

Mental health takes its time leaving sr. center

By Kathryn Reed

“Frankly, I feel that by remaining we are subjecting the clients of our wellness center to unjustified and disrespectful mistreatment.”

That is what Terri Daly, chief administrative officer for El Dorado County, wrote in a letter to South Lake Tahoe officials on May 15, 2013. It was in reference to mental health clients being seen at the senior center in the city.



Despite those sentiments, mental health is still seeing clients at the senior center. A deal was signed in 2012 allowing for the joint use. It has been an unsuccessful blending of populations.

“We are working together on a solution so they can leave as soon as possible,” City Manager Nancy Kerry said. But she said the move could still be several months from now.

The problem is the county took over some of the space the seniors had been using. The mental health clients can be disruptive. Seniors don't feel safe.

Ross Branch, policy analyst with the CAO's office, said, “The senior center was never intended to be a long-term solution. The reason we moved there was to help defray maintenance costs with the city.”

That's great in theory. But the county hasn't paid its share of utility bills that was originally agreed upon. After months

of no payments, the county agreed to a lower amount and has paid that. The fees were based on the percentage of space used.

“The cost sharing for ‘maintenance costs’ was the sharing of the facility expenses. However, as soon as we submitted an invoice, the county disputed the cost sharing,” Kerry told *Lake Tahoe News*.

The county doesn’t have a date for when it will be out of the senior center, but it has found a place it would like to move into. An employee told *Lake Tahoe News* it’s the Tata Lane building the city used to lease.

“We are finalizing details on a new lease agreement,” Branch said. But he didn’t know where the building is and said he could not give a time frame for when the move would occur.