

Kubby: begin by tearing down the excessive regulations

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: Steve Kubby

Age: 63

How long have you lived in South Lake Tahoe?: One year in South Lake Tahoe, but 15 years in Northstar and five years in Squaw Valley.

Job/profession: CEO of KPAL, a biotech research firm. Previously, editor and publisher of Ski West magazine.



Steve Kubby

What would you build or tear down on the South Shore to make it great, as in what Whistler is like?: Aspen Ski Corp chose to go outside the U.S. and develop Whistler because there are fewer regulations and a lot less red tape in Canada. If we want something as grand as Whistler, we have to begin by tearing down the excessive regulations here in Tahoe. However, the only way we could actually become as desirable a destination as Whistler would be if Heavenly built a peak-to-peak gondola to Freel Peak. Right now, Whistler delivers an

astonishing variety of alpine bowls, chutes and cliffs that is missing from the Heavenly experience. Opening Freel Peak would draw skiers from around the planet and provide Whistler with serious competition.

What form of recreation do you participate in? What recreation improvements would you strive to make in SLT?: I'm a skier, fitness fanatic and father. Unfortunately, there are few areas dedicated to kids, and we still don't have improvements such as the athletic fields that were paid for in past bond measures. So the place to begin is to find out why the athletic fields we were promised were never built.

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?: We can't have a world-class resort destination if our roads and paths are like something from the Third World. Fixing our substandard, dangerous bike paths and lanes and roads should be a major priority for the City Council, not an afterthought. If I am elected to City Council, I will enthusiastically support programs to fix these issues as quickly as possible.

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?: Recently, a local paper published a compelling narrative about the bombing of Harvey's casino 30 years ago. As horrific as that bombing was, the South Lake Tahoe City Council has inflicted an even more devastating event that destroyed 44 businesses, demolished 577 rooms, left a 12-acre crater of decaying concrete, and has saddled the city with several serious lawsuits, all done in the name of redevelopment.

That enormous crater, euphemistically called "The Hole," has been here for three years and shows little hope of going away soon.

Next, we have the huge crater left by the scathing report on our City Council, by the 19 distinguished members of the El Dorado Grand Jury. This report blasted the City Council as "dysfunctional" and concluded with a stern warning: "This Grand Jury is of the opinion that an accusation for malfeasance or nonfeasance by this City Council may be appropriate."

As if these two craters aren't bad enough, there is yet another huge crater we must deal with: the \$3 million a year crater in our budget. Fixing these three craters won't be easy, but I won't be afraid to tackle these critical issues and do whatever is necessary to deal directly and honestly with finding solutions.

What compelling idea have you read in the citizens' input of the revamped, in-progress update of the city's General Plan?: Unfortunately, the city's General Plan is irrelevant and, except for the dog park, ill-conceived. I've read the General Plan and it is a well-intentioned recipe for economic disaster. The city of South Lake Tahoe can't even operate a parking garage without losing over \$160,000 last year, yet its elected officials want to create a centrally planned economy, not unlike the former Soviet Union.

Even worse has been the blowback from the past actions of the City Council, which resulted in so much uncertainty and intimidation that local businesses are reluctant to invest in upgrading their properties. Until confidence is restored, we will be frozen in functionally obsolete infrastructure.

I suggest a good way to begin is to torch the General Plan and start over with something that 1) we can actually afford, and 2) will actually work.

How do you plan to boost revenue in SLT?: Now that the gaming industry is struggling to deal with the impact of Indian casinos, we obviously need a new draw. Fortunately, our city has three world-class medical marijuana dispensaries that can make the difference when it comes to destination resort choices. There are millions of qualified medical cannabis patients who don't want to smuggle their medicine on a plane, or to be forced to buy from strangers once they arrive at their destination. For these patients, many of who are regular people with families, the opportunity to visit a safe, well run dispensary by coming to South Lake Tahoe is a hugely important consideration. Frankly, if SLT can tolerate casinos, it shouldn't be that big a stretch to accept legal cannabis dispensaries as well.

What stands out to you in the 2010-11 budget?: We've dodged the budget bullet for the last time. There is a structural deficit of about \$3 million and so far we've been using our reserve accounts to patch the hole. Unfortunately, the reserve accounts are exhausted and there is no plan for covering this deficit next year or for years to come.

What needs to be done to allow businesses to thrive in SLT?: I believe we need to do two things to create a better business environment.

First, we need to slash the red tape and burdensome regulations that make it nearly impossible for businesses to do anything in this city. Our current city regulations make a pile nearly six inches tall. We need to torch 75 percent of those regulations and then make sure we uniformly enforce the rules that are left.

Second, we need to take back local control from the TRPA. While we all agree and support the importance of maintaining our lake's clarity, and while we accept the federal jurisdiction for navigable bodies of water such as Lake Tahoe, it is time to question the authority of the TRPA to operate

within South Lake Tahoe's city limits. I don't believe a federal agency of mostly appointed officials has the constitutional authority to supersede, modify, or dictate to our city's elected officials what we can and cannot do, so long as we conform to California state law. The TRPA may be a noble idea, but it is exceeding its constitutional authority and it is causing more harm than good.

What have you done to help South Lake Tahoe be a better community?: While on the Northstar board I found Placer County reserve accounts for snow removal that we didn't need and converted the funds to fix all of our potholes and pave all of our streets, all from the county's financial reserves. We urgently need to do the same here and I look forward to making it happen.

