

Pliocene Ridge Community Services District

100 Pike City Road Pike City, CA 95960

plioceneridge.org

plioceneridge@gmail.com

NOTICE OF REGULAR MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Thursday June 15, 2023, 6:30 pm Location: Pike City Firehouse

ALL MEETING DOCUMENTS ARE POSTED ONLINE plioceneridge.org

- 1. ESTABLISH QUORUM, CALL TO ORDER, FLAG SALUTE
- 2. CONSENT CALENDAR
 - **a)** Approval of Agenda **b)** Approve Minutes for regular meeting held May 11, 2023 **c)** Ratify Treasurer's report & bill payments for May 2023.
- 3. PUBLIC COMMENT: Complaints about individuals are to be submitted in writing per Article II section 15 of the bylaws. The public may be heard before or during the consideration of any agenda item to be considered by the board, subject to reasonable time limitations for each speaker. Members of the public may address matters under the jurisdiction of the Board of Directors, and not on the posted agenda, provided that no action shall be taken by the board unless the matter is deemed urgent by a 2/3 vote.

4. INFORMATION/DISCUSSION ITEMS, STAFF &/OR COMMITTEE REPORTS

- a) Correspondence since last meeting –
- b) Committee/Member/Business Reports:
 - 1. District Chief's report
 - 2. Assistant Chiefs' reports
 - 3. AVFD non-profit corp.
 - 4. Pike Community Support Foundation
 - 5. Board Member/Staff Reports
 - 6. Firewise Communities
 - 7. Firehouse Projects & ADA Compliance ~ Planning Committee Report
 - 8. Pending Grants None
- 5. DISCUSSION and POSSIBLE ACTION ITEMS:
 - a) Unfinished business:
 - 1. Adopt preliminary budget for Fiscal Year 23/24
 - b) New business
 - 1. Accept donation of laptop computer valued at \$543.00 donated by Chris Kissinger for the Pike Firehouse.
 - 2. Amend bylaws Article II to allow a call-in option for board meetings.
 - 3. Update Policy #1020 Administrative duties
 - 4. Renew Rae Bell contract for services, current contract expires June 30th.
 - 5. Appoint Risk Manager per policy #1030
 - 6. Consider changing the name of the "General Fund" to either "The Fire Fund" or the "General Fire Fund"
- 6. ANNOUNCEMENTS, NEXT MEETING DATE & AGENDA ITEMS ~ Next meeting date August 17, 2023 in Alleghany (No meeting scheduled for July) Agenda Items:

7. ADJOURNMENT

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MINUTES of the Regular Meeting of the Pliocene Ridge CSD Board of Directors

Date: Thursday May 11, 2023 Time: 6:30 pm

Location: Alleghany Firehouse Station 2 514 Miners Street Alleghany

1.ESTABLISH QUORUM, CALL TO ORDER, FLAG SALUTE: The meeting was called to order at 6:30 pm by President Larry Allen. **Flag Salute**. Director Pam Davis was sworn in. Present: Board members, Larry Allen, Pam Davis, Grace Lundeen and Chris Mills Director Bruce Coons arrived after the Consent Calendar was approved. Also in attendance: Pliocene Ridge Fire Chief Chris Dorn, Alleghany Assistant Chiefs David Arbogast and Ned Cusato. Pike Community Support Foundation President Roland Robertson and Treasurer Denise Ruane. Public present: Vicky Tenney. Pliocene Ridge CSD Secretary Rae Bell Arbogast was present and took the minutes.

2. CONSENT CALENDAR:

Approval of current Agenda, Minutes for regular meeting held April 20, 2023 and the Treasurer's report for April 2023. A motion was made to approve the consent calendar by Grace Knowles, seconded by Chris Mills Ayes: Allen, Davis, Lundeen, Mills Noes: none Absent: Coons Abstain: none ~ Motion carried.

3. <u>PUBLIC COMMENT</u>: For items not listed on agenda. Vicky Tenney wanted to know why there was no call-in option on the agenda. Larry Allen explained that he had done some research and determined that with the COVID-19 emergency over, the district cannot allow remote meetings under those rules. He said that something can be added to the bylaws to allow them. This will be on the June agenda for board consideration.

