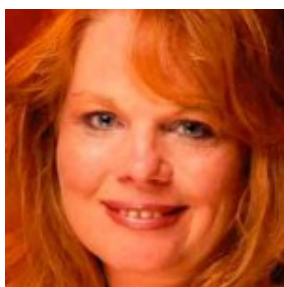


# Opinion: Time for Tahoe to decide what it wants

By Nancy Kerry

The polls have closed and voting is complete. Now the tallying begins.

These past few months of debate regarding the value of parking meters as a revenue source for the city has resulted in a higher level of engagement and discussion among community members about revenues, expenses and the future of the south shore. An open and free democracy quite often results in these types of lively debate with opinions and positions on all sides of the issues.



Nancy Kerry

I've had the privilege of listening to various opinions on both sides of the issue and have heard many good opinions. The City Council's decision to put this question before the voters was the right decision. The community has spoken through their vote, and their collective opinion is held in high regard and the community's involvement is appreciated.

I commend Peggy Bourland and her group of friends that took it upon themselves to challenge a decision they did not agree with and circulated a petition. Her efforts and those of her group are exactly what democracy in the United States is all about.

Even when we disagree or when democracy is messy, it's a wonderful and respectful method of having a powerful voice in your government. At the time of this writing, we do not yet know the outcome of the vote as the polls have just closed. However, the votes have been cast, the decision is therefore made and it is now in the County's hands for tallying.

Thank you to all of the voters in this election.

Now that the issue regarding the meters is settled, it is critical the community turn our attention to the future of the South Shore. The question remains, "What future do we want and how do we envision paying for it?" The community of the South Shore receives more federal and state dollars from taxpayers in other parts of the state and country than most other communities because of the state and federal government's efforts to protect our beautiful Lake Tahoe. As a community, we have relied on these and other outside funding sources for many years for capital improvements and public services.

However, those funds are less plentiful today and more competitive to obtain. If we envision investment in improved recreation amenities, significantly improved streets and roads and attracting private investors to remodel commercial properties, we need a strategic approach to economic development, business attraction and job creation. As a community, we can improve our economic forecast, which currently remains uncertain, by attracting and obtaining more private investment, supporting the local business community (both small and large businesses) and using growth in revenues to invest in our future.

But what future does the community want to invest in? It is sometimes easier to know what we are against, than what we are for. Now would be a great time to leverage the community's interest in local decision making process to shape the future of the South Shore.

In the past four years, the city has reduced expenses significantly, eliminated 30 percent of the workforce, reduced employee wages and benefits and simultaneously invested millions of local tax dollars back into the community through the Harrison Avenue project, street improvements and other capital projects. The city cannot reduce a sufficient amount of expenses to generate enough revenue for the amount of the investment needed in the community.

Although we have more to do to continue to reduce expenses and long-term liabilities, the question remains the same – “What does the community want and how do we as a community envision paying for it?” We will be discussing these questions and more at the next City Council meeting on June 17 and I encourage everyone to join in the discussion and debate and shape the decisions impacting our tomorrow.

*Nancy Kerry is city manager of South Lake Tahoe.*