

# Needy business owners may get help sprucing up exteriors

By Kathryn Reed

A state grant may allow South Lake Tahoe businesses to improve their facades as long as they meet strict income requirements.

The money will come from the Community Development Block Grants the city receives from the state. The bulk of the first grant has been spent, with another \$300,000 being awarded to the city to be used through June 2013.

Through a formal bidding process the Lake Tahoe South Shore Chamber of Commerce had been awarded the contract for the business coaching services. An amendment to the agreement approved last week by the City Council would allocate \$153,125 for façade improvements to businesses the chamber is working with. The state must still say this is an allowable use of the funds.

Hilary Roverud, director of Development Services, told the council she does not anticipate many business owners falling into the income criteria. It's possible three to five structures could be aided with the money available.

All of the money must be spent on South Lake Tahoe businesses.

During the presentation the council heard from chamber CEO B Gorman, coaches in the program and recipients of the help about the effectiveness of the program. In the past 15 months, 47 businesses have received coaching, with 25 of them being new businesses.

"Twenty-two existing businesses have benefited from the program by improving their skills, expanding products and services offered, thereby creating approximately 15 new [full

time] jobs as well as a second location being opened by one of the businesses," the staff report says.

Before the chamber took over running the program, a group off the hill had the contract. Gorman said the chamber in turn has local experts be the coaches so even more money is staying in the area.