

S. Tahoe council supports Nevada leaving TRPA

By Kathryn Reed

South Lake Tahoe's City Council took a baby step toward wanting to be done with the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency. On the same day, the council agreed the board and members of the League to Save Lake Tahoe should get a clue about what is really going on in the basin and then find a new executive director.



In what was a marathon council meeting April 19, one topic was whether the council would support a bill in the Nevada Legislature that would have it withdraw from the bi-state Compact with California that formed the TRPA 42 years ago. Another item centered on a letter to the League.

In what appeared more like a sparring match between Councilmembers Bruce Grego and Claire Fortier that had to be refereed by Mayor Hal Cole, it was eventually agreed the council would send a letter in support of the Nevada Senate bill. The vote was 4-1, with Fortier the lone dissenter.

But the motion was much more than that. It also included sending a letter to South Tahoe's representatives in the California Legislature stating all the reasons why it doesn't like TRPA, the proposition of forming a new bi-state agency, and the threat of South Tahoe withdrawing from TRPA if its demands are not met.

South Tahoe wants more control. It wants an elected Governing Board, not political appointees. It wants logic in decision-making by the TRPA, not having it involved with the paint color of houses or whether a drive-through business should be

allowed.

Fortier supports petitioning California lawmakers for change, but does not believe the city should be involved in Nevada politics.

To complicate matters, during councilmember comments at the end of the meeting, Councilwoman Angela Swanson said although it was not legal at that point to switch her vote to no, that is how she intended to vote.

The motion as it was made was convoluted and probably should have been separate motions to adhere to protocols the city operates by. Nonetheless, the motion would have passed if she had voted no.

A no vote by Swanson would have been in line with her arguments. She, too, has issues with a California city telling Nevada what to do. She also said a letter to California lawmakers needs teeth and that a meeting with Tahoe's reps should be called for so they could introduce legislation.

No one at the meeting, including the city attorney, could say what happens if Nevada votes to pull out of TRPA because Congress formed the bi-state regulatory agency.

The NTRPA and CTRPA existed before the TRPA was formed.

"NTRPA still exists. It's essentially the Nevada delegation of our board. They have a special meeting once or twice a year to discuss gaming issues and to elect the 'at large' Nevada board member," Julie Regan, TRPA spokeswoman told *Lake Tahoe News*. "CTRPA dissolved in the early '80s after the Compact was amended to gain more statewide representation on the Governing Board."

Special interest groups got a bad rap Tuesday, with Fortier calling the League a special interest, and Cole saying Gov. Jerry Brown and the Attorney General's Office are special

interests. Brown is labeled as such partly because of his most recent appointment to the Governing Board – attorney Clem Shute, a longtime League supporter.

“He has been a problem ever since he was attorney general,” Cole said of Brown. “If I were in Nevada, I would support this whole-heartedly.”

It was Davis who brought forth the idea to write a letter to the League, in which the original draft said the environmental nonprofit used “underhanded tactics.” His colleagues voted to have that scraped.

At one point Davis said he wanted to cooperate with the League and in the next breath called them obsolete. But he could never answer Swanson’s question of what the purpose of the letter would be.

Grego added that the letter should also ask for a meeting between the council and League’s board.

Although Davis kept saying this is a new day, his tactics are the same as they were when he was first on the council from 1992-2004 – write a letter to complain. He had no other ideas to effect change.