

Gaines gives Tahoe residents earful on TRPA, state budget

By Kathryn Reed

Money, TRPA, redevelopment agencies, water meters, ADA lawsuits, and California's lousy business climate were some of the topics brought up Tuesday during an open forum with state Sen. Ted Gaines.

This was Gaines' first visit to South Lake Tahoe since being elected to the state Senate in January. The Republican from Roseville is keeping up his tradition of visiting various parts of his district to connect on a more intimate basis with constituents.

In a one-on-one with *Lake Tahoe News* before the event started May 24 at Riva Grill, Gaines touched on how forest management practices continues to be a priority with him.



Ted Gaines speaks to constituents May 24 in South Lake. Photo/Kathryn Reed

He wants to create more public-private partnerships to make sure fuel thinning projects continue as the more traditional

sources of funding dry up.

“If we can negotiate the right deal, it shouldn’t cost the taxpayer money,” Gaines said. “You need to look at what satisfies (the logging company) and what satisfies our goal.”

Gaines spoke a bit about his bill that would require Tahoe Regional Planning Agency’s Governing Board to file the 700 financial disclosure form. He had to do this when he was on the Placer County Planning Commission – a non-elected position.

“When you are making a financial decision for an agency, the public has a right to know any financial issues that should be disclosed,” Gaines said. “It’s part of living in a fish bowl. They are making huge decisions about the local economy at the lake.”

To the whole group he said he hopes SB271 in Nevada will bring what he calls much needed change to TRPA.

“While I agree (TRPA) has been overzealous with its authority, (the board) needs local control. My concern is you get people who are appointed who have special agendas,” Gaines said.

He believes a fully functioning TRPA will bring economic vitality to the Lake Tahoe Basin, along with the desired environmental improvements.

But Gaines is also not in the camp with the League to Save Lake Tahoe supporters.

“I’m tired of the League to Save Lake Tahoe litigating every project,” Gaines said.

Lew Feldman asked the senator what his take is on Gov. Jerry Brown’s desire to do away with redevelopment agencies.

Gaines said in a conversation he had Monday with the governor’s staff he does not believe that idea is going to go

forward even though it was in Brown's May revised budget.

"I'm not convinced there is enough support on either side to get it approved," Gaines said.

Deb Howard brought up how redevelopment is the key to getting affordable housing built in South Lake Tahoe.

Gaines said even if redevelopment agencies are abolished there would still be a mechanism for getting that type of housing built as well as dealing with blighted areas.

When it comes to the state budget Gaines is adamantly opposed to continuing with the tax hikes that are supposed to expire this year. Brown wants them on the books for another five years and has tied his budget to them continuing.

Gaines recognizes the economy is still fragile, but sees glimmers of improvement in the technology, tourism and trade sectors.

Gaines also wants a better business climate for the state and will keep trying to get useless and conflicting legislation off the books.

"The governor's message to us is he is not beholden to anyone. But I don't see him acting to reform government. I would like to see him deal with pension reform and regulation reform," Gaines said.

The senator praised Democrat Lt. Gov. Gavin Newsom for going with Republicans to Texas to find out how that state has improved the business climate and to see how it might translate to California. He also pointed out that with Newsom's business holdings in Squaw Valley that he has his pulse on the Lake Tahoe economy.

Tom Davis wants the senator to do something about the lawyers who have hit up the South Shore and other areas of the state with lawsuits over the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Gaines said he is working with both parties to implement a piece of legislation that passed last year that would address this concern. He said the Trial Attorneys Association is the roadblock.

Andrew Strain bestowed praise on Gaines for interjecting himself into the Highway 50 Echo Summit issue when it looked like the road might be closed while ski season was still going on.

Gaines said he has lots of issues with Caltrans.

"We need to continue to work with Caltrans on their lack of communication and their skills," Gaines said.

He mentioned how at last weekend's press conference announcing the summit was open he arrived at the designated time but Caltrans didn't start the event until two hours later.

"This nonchalant attitude of theirs needs working on," Gaines said.