

South Lake Tahoe hires city attorney

By Kathryn Reed

South Lake Tahoe's next city attorney hails from the San Joaquin Valley.

Tom Watson, whom the council on May 7 unanimously agreed to hire, is currently a partner with Fike & Watson in Clovis. The firm contracts out to be counsel for various cities.

Watson represents Woodlake and Mendota – two extremely small towns.

"It's the capstone of a 24-year legal career," Watson told *Lake Tahoe News* of being hired by the city. He expects to start the first week of July.



Tom Watson will be South Lake Tahoe's next city attorney.

While all the details of the contract are still being worked out, Watson said he is definitely going to accept the offer – calling this a "dream job."

Much of the work he has done is municipal and construction litigation, which he believes will be a great fit in Tahoe.

Even though the towns he has worked for are smaller than South Lake Tahoe, he said issues are the same, just on a different scale. He has been an in-house attorney in the past for Tulare County.

“The critical element of being part of a team is to be proactive. As a contract attorney you are reactive,” Watson said.

Watson graduated from Santa Clara University School of Law in 1989. He has been with the current firm since 2002.

He was one of five candidates the City Council interviewed.

“He’s a go-getter. He’s not afraid to jump in and tell the council what to change. He is going to give us great legal advice,” Mayor Tom Davis told *Lake Tahoe News* after announcing the decision.

Watson has done his research – knowing the different legal battles the city has faced.

“The key for any city attorney is to recognize trust in the law is becoming more rare,” Watson said. He wants to restore trust to the City Attorneys Office. “I will work for the council and the community for the betterment of everyone.”

Current City Attorney Patrick Enright will be leaving at the end of the month. He will be taking a job in Sacramento. Enright was hired in June 2009.

Deputy City Attorney Nira Feeley will be going out on maternity leave in June. During this month without a city attorney Davis said it’s possible the city will contract with a former city attorney to do work. He wouldn’t name who that might be. Dennis Crabb, Cathy DiCamillo and Jacqueline Mittelstadt are all still in the area.

Watson will be moving to Tahoe with his wife, Jennifer, and their 15-year-old daughter. They also have a 24-year-old

daughter.

The Watsons were married at Harveys in 1995 and come up here regularly. Watson said he's been skiing in Tahoe since he moved to California in 1972. Besides more time on the slopes, he looks forward to getting into mountain biking.