

T.J. Maxx building changing water purveyors

By Kathryn Reed

Sometime in October the T.J. Maxx building in South Lake Tahoe will be a water customer of South Tahoe Public Utility District's instead of Lukins Brothers Water Company.

The STPUD board will get an update this afternoon at 2 about the property owner's application for water service and the main line extension.

The Garfinkles own the building at the Y.

The water supply became an issue last fall just before the department store was about to open. It was discovered there was not adequate water pressure for the sprinkler system that had been installed. An emergency agreement was drawn up between the two water companies that would provide fire suppression by South Tahoe PUD if needed.



The T.J. Maxx building will switch this fall from Lukins to STPUD water. Photo/LTN

Original sprinkler plans had been signed off by the South Lake Tahoe fire marshal. But when it came time for inspection it was discovered that the system was of a higher grade that is

more than the building needs and would require more pressure than Lukins could supply.

(The Garfinkles and the contractor are in a lawsuit regarding that issue.)

For months a resolution has been sought for a permanent supply of water in the event of a fire. The Garfinkles, who live off the hill, triggered a clause in their agreement that allows them to switch from Lukins to STPUD.

"I never thought it would come to that. It's such an unfortunate situation," Jennifer Lukins told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Switching water companies requires special circumstances like this. It's not just something any customer may ask for and receive.

The Garfinkles have told STPUD they will have the necessary work done by Oct. 1.

Part of the reason for the switch is the money involved. STPUD was going to charge Lukins \$147,500 for the fire only connection fee. This represents 36 percent of a full domestic 8-inch connection. Lukins in turn was going to pass the cost onto Garfinkles and not spread the expense to all of its customers.

South Tahoe PUD offered Garfinkles domestic and fire water for \$97,469.

Richard Solbrig, STPUD general manager, said the total comes in part from the connection fee and then the following:

- The estimated 1-inch diameter domestic line for \$11,389;
- Six-inch diameter for the sprinklers in T.J. Maxx for \$953;
- A 4-inch diameter for the sprinklers in the other half of the building currently unoccupied for \$477;

- A \$2,500 water main extension agreement charge;
- A \$2,000 time and materials deposit;
- A \$150 administration fee.

“Note that both options provide the capability of extending the main further along James Avenue to accommodate redevelopment of the old AAA building on the adjacent parcel. This is currently being studied by the property owner,” Solbrig told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Lukins, though, said the neighboring building would remain one of her company’s customers.