

Recreation, transit unite South Shore politicians

By Kathryn Reed

Multiple jurisdictions providing the same services in a small geographical area. That's a huge problem in the Lake Tahoe Basin.

Some of the bravado and territorial issues that have existed between South Lake Tahoe, El Dorado County and Douglas County went by the wayside on Monday when the elected officials from each of those areas met at Lake Tahoe Resort Hotel.

A simple way to show solidarity is to eliminate the out-of-state fee that is charged at city and county recreation facilities – at least for those in the area.

Recreation and transportation dominated the discussion. And while South Tahoe Mayor Tom Davis, who was chairing the Oct. 7 meeting, at first tried to stifle conversation for the sake of time, ultimately he was convinced by his peers that they had no problem turning what was supposed to be a two-hour meeting into four hours.



South Tahoe, El Dorado and Douglas electeds convene for the first time on Oct. 7.

Photo/LTN

Many said that while everyone was gathered it was best to get things out on the table instead of waiting for who knows how long. After all, this was the first time these three bodies had ever met together.

(El Dorado County Supervisor Ron Briggs went home sick after lunch and South Lake Tahoe Councilman Hal Cole was in Placerville meeting with county staff.)

No action items were on the agenda. But the group decided that two members (to be named later) from each elected body would be named to an ad hoc committee to work on South Shore issues. Future meetings between all of the electeds are possible.

The three entities are already working in partnership to devise a recreation master plan. An economist is on the consulting team to analyze return on investment. This is being created as a to-do manual, not a theoretical document.

City Manager Nancy Kerry revealed some of the results of a recreation survey that was taken this year that is part of the master plan. People love Lakeview Commons, want more bike trails and definitely want signature events.

Part of the problem with having any kind of substantial athletic tournament here is the various entities to deal with, which equates to time and money for the organizer.

“Chaos happens” is how Scott Morgan, Douglas County community services director, described the process for someone wanting to schedule a tournament or special event here.

Depending on the event the organizer may have to deal with the three jurisdictions, possibly three school entities, the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency, and maybe two state departments of transportation. And each of those usually has a fee they want to charge and permits – aka paperwork – to secure. When people learn this, many start calling other places with less cumbersome processes.

And then there is the issue of getting people to and from the various locations. BlueGo, the public bus system on the South Shore, doesn't go to Meyers or Zephyr Cove Park. And it doesn't go to Lake Tahoe Community College on Sundays.

Carl Hasty, executive director of Tahoe Transportation District, said to provide the current bus service for free it would take \$700,000. That is what is collected each year in fares. It doesn't include the money private and public agencies contribute.

"Successful resort communities have free transit," Hasty said. He also pointed out how when TTD has received money to have free bus days the number of riders doubles.

TTD is also tied to recreation. It is the lead agency for the Stateline-to-Stateline bike trail. The second mile that links Rabe Meadow to Round Hill Pines will be finished this month.

Hasty said the problem on the South Shore is there are no dedicated transit funds. On the North Shore, Placer County uses part of the hotel tax for transportation. South Shore relies on state and federal dollars.