

STPUD candidates try to distinguish themselves

By Kathryn Reed

Not much separated the six South Tahoe Public Utility District board candidates in terms of their responses to questions posed to them Wednesday night. They politely sparred for 2½ hours before more than 40 people – mostly employees.

All will hire qualified disabled employees, all would prefer local contractors be hired if that were possible and is in the district's best interest, all wish the water meter issue were more equitable, all want to make sure the district's capital improvement projects are prioritized, and none wants to raise rates.



STPUD
candidates
answer a dozen
questions Oct.
12. Photo/LTN

While the six were seated where the board normally sits, only two will be there in December when they are sworn in. They were positioned based on how their names will appear on the Nov. 8 ballot: Claude Gunsch, Mary Kortge, John Runnels, Randy Vogelgesang (all vying for the seat being vacated by Marylou Mosbacher); and Dale Rise and Kelly Sheehan.

Jimmy Hoggatt, engineering department manager, asked the six with all the prioritizing they want to do, where fire flow fits into their plans. The consensus was the district is not mandated to provide fire flow, what fire departments require is more than what's really needed, the areas closest to the forest have the larger water lines and the district will do what it can to make upgrades when it can.

What set them apart Oct. 12 based on answers to questions from the audience:

- Gunsch: As a former employee, he would hit the road running – is a nuts and bolts guy, not a politician.
- Kortge: The district should look into a possible class-action lawsuit against the state because she believes the equal protection law has been violated when it comes to how water meters are being installed and billed.
- Runnels: Salaries of district employees should to be more on par with what the average ratepayer living in Lake Tahoe is making.
- Vogelgesang: Supports the 10 percent cut department heads have been asked to make, but added staff cuts may be needed.
- Rise: Postpone the \$7.1 million project in Alpine County. Change the district's health care plan.
- Sheehan: Does not advocate for a rate freeze.

The Employee Communication Committee at South Tahoe Public Utility District sponsored the forum. Soroptimist International of South Lake Tahoe is having a noon lunch forum Oct. 19. Reservations are required. For more information, call 866.801.8652.