

# Complexity of South Shore water issue growing

By Kathryn Reed

While a definite solution has not been decided upon, most of the talk at last week's South Tahoe Public Utility District meeting centered on having an intertie be the solution to the water issue for the T.J. Maxx building.

That building at the Y is owned by the Garfinkles and is serviced by Lukins Brothers Water. But the water pressure is not sufficient to put out a fire so STPUD's help is needed.

A temporary solution was found last fall, but a permanent one is still being negotiated.

For decades there has been a link between two the water companies so water can flow back and forth as needed. But that valve must be manually turned. This has been done less than a half dozen times in the last 30 years, according to Lukins.



Water pressure issues have yet to be resolved at the T.J. Maxx building in South Lake Tahoe. Photo/LTN file

What is being proposed is an automatic valve or pressure trip device. This would allow water to flow into Lukins' 8-inch

pipe if the pressure got to a predesignated point.

Danny and Jennifer Lukins, the father-daughter duo who run the company, said they are waiting to hear from the state Public Utilities Commission as to the cost of the connection fee that could be passed on to ratepayers. STPUD would require a fee of about \$150,000.

Before South Tahoe PUD says yes to the pressure valve, they want confirmation from the city fire chief about what is required. When the store opened it was Lake Valley's chief who signed off on the paperwork.

While it's state regulations that dictate fire flow, fire chiefs and marshals interpret things differently. South Tahoe PUD therefore likes things in writing because its jurisdiction involves more than one fire agency.

Another issue brought up at the April 18 meeting was whether the Gardner Mountain tank could keep enough pressure to service STPUD customers in the event Lukins needs water.

Another piece of the puzzle is now that the Chateau project near state line is likely to go forward, at least in small phases starting this summer, water is an issue there. STPUD had an agreement with Lakeside Water Company, but that needs to be reworked. The water intended for that area from STPUD has been flowing down Highway 50 and used near the Y.

The other thing STPUD needs to figure out is what type of contract to come up with because nothing like what Lukins is asking for – just emergency supply water services – exists.

More talking is planned, with no date for a resolution.

Another factor in all of this is that the Garfinkles have people interested in leasing the building next to T.J. Maxx, but no contracts can be signed because the building doesn't have an adequate supply of water to fight a fire.