

Cole returns, Conner joins South Tahoe City Council

By Susan Wood

In line with the early absentee counts, South Lake Tahoe voters tapped community jack-of-all-trades JoAnn Conner and incumbent Hal Cole to lead the town over the next four years. With all precincts reporting by 12:40am, Cole received 26 percent of the vote with 1980 ballots cast. Conner seized the second seat with 1928 votes at 25.3 percent.

The other three candidates: marketer Austin Sass, incumbent Bruce Grego and businessman Clinton Schue followed behind with 20.2 percent, 18.7 percent and 8.9 percent of the vote, respectively.

A high vote-by-mail turnout characterized the evening for El Dorado County. Results are unofficial and as always are expected to be finalized in the next few weeks.

For South Lake Tahoe, 52.9 percent of the city's 9,248 registered voters cast their ballots for their favorites of the five candidates.



Hal Cole



JoAnn Conner

The race showed a little bit of everything – from the standard debate circuit to a last-minute, anti-candidate campaign with signs reading “No Sass,” a measure of no confidence to Sass’s support of the Loop Road project, one of several proposals the candidates will need to wrestle with in the near future. With new ideas coming from a creative, resourceful city manager in a post redevelopment agency era, the entire council will have its hands full in terms of responsibility. Projects and plans remain pending from Stateline to the Y in a city with much of its focus on tourism.

Cole, who runs a construction company, would be going on his fifth term with a city struggling to still define itself in the last decade. Even as a newcomer, Conner has a long history with the city working in fields ranging from social work to education.

Cole and Conner share several things in common, with one being a desire to put recreation as a focus of the city.

“I think this recreation master plan doesn’t sound like much to some people, but it’s a big deal. We’ve been skirting around this issue for a long time,” Cole said.

He wants the city to re-embrace the phrase being the all-year playground.

Conner knows developing recreation assets and then promoting them is critical to developing a better economy.

Another big issue with her is to immediately work on talking

to businesses that would be good to relocate here that would bring jobs for people who already live in the area.

Cole served three four-year terms, took two years off and is now starting the second term of this stint. He tells *Lake Tahoe News* this will be his last run. After all, he turns 64 next month. But there is more work to do, he says.

“I’ve had a great career. I’m really excited with [City Manager] Nancy [Kerry]. She has more energy than I’ve seen in anybody,” Cole said.

He said he has great hopes with Kerry and Conner.

Conner is ready to get to work, but is realistic in her approach.

“I think the first thing I need to do is learn more, study the budget, meet with people who already offered to share their insights so I can learn more,” Conner told *Lake Tahoe News* early Wednesday morning.

The councilmembers-elect will join Angela Swanson, Tom Davis and Claire Fortier. The latter may soon be vacating her seat due to family obligations, leaving another possible seat up for grabs. It would likely be filled by appointment.