Denise Ruane had a question about the treasurer's report, she wanted to know what the \$495 in strike team administration paid to Rae Bell Arbogast was for besides payroll. Rae Bell explained that it included time spent getting the district set up to be paid. She will provide a copy of her hours next month.

4. INFORMATION/DISCUSSION ITEMS

a) Correspondence:

Incoming: Notice of explosives storage (forwarded to Forest Service), Notice that annual Government Compensation report was filed from Blain Boden, consumer confidence report notice of availability from Alleghany County Water District.

Outgoing: Thank you letter and receipt for tax purposes for computer donated to the Pike Firehouse by Chris Kissinger, Pam Davis board seat renewal papers sent to the County

- **b)** Committee/Member/Business Reports:
- 1. Chief's Report ~ Chief Dorn reported that activity has been light. There was one vegetation fire at the end of April. He submitted a payment request to CDF. Trainings have been full, with several new faces. It is really good to see. One of the trainees donated a new laptop computer to the Pike Firehouse for trainings. The new tires have not been installed on engine 7180 but should be soon. Nevada County Consolidated FPD is surplussing a water tender. He is trying to get it to replace the old tender in Pike 6790. It is a very nice truck that has been stored inside.
- 2. Assistant Chief's Report: Alleghany Fire Assistant Chiefs David Arbogast and Ned Cusato reported they have been building new hose packs at training. It was explained that a hose pack is used on wildland fires to quickly extend a hose lay 100 feet at a time.

- 3. AVFD non-profit corp: ~ Rae Bell reported that all the delinquent filings and the currently due files have been submitted. The delinquent status has not changed yet. Everything was sent by certified mail to the State.
- 4. *Pike Community Support Foundation* ~ Roland Robertson reminded Chief Dorn that he would like a wish list from him.
- 5. Board Member/Staff Reports ~ Report provided in writing. Additionally it was reported that NORCAL EMS had granted another 90 days in addition to the first 60 days to sort out the ambulance MOU issue. (Through August)
- 6. Firewise Community Projects ~ Chief Dorn reported that another 320 hours of fuel reduction work can be added to this year's tally thanks to clearing on Ridge Rd by the Washington Ridge Crew in conjunction with the County Road Crew.
- 7. Firehouse Projects & ADA Compliance:~ It was reported that the planning committee met on May 3rd and came up with four options to consider for the alternatives analysis. Another meeting is needed to fine-tune the ideas. A meeting was scheduled for Tuesday May 30th.
- 8. Pending Grants: None.

5. ACTION ITEMS

- a) Unfinished Business None
- **b)** New Business
- 1. Motion to rescind decision made on March 16th regarding changes to Policy # 2010 After a long discussion a motion was made by Chris Mills to rescind the changes made to Policy # 2010 on March 16th. 2nd by Grace Lundeen. Ayes: Lundeen & Mills Noes: Allen, Coons & Davis Absent: none Abstain: none ~ Motion Failed.
- 2. Motion to rescind decision to put mutual aid revenue earned in 2022 in the General Fund: It was determined that this motion was not needed because the previous motion failed.
- 3. No action needed.
- 4. No action needed. Copies of the preliminary budget were distributed for consideration in June.

6. ANNOUNCEMENTS, NEXT MEETING DATE & AGENDA ITEMS

The next regular meeting is scheduled for June 15, 2023 at the Pike City Firehouse. Agenda Items: Fiscal Year 23/24 Preliminary Budget adoption, Consider adding a remote call-in option to the bylaws.

7. ADJOURNMENT:

There being no further business before the board, the meeting was adjourned at 7:08 PM.

Respectfully submitted, Rae Bell Arbogast, Secretary

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Serving the Communities of Alleghany, Forest City and Pike City 100 Pike City Road
Pike City, CA 95960
plioceneridge.org

