

Letter: Paid parking is not the answer

To the community,

The city's determination to "sell" paid parking and residential permit parking to the residents of South Lake Tahoe is being met with strong opposition. The almost 100 people that attended Monday night's Residential Parking Permit and Kiosks meeting (just the title is confusing) was a demonstration of how passionate this community is about free access to the lake and the continued confusion over residential permit parking.

People should be able to park in their own neighborhoods without exposure to a \$50 parking ticket. Listening to the community dialogue, I'd say this is becoming a public relations concern.

It was just three weeks ago at the April 16 City Council meeting that anyone outside city government learned of the "new" expanded parking plan. Something Police Chief [Brian] Uhler describes as, "A huge program involving lots of parts – it is complex".

By expanding the seasonal parking plan to 12 months/seven days a week/8am to 10pm with rates starting at \$2 per hour, they have effectively eliminated any opportunity for free use of the beaches by the locals who often yield them to tourists until after Labor Day.

I am perplexed by our City Council's stubborn support of a parking plan that by staff's own projections will earn just \$150,000 per year, with the promise that another \$100,000 can be gained by issuing approximately 4,000 parking citations. The kiosks alone cost \$250,000.

Considering the city's overall budget of \$95 million, this \$150,000 is viewed by some as the equivalent of having a bake sale to save the city budget. As a community, we should be able to come up with revenue strategies that don't piss off half the town.

Our city's beach parking lots and some of our streets with parking demand have been described by consultants as assets that need to be profited from. That being said, the city's largest parking lot asset is at the airport. To best utilize this asset, I'd like to propose that parking kiosks be installed at the airport so council members and city staff can have the opportunity to contribute to this parking campaign to improve the city's lagging revenues. The city tests the public's trust when they have different rules than the citizens.

For me, free lake access is fundamental and should be at the center of any tourism and community vision plan that we have for ourselves.

Peggy Bourland-Madison, 40-year resident of Al Tahoe