

S. Tahoe workers to be questioned about Lakeview Commons

By Kathryn Reed

Will any city employee be reprimanded for the botched Lakeview Commons project?

An answer may come today. The court decision favoring the firm not originally awarded the multi-million contract is on the South Lake Tahoe City Council's agenda. It will be discussed in closed session at the end of the meeting. (The meeting starts at 9am at Lake Tahoe Airport.)

The scathing decision singles out two city employees in particular – Jim Marino from the engineering department and City Attorney Patrick Enright. Both have been asked to address the council and explain any pressure that may have been put on them from current or former city employees and/or councilmembers.



Lakeview
Commons in the
middle of
South Lake
Tahoe is
indefinitely

off-limits.
Photo/Kathryn
Reed

Lake Tahoe News asked the five councilmembers who will be in charge of city matters starting next month whether they think anyone employed by the city should be reprimanded.

Current Councilman Hal Cole and Bruce Grego never responded to the email. They, along with Councilmembers Bill Crawford and Kathay Lovell, voted to award the bid despite flaws with it being brought up when it was approved this past summer.

Their decision not only caused the project to be stalled and the potential for it not to be completed next summer, but the city must pay for Clark & Sullivan's legal bills.

The company took issue with the bid process and successfully sued for the project to stop. The judge ruled the bid awarded to Reeve-Knight Construction is invalid.

As for the incoming councilmembers' views:

Councilwoman-elect Angela Swanson is out of town on a family emergency.

"Obviously, there were some serious problems. Just who should be reprimanded is something the current council should consider first," wrote Councilwoman-elect Claire Fortier.

Councilman-elect Tom Davis said Monday, "I have asked the city manager and city attorney for a full report. I just received this Friday – a five-page report from the city attorney. I will review it in the next few days. Any reprimand, if any at all, will have to come from the council."

To prevent such a boondoggle happening again, City Manager Tony O'Rourke is making sure the city's purchasing agent is involved in matters like this in the future.

He said he has never seen a project this size not go through the purchasing agent.

“It’s a critical role to ensure purchases of goods and services are done under state law,” O’Rourke said. He will make sure the person in the finance department is involved on the front end, not just the back.