

South Tahoe General Plan update doesn't sit well with League

By Kathryn Reed

South Lake Tahoe has spent more than three quarters of a million dollars on a document that on Tuesday the League to Save Lake Tahoe all but said it would file a lawsuit against if the city approves it.

The controversy surrounding the General Plan update has to do with it not complying with the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency's Regional Plan.

The goal was never to have it comply.



The idea when the \$877,605 contract with Mintier Harnish was signed in August 2007 was the consultant would devise a document that was forward thinking and be done while TRPA updated the Regional Plan.

Then City Manager Dave Jinkens was a strong advocate for the city being able to control its destiny, put in writing what it wanted to do, and to have influence on the updated Regional Plan.

But that Regional Plan update got sidetracked and isn't expected to come before the TRPA Governing Board until December 2012 at the earliest.

In the meantime, the city has a document that it is ready to have the council approve. It says which parts don't comply with the Regional Plan and that projects wanting to do something in that section would not be able to without TRPA

approval. Much of this has to do with height and density regulations.

Michael Lozeau, attorney for the League, and the council engaged in an unusual back-and-forth dialogue May 3 during the City Council meeting.

"I'm not trying to antagonize you. I'm trying to slow you down," Lozeau said. This was long after he told the council it needed a "much more legally defensible document."

The reason the city wants to go forward is that a current General Plan (the last one was updated in 1999) would allow the Tahoe Valley Community Plan to move forward. A community plan is needed in order for the two South Lake Tahoe projects (Raley's at the Y and Mikasa) in the TRPA's Community Enhancement Program to go forward. An extension to the CEP was granted, but those projects will need to show progress in early 2012 to stay viable.

The council on Tuesday was supposed to have a workshop on the General Plan, but they were too tired at 4pm to keep going with the agenda. For now, the plan is have the workshop as the first item of the open session May 17, which starts at 9am, with a vote likely to take place that day. Another public hearing will be conducted.