Since moving to South Lake Tahoe, I've been a staunch defender of our dispensaries and home medical cannabis gardens. I've spoken out against the bogus claim that a cannabis tolerant policy toward dispensaries and home gardens will result in more teen use of marijuana. Such assertions are proved false by studies conducted by the California Department of Alcohol and Drug Programs. Studies by the state found that since the passage of Prop. 215, the number of ninth-graders reporting marijuana use in the last 30 days has declined by 47 percent. The answer is clear: if you want to increase teen drug use and make gangs and thugs wealthy, then ban the dispensaries. However, if you are genuinely committed to reducing teen use then you must encourage the creation of a safe, well-regulated program to support our dispensaries, as well as the patients who grow for themselves and for their collectives.

What boards, commissions, or other experience do you have?: I have been elected to and served on the Northstar Homeowners Board, as well as the treasurer of the Northstar Ski Trails Condominium Association. I also served as a member and fundraiser for the Northstar Ski Team, as well as chairman of the annual Northstar Fire Department, Pancake Breakfast.

Why should voters vote for you over someone else?: Don't think of this as just a campaign to elect me to City Council. No, listen to me: we're here to make history. Beginning right here in South Lake Tahoe, we will redefine politics in a revolutionary return to common sense and smaller government. We are going to force government to become our servant, not our master. That's how to think of this.

BlueGo, our 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?: Sadly, results don't lie. Despite a dedicated and heroic effort by the BlueGo folks, mass transit has failed here and there isn't any public money left to save it. The only hope left is for a private company to step in and try to make it work with their own funding.

If a private transportation company can't foresee making a profit from public transit in South Lake Tahoe, then the City shouldn't pretend that we can operate a public transit system successfully.

Do you support commercial air service at Lake Tahoe Airport? Why or why not?: I've spoken to the airport manager, who told me that his biggest problem is excessive regulations. So the first step in bringing profitable airline service to South Lake Tahoe is to reduce the role of local government in limiting airport operations. The City Council needs to get out of the airport business and let the private sector take over the operations and funding.

On the other hand, I'm opposed to nighttime take-offs and landings because of aviation noise when most folks are trying to sleep. Here is where I support regulations that set clear limits on noise.

Is there any individual, group or organization you would not take campaign money from? Why?: I've already turned down money

from folks who grow marijuana illegally. Our medical marijuana laws are being abused by gangs and outlaws that hide behind the law, which is unacceptable. One of the biggest reasons I support our local dispensaries is that they make illegal growing unprofitable. If Prop. 19 passes, then we will be into a new reality. Until then, if you grow or sell marijuana illegally, don't try to give me money and don't expect any sympathy from me.

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?: Nepotism and favoritism have no place in our local government. Considering the "dysfunctional" evaluation of the City Council, an official finding by 19 distinguished members of the County Grand Jury, the City Council must address any appearance of unethical or questionable behavior. We need to set new policy and stick to it.

However, I would not favor firing any current employees simply because they are related, unless there is a clear reason to suspect a conflict of interest.

You have run for governor and president, why do you think the outcome will be different this time?: I ran for governor to counter the dishonest statements that Attorney General Dan Lungren made about medical marijuana, who was running against Gray Davis for governor. I ran for president because my fellow Libertarians asked me to.

Although nobody expected me to win those races, I'm certain that I have the right experience and the revolutionary common-sense ideas to make South Lake Tahoe an economic success story that other cities will emulate. That's why I believe I can win this time: I'm the right candidate for the job.

You are called a one-issue candidate, with marijuana being that issue, how do respond to that statement?: My campaign is

no more about marijuana than the Boston Tea Party was about tea. No, this campaign is all about freedom and forcing the government to keep its unwelcome nose out of our lives and businesses.

I have extensive experience as a successful ski magazine publisher, with 20 years in the Lake Tahoe area, and plenty of experience working with tourist bureaus. As a result, I understand why tourists come here and what it takes to make them come back.

In addition, my job as a CEO of a biotech firm demands that I have a good head for business, something the current insolvent City Council desperately needs.

Can you tell voters about your arrests and any time you served in jail?: After the passage of Prop. 215, those of us who led the campaign to legalize the medical use of marijuana were targeted by law enforcement for raids and arrests.

I was arrested for upholding a law I helped to write and pass, as part of an effort to discredit medical marijuana and its leaders. Although the marijuana charges against me were dismissed, I was temporarily convicted for some tiny fragments of a psilocybin mushroom and peyote cactus found in our guest bedroom.

That conviction was later “dismissed in the interests of justice” by Superior Court Judge David Nelson, on July 3, 2008, in Mendocino County. During the 40 days I was forced to spend in jail for something that was later dismissed, Placer County Sheriff Ed Bonner visited me at the jail and apologized for what was being done to me.

Also, the San Francisco Board of Supervisors passed a resolution calling for my release. The entire experience opened my eyes to the incompetence and corruption that exists throughout our police and courts. I’ve spent the bigger and better part of my life fighting to protect the rights of my

fellow Californians, and I intend to continue doing so as a member of South Lake Tahoe's City Council.

Tell us something about yourself that voters don't already know: In 1991, I was invited by the Navy to do a story about advanced military aircraft and tactics. I was issued a special top security clearance and given training that allowed me to actually fly a fully tweaked F5, one of the world's most agile military jets.

While at the controls, I broke the sound barrier and exceeded 7 G's. What is it like to pilot an aircraft that is so powerful you can break the sound barrier during vertical ascent? It is the ultimate adrenaline rush, with an exhilarating sense of total freedom and breathtaking views from the knees up.

The only limiting factor is how much punishment your body is able to withstand. As a result of the severe effects of pulling 7 G's, I got airsick. Afterward, the Top Gun Instructors assigned me my official Top Gun call sign, "Chunks."