

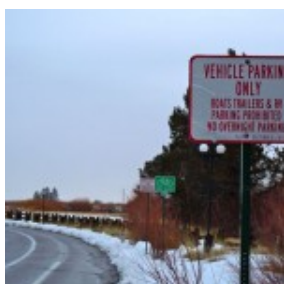
S. Tahoe budget hole would grow without parking meters

By Kathryn Reed

For people to say they didn't know South Lake Tahoe intended to charge for parking near beaches, makes one wonder if they had their head in the sand for the past year.

"The other new source of revenue is via metered parking, especially near beaches." That's from a March 2, 2011, *Lake Tahoe News* story.

The city in its budget for 2011-12 – that would be this year – is counting on more than \$300,000 from parking revenue in the form of citations and meters.



Venice Drive in South Lake Tahoe is slated to have parking meters this summer.

Photo/LTN

On Feb. 7 the City Council was expected to approve an amendment to a city ordinance that would have expanded parking meter zones to Regan Beach, Stateline Beach, Venice Drive between Tahoe Keys Boulevard and Tahoe Keys Marina, and Saddle Road between Ski Run Boulevard and Wildwood Avenue. Instead,

the four (Angela Swanson was absent) caved to pressure from marina interests.

“We did have 200 people at both budget hearings, so it is not like this is news,” City Manager Tony O’Rourke said.

Jay Kniep with Lakeside Park Association; Bob Hassett who operates the marinas at Camp Richardson, Tahoe Keys and Lakeside; and Zan Barker the president of the Lakeside Park Association said at the council meeting last week that they found out about the parking issue this month.

This, despite the fact the parking issue has been discussed at multiple public meetings for nearly a year, has been written about multiple times, is included in the current budget year which started Oct. 1, and that meters already were erected near Heavenly Village.

“It’s chilling to have this announcement and no input,” Barker said. “Everyone I’ve talked to is concerned. I beg you to step back.”

Step back the council did.

A special meeting just to accommodate these three men and their special interests has been scheduled for Feb. 22.

These men think paid parking will hurt their businesses. After all, they won’t be making a dime off the fee. It will go into the city’s coffers.

But paid parking is not new on the South Shore. Even Hassett charges for parking every summer to get to the Beacon restaurant and adjacent marina. But he gets to keep those dollars.

The Ski Run Marina owner charges in the summer and the U.S. Forest Service has a fee at some locations.

If the council doesn’t move forward, it’s possible the summer

paid parking season will be cut short. Originally the council was expected to have on its Feb. 21 agenda an item to approve buying the parking meter kiosks. Clearly that won't happen because the special interest meeting will be the day after the next council meeting.

Police Chief Brian Uhler, whose department handles the bulk of the parking issue, said each week and month that decisions are delayed means that much longer for the equipment to be purchased, put into the ground and to become operational. Which in turn could mean less money collected that would necessitate mid-year changes to the budget.

O'Rourke pointed out the council can do whatever it wants as long as the electeds remember they adopted a budget that banks on parking revenue. If they want to back away from meters, then another revenue source needs to be found or the council can keep making cuts.

Meeting info:

Date: Feb. 22

Time: 6-7:30pm

Location: Parks & Recreation Complex, Cedar Room, 1180 Rufus Allen Blvd., South Lake Tahoe

More info: (530) 542.6136.