

# Tahoe Prosperity Center funding divides City Council

By Kathryn Reed

The majority of the South Lake Tahoe City Council on Tuesday decided to spend \$10,000 in taxpayer money on the Tahoe Prosperity Center without knowing what it will be spent on.

Councilmembers Tom Davis, Hal Cole and Angela Swanson think increasing the city's allocation to this nonprofit is a good idea. The city has now contributed \$30,000 to the group.

Center officials have 60 or 90 days, whatever works for them the majority of the council said, to come back with a clear business plan.



"I would rather see the plan before we give them money," Councilwoman JoAnn Connor said at the Feb. 19 meeting. And she's the city's rep to the center's board.

Councilwoman Brooke Laine took issue with giving one nonprofit cash when the process has not been opened up to others as was done years ago.

Laine went on to say of the center, "It just feels like an additional layer of bureaucracy."

Usually staff makes a recommendation to the council about the action to take. In this case, none was offered. It's also not in the budget. The staff report from City Manager Nancy Kerry says, "If approved, funding would need to come from unassigned

excess reserves for 2013.”

The Tahoe Prosperity Center’s website says this about itself, “Promoting regional sustainability through economic vitality, environmental stewardship and healthy communities in and around the Lake Tahoe Basin.”

Tom Greene, chairman of the center, presented to council, along with Christina Proctor. She called herself the interim executive director, while just a month ago she sent out a press release saying she was the flak for the group. There are no employees now – just people working as independent contractors. And there is nothing in the current budget, which operates on a calendar year, for projects – just staff.

“What this comes down to is this is an investment,” Greene told the council. “Our desire is not to come here every year.”

B Gorman, who is on the TPC board and as leader of the Lake Tahoe South Shore Chamber of Commerce was instrumental in developing the Tahoe Prosperity Plan, said, “Capital generation will be a 10-year project when we dive into that.”

What the center has been spending the bulk of its time on is trying to bring broadband to the basin.

Working regionally, the center proponents say, is how best to attract outside capital to get things done. The idea is broadband capability would open doors to potential businesses or entrepreneurs who would relocate to the Lake Tahoe Basin.

In Greene’s letter to the council asking for the money, he wrote, “The TPC is also working in coordination with the Tahoe Transportation District to facilitate productive Basin-wide dialogue aimed at fostering regional transportation initiatives.”

That and the mention by Proctor of a TTD meeting last week that Swanson attended unbeknownst to her colleagues nearly

cost the center the city's contribution. And then it was unearthed that the TPC is going to be the facilitator, while at the same time being a member, of the business group meeting to analyze the fiscal analysis of the loop road.

Cole was clearly unaware there was an analysis going on despite its being mentioned at several meetings and being written about.

In the end, though, it was the belief in broadband that swayed the majority of the council, even though they didn't know how their \$10,000 was going to help accomplish that.

**In other action:**

- The council made appointments to various commissions. Parks and Recreation – Rebecca Bryson, Peter Fink, Steven Noll, Bonnie Turnbull and Scott Valentine; Clean Tahoe – George Alm; TRPA Advisory Planning – Joy Curry; and El Dorado Commission on Aging – Gerry Grego.
- No longer can the council use any electronic device while the meeting is in session – only at breaks. This has to do with adhering to the Fourteenth Amendment and due process.
- People speaking to the council will be given three minutes. No letters will be read into the record.
- Expenses by councilmembers must be preapproved by the other four electeds. The city manager's expenses are OK'd by the mayor.