

Curry: grow, strengthen and diversify the local economy

Publisher's note: *Lake Tahoe News is profiling candidates for South Lake Tahoe City Council and Douglas County Commission. The stories are being published in the order they were received.*

Name: Joy Curry

Age: 63

How long have you lived in South Lake Tahoe?: I made South Lake Tahoe my home in 2003, after frequently enjoying visiting and vacationing in the area since 1979.

Job/profession: South Lake Tahoe planning commissioner, small business owner, community college instructor, dental practice management, community volunteer.



Joy Curry

What would you build or tear down on the South Shore to make it great, as in what Whistler is like?

We need to be South Lake Tahoe and not try to emulate other resort towns. Whistler, Park City, Vail and other resort towns have some of the natural attractions of South Shore, but none have the unique combination of the lake, mountains and forests. We can take ideas and successes from other resort

towns and utilize them in South Shore. Our downtown is Highway 50, which is unlike any other resort town. I would like to see a community center and city hall evolve around Lakeview Commons to give the South Shore a sense of community. In the Regional Plan and General Plan Update, the community said over and over again that they wanted common gathering places and Lakeview Commons is a perfect setting to develop those ideas. We need to implement the Tahoe Valley Community Plan and update the Y. Create more pocket parks for our community. We need to create a world-class resort destination at Stateline to improve our economy, which in turn will vitalize small business, create jobs and provide our residents with wages that enable affordable living within the city.

What form of recreation do you participate in? What recreation improvements would you strive to make in SLT?

I love the Tahoe lifestyle. In the summer you can find me hiking, kayaking, boating, bicycling, playing golf, and just enjoying the beach and the beautiful outdoors. In the winter I ski and snowshoe. I would like to improve and maintain walking and bike paths, ball fields and community parks.

Recreation tourism is expected to be the driving force of the South Shore economy in the coming years, and according to a decade-old study, the majority of the South Lake Tahoe residents would like to see cycling-type facilities and maintenance projects. So, what do you specifically plan to do to improve our substandard, dangerous bike paths and lanes and roads beyond hiring a consultant to tell us how bad they are?:

The poor condition of our streets, bike trails and drainage systems are well documented. I am told that the cost to build and repair streets and drainage alone is over \$100 million. The city needs to continue seeking federal and state grants funds to make these repairs and improvements over time to reduce the burden on local taxpayers. The city needs to continue to vigorously oppose any state take-away of city

funds for street repair, etc. Whenever and wherever eligible, the city needs to use available RDA funds in both existing and new RDA project areas to make major roadway repairs. Aggressively apply for grants and partner with other agencies. Support another attempt to pass a measure complementing Measure S for ball fields and repair of bike paths. A stronger and more diverse local economy will help generate new funds that can be dedicated for road repairs.

What are the three major issues facing South Lake Tahoe and how do you expect in four years to make it so they are not major issues when your tenure is through?

First, grow, strengthen and diversify the local economy. Complete and adopt a business-friendly and business-encouraging city General Plan and Tahoe Valley Community Plan and vigorously support development of a business-friendly TRPA Regional Plan. Second, invest new dollars from a growing economy that provides the revenue base to make needed capital improvements in the community (streets, drainage, sidewalks where desired and lighting). Third, encourage current local businesses and new companies to establish desired products and services that are appreciated and supported by locals and tourists alike. In support of each of these, I will encourage, support, and seek to facilitate completion of the convention center/hotel project.

What compelling idea have you read in the citizens' input of the revamped, in-progress update of the city's General Plan?

As I have advocated on the city Planning Commission regarding this and other important planning issues that come to the table, we must have public outreach meetings, dialogue, and more community input on the proposed General Plan and Tahoe Valley Community Plan before final approval is made by the City Council. We are at an important juncture with these plans that will establish our city's future. We must exercise due diligence to gather information, get input and deliberate

effectively to get it right the first time. I would also evaluate the final plan options to be presented to the City Council to see how they match up against the public opinion poll of local residents done by the city in December 2008 regarding city needs and priorities. I will carefully evaluate resident comments on any new plan and weigh this together with other factors including funds available, costs, outcomes and technical input. We must have good plans that the community wants and supports if we are to prosper in the future.

How do you plan to boost revenue in SLT?

Recreation tourism is the backbone of our community, and it is the City Council's duty to grow, strengthen, and diversify our local economy. Re-establishing commercial air service to Lake Tahoe Airport would be a great boost to our overall economy. Support a more business-friendly business regulatory system that is also environmentally friendly. Support continued and expanded business retention, expansion and new business development programs by the city's RDA. Continue city collaboration and support of the Lake Tahoe Basin Prosperity Plan and support activities of it that will help to grow the local economy. Review consolidation opportunities and seek grants that may have potential for new resources of funding. Particularly those related to sustainability. Collaboration with others agencies, school district, STPUD, and with them we might be able to consolidate or combine resources to save money. Turn over every rock to reduce cost and increase revenue while still providing critical essential services to the community. Police, fire, snow removal are critical.