Treasurer's Report for May 2023

	ALLEGHANY . FOR	Beginning Checking Account Balance \$			
DEPOSITS	Date	From:	For:		Amoun
	30-May	Golden State RMA	Training Grant for Rural Medical Skills Day	\$	1,000.00
			Deposits Total	\$	1,000.00
EXPENDITUR	RES				
Ck#	Date	То:	For:		
EFT	5/1	WA credit card	details below	\$	368.46
		GoDaddy	domain name renewal \$	31.16	
		Suburban Propane	Propane Alleghany \$	337.30	
EFT	5/4	PG&E		\$	911.05
			Alleghany Firehouse \$	152.58	
			Pike Firehouse \$	458.39	
			Alleghany Streetlights \$	280.84	
			Forest City Streetlights \$	19.24	
2672	5/31	AT&T	Phones Alleghany & Pike	\$	62.66
2673	5/31	Sierra County Public Wor	ks Fuel Alleghany FD	\$	71.32
	Reserve Acco	ount Detail	Expenditures/tran:	sfers Total \$	1,413.49
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Staff report for meeting date 6/14/2023

Prepared by Secretary/Treasurer Rae Bell Arbogast—disclaimer: any opinions expressed in this document belong to the author and do not represent the official stance of the district.

Agenda item 4. a) Correspondence since last meeting

Incoming: Certificate of appreciation to all first responders from NORCAL EMS,

Outgoing: Pam Davis oath of office papers sent to the Sierra County Clerk Recorders Office, Thank you letter and receipt for tax purposes sent to JK Jennings foundation for \$3,000 donation for Pike City FD

Agenda item 4. b) 5 Board member/Staff reports

- The radio license for call sign KD27938 used for the repeater in Alleghany was renewed and is now current through 5/27/2033.
- The SAM.GOV account was renewed for another year.

Agenda item 4. b) 7 Firehouse Projects and ADA compliance

• The Planning Committee met again on Tuesday May 30, 2023. The purpose of the meeting was to fine-tune some of the options to be considered in the alternatives analysis for adding larger engine bays and creating an ADA compliant meeting/community space at the Pike City Firehouse. In attendance: Ned Cusato, Bruce Coons, Roland Robertson, Denise Ruane, David and Rae Bell Arbogast. Denise & Roland will be working with architect Bruce Boyd to have the alternatives analysis done. We anticipate lots of questions once Bruce Boyd gets started.

Agenda item 4. b) 8 Pending Grants

Nothing actively pending at this time.

COMMENTARY ON A FEW THINGS:

At the May 2023 Board Meeting, a comment was made that the 2022 CAL OES Stand-by assignments were in Pike. To clarify: both of the 2022 CAL OES stand-by assignments were district-wide. The only stipulation for the staging was for them to be on stand-by for Pliocene Ridge CSD. The crew opted to remain mostly at the Pike City Firehouse to work on cleaning it up and because there is cell coverage there. They did not stay at the firehouse the entire time nor were they required to.

There was also a comment about the \$13,000 in rent revenue that the Sierra County board of supervisors (BOS) allocated to Station 2 in Alleghany for the PG&E Community Resource Center usage. When the money was received, I suggested that the Pliocene Ridge CSD board of directors ask the BOS to let it be allocated to either firehouse in Alleghany. The main reason for that was two-fold:

1. Having the money allocated separately to Station 2 would have required the creation of yet another reserve fund. 2. Fire Station 1 in Alleghany is still in need of critical repairs. At that time, it did not occur to me to ask the BOS if they could allocate the money to be used for ANY firehouse. That also would have required the creation of yet another reserve fund. Possibly this is something that should be considered: the creation of a "Capital Improvement Fund" that is not linked to a specific Fire Dept. However, in all my years of serving our fire departments, more and more I am realizing that attaching strings to our own money is not always smart.

Regarding the March 2023 changes to the Fund Policy eliminating the sections about splitting mutual aid revenue between fire departments. It recently occurred to me that the simplest way to explain the stance of those of us who supported that change is to point out that there is NO MONEY earned by the individual fire departments. If the fire departments paid their own expenses separately then you could come up with a "net earnings" figure but that is <u>not</u> the case.

Most important in my opinion, is the fact that the district is finally looking at long-term planning on a district-wide level. Both the Board and Staff of Pliocene Ridge CSD all agree that the highest major expense (capital expenditure) priority for the district is to determine the best way to add two large engine bays in Pike and to provide an ADA compliant community space, and then to build it! The alternatives analysis that is in the works, is the first step. This is a long-term project. The highest priority for the vehicle fleet has been identified as upgrading the Pike City FD Water Tender.

