"I agree with Jacquie and I disagree with Richard Vinson. I have a business in town and I think this is not going to hurt businesses," Rich Escamilla, District One Supervisor, said. "I was late a couple of times paying the city and I had the city police come to my business."

"I think this would be enhancing bu-

reaucracy because there would be more costs. We don't need to go there," Richard Forster, District Two Supervisor, said. "If we do this program completely, \$175 is a lot of money that businesses would have to pay. I don't agree with the way other counties are doing it."

The annual fee for Calaveras County is \$25 for a business license, \$32 in El Dorado County, \$50 in Stanislaus County and it costs the businesses in the city of Jackson between \$42 to \$84 a year depending on the type of business it is, according to the County Business License Proposal.

A motion to implement the fee schedule was not passed because there was a two to one vote against it. Three votes were needed to rule it out and District Five Supervisor Mario Biagi and District Four Supervisor Louis Boitano were absent from the meeting.

"I am not going to admit this at this time, maybe it will come back and it will be looked at again at a different time," Vinson said.

"I second the motion. I don't have a problem looking at this again in the future," Forster said.