

3-day SnowGlobe music fest returning to S. Lake Tahoe

By Kathryn Reed

Turning the stage 180 degrees so the sound reverberates away from homes, ending the concerts at 10pm the first two days and at 12:30 New Year's morning, designating smoking areas, keeping the decibel level below 95, paying a \$50,000 deposit and involving local businesses in the three-day event. Those are the criteria SnowGlobe promoters agreed to in order to bring the controversial music festival back to South Lake Tahoe.

While the South Lake Tahoe City Council on Aug. 21 agreed to have the techno bass-driven music event return Dec. 29-31, the final contract still needs to be drawn up.

With the council also on Tuesday passing an emergency no-smoking ordinance on city owned or operated property, the promoter would need to get a waiver to allow smoking even in a designated area.



SnowGlobe will be returning Dec. 29-31 to South Lake Tahoe. Photo/LTN file

The \$50,000 deposit the city will collect is designed to pay

for any overtime staff – especially police – that may occur, as well as cleanup costs.

The 2011 event cost the city almost \$20,000. Police officer overtime was \$11,000, \$5,000 went to cleaning the artificial turf field, and the remainder mostly went to unexpected overtime for parks and recreation staff.

Lake Tahoe Community College's board at last week's retreat discussed the prospect of the event returning. A vote is expected to be taken at the Aug. 28 meeting.

While the field where the event takes place is owned by the city, it is a joint use facility with the college. The college facilities are integral to pulling it off. Buses brought concertgoers to and from the college, and the gym was used as a green room of sorts.

LTCC President Kindred Murillo spoke at Tuesday's meeting, saying she supports the event. She practically lived at the college those three days so she knows intimately what went on, what worked and what didn't.

"This was a pretty well-behaved group of people," Murillo said.

What she told *Lake Tahoe News* is the board needs to decide if it will rent the facilities like it did last year or become a true partner. This could include being part of the marketing, having more of a say of what goes on and making money in a different way. LTCC's contract with promoter Chad Donnelly would be separate from the city's.

There is a SnowGlobe logistics team comprised of city, college, lodging, and tourism personnel. Dory Smith, a vocal opponent to the festival in the past, will join that committee.

He spoke at the council meeting as a resident who spent three

days last December dealing with sound checks and then the concerts. It was the never-ending bass that permeated his walls and affected him physically. And he's a musician, so he knows a few things about decibel levels, bass and subwoofers.

Smith and his wife, Diana Hamilton, were not the only residents affected by the noise. That whole neighborhood seemed to flood the city (staff, police, council) with complaints. People in Tahoe Keys heard the concerts, as did Echo View Estates.

While no one at the council meeting promised residents and guests would be 100 percent satisfied when SnowGlobe bands – many of which are more like disc jockeys making unique sounds – take to the stages, the goal is to significantly decrease the problems that occurred last year.

The boom, boom of the base, as Councilman Tom Davis called it, is what needs to go away. While that won't happen entirely because of who the acts will be, altering the stage, sticking to the time and having the lineup not include the heaviest bass acts at the end should cut down on the invasion of noise into people's homes.

City Manager Nancy Kerry said the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency had complained about SnowGlobe, but the bi-state regulatory agency is now silent.

"They have not let us know what the specific problems were," Kerry said.

Donnelly would like to eventually secure a multiyear contract for SnowGlobe in South Lake Tahoe. He has told city officials he is open to changing the date after this year, but needs to first establish South Lake Tahoe as SnowGlobe's home. That is why he is so committed to making sure the event works for all involved.

Tourism officials, while acknowledging some businesses

benefited from SnowGlobe at a time when no snow blanketed the South Shore, believe having the event another time would be more beneficial in a normal snow year because New Year's Eve is traditionally a busy time for the area.

But it was also acknowledged that having a place for people to go, especially Dec. 31, took some of the pressure off Stateline.

Police Chief Brian Uhler said he would like to see SnowGlobe become the destination for visitors and Stateline become a non-issue. As it is now, young people (those in their 20s and some not of drinking age) mill about the casino corridor – many in a stupor. There is no ball, no music, nothing.

Last year each night of SnowGlobe attracted about 10,000 people. Donnelly wants to increase that by 20 percent. He works with AEG – a world-renowned company that puts on festivals like Coachella and the New Orleans Jazz Festival.