

Officials controlling South Lake Tahoe ball fields represent multiple interests

By Kathryn Reed

A clear case of conflict of interest reared its head Tuesday night at the Lake Tahoe Unified School District meeting, but no one put an end to it.

Steve Morales, facilities director for the district, is also a founding member of the Community Athletic Coordinating Council. This group has been overseeing aspects of ball field management in South Lake Tahoe since it incorporated as a nonprofit in 1989. It was also central to an agenda item about fields.

A school district official the night of Aug. 21 told *Lake Tahoe News* that Morales is merely the district's liaison to the CACC board.



Adults are making the ball field situation in South Lake Tahoe anything but child's play. Photo/LTN file

However, the 2007, 2008 and 2009 900 forms the nonprofit must file with the IRS list Morales as the president of CACC. No

2010 or 2011 forms were available online. Even if Morales is not a current board member, his history makes his allegiance suspect.

Donice Lenhardt, a former employee with South Lake Tahoe's Parks and Recreation Department, is listed as the vice president-treasurer in 2009; William Goss had those titles in 2008 and 2007 on the forms. (He listed the city rec center as his address.)

In fact, CACC uses the rec center as its address. At a minimum, this is unethical for city employees to be using taxpayer facilities for personal use even for mailing purposes.

It is not known if CACC work was done on city or school district time by CACC members.

While CACC was formed by district and city staff, it was supposed to be an entirely separate entity.

CFO Deb Yates said at the meeting this week that the district doesn't need CACC and that it will be up to the city how it deals with this group.

Morales, Lenhardt and Goss report no income from CACC on the forms. However, Morales' true connection to this group was not disclosed at the meeting. He did, however, act like he was representing CACC and not the district – which does pay him a six-figure annual salary. To avoid conflict, he should have recused himself from the discussion.

The certified public accountant signing off on the forms for those three years was Dave Olivo. Olivo is the elected treasurer for the city of South Lake Tahoe.

At the district meeting this week, board member Sue Novasel questioned the legality of fees collected in California benefiting Nevada. Morales said Douglas County was only

involved at the get-go and a few years ago may have had some money given for improvements.

However, current CACC President Chuck Leonard told *Lake Tahoe News* last November, "(The CACC) maintains a central calendar in conjunction with the South Tahoe Parks and Recreation and the Douglas County Parks and Recreation departments and the Lake Tahoe Unified School District." That statement proves Nevada is still part of CACC.

It was also revealed this week that the district and CACC have each charged entities for the use of the same field at the same time. Yates said that won't happen again going forward.

Here is the 2007-CACC 990 form, 2008-CACC 990 form and 2009-CACC 990 form.