Another thing that I want to say about the reserve funds is this: last summer, after the first surplus firetruck was sold, I got a phone call from Roland wanting to know why the money had not been put into the Pike City FD Vehicle Reserve Fund yet. I was tired when he called, and his manner was very assertive. All I said was: "It takes time" or something like that and I wasn't very nice about it either. In hindsight, I wish that I would have explained that I was waiting for the final advertising bill from the Mountain Messenger so that I could determine the total advertising expense which was being split 3 ways between all three surplus vehicles. As soon as I got that final advertising bill, the money was moved.

There is nothing complicated about how the reserve funds are updated. Currently a few policies deal with this: Policy#2070 Disposition of Assets states that the net income from vehicle and equipment sales shall be allocated to the reserve funds of the department that utilized the equipment, Policy 2120 Donations to the District states that donations that are earmarked for a specific fire department shall be placed in the "unallocated" reserve fund for the specified department, Policy#4000 Streetlights details the procedures for updating the streetlight fund annually and of course, there is Policy#2010 Reserve Funds which was simplified at the March 2023 BOD meeting.

What is hard to follow and that needs to be cleaned up is the reserve fund tracking sheet. That sheet was developed over the years by adding to it each time that a new policy involving the reserve funds was adopted. Hopefully a new sheet will be created in time for final budget adoption this year.

Another complication is the fact that the streetlight fund cannot be updated until after the final tax income check arrives for each fiscal year. This is because the formula for arriving at the streetlight portion of the County Management fee is based on the actual percentage charged on all the tax income for the year. The final check usually arrives in July but sometimes does not arrive until August. The total fund balances on the treasurer's report cannot be caught up to the June 30th (fiscal yearend) actual balance until after the final check arrives from the County.

Response to information published by the Pike Community Support Foundation in November of 2022

Note: I was advised not to respond directly to this article when it first came out, but I feel an ever-increasing responsibility to do so. I think it is important to address these things when they come up.

In the Pike Community Support Foundation's November newsletter there was an article with no title or author listed that starts out on a positive note, documenting the Foundation's contributions to the Pike City Fire Dept. since 2015. This shows that the donations, grants and fundraising proceeds were used for their intended purpose. This should be a "win-win".

However, the next paragraph states in part that "Our local district, the Pliocene Ridge Community Services District (PRCSD) receives local property tax revenue to serve, among othersemergency medical and fire needs. Since 2015PRCSD has purchased \$7,410 in equipment for the Pike Firefighters and has reimbursed the Foundation \$7,000 for the stairs at the Pike Firehouse. It goes on to compare that \$14,410 spent on Pike to the \$45,705 spent by the district on equipment and vehicles for Alleghany for the same period. No mention is made about the fact that the district is responsible for ALL expenses related to running both fire departments. The dollar figures being compared between Pike and Alleghany are not an "apple to apple" comparison. The figure for Alleghany INCLUDES grants and donations, but the figure for Pike does not. The five-year history included on the district's budget sheets represents audited figures.

It ends with the statement that: "At the time of District Formation Pike's Tax rate area generated 68% of local property tax revenue while Alleghany's Tax rate area generated 15%" These numbers are correct but taken out of context. Please see the draft Board Members handbook included in the June meeting documents for more information about the district's formation and funding stream.

More importantly, these are not worthwhile comparisons. Some years, more will be spent on one department or the other. Donations from the non-profit corporations help all the district's money go further. As stated above, this should be a win-win.

The whole gist of the article seems to be geared towards turning the communities against each other and/or the district! The Foundation is supposed to support the district, and this is clearly stated in the MOU between the district and the Foundation as a condition for the district to provide insurance coverage to the Foundation.

There is ALWAYS room for improvement on the part of the district. Constructive criticism is one thing, but slanted information taken out of context is not constructive in any shape or form. The good work of the Foundation is overshadowed by this negativity. The repercussions of that newsletter article continue to be felt.

There is still a huge amount of misunderstanding about the structure of the district. There are many people who still think that the non-profits are the fire departments. From my perspective all we can do is keep trying to educate ourselves and the public about what is what. To this end I have started working on a Board Member handbook.

