

Opinion: JPAs need to be more transparent

To the community,

As a member of the City Council, I served on three JPA boards (joint powers authority). They were the recreation JPA created by Measure S; the refuse JPA; and the fire-ambulance JPA.

Recently, the recreation JPA has been through a meat grinder. It has paid for two elections; one failed, one passed. It has been decided that non-taxable Mello-Roos bonds will become taxable bonds which will bail out the contract for the private operation of the ice rink. The JPA board is comprised of a city rep, a county rep, and a Tahoe Paradise rep. A staff employee handles the books for a wage of \$40 per hour.



Bill Crawford

The refuse JPA has a city rep, a Douglas County rep, and an El Dorado County rep. This JPA does not make sense because each member has a separate contract with the South Tahoe Refuse Co. The city's contract has mandatory residential pick up. Douglas County does not have mandatory pick up. El Dorado County pays a different rate than the city for the service.

The ambulance-fire JPA has a board of two, the city fire department and Lake Valley. I was short term on the JPA. I attended two meetings. At that time, the JPA was six years behind in its audits.

The major problem with the three JPAs is the lack of oversight. Who is accountable? For example, the recreation JPA has never (as far as I know) had an audit. It only has a mandated once a year meeting. Special meetings can be called as was the case in the feuding between advocates for bike trails and ball fields. JPAs are mostly out of sight and out of mind. But they do conduct the public's business. They need to be out of the shadows in full view.

The city should mandate that twice a year each JPA will in open City Council meetings provide full disclosure of their financial operation and financial condition. Such information would help the council decide if the partnerships should continue.

Bill Crawford, South Lake Tahoe

Publisher's note: *This Aug. 11, 2011, Lake Tahoe News story has information about the recreation JPA audit.*