

South Lake Tahoe council praises Kerry, but wants full search for next city manager

By Kathryn Reed

Spending more than \$20,000 to find a city manager is clearly what the South Lake Tahoe City Council wants to do, even though the electeds agree an internal candidate is more than qualified to do the job.

The five sent conflicting messages to the public during the Tuesday afternoon presentation by four individuals who represent companies that could be hired as the headhunter to find the permanent replacement for Tony O'Rourke. (O'Rourke told the council he will be around for the two June meetings. Then he is off to do the same job in Yakima, Wash., having fulfilled less than two years of his three-year contract in South Lake Tahoe.)



The South Lake Tahoe City Council on May 15 appointed Nancy Kerry to be interim city manager when Tony

O'Rourke leaves in a month.

Photo/LTN

The mixed message is how they praised the internal candidate, saying how strong and qualified she is; then saying they want to look elsewhere – just in case someone better is out there. This all came after a presentation on the five-year budget that included how horrible the local economy is and how revenues for the city are stagnant at best.

Where the money will come from to pay the headhunter was not discussed.

The council is slated to pick one of the firms at a special May 29 5pm council meeting

The council on May 15 agreed to appoint Nancy Kerry interim city manager effective July 1. With the appointment comes a \$2,000 month raise, which brings her annual salary to \$141,240. Police-Fire Chief Brian Uhler, who will report to Kerry, makes a few thousand dollars more than her per year. O'Rourke makes \$175,000 a year.

In the contract with Kerry, the council agreed if the electeds pick someone else for the job, she would return to the assistant city manager position with a contract of at least one year.

Kerry told *Lake Tahoe News* she definitely intends to apply for the city manager position.

When it came to the headhunters, all were asked how the process would go with an internal candidate in the mix who is respected and that day was appointed to be interim city manager.

First up was Bob Murray of Bob Murray & Associates. He is the man who recruited the last three city managers.

Second was Phil McKenny of Peckham & McKenney.

“If you have a strong internal candidate, hire her,” McKenney advised the council. “If it doesn’t work, call me in six months.”

Bob Neher, with Neher & Associates, told the council that while most searches take three to four months, he would strive to do it sooner so there was not much lag time between O’Rourke’s departure and the hiring of the next city manager.

Heather Renschler of Ralph Andersen & Associates said having a strong internal candidate “could change the composition of the pool.”

No matter who is hired as city manager, that person will not be hiring the finance director. O’Rourke is expected to choose one of the two out-of-town finalists before he leaves. That person will replace Christine Vuletich, who left earlier this year for Douglas County.