

South Tahoe's paid parking turns a profit

By Kathryn Reed

Paid parking in South Lake Tahoe is working – based on when it comes to revenues being greater than expenses.

Paid parking in South Lake Tahoe is not working – based on the nine people who spoke Nov. 5.

Paid parking in South Lake Tahoe is evolving and will continue to – based on the direction the council gave staff.

Paid parking has been contentious for the 15-plus years the issue has been discussed here. More than \$80,000 has been paid to consultants in that time period to study how best to manage parking. The studies finally stopped and action was taken. Most of the kiosks for paid parking went online in the city after the busy July 4 weekend.

For about two hours the City Council on Tuesday heard about what is working and what isn't, as well as what the public thinks.



Many people just don't like paid parking no matter how much money is generated. It would be difficult to find anyone in any town – local or visitor – who wants to pay a dime to park their vehicle on a slab of asphalt. So it could be a fact

when the people who are against the parking fee say everyone is against paid parking for some reason.

The people who aren't weighing-in are those who pay for it

whether they like it or not. After all, 42,342 people paid to park in South Lake Tahoe in the three-plus months the kiosks have been working. Most were at Lakeview Commons – 20,876; then Lakeside Beach – 16,796; Venice Drive – 3,347; and Paradise – 1,223.

Bellamy Court kiosks have been in for a couple years, with 9,161 transactions during the same time period.

Of the 3,551 tickets issued in fiscal year 2012-13, 1,507 were in the paid parking areas. Other tickets include being in front of a fire hydrant, in a handicapped spot, snow removal or other reasons.

The ticket at the parking kiosk costs offenders \$55. If there is no challenge to the ticket, the city pays the Southern California collection agency \$3. That dollar amount goes up through the appeals process, so then the city is generating less income.

According to the staff report, the compliance rate at kiosks is 97.5 percent.

The city collected \$190,976 off the kiosks in the 12- to 15-week period it was operational and another \$211,183 from tickets. After expenses, some being one time, the net revenue for 2012-13 was \$180,783.

The city is projecting net revenue of more than \$1.37 million in five years beginning with the fiscal year that started Oct. 1.

Still, Lakeside Beach area people have been fired up and angry about the parking and remain so.

Andy Engelhardt of Lakeside told the council, “You have created disgruntled, not delighted customers.”

He keeps saying Lakeside lost money ever since the kiosks went in. But what he doesn't publicly say is that the fee to access

his beach went up and Lake Tahoe Resort Hotel no longer buys beach tickets for its guests. The former Embassy Suites was Lakeside's best customer in years past. There has also been a change to who is operating the restaurant on the beach and that contract is now being negotiated.

Most of the other beach areas on the South Shore that the city has nothing to do with have paid parking during the summer season – such as U.S. Forest Service beaches, Ski Run and Camp Richardson.

Kings Beach is following South Lake Tahoe's lead with year-round parking. The North Tahoe Public Utility District voted this fall to charge at Kings Beach State Recreation Area and North Tahoe Regional Park. The park alone has more than \$1 million in deferred maintenance.

Councilman Hal Cole in his support of the program said the city needs to create cash to pay for the operation and maintenance of places like Lakeview Commons, as well improvements to other areas like Lakeside.

The council agreed to have the parking program come back after the first of the year to further look at the entire program, whether kiosks would be removed from Paradise Avenue, how to improve Venice Drive – including possibly adding a trail for pedestrians and cyclists and bringing trailer parking back, hours of operation, lighting on kiosks, signage and a season pass.

Already the paid parking on Venice Drive has been suspended until May 1.