

Sheriff Neves talks about resignation

By Kathryn Reed

El Dorado County Sheriff Jeff Neves is resigning in December, more than a year before his term ends.

He told *Lake Tahoe News* on Tuesday morning it has everything to do with wanting to spend more time with his family “to make up for missed anniversaries and birthdays celebrated without him.

Some speculate the reason Neves is leaving is so the candidate he wants to replace him will have a leg-up in the June 2010 primary.



Jeff Neves

To that theory, Neves said he believes the Board of Supervisors will not appoint one of the seven candidates who has declared his candidacy for the 2010 sheriff’s race. However, his resignation letter strongly urges them to appoint a captain in the department. Neves on Tuesday said he believes the board will appoint Undersheriff Fred Kollar to fill out the remainder of the term.

Neves’s Oct. 23 resignation letter to the Board of Supervisors didn’t say much despite filling an entire type written page. (Click letter to read his words.)

In his resignation letter Neves tells supervisors he thinks candidate Capt. Craig Therkildsen should be appointed interim sheriff. As a back up, he says Kollar would be his second choice.

Kollar says he has no desire to be sheriff except on an interim basis, and that he had intended to retire when Neves left office. If Kollar is not appointed sheriff, it's unknown if the interim top cop would keep Kollar. The sheriff appoints the undersheriff.

"I would take the job merely because we are going into a very contentious election year where several people are vying for sheriff. By putting me in you get someone who is not involved in that process," Kollar said. "I would bring stability, continuity and hopefully keep election year politics out of the office as much as possible."

On top of that, as undersheriff he is integrally involved in the budget process. The county will begin working on the 2010-11 budget right after the first of the year. The fiscal year for the county begins July 1.

Kollar has been with the department for 30 years "with about a dozen of those years in the South Lake Tahoe office.

Supervisors are expected today to discuss in closed session the looming sheriff's vacancy because sheriff's department personnel issues were already on the agenda. Because the sheriff matter was not original on the agenda it's possible the discussion could violate the Brown Act, the state opening meeting law.

Neves, who was first elected to the highest law enforcement position in the county in 2002, months ago said he was planning to retire at the end of his second term.

Instead, his last day will be Dec. 26. After 30 years in law enforcement, all with this sheriff's department (seven years

at the Lake Tahoe office), Neves said he plans to do more volunteer work and continue his work on nonprofit boards.

The sheriff's primary is in June. It's possible more candidates could declare before then. A candidate needs 50 percent, plus one vote to win it outright; otherwise the top two finishers would be in a runoff in November, with the winner taking office in January 2011.