

Letter: New S. Tahoe hotel a questionable neighbor

Publisher's note: *The following letter was first sent to the South Lake Tahoe City Council and then to Lake Tahoe News.*

Dear Mr. Mayor and South Lake Tahoe City Council Members:

I am writing to bring notice to a very frustrating situation in regards to the construction taking place on the new hotel The Landing. We live right next door. For the last year and a half, we have been dealing with excess noise at inappropriate hours, garbage and trash on our property and workers walking across our property and flower beds with no regard.

We have maintained neighborly respect for a couple of reasons: 1. Because we are excited about something new and fresh to replace the Valhalla. 2. Because South Lake Tahoe is long overdue for a five star property.

However, over the past few days we have become very alarmed and upset by their lack of neighborly respect for us.

Two summers ago on Fourth of July, we met the owner who assured us that the construction project would take place very fast and the community would be kept in the loop. As a year went by, we knew that there was construction occurring but had not heard from them. During this most recent Fourth of July holiday, we sought out the project's general manager and asked him about the bordering fence we shared with the hotel. This was our biggest concern because we have a lake view from both our front and back yards that we did not want to lose. At the time, the project manager assured us that when it was time to replace the fence, we would be given plenty of notice and that the plan was to use rod iron to build the fence. This met our satisfaction.

We understood that our backyard would be looking at their busy parking lot, but that is a sacrifice we were happy to make to keep the beautiful lake view. We trusted their word.

On Oct. 18, we arrived at our house (we spend half of our time in Sacramento and half of our time in Lake Tahoe) and found the fence torn out, our bushes and vines mauled and our flowers with stacks of dirt covering them and trampled. We were shocked to say the least. We have spent three years working on our yard. And we were promised to be kept in the loop specifically regarding the fence.

I immediately contacted the manager and construction foreman. They came down to look. All we heard were excuses. Without looking us in the eyes out of shame, they told us "too bad." That costs of the planned rod iron fence were too expensive, so they changed. They informed us that now the fence would be solid wood and 6-feet tall!

When I showed them trampled landscaping and explained that it had cost us \$2,000 to fix up our yard, they disrespectfully scoffed and said it didn't look like it cost nearly that much.

I'm sure you can imagine how upsetting these series of events were to a couple that takes great pride in our home, wants to see their project succeed, and has shown them a great amount of respect and patience.

Not only were we upset, the fact that we didn't have a fence was a huge inconvenience we had not planned for. I canceled my work flights from Reno because we were unable to leave the dog in the back yard.

The next day my newly pregnant wife and I were cleaning up the mess they left, we came across the foreman who gave us Bob Hutchison's number. Bob is a representative for the owner. He agreed to meet with me today. I took a day away from work to drive back to Tahoe to meet with him with the hope of finding middle ground. I walked away shaking because he was so

inconsiderate. The sum of his attitude was; "we are the new game in town. The community is going to have to adjust to us." And he was so insulting he actually insinuated that our house and yard is too ugly to see through a rod iron fence. He said, "Heidi Klum is going to visit and looking at our cabin in the shape it's in is not up to her standards" – which led them to their decision to put up a solid fence.

In an effort to meet in the middle, I asked Bob to consider bypassing a fence in the front yard. If we must lose our backyard view, we can at least try to salvage the view from our front yard. After all, they have put a catch basin for their BMPs right there and human traffic would not be an issue. Or I offered the solution of a 4-foot fence with rod iron rails on top. He told me that the construction foreman did not speak for the owner and that no flexibility would be given. Within 10 minutes, the framing crew arrived and started framing the fence.

I run an extremely large cattle brokerage firm with sales of over \$150 million per year. I understand the complexities of business, but truly believe in doing things right and with honor. If my employees commit to anything, right or wrong, I honor their word. Deals are done on a handshake.

Rather than honoring their word, the folks at The Landing have decided to change plans and not keep us involved as promised. They are using the trimmed back bushes and fall foliage as an excuse to tell us our yard and house is not nice enough for people to look at while they are parking their cars.

Thank you for taking the time to read this lengthy email. My request is that you look further into what fencing plans were approved. Possibly encourage them to consider more friendly fencing options. Most of all, I hope you will encourage The Landing to try and become part of the community, not rule it. As proud residents of South Lake Tahoe, we want to have friendly relations with the big businesses attempting to

improve our city. Not feel helpless and disrespected.

Please consider this request and respond when you can.

Many thanks for your time and leadership.

Jake Parnell, South Lake Tahoe