Those of us who are involved with the district did not choose the formation of Pliocene Ridge CSD, but we have chosen to make the best of the situation. We did not invent the State Laws that govern us. We are doing our best to keep emergency services available for the benefit of our communities. Keeping the fire departments going, with ever-increasing administrative requirements and dwindling volunteerism is a gargantuan task. We need everyone pulling together. We need to support the first responders who are on call 24/7 and willing to put their lives on the line at a moment's notice. This is what all this work is about!

I want to point out that the competitive tension felt at the PRCSD board meetings does not exist amongst the "boots on the ground" first responders. The first responders train together weekly and respond to emergencies together. They (we) fully understand that we are stronger together. If only that attitude could carry over to the board meetings and out into our communities. That is the needed medicine.

Pending items not addressed on this month's agenda:

(Staff needs more time to work on them before presenting to the board, more info needed, or conditions not right to proceed)

- Water Tender Upgrade
- Fund Policy revision (need to create simplified tracking sheet)
- MOU with non-profits (name changes) We are waiting on documentation from the AVFD non-profit corporation.
- Engine Bay conversion to ADA friendly space Pike firehouse (need cost estimate).
- Signage for firehouses (Need signs with updated department names and updated district logo)
- Long-term plan for adding two larger engine bays in Pike (defined as highest capital improvement priority first by the Chief(s) then the board in Sept. 2022 with letter to USDA Rural Development)
- Repair to west wall of Station 1 in Alleghany. The metal siding was purchased last April, arrived last summer and is sitting in the County Yard.
- Proposed changes to Ordinance #1 discussed in Feb. 2023 Larry Allen found additional code that
 would allow us to bill for environmental spills & clean-up. More legal research is needed before a new
 draft will be ready for the first reading.
- ISO survey done in 2019 ~ I have not been able to get a copy of our survey docs from 2019. Every time that I contact them, they tell me to create a user account on their website, which I do, and get a message that a confirmation email will be generated but it never happens. I have contacted the person who did the survey and he said that I am not the only one having problems and that he would get back to me, but he never has. The ISO survey will be due again next year. It is a very involved process that I spent well over 40 hours on last time, but we did manage to get a better ISO rating for the district as a result of the work.
- Free attorney consult: I was authorized a long time ago, to inquire about the borrowing limits for CSD's to see if there is any additional information (legal precedence) besides the code but haven't done it.
- Additional Siren for Alleghany, a considerable amount of time was spent on this in conjunction with Sierra County OES and district staff (we had to get two quotes, provide information for the historical building inventory paperwork and did some sound tests). The original idea was to apply via the Homeland Security Grant Program, but for some reason Sierra County OES changed their mind about it.

Pliocene Ridge CSD Board Member Handbook FIRST DRAFT Presented June 2023 (not ready for adoption)

DISTRICT STRUCTURE

The district is set up with two "ZONES" or "FUNDS" these are Fire and Streetlights. Todate PRCSD has referred to the Fire Fund as the General Fund, but there will be an item on the June 2023 agenda to consider changing it to either "The Fire Fund" or "Fire General Fund" for better clarity.

I have attached a copy of the statement that arrived with the last tax revenue check from the county. As you can see, it doesn't specify any allocation, not by fire department, nor for streetlights.

When the district was formed, the amount of money that had been historically paid to the two non-profit fire departments plus the amount historically paid for the streetlights for Alleghany and Forest City per year, was converted into a percentage of the tax base (property tax) within the new district's boundaries.

The original dollar amount was \$28,444, arrived at as follows: historical amount paid to each fire dept. (AVFD & PCVFD) \$11,462 <u>each</u> = \$22,924 for Fire Department Services plus \$5,520 in streetlight expense for Alleghany and Forest City. Moving forward, after district formation, the percentage stays the same, but the dollar amount will fluctuate as property values change.

With district formation, the PRCSD Directors decided that the best way to keep the streetlight income and expense separate from the fire income and expense was to create a ZONE for the streetlights. The original streetlight allocation of \$5,520 was converted into a percentage of the Alleghany County Water District tax rate area. Going forward that formula is used to determine the streetlight revenue each year. The County Auditor provides the dollar figure annually. Additionally, the streetlights are charged an equivalent portion of the County Management Fee each year.

The Streetlight Fund or Zone has its own budget section and a reserve fund that is used to capture any extra income at the end of each year, or conversely that can be used to make up any budget shortfalls. This ensures that Fire Fund money is not used to cover the streetlights.

