

LTVA approves \$2.12 million budget

By Kathryn Reed

With Lake Tahoe Visitors Authority changing its fiscal year start from Oct. 1 to July 1, the bottom line is a bit skewed for the short year – October 2009-June 2010.

Jerry Bindel, who is on the South Shore tourism board, said revenues are down about 25 percent. The primary funding source for the agency is the Tourism Improvement District, which assesses a fee on South Lake Tahoe properties; and the Tahoe-Douglas Visitors Authority, through a hotel tax in Douglas County.

The \$2.12 million budget for the 10-month period was approved Sept. 10.

Cuts include reduced hours at the visitors' centers and less staffing. The agency does not intend to help sponsor as many events as it would like.

It is bringing back opening days in June. The roads will not be closed like in 2008 when it was a traffic nightmare.

The sports commission has \$5,000 to spend.

To generate a sense of community some board members want to promote lights being strung along businesses during the holidays so the South Shore looks festive.

Some of the discussion that afternoon centered on the agency's website.

"It's in dire need of an upgrade," Bindel said after the meeting. "Some of us are pushing to make it a marketing piece and an advertising piece. We need to get them information, but

we need to sell the story. We need great pictures that you can almost touch and feel that say what the community is about.”

LTVA has been dragging its feet in joining the social network age. Facebook, Twitter and the like are not part of the agency’s marketing component. More talk to do so was brought up last week. It was noted that it’s cheaper to get the word out via the Internet than traditional media outlets.

The other thing with using the Internet is that it’s a measurable resource in that the number of people who seek specific information can be tracked. This is not the case for radio, television and print media. It is not known how many people heard a particular ad, saw it or read it.

The winter ad campaign is being delayed because people are booking their travel later and later. This is why Tahoe was not prominent in the ski-snowboard magazines this month.

“Get Your Vacation On” will be the summer 2010 campaign that is being developed by Duncan/Channon, the ad firm hired earlier this year to replace the company that developed the failed Blue World campaign.

More detailed concepts should be presented at LTVA’s October meeting.

