

Editorial: Laine, David, Sass for S. Tahoe council



Brooke
Laine

Wendy
David

Austin
Sass

**Pub
lisher's note: *Lake Tahoe News convened an editorial panel of seven community members to come up with this endorsement.***

An elected board, while comprised of individuals, ultimately is a team. They don't have to agree – in fact 5-0 votes are not necessarily a sign of a healthy board – but they do need to play nice together.

The current South Lake Tahoe City Council is not always respectful of one another. They don't all look each other in the eye or actively listen. Their body language, at times, is atrocious.

Too often the same subject matter is revisited over and over again because a vote didn't go someone's way. This keeps the

city from being able to move forward. The vote on the plastic bag ban is just one example.

While technically the recession ended years ago, the fallout from it is still being felt in the Lake Tahoe Basin. Not everyone has recovered in terms of jobs or the housing market. Summer was good to many, winter bad for most. But when 60 percent of Lake Tahoe Unified School District's students receive a free or reduced lunch, clearly the people here are not doing well. That translates to 60 percent of the people with school-age children not being able to provide their child with lunch. Who knows what those families are eating the rest of the day.

South Lake Tahoe needs jobs that pay a livable wage. The town – and region – needs to attract people here who will spend money. We need infrastructure. We need businesses to invest in their product, including modernizing their buildings and signs.

First, we need to take care of more than 20,000 people who call South Lake Tahoe home. Then we can worry about the greater South Shore, the basin and those who visit.

Government can only do so much to help. A few ways the City Council can help include creating regulations that encourage redevelopment, not charging outrageous fees, enforcing the rules on the books so the town doesn't look like a flea market, bringing like-minded businesses-residents together to form community service districts, marketing the area and not relying solely on the primarily Nevada-funded tourism agency, realizing recreation is more than a bike trail (though we like bike trails), and investigating new and different industries to supplement tourism beyond minimum wage jobs.

We believe the continued efforts of Brooke Laine, and the infusion of newcomers Wendy David and Austin Sass will help South Lake Tahoe be a more progressive town by the time their

terms are up in 2018. We believe they are already leaders who have like-minded goals, though different approaches. We believe they comprise the team that will take South Lake Tahoe out of its morass of conflict and backpedaling and into a world of progress and prosperity for all, while bringing compassion and understanding to the process.

Laine has demonstrated her ability to be a voice of reason since being appointed in January 2013 to the unexpired term vacated by Claire Fortier. Laine was elected to serve on the council from 1998-2002.

One thing that makes her unique is she is and would be the only councilmember who has a full-time job where she is an employee not working for herself. She is more like most people in town – working for someone else. Laine has demonstrated the ability to do the city's work efficiently and effectively. She is always prepared, having read the council packet.

As someone who was born and raised here, Laine brings a breadth of experience others cannot. She also has the institutional knowledge that is critical.

She can see both sides of an issue, does not come to meetings with blinders on, and truly cares about the town and residents. She is thoughