

LTVA finalizing website, ready to promote winter on S. Shore

By Kathryn Reed

STATELINE – A mountain biker navigating the thin Flume Trail with Sand Harbor in the background – that’s the type of image South Shore tourism officials want people to think of when they are planning their next trip to Tahoe.

Recreation – it’s the mantra they are embracing, with gaming taking a back seat.

With nearly \$300,000 spent overhauling Lake Tahoe Visitor Centers’ website, the final tweaks are being made so it is ready to go live by Dec. 1. The LTVA board was given an update on the site at Thursday’s meeting, with the folks from Duncan/Channon phoning in the presentation, but able to manipulate the screen from their San Francisco offices.



LTVA wants the new website to focus on recreation.

Play, Sleep, Eat, Events, Deals, Blog – those are the categories on the website. But not all board members think they are the best.

John Koster, Harrah's-Harveys rep on the board, said, "Sleep seems incredibly boring."

Sleep, he said, is not the word that comes to his mind when thinking about lodging.

Mindi Befu, who is on the LTVA's marketing committee, said it is important to pick words that people intuitively understand as well as that help with search engine optimization.

The board does want to see what the final photo selections are because they were not thrilled with some of the placeholders – like the one of Emerald Bay that had a dead tree in the foreground.

"I want photos that you can't duplicate elsewhere," Koster said.

Carol Chaplin, executive director of LTVA, after the Oct. 13 meeting told *Lake Tahoe News* what people will notice most with the new site compared to the current site is more continuous fresh content, outstanding photography and video, and a look that is more current.

Noble Studios in Reno will be adding the content. Blogs will be in place for people to write about their passions.

"It will be more dynamic overall," Chaplin said.



The logo LTVA will use to promote the South Shore.

The board also agreed to the logo changes, with the T in Tahoe not being straight across as the main change from previous versions.

Open meeting law violation

The winter ad campaign was not on the posted agenda, but was added by the board members at the meeting. The same scenario transpired regarding discussing sending a letter supporting alternative 2 for the Washoe Meadows golf course-Upper Truckee River proposal.

Board member Tom Davis, South Lake Tahoe's rep to the board, said he thought doing so would violate the Brown Act – which even though LTVA is based in Nevada, must still adhere to because of receiving California dollars and doing business in the state. To that, board President Pat Ronan, the South Lake Tahoe Lodging Association's LTVA rep, said, "We've done it before."

The board's conclusion is they could add things to the agenda, discuss them, but not take action. But they took action on both items – so the Brown Act was violated because the public was not informed of the agenda items 72 hours in advance of the meeting as is required per the law. Even discussing the add-ons is a violation.

This could invalidate the decisions regarding the winter ad campaign and sending the letter.

Winter ad campaign

While the LTVA has not had its own winter ad campaign in years, it is going to this year. Through its affiliation with Ski Lake Tahoe, LTVA has had a voice in the past. Plus, the individual ski resorts are out in force touting their slopes.



Boarding often involves chilling, especially at Sierra -- a message LTVA will convey. Photo/LTN file

With about \$200,000 in carryover dollars for advertising, the board agreed to buy a billboard ad in San Francisco for January-February-March. This will use about half those dollars.

Tied to that billboard will likely be a promotional campaign with a Bay Area radio station that will include give-aways to the South Shore.

Laura Davis, with Duncan/Channon, told LTVA that billboard receives 756,000 impressions a week.

In changing policy with having a winter campaign, Chaplin said, "We felt we hadn't talked to those people directly in a long time. We feel a need to do our own thing year-round."