

S. Lake Tahoe to begin searching for city attorney

By Kathryn Reed

On a morning that started out with Mayor Claire Fortier giving the State of the City address – looking back and forward – the big news of the day didn't come until staff comments.

South Lake Tahoe will have a new city attorney by summer, if not sooner.

Patrick Enright during his comments at Tuesday's City Council meeting said he would not ask his bosses to renew his contract that expires May 31. He had presented them with a letter regarding his intentions prior to his public announcement.

The council in October had a closed session item on the agenda to give Enright a performance review. That never came about. But the council also did not offer him a contract extension.



Patrick
Enright

"It had to be up to Patrick what he wanted to do. He made the decision not to get his contract renewed," Fortier told *Lake Tahoe News* after the Nov. 20 meeting. "I think Patrick had a lot of huge issues to face as city attorney. What a grueling job."

Enright was not available for comment after the meeting.

He was hired in 2009 to be the city attorney who would focus on redevelopment, while Jacqueline Mittelstadt was hired to do much of everything else. Mittelstadt resigned in March 2010 after a contentious few months.

The idea when they were hired was that they would provide a one-two punch. That never materialized.

Enright, while never accused of wrongdoing per se, has made some questionable legal decisions that have hurt the city financially or given it a bit of a black eye.

There was the first contract with Lakeview Commons that ended up in a lawsuit and the project needing to be rebid; questions about privatizing the ice rink and how the bonds worked; a dust-up over the concessionaire agreements at city beaches; questionable advice given regarding the ongoing South Tahoe Area Transit Authority lawsuit; and ongoing issues with the successor agency involved with dissolving redevelopment.

It's expected the council will decide soon whether it wants to hire an outside firm to recruit the future city attorney of South Lake Tahoe or if staff will do it.

"I'll figure out the costs and make some recommendations. We are capable of conducting a recruitment," City Manager Nancy Kerry told *Lake Tahoe News*.

The letter Enright gave the council says he could leave sooner than May 31; it will depend on where he goes next.

Fortier in her address to a packed room let it be known she would like to see some changes to the council. She wants electeds to be paid a livable wage so it would provide for a more diverse council.

In other action:

- On a 3-2 vote, with Councilmen Tom Davis and Bruce Grego in the minority, the parking permit idea for certain areas was

scrapped, but meters will go up in select areas of town.

- Community Services Officer Bob Albertazzi, who has overseen the parking program, is retiring at the end of the month.
- Per a unanimous vote, the council has decided not to change the fire department's structure. That means beyond the fire marshal services and longstanding mutual aid response agreements, Lake Valley and city fire departments will remain separate.