

Opinion: Denial will not heal what ails South Lake Tahoe

To the community,

I watched and listened to Mayor Hal Cole's state of the city speech. There are two parts to any speech, substance and tone.

On substance, Mayor Cole outlined the city's needs and problems comprehensively. He said the city is solvent and will keep a 25 percent general fund reserve. He said we need to fix the streets, clean the city up, attract more tourists, and increase city revenues.



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On revenues, he said the city will seek a TOT tax increase in the future. And he clearly said the city's economy depends on resources of others. Those others are agencies such as the Forest Service, the CTC, Caltrans, and grants. Mayor Cole favors more BIDs, business improvement districts like the Ski Run BID. Partnerships between private businesses and the city.

Mayor Cole defended past Redevelopment Agency action. He said redevelopment tax increment revenue, new higher property taxes stay in town. That's false. By law it goes to serve redevelopment debt, to pay the bondholders.

On tone, he simply recited what was written. The tone was flat. It lacked enthusiasm. That's understandable considering

the city's fiscal pain.

Mayor Cole made a plea for peace. Please, no finger pointing. The past is the past. It was denial of any consequences of decisions that led to failure(s) such as the convention center. It's a plea to forget, to erase memory so there can be harmony.

So where is the city now? Mayor Cole said the city must have outside financial support to rebuild the city. If so, the city's a charity case chasing the rainbow's pot of gold. And there can't be peace and harmony until Mayor Cole atones for errors like the convention center. Soon he will have served 16 years on the council and been the mayor many times. He has played a big role in creating the political and economic plight of the city. Atonement heals. Denial does not.

Bill Crawford, South Lake Tahoe