The other Fund or Zone is FIRE. Most of the expenses for the two departments are tracked separately for information purposes. Several expenses cannot be tracked by department, these include the cost of insurance, the independent audit and district administration.

Pliocene Ridge CSD's Directors are fiscally responsible for managing the district as a single entity. Many of us, me included, did not understand this when the district first formed in 2004. We thought that there might be a way to continue to split the Fire Tax Revenue between the two fire departments, we quickly learned that it was not feasible to approach the district's management in that way.

The formation of a district represents a pooling of resources. Even with the drawing of such a large (115 square mile) district boundary, at the time of formation the district did not generate the tax revenue required to support the original allocation of \$28,444. This is because about 66% of the land within the district's boundaries is Forest Service Land that does not generate tax revenue. Most of the private property is in the western portion of the district, so that the Pike area generates more tax revenue than the Alleghany area where most of the public land is located.

Within the district the Board is responsible to spend funds where they are needed. The property that generates the funds does not get a prorated share. That is not how it works. Generally speaking, if taxes were divided up by the properties that generated them, then critical infrastructure would not exist within the State of California. The purpose of pooling resources is to take advantage of that structure. The district's budget has two main sections: Fire and Streetlights.

Are the Fire Departments Separate or not?

There has been disagreement about whether-or-not the fire departments are separate entities. Both answers are right depending on how you look at it.

From a strictly legal perspective, the Alleghany and Pike City Fire Departments are not separate entities because they operate under the sole authority of Pliocene Ridge CSD, sharing the same tax ID #, bank accounts, main income source and administration.

Additionally, all operating agreements with other agencies (Mutual Aid and MOUs) are between Pliocene Ridge CSD and the other agencies. This is because the fire departments do not have individual authority to enter into agreements. They are not separate legal entities from the district, they are departments within the district.

That being said, the departments do have different names attached to their respective communities and are separate in certain ways, much in the same way that Forest Service Battalions are separate. They have their own call numbers, stations, apparatus and crew. They are paged out separately for certain calls outside of the district. Additionally, Pliocene Ridge CSD earmarks money for the individual fire departments under certain circumstances including if a donor wishes to designate their donation to a specific department.

Resources:

Sierra County Auditor Van Maddox was in office when Pliocene Ridge CSD was formed. He was the "number cruncher" and has a clear understanding of the structure of special districts. He is still in office. He is a good source of information.

The California Special District's Association is another good source of information. Pliocene Ridge CSD is a "Special District". Other types of special districts include: Cemetery Districts, County Water Districts and Fire Districts. Districts fall under certain general rules (such as the Brown Act), but also have a unique set of rules for each type of district established by the State. These specific codes are referred to as "Enabling Legislation".

The district's formation documents are available online at: https://www.plioceneridge.org/district-formation-documents

Pliocene Ridge CSD Bylaws & Policies are available online at:

https://www.plioceneridge.org/bylaws-policies-procedures

Pliocene Ridge CSD Financial information, including budgets and independent audit reports available online at:

https://www.plioceneridge.org/financial-information

Sierra County
Auditing Department
P.O. Box 425
Downieville, CA 95936
(530) 289-3273
Fax (530) 289-2842

Sierra County

Memo

V5891 430 9999 7400 PRESD 4-2023

To: Pliocene Ridge CSD

From: Van Maddox, Auditor/Controller - Treasurer/Tax Collector - Risk Manager - Budge

Date: April 10, 2023

Re: Distribution of Taxes - April Apportionment

dr.	
Enclosed, please find a check for tax distribution in the amount of	\$ 12,759.44
Current Secured Property Tax	12,759.44
Current Unsecured Property Tax	_
Prior Secured Property Tax	
Prior Unsecured Property Tax	
Supplemental Property Tax	<u>-</u>
Supplemental Unsecured	
Timber Yield Tax	_
Homeowners Property Tax	<u>-</u>
Interest Apportionment	<u>-</u>
Property Tax Roll Fees	· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·
Subtotal	12,759.44
Less: Property tax solid waste on the properety Tax Roll Total Check Amount Enclosed:	\$ 12,759.44
	+,

If you have any questions regarding this payment, please contact the Sierra County Auditor's Office at (530) 289-3273

