

Jones: real world experience in governmental accounting

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: Alice Jones

Age: 34

How long have you lived in South Lake Tahoe?: 8 years

Job/profession: CPA; Controller, Tahoe Keys Property Owners' Association



Alice Jones

What would you build or tear down on the South Shore to make it great, as in what Whistler is like?: South Lake Tahoe should not aspire to be like another town. We do not need to build or tear down anything; instead we need to focus on maintaining and repairing what we already have. South Lake Tahoe is a place where families can come to camp or stay in a rustic hotel or cabin to ski, hike, bike, or just spend the day at one of our beautiful beaches. It used to be a place where locals could live and raise a family without earning a six-figure salary. This is what makes South Lake Tahoe unique and desirable for many locals and tourists alike. As we

continue to tear down and build up to try to be like more upscale communities such as Whistler or Vail, we end up losing locals and middle class tourists. South Lake Tahoe does not need to be posh to be a desirable destination. We will never be able to draw the same tourists as Whistler or Vail nor should we try.

What form of recreation do you participate in? What recreation improvements would you strive to make in SLT?: I enjoy hiking, swimming, mountain biking, and snowboarding. I think our recreation center and swimming pool could use some upgrades. It is an older facility that could use a facelift. I would also like to see the facility include a fitness center with cardio equipment and free weights as well as a smaller kids pool with water features.

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?: Well, it is obvious that the Public Works Department needs additional funding, the question is where that funding comes from. I think that the city can achieve efficiencies in other departments and reduce waste in order to shift funding to the roadways. If we want private property owners to improve their properties, the city needs to set an example by improving the infrastructure and maintaining city roads. The city has obtained grant funding for the Bijou and Sierra Tract erosion control projects, but they should not ignore the other roads not being funded by this grant. It is entirely unacceptable that the city spent nothing on its roads, not one dollar in 2003-04 and 2004-05 when the economy was booming. It is always less expensive to maintain what you have then to let the deferred maintenance go so long that more expensive

replacements are now necessary.

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?: The single greatest issue facing South Lake Tahoe is our aging infrastructure. That problem is multifaceted and includes issues with our roads, sidewalks (or lack thereof), erosion control, street lights, and recreation facilities including parks, beaches, and restrooms. Many years of deferred maintenance and lack of a long range funding plan has got us to where we are now and it will take many years to dig ourselves out of this hole, no pun intended. City residents and taxpayers will need to be patient as we work to right the wrongs of many years. That being said, the time is now to lay the foundation of this fundamental change in priorities.

What compelling idea have you read in the citizens' input of the revamped, in-progress update of the city's General Plan?: I have not read the citizens' input of the revamped, in-progress update of the city's General Plan so I have no comment on this question at this time.

How do you plan to boost revenue in SLT?: By taking care of our city and making sure that the infrastructure is well maintained and upgraded we will draw more tourists. I can only imagine what it is like for the families who travel here. The condition of our roads, failure of our public transit, and aging of our recreational facilities must not make a very good impression. Follow that up with marijuana dispensaries on every corner in town you may come to the impression that South Lake Tahoe is not a very family-friendly destination. We do not need to be a ritzy ski town, but we do need to have decent roads and bike trails for biking, sidewalks for walking, and a clean well maintained Lake Tahoe Boulevard. If the city does these things well, then the city has done its job to help the local economy. The economy may continue to lag, as it does in the rest of the country, but that is outside the scope of what

the City Council can realistically impact.

What stands out to you in the 2010-11 budget?: The lack of a sustainable budget. Whenever you depend on reserves to balance the budget there is cause for concern. It will likely be a significant amount of time before the city realizes any additional revenue from an economic rebound. Just as there was a lag in the revaluation of property with regards to property tax revenue loss there will be a delay in the realization of any property tax revenue increases as a result of property value increases. Sales tax and TOT revenue more closely mirror "real time" economic activity but only comprise a small portion of total revenue sources. The city needs to adjust to realistic revenue projections and cut expenses accordingly.

What needs to be done to allow businesses to thrive in SLT?: The city needs to adopt business-friendly regulations and help businesses to comply without unnecessary expense.

What have you done to help South Lake Tahoe be a better community?: I volunteer at my children's schools and I am involved in local sports, clubs, and cooperatives.

What boards, commissions, or other experience do you have?: Prior treasurer at Tahoe Parents Nursery School. I am also very involved with the board of directors at the Tahoe Keys Property Owners' Association and have helped guide them in long range planning and financing of large infrastructure projects including replacement of underground water lines. As controller, I keep separate accounting records for 38 separate funds. I have helped the board come up with long-term funding plans that are realistic and achievable.

Why should voters vote for you over someone else?: I have real world experience in governmental accounting and financing and long-term funding plans for maintenance and repair of infrastructure. Additionally, I care about the city. I am raising two children here and have no other agenda other than

making our city a better place for locals and tourists alike.

BlueGo, 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?: Obviously we need public transit. We need to come up with a realistic business model and provide prudent oversight of any transit administrator. We need to work on a revenue plan, including grant funding if at all possible, to reduce taxpayer subsidies. At all times, adequate oversight should be maintained.

Do you support commercial air service at Lake Tahoe Airport? Why or why not?: I support commercial air service without taxpayer subsidies. I don't know if that is a realistic objective and I tend to think that if it was economically feasible, one of the past commercial airliners would still be operating at South Lake Tahoe. The sad reality of the commercial airline business is that they are cutting capacity and flights at almost every airport. Commercial airliners are not in an expansion mode and likely will not be considering South Lake Tahoe without significant subsidies. I could be wrong and I do think that the matter is worth investigating. I do think we should try to market our airport to potential airliners, however, I am skeptical that it can be done without a significant subsidy.

Is there any individual, group or organization you would not take campaign money from? Why?: I haven't taken money from anyone yet. I'm not sure who I would refuse from, but obviously that would be handled on a case by case basis.

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?: Policies are very important and they should be written with the assistance of the city attorney and others with expertise in specific fields. I would probably defer to a labor code

specialist when developing a specific hiring policy because many of the issues have legal ramifications. Obviously, nepotism and favoritism within hiring practices need to be addressed. Other issues that also generally need to be evaluated from time to time are procurement procedures as well as procedures for soliciting bids.

Tell us something about yourself that voters don't already know: I like to sing to my kids, even though I am a horrible singer. I will do anything for my kids.