

Lovell calling it quits at end of council term

By Kathryn Reed

So often politicians give the trite answer of “I want to spend more time with my family” when in fact something much less altruistic is the true reason. In the case of Kathay Lovell, the statement is fact.

Lovell has served on the South Lake Tahoe City Council for eight years, with three stints, including now, as mayor. She is not seeking re-election in November.



Kathay Lovell

Grandchildren are an overriding reason to call political life quits – at least for now. The boys are 11 and 14, the twins turn a year next month, and baby No. 5 arrives in January.

When this reporter congratulated her at the July 13 council meeting about her daughter-in-law’s pregnancy, Lovell was taken aback because she hadn’t even told all of her family. Plus, she had just finished her council member comments. On her list was to announce her decision to not run again. Instead, she stayed silent that day.

“I was trying to convince myself to run again. I said I would cutback and I would not be involved in so many things. But I said that every year. It just doesn’t happen that way,”

Lovell, 57, said.

Speculation has swirled around Lovell for some time that she would seek higher office. With state Sen. Dave Cox's recent death, talk became louder. But she said now is not the time to pursue higher office. However, she would not rule out running for some office in the future.

It's not just the twice a month council meetings that she goes to – and like all councilmembers – gets paid \$450/month to attend. As a councilmember she is on the boards of the California Tahoe Conservancy, South Tahoe Area Transportation Authority, CalTahoe JPA, alternate for the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency board, and on the Finance Committee.

Outside of her elected duties, Lovell has been a member of the Secret Witness board for 12 years and is a member of Soroptimist International South Lake Tahoe.

Besides those commitments, so often she is the only councilmember at so many of the community events in town. She was the lone councilmember at the last Memorial Day, Veterans Day and Patriots Day ceremonies in the city.

This last year has been a trying one for the entire council. The grand jury report that came out in June says it all.

Even though Lovell says there is plenty more work that she would like to do for the city, her priorities have changed, with the focus on her growing family.

"I still want to be involved in some fashion with the community. That will never go away," she said. "But I've been doing this at warp speed and it has taken a toll."

Before she leaves, one of the projects she helped spearhead will break ground – Lakeview Commons. She is going to work on bringing in the El Dorado Community Foundation to provide money because there is a shortfall when it comes to building

the whole project that was once known as the 56-acre project.

Lovell isn't taking the short-timer's approach to governing.

"If we are fortunate enough to get the Tahoe Valley Community Plan done before December, that would be awesome," she said. "I haven't given up on getting a home for Tom and Cheryl (Millham for Lake Tahoe Wildlife Care). Maybe I can spend more time on that (being off the council)."

There are plenty of things she won't miss about life as an elected official in a small town. However, it's the little things she will miss most.

"I will miss getting things accomplished that people don't even know we do. People will call with a concern or complaint and we just get it fixed," Lovell said. "You don't do it alone. You are the conduit. Staff does it. But (the public) calls us. I like to be that conduit and ask staff to be part of the solution."

Making a difference in the community – that's what Lovell will miss most when her term expires at the end of the year.