

# Lakeside Inn Casino spoof not completely false

By Kathryn Reed



Whoever was the originator of the Lakeside Inn's day-early April Fools' Day joke probably should get a raise.

Facebook chatter on Wednesday was amusing. For those who don't do Facebook or skipped a day, click to know what's going on.

It was prompting calls to the Stateline casino to find out where the truth was. PR folks on the South Shore were helping promote the hype via social networking. A slew of local recognizable names/faces were in on the act – Lew Feldman, Jerry Birdwell, B Gorman and Julie Regan. Even Charles Barkley had a quote.

Having a zipline from the top of the proposed 50-story hotel tower to Emerald Bay sounds like more than your average E-ticket ride. The regulatory process for something like that, if it were really proposed, might provide for more spectacular fireworks than the ones shot off over Lake Tahoe each Fourth of July.

"The town has been under so much pressure for a couple years now that we think it's healthy to share the humor," Mike Bradford, president of the hotel-casino said as to why they created the make-believe development project.

But the truth is Bradford for a long time has thought a zipline from somewhere on Heavenly Mountain Resort to the lake

would be an ultimate attraction.

Even though what's proposed on Facebook is not going to happen – for many obvious reasons to anyone who knows about the rules and regulations at Lake Tahoe – the property does want a face-lift of sorts.

“What we would like to do is some sort of resort spa development,” Bradford told *Lake Tahoe News*. “We will raze all of our rooms and build a whole new facility.”

That is the truth.

The 25-year-old property that is considered a locals' spot for gaming and dining, doesn't want to lose that character. But at the same time, it knows gambling is not the primary focus of people living in or visiting Tahoe.

Bradford was at the March 25 Tahoe Regional Planning Agency meeting where he told the Governing Board he wants to transform the Lakeside Inn.

“It's no secret he would like to do things,” TRPA spokesman Dennis Oliver said. “He wants to remake his business so he can respond to the decline in gaming.”

Lakeside has acquired neighboring properties to the north for a combined 8-acre parcel.

“Gaming will always be an important part of our economic model, but it will be less a part of it,” Bradford said.

Lakeside has 124 rooms – all without much of a view. They are basic, ordinary and cater to the person coming to town to spend their time in the casino. Because that person for the most part does not exist anymore, Lakeside wants to start over.

Views of Lake Tahoe and Rabe Meadow are from the second floor. But none of the current rooms are that high. That will change

in the future.

“The economics of hotels are such that simply redoing rooms isn’t cost-effective,” Bradford said.

Bradford said talks are under way with potential developers as well as boutique hoteliers. He foresees the project to break ground in three to five years, with it taking about a year to complete.

The hotel has a summer-only pool and year-round hot tub. But Bradford said they don’t meet the destination resort standards. That will change if his ideas get implemented. And they are likely to be some of the initial upgrades.

“I envision a facility that has a more recreation focus,” Bradford said.

With the Tahoe Beach Club one day going in at the end of Kahle Drive, Lakeside wants to provide its guests access to that development’s beach club. The current casino is also within easy access of Rabe Meadow and then Nevada Beach. The proposed Stateline-to-Stateline bike trail will be in the area.

Dining options are likely to expand. Room service will definitely be added, Bradford said.

He expects the remodel of the existing buildings to take on a more modern, European Alpine theme instead using all the logs and rock that are typical of Tahoe.