What stands out to you in the 2010-11 budgets?

The city budget is lean and tight because local government revenues are down due to a sluggish national, state and regional economy. The state confiscated \$2 million in RDA funds from the city. The city has made cutbacks in employees but assures us that a high level of public services will

continue to be provided. The budget is protected by a strong reserve (unlike the state of California) that can help pay for emergencies that may arise. Employee groups have made concessions with furloughs, accepting salary reductions, paying part of their retirement contributions and giving back COLAs to help maintain needed services to the community. Growing the local economy needs to be the focus of city government or the city will be unable to sustain over time providing a high level of service to the community. We need to always look at ways to do more than less.

What needs to be done to allow businesses to thrive in SLT?

Take back more regulatory control of business from TRPA and give it to city elected officials. It is then incumbent upon these elected officials to fashion more business-friendly environment to include business expansion, new business development and business beautification and appearance enhancements, e.g. responsible rules for signage and property attractiveness.

What have you done to help South Lake Tahoe be a better community?

I have donated my time and service to the city as a member of the City Planning Commission for the last 3½ years. I am also a member of the General Plan Update Committee, which has worked on the General Plan and held many public meetings for input from the community. I served on the Public Working Group for the Regional Plan Update. This committee met over a two-year period, with many open meetings to allow full public input for the Regional Plan. I have hundreds of hours invested in participation in these working groups to expand my knowledge and ability to lead our city and move us forward.

What boards, commissions, or other experience do you have?

I am currently the vice chair of the South Lake Tahoe Planning Commission, having served on the commission for 3½ years. I

serve on the General Plan Update for the city. I have served on the Public Working Group for Pathways, which is managed by TRPA. Before residing in SLT, my experience also includes being a Schoolpower board member, Capital Campaign for the Laguna Beach Unified School District, a member of the Sandpiper Board, Hoag Hospital Foundation Board and involved in the Capital Campaign for the Hoag Cancer Center.

Why should voters vote for you over someone else?

I want to move us forward by being dedicated as a city councilmember and serving with a full-time commitment. I have experience running a business in town and know the struggles faced by local business owners. I will make a positive impact on the community by focusing on the real issues of interest to the people, combined with a process that allows civil and courteous discourse on local government issues at the City Council and in the community. I am my own person. I am not beholden to special interests. I want what is best for the entire community. I am dedicated to that end and move us forward.

Blue Go, the public transit, is mired in lawsuits and bankruptcy. Do we need public transit on the South Shore? If so, how do you propose to make it functional?

We need a fully functional and efficient transportation system in South Shore. Having both public and private sector involvement and financing of a transit system is a good thing. The public should not have to bear the full cost of a viable public transit. The current organizational structure of transportation in the South Shore needs to be re-examined and restructured, with competent and efficient operators brought in to run a system that serves the community, meaning affordable and reliable.

Do you support commercial air service at Lake Tahoe Airport? Why or why not?

Yes. I'm in favor of re-establishing commercial air service to the Lake Tahoe Airport, which would be a big boost to small businesses and the overall local economy. The airport is not only important economically, but vital to the public's protection in case of a catastrophic wildfire. Commercial air service would facilitate easy, quick access to South Shore that would benefit tourism. The reality is that South Lake Tahoe isn't a convenient destination. Opening the airport to commercial traffic – as it was years ago–would facilitate arrival at South Shore within an hour from points on the West Coast and within several hours from any point in the country

Is there any individual, group or organization you would not take campaign money from? Why?

I welcome the support of community members and legitimate interests in my campaign. However, no one should think that by contributing to my campaign that they will gain special favors from me. I will always vote favorably on matters before the City Council that I think best serve all the people of South Lake Tahoe.

Nepotism and favoritism runs rampant in the city when it comes to hiring preferences. The council sets policy. What type of policy would you write regarding nepotism and favoritism?

People hired by the city should be hired on the basis of their qualifications, experience and what they know, not who they know. The city has an anti-nepotism policy in place, and no one has found that it has been violated. All hiring, purchasing and contracting policies and practices for the city should be based upon a level playing field that provides fairness, objectivity, transparency and cost-effectiveness in all city dealings and transactions. I will support and encourage a complete review by the City Council of the current policy and practices, taking whatever steps are necessary to ensure strict compliance policies and procedures that accomplish these ethical and operational standards.

You and three other council candidates met with the Lake Tahoe South Shore Chamber of Commerce. Then you and two others were invited back for a follow-up meeting. Tell us about that meeting.

I spoke to a small group of business leaders and would be happy to speak to any group that invites me to speak. The follow up meeting provided educational information about running for office that was helpful.

Tell us something about yourself that voters don't already know:

I am a go-getter. I am a mom and wife first and have always taken very good care of my family, and I pledge to do the same for the city of South Lake Tahoe.