

# South Tahoe on course to change how it does business

By Kathryn Reed

South Lake Tahoe is taking a different course of action than ever before. It plans to implement its approved strategic plan.

“If you don’t develop an action plan and then fund it, the plan sits on the shelf. And that’s why so many strategic plans fail,” Nancy Kerry, the city’s spokeswoman, explained after the May 17 council meeting.



During the City Council’s afternoon work session, City Manager Tony O’Rourke went over the business plan. This is the final document for the council to approve in order to get the city on track and functioning better. It’s expected to be adopted at the June 7 meeting.

The strategic plan and five-year financial plan were approved earlier this year. They are components of this bigger plan.

“The business plan is the culmination of a comprehensive process undertaken by the city staff at the beginning of 2011 to evaluate community needs and interests and identify the key strategic priorities to move the community and city organization forward,” O’Rourke wrote in the introduction to the council.

In the next 18 months the city intends to achieve measurable goals. That is one of the unique aspects to this. Employees – from department head to the bottom rung – will be held accountable.

“What is different with this plan is we identified what we are

doing, what our core services are,” Kerry told *Lake Tahoe News*. “This links performance measures to every initiative.”

It’s not that the city intends to implement a ton of new things. Part of the process in developing the business plan included assessing what works, what doesn’t, what can be improved upon, what to eliminate and what to initiate.

To create a better business climate the city intends to create a business resource center. O’Rourke called it “one-stop shopping” to get things done “much more expeditiously.”

Quarterly reports will be presented to the council starting in October. Each fall the city will present a state of the city report to the community. Progress reports on the strategic and business plans will be included.

When the city’s revamped website is up this summer it will include an electronic newsletter to let the public know what is going on – especially in terms of achieving goals in the strategic plan.

One goal of O’Rourke’s is to create more events to generate income via hotel room and sales taxes. He mentioned bringing a juried art show to Ski Run Marina in August and working with Heavenly Mountain Resort to host an adventure race Labor Day weekend.

However, Councilman Tom Davis took issue with the city being so proactive, instead wanting to defer to Lake Tahoe Visitors Authority to handle the bulk of the events. Davis is the city’s rep to the LTVA board.

But Carol Chaplin, executive director of LTVA, has repeatedly said publicly and to this reporter that her group is about helping with events, not being the lead organization.

“We have more resources,” O’Rourke said in response to Davis’ contention that LTVA should be in charge of events. “They

don't have the staff to do events."

O'Rourke called the LTVA a marketing group.

When it comes to fiscal sustainability, O'Rourke said, "We will develop a financial trend monitoring system. We want more early warning information about our finances."

This is practically revolutionary for a city that has for decades been reactive to the economy instead of in-line or proactive.

Another component of the business plan that is being finalized is an asset inventory. This includes land in stream environmental zones owned by the city, tourist accommodation units and commercial floor area.

"We have tangible assets we can sell. We want to make sure we inventory it and treat it as a bank account," O'Rourke said.

**In other action the council:**

- Agreed to transfer eight parcels under purview of the Redevelopment Agency to the city to ward off a land grab from the state. The transfer does not include the parking garage, transit center near Stateline, or common areas at Heavenly Village.
- Unanimously passed the medical marijuana ordinance. Enforcement begins at the end of the year. Next up is to devise an ordinance allowing dispensaries to grow the crop.
- Approved the General Plan update and related environmental document.
- Learned four bids have been submitted to operate the South Lake Tahoe Ice Arena. The council is expected to choose one of the four (Robert Perkol, South Lake Tahoe park supervisor; I.C.E. of Alameda; Tahoe Sport and Entertainment; Rink Management Services Corporation) at the June 7 meeting.

- Will consider at its next meeting who will be the representative to the California-based chamber of commerce because Davis is stepping down after having a run-in JoAnn Conner.