

Time for a City Council that represents the people

To the community,

The El Dorado County Grand Jury, in its Final 2010 Report states, "The (South Lake Tahoe) City Council, in its reports, procedures and by evidence received by the Grand Jury, points to a severely handicapped organization that needs major changes."

If ever there was a time when substantive change could happen, this is it. I first moved to Tahoe in 1979. I have always believed in the importance of law and government, even more so in a community like South Lake Tahoe where so few votes elect the five city leaders who have such power over our lives. Over the years, I have become disheartened with the City Council's blatant disregard of the needs and voices of the hardy, long-suffering locals they were elected to serve.

It seemed the council's collective deafness had very few negative consequences for them until the latest Grand Jury Report, which has focused a blinding spotlight on how the same select few good-old-boys and girls have been able to continually replace the will of the electorate with their own personal agendas.

It seems the incumbents have all chosen to run for cover, rather than to stay and have a hand in fixing some serious procedural and philosophical problems. As the Grand Jury put it, "The City Council, when facing controversial issues or after threat of litigation, routinely drops issues, even if addressing the issue would improve the function of government or service to the public. ... voting often appears to be the result of Council members pursuing personal agendas rather than operating in the best interests of the City."

I for one am not going to shed even one tear over these former leaders' hasty departure. The mission statement on the city's website says, "The City Council exists to represent the public interest...." Maybe now there's a chance to elect a council that will do just that.

But it still requires the willingness of fearless locals to get off their backsides and step up to the plate. You've still got until Aug. 11 at 5pm to file -- whether you're a former unsuccessful candidate and longtime local, or someone just new to town. This is going to be a wide-open race in a way it hasn't been in decades. A small group of civic-minded individuals have run for City Council in the past, asking for voters' support to help create positive change. With the right mix of candidates, the unbreakable voting block of the monied special interests that sent them down to crashing defeat in the past can be overcome this year. Even if you can't run for office, you can vote in November.

Maybe the City Council has chosen to turn a deaf ear to the Grand Jury's scathing remarks, but Tahoe locals need to heed them well. The time for complaining is over. Now is the time for action.

Joann Eisenbrandt, South Lake Tahoe and Camino