

Opinion: Rules are necessary – even at parks

By Brian Uhler

June marked the beginning of summer, and with it the arrival of visitors and the summer concert series known as Live at Lakeview.

As a community and specifically as a police department we recognize the value of helping our visitors have a nice time in our beautiful town. The Live at Lakeview event is enjoyed by visitors and locals alike.



Brian Uhler

For the last two years, our officers have had a rather low-key approach to the summer series, not wanting to impact the fun and doing our best to gain voluntary compliance to the rules at the Lakeview Commons and other city parks. In previous years, those who visited Live at Lakeview didn't necessarily respond to the low-key approach, which not only included cops in "friendly, non-enforcement, reminder mode," but also announcements by organizers on the speaker system.

The rules that are most applicable are:

- No drinking alcohol in public (SLTCC 18-9)
- No smoking (SLTCC 18-81)
- No dogs (SLTCC 18A-11).

We have heard a clear message from the community, City Council, and those who attend the event, "there's too much smoking and drinking" and by smoking, I mean smoking of all sorts. To a lesser degree, people have complained of the dogs, too.

These laws are in place to make our city's parks inviting and friendly for all, but especially for kids and families.

Some have argued that public music events automatically mean that people are going to be smoking marijuana and drinking because that's just the way it is at a concert. To this, I want to point out some key differences:

Concerts are not "public" and are not usually free.

Concerts are attended by people who enter the event fully understanding the type of crowd and likely behavior (not passers-by, families who happen to be at the public park, or parents with small children).

Concerts usually include a private security force.

In the first event of the year, we had five officers assigned. Twenty-four administrative citations were written. During the event, foul language was directed toward the officers; one person argued that the temporary, extra signs didn't include the specific City Code sections (the permanent signs did have the sections); and another person indicated that since the sign said "please" it was viewed as being optional.

Your police department looks forward to keeping this event fun and friendly for all who attend throughout the rest of the summer.

Brian Uhler is the police chief for South Lake Tahoe.