

# Opinion: CTC crosses the line with taking of property

*Note: The following letter was read into the record at the June 20 California Tahoe Conservancy meeting by Lake Tahoe News Publisher Kathryn Reed.*

Thank you for allowing me to speak today.

I am Kae Reed and I am a homeowner in South Lake Tahoe who lives next to a Conservancy lot.

Susan Wood and I have owned this house since April 2003. In that time the Conservancy has mostly been a good neighbor; removing trees as necessary. In turn, we pick up errant trash and dog poop left by others on the side of the property that might actually be in the city's right-of-way.

I may not get through all of this in my allotted time, so I will leave a copy, or feel free to read it in full on *Lake Tahoe News* [today].



CTC has literally staked a claim to what homeowners thought was their property for the last 10 years.

Photo/LTN

What brings me to the podium is an encounter I had with two of

your staff members on Tuesday. One was Jeff Miller, associate environmental planner, and the other guy's name I don't remember; definitely a subordinate to Miller.

After my encounter with them, a headline for a column flitted through my head – it was “Conservancy in the business of taking private property.” It might still be something like that.

I went out front when I saw them standing around like most government workers, just staring and not doing anything. Reminded me of Caltrans. But I digress.

They said someone else at the Conservancy had been by and asked them to come by. They asked where I thought the property line was. I told them it was one of two markers in the front – that depending on who from the Conservancy came out I was told something different. They said I was all wrong and that in fact the property line was much closer to my house. They said they were going to revegetate the land that we had disturbed.

I said not so fast. Prove it. They came back with a measuring device and metal detector. As they were doing their thing, I was leaving messages for CTC Deputy Director Ray Lacey and the city's board rep Tom Davis.

The worker bees had me come out and see the metal marker in the middle of the Conservancy lot and how 60 feet toward my property would be our shared property line.

They could not find the property marker dividing our lots. They said they did. But the metal detector did not ping while I was there. They said someone would be back to dig it out. They had already left a sizeable hole and literally put a stake in the ground to claim that as CTC property.

From the hole to the closest previous marker that CTC staff has said was the property line is 5 feet. Yes five. If you go back the 100-plus feet of how deep the parcel is, that would

have the CTC taking more than 500-square-feet of land. Considering our house is only 1,150-square-feet, if this were a structure they were commandeering, it would be just less than half of our living quarters.

What made this experience even more unpleasant is that I was told I had until that afternoon of June 18 to move what was allegedly on CTC property. What is on there are rounds of wood and a wheelbarrow. Wood is our primary heat source and I split most of it by hand. The disturbed land is some wood shards and sawdust from when the chain saw comes out.

I was able to talk to Ray Lacey that day. He said he was going to have an independent assessor figure out where the lot lines are. While this is great, it does seem like an incredible waste of taxpayer money.

I wonder if I didn't have Lacey's number, know who he is or that if he didn't call back, that I could call his boss, Patrick Wright, if the CTC would have just taken my property this week. People who have the "right" names and numbers should not get special treatment. And the government should not screw people who don't have connections.

Tom Davis also swung by to see the situation. He seemed a bit surprised by the lot line assessment of the CTC, but I'll let him speak for himself.

Even if the measurement comes back that the CTC dudes were correct, the lack of due process and the manner in which the CTC goes about taking private property is horrendous. Jeff Miller said he had been by before but no one was home. He never left a card, no letter was sent, no phone call made, no appointments made. It wasn't like I was playing hard to reach.

At least the U.S. Forest Service when it has an encroachment issue with a neighbor sends letters before they drive a stake in the ground.

Miller could have made this a teachable moment. He could have said why cutting wood there was a bad thing.

Instead he said his colleagues would be out to plant more of the thorny wild roses that have overtaken most of that lot. When Davis saw the parcel he said he thought the lot needed cleaning up. I laughed and said staff thought more needed to be planted.

Two weeks ago we had a defensible space inspection. The South Lake Tahoe fire captain said those wild roses were way too close to our fence. Now I'm not sure if I should remove them or not – I don't know who owns what and if I would be destroying government property.

I do know planting more vegetation closer to my house, as the CTC wants to do, would go against the definition of defensible space.

Assuming the property lines are redrawn to what the CTC guys said were true earlier this week, why the change now after we've been here 10 years?

I can't wait to find out what happens to the shed that we use for wood storage. It was there when we moved in. A few inches of it may be creeping onto CTC territory.

All I was left with was a sour taste and having the same question I have of TRPA – why does either one of your agencies exist and what good do you really do? Shame on you CTC for allowing this to happen.

Maybe it's time for South Lake Tahoe, El Dorado County and Placer County to manage the urban lots in their jurisdictions – and to even own them. Get the state out of back yards and side yards. Less government would be a welcome change in all our lives.

Thank you for your time.

