

# Davis: 'I made promises and I kept them'

**Publisher's note:** *Lake Tahoe News asked the seven South Lake Tahoe City Council candidates a series of questions. All are the same except for one that is specific to each candidate. The responses are being run in the order LTN received them.*



**Name:** Tom Davis

**Profession/work experience:** Director of General Services for Heavenly Ski Resort; convention manager, transportation manager for Sahara Tahoe Hotel Casino; executive director of sales and marketing for Sahara Tahoe, High Sierra, Horizon hotel and casinos. Director of sales at the Ridge Tahoe, president and managing partner for Tahoe Keys Resort. For a short time director of marketing, casino host for MontBleu Resort Casino & Spa.

**Age:** 68

**What organizations, committees or groups are you or have you been involved with?:** Board of directors of the following organizations:

California Tahoe Conservancy

El Dorado County Fair Board

Lake Tahoe Visitors Authority

Lake Tahoe Wildlife Care

Christmas Cheer all Year (Food Bank)

Kiwanis Club Lake Tahoe.

**Why are you running for City Council?:** To make a difference, which I have done.

**Why should people vote for you over the other candidates?:** Because I have done what I said I was going to do. I made promises and I kept them. My brochure when I ran said we would invest in our future. The following were promised and completed: Highway 50 improvements with Caltrans \$43.1 million. That is going on right now. Get the lawsuits settled at Lakeview Commons and get the project complete. That has been done. Get the Chateau project completed. That is finished. Get Harrison Avenue streetscape project going. That is going right now. Fire Station 2, new ladder truck to replace 33-year-old truck. That is done. Linear Park pedestrian lighting and landscaping and repaving of the bike path and pedestrian pathway. That is done. Pedestrian lighting curbs and gutter from Ski Run to Larch Avenue. That is done. New police vehicles. That is done. El Dorado Beach bathrooms. That is done. The Aspens 45 units affordable housing project. That is completed. The Bijou erosion control project that will keep 21,000 pounds of sediment out of the lake each year. That is done. That is completed Class 1 bicycle trail rehabilitation. That is done. I've been the common thread through all those projects because I believe in building bridges not fences.

**What do you think is the most pressing issue facing South Lake Tahoe and how will you deal with it?:** The economy, the economy, the economy. Improve the built environment just as we have been doing. More recreation facilities and opportunities and entertainment. Encouraging more retail to locate to Tahoe. Encourage locals to remodel their businesses. This can be accomplished with the incentives in the recently adopted area plans.

**If the city cannot reach an agreement with its bargaining units, are you willing to go to impasse? Why or why not?:** Yes, but it is my hope we will reach an agreement. Our employees

are a valuable community asset.

**How would you resolve the CalPERS and health care issues in the city?:** CalPERS is a state issue that cities, counties and special districts have no control over. The California rule needs to be eliminated. That is shortages in CalPERS have to be made up by the local governments and special districts. They also keep changing the rules in the middle of the game which only adds to the liability. We have made some progress by our having our employees contribute to CalPERS. The city has been actively working to reduce the health care liability from retirees by having those over 65 go into Medicare. It has reduced the liability from \$47 million to \$25 million. The health care we provide for our current and retirees is too expensive and will be reduced over the next few years. The council has directed the city manager to reduce this unfunded liability. We have no choice but to do that. Every city is facing the same issues. In addition, all new hires do not receive that benefit. But much more needs to be done.

**What is your opinion about term limits for the council?:** The voters in South Lake Tahoe are educated and well informed. Every two years they can vote us in or out. And they do.

**If the city has positive cash flow, where should the money be spent?:** Infrastructure which includes paving our roads, improving our recreation facilities and protecting our citizens.

**What are your ideas for increasing the city's revenues?:** This record July shows that our road to success lies with providing quality facilities in our city. Visitors and locals are now saying that the town looks great.

**What is your vision for the 56-acre project?:** We need to partner with the county because they actually own that property. However, they are working with us and are part of the recreation master plan process. This plan will establish

the future of the 56-acre project. Looking forward to seeing the plan soon.

**What would you do to improve relations with El Dorado County?:** I have always had a good relationship with the county supervisors, most likely because I sit on the EL Dorado County Fair Board which provides me with opportunities to build friendships.

**Is the city on the right course with restructuring debt and focusing on recreation? Why or why not?:** Yes. We just refinanced and may do more because of lower interest rates which frees up millions for infrastructure and recreation.

**Name one vote the City Council made in the last four years you are proud of and one you are disappointed in – and why?:** I'm proud of voting to get the Chateau project done that helped fix the hole in the ground.

The hardest vote for me was reducing our workforce and laying off 70 employees which came to about one-third of our entire staff. We had no choice.

**What is working in the city and what isn't; and how would you go about changing what isn't working?:** What is working is that we are getting our financial house in order.

We could do a better job of communicating with the public and transparency in government in the city. To our credit we see the problem and are working on it. For instance you can go to the city web site and get information on the budget and most all of the city programs and all City Council meetings [www.cityofslt.us](http://www.cityofslt.us)

Or you can call me anytime at 530.545.1168.

**Being on the council requires working with four others. Give readers an example of how you work well others in difficult situations with differing opinions:** I believe in building bridges not fences and even when I'm in the minority on a vote

I still respect the majority decision. I always respect the majority vote of the council and never try to undermine their decision even when I don't agree.

**What is your opinion about the following topics:**

• **Ferry service on Lake Tahoe?:** I think it will be a financial black hole. There just isn't enough demand for it. However, free bus service would be the smart place for the Tahoe Transportation District to seek grant funds. It is common sense that when fares are free rider ship goes way up and greatly benefit's the working community.

• **Loop road?:** The city has made it clear that we will not seize properties through eminent domain. If it is possible to have all those who own property there to be willing sellers then if the TTD can accomplish that it is a better project.

• **Future of Lake Tahoe Airport?:** Airport proved its value in the 2007 Angora Fire disaster. We are seeing an increase in general aviation small plane traffic. What I would like to see is an airport district that would include portions of Douglas County, El Dorado County and our city. It's a fact that our airport serves a regional market that should help bear the costs of the district.

• **Increasing the transient occupancy tax?:** Only if it was not going into the black hole. It would have to be for something that increased other revenues for our businesses and city government.

• **Changing the vacation rental ordinance to reduce the number of such units in neighborhoods?:** No. We have a very comprehensive city ordinance that addresses all the issues such as noise, number of people and parking. The ordinance also provides for elimination of a vacation rental if it is a recurring problem. I am in the vacation rental business and my company has provided many great family experiences. The problem we see is usually from out of town single home

vacation owners (VRBO) who rent properties but don't live here so they can't supervise them. And local vacation rental companies are responsible good community neighbors and are proactive in policing the units they handle. They have staff that are available for that. Parties in quiet neighborhoods are not tolerated. The biggest complaints that I get are illegal marijuana in our neighborhoods. That is what I will push to have addressed. We must have safe neighborhoods. I was doing a ride along with our police department and witnessed a fire at a house used for a illegal marijuana grow. The renter had bypassed the electrical panel which overloaded the system and caused the fire.

**Why do you have a concealed weapon permit? How often do you carry that weapon to council meetings or other public places?:**

The Second Amendment allows law-abiding citizens to have protection for them and their family. The whole point of concealed carry is just that. No I do not carry it to City Council meetings. The police provide security at our meetings.

**Tell the voters something about yourself that they may not know:**

I hold a 100-ton United States Coast Guard license. (Currently inactive.) When I worked for the Sahara Tahoe Hotel Casino I took out on the hotel's 42-foot yacht Elvis, Tom Jones, the Beach Boys, Johnny Cash, Joey Bishop, Engelbert Humperdinck, Liberace, Mac Davis, Helen Reedy. I met some great people.