

Fallen Leaf Lake to allow alcohol, but has no seller

By Kathryn Reed

Alcohol will be sold at Fallen Leaf Lake this summer. That is assuming a concessionaire is ever hired and then that person acquires the necessary permits.

After a 3½-hour meeting Saturday that was dominated by issues related to the operation of the store and marina at the South Shore lake, the board voted 4-0 for the store to sell alcohol to be consumed on the premise (stopping at 6pm) when food is bought, as well as allowing unopened containers to sold for consumption off-site.



Fallen Leaf
Lake still
does not have
a
concessionaire
. Photo/LTN

Last season alcohol was not sold at the store/café when Rob and Sandy Wirth ran the operation because they never secured the necessary permits from Alcoholic Beverage Control.

Prior to that, when John and Ruth Rich had the concessionaire, they operated under a No. 20 permit that allows sales without onsite consumption. However, for decades people had open

containers without being told to leave.

A No. 41 permit allows sales at an establishment selling food.

Issues for the next concessionaire are the lack of No. 20 permits available from the ABC. However, people at the April 16 meeting at Lake Tahoe Airport said the Richs have such a permit that expires next month. Although No. 41 permits are available for a few hundred dollars, protests have been filed with the ABC by Fallen Leaf Lake residents that could make the acquisition of one a time consuming endeavor, if not impossible.

Three people sent the board paperwork indicating an interest in operating the seasonal marina and store at the edge of Desolation Wilderness. One has withdrawn from the process and another does not want a background check done.

Darin Carolus, who works for Sierra Outdoor, is the concessionaire at Tahoe Keys Resort in South Lake Tahoe. He was at the Saturday meeting as the other concessionaire applicant.

Board members Wanda Kownacki (who was participating via telephone) and Dave Stumbos were tasked with finding a concessionaire to recommend to the board. They hope to be able to do so by the May 7 meeting. Operations usually begin Memorial Day weekend, so the new operator would have less than a month to get up to speed.

Throwing a unique twist into things was John Rich contacted Steve Malley that morning. Rich, through Malley, stated he would be interested in operating the facility again if the board contacted him and did a few other things.

Then Malley, a resident of Fallen Leaf Lake, was called during the meeting by Rob Wirth, who also said he'd run the operation, but would hire a manager for the day-to-day operation.

(People could listen via telephone to the meeting and comment at any time.)

Malley said John Rich offered to replace the dock and do all the maintenance if granted a 20-year contract.

To this, Carolus said, "I was at the marina (Saturday) morning for a site visit. You have new docks there; put in in 2009. So, you probably wouldn't need to replace them for 20 years, so I could add that, too."

The Richs were dismissed in February 2010 after operating the store/marina for 14 years.

The Wirths backed out after one year.

The issue has divided the community, with resentment and bitterness lingering and carrying over into the most recent meeting. Board President Tom Bacchetti had little tolerance for belittling of people, trying to keep the discussion on the issues and not people.

In the end, the board said there is time for others to apply, but they won't seek anyone out and no special favors will be granted to past operators. And the proposals must be in writing, not delivered verbally by someone else.

In other action:

- The board voted to accept applications to fill the vacancy left by the abrupt resignation of Jennifer Thornton, who had been on the board for about a year. A vote on the appointment is likely at the May 28 meeting. (Thornton did not respond to earlier emails from *Lake Tahoe News* for comment.)
- Fire Chief Gary Gerren's contract was extended through May 31, with the anticipation a longer contract will be entered into at the May 28 meeting.
- Wanda Kownacki was elected vice president of the board.

- Non-motorized watercraft will not have to pay a launch or boat cleaning fee. The thinking is this will get people to clean their kayaks or canoes to prevent bringing in aquatic invasive species instead of skirting the fee and launching elsewhere on the lake without the cleaning.
- Mooring and launch rates for motorized boats will remain the same.