

S. Tahoe staff, council differ on need for commissions

By Kathryn Reed

Even though staff told the South Lake Tahoe City Council there is no money, time or staff to deal with the non-mandatory city commissions, the elects aren't ready to disband them.



Instead, the council wants to have every member of the Parks and Recreation, Latino Affairs, Sustainability, and Airport commissions make a case for why their particular commission should stay the way it is. Even if everyone weighs-in, there is no guarantee later this fall the council won't take staff's recommendation and do things differently.

And if the commissions stay in place, the council will have to figure out how best to allocate the minimal resources left in the city to handle this non-essential work. Staff reductions in the last few years mean 65 fewer positions – or one-third the employees are gone.

Prior to the Oct. 2 meeting the city manager had contacted the chair of the Sustainability and Recreation commissions to apprise them of the agenda item. Neither attended Tuesday's meeting.

The Latino Affairs Commission only has a couple members and therefore is not able to meet because it does not have a quorum. This has been an issue for that commission for some time.

Councilman Tom Davis, who chairs the Airport Commission, said

he is fine with disbanding that group. However, David Kelly, who is on that commission, said the opposite.

City Clerk Suzie Alessi and City Manager Nancy Kerry teamed the presentation to the council that outlined what the commissions do and why change is needed.

Kerry explained that each commission is subject to the Brown Act – the California open meeting law, how staff helps oversee the commissions and that city offices are used for the meetings.

What was proposed was to make many of these commissions committees. This would eliminate the open meeting requirements, allow for less structure and potentially the ability to get more things done.

However, the council likes having control over the commissions, including who is on them. Council members also questioned whether there would be their desired transparency if the groups become committees. And then there was the question of whether committees would have the same voice as a commission.

By state law or city code South Lake Tahoe must have the Building Board of Appeals, Delinquent Refuse Fees Hearing Board, Planning Commission, and Airport Land Use Commission.

The city has technically not had the latter commission. It got away with it under old state requirements by having the Planning Commission plus two airport commissioners convene. They haven't met since 2007. But current law necessitates the new commission be formed.

That commission will be comprised of two county reps, two city, two aviation experts and one person from the general public. The purpose is to work on land use issues involving the airport. With the city soliciting requests for proposals for someone to come up with a master plan for the airport, the

commission would be on the ground floor with that process.

The current Airport Commission is more involved with operations of the airport. The new commission would have none of those responsibilities.

Council recommended blending the Delinquent Refuse Fees Hearing Board's responsibilities into one of the established commissions. The Planning Commission or Building Appeals are contenders.

Davis wondered why the city deals with collections for South Tahoe Refuse when it doesn't for other utilities. Because that stipulation is part of the franchise agreement is the answer. That, though, could be changed.

Changes the council agreed to are:

- establish the Airport Land Use Commission
- appoint two physically handicapped people, per the Health and Safety Code, to the Building Board of Appeals.