

# South Tahoe continues to tweak sign ordinance

By Kathryn Reed

Small town politics reared its head at Tuesday's South Lake Tahoe City Council meetings as verbal sparks flew regarding the city's sign ordinance.



The underlying issues were posturing for political gain and protecting business clients.

The overt issue was whether the council would hear appeals of decisions made by the Planning Commission regarding historic signs.

It was agreed on a 5-0 vote that if three members of the council want to hear an appeal, it would be heard. This only pertains to the old signs, of which less than a dozen are estimated to fall into this category.

Planning Commissioner Judy Brown, who is also a former mayor of the city, asked for the item to be pulled from the council's April 17 consent agenda.

She and fellow Commissioner Austin Sass questioned the council's timing of revising its sign ordinance that was originally passed in October. This week's agenda item was the second reading of the revision that would have allowed an appeal of historic signs no matter what.

It was Councilman Hal Cole who suggested the majority of the council would need to agree on the hearing.

Sass, who intends to run for the City Council again, questioned why the owners of Stardust Lodge asked for the hearing before the Planning Commission be delayed until after this specific council meeting.

He said there is an appearance of impropriety.

Councilmen Bruce Grego and Tom Davis have been extremely vocal in their desire to have the electeds hear the appeals. Grego is the attorney for the McCarthys, who own the Stardust. However, if an appeal did come before the council, he would have to recuse himself. Davis is in the lodging industry.

Jan McCarthy, who had to have her personal attacks on Sass curtailed by City Attorney Patrick Enright, said she doesn't believe the Stardust's sign would receive a fair hearing with Sass making this a personal issue, and having allegedly voiced his intent to vote for the sign to not be allowed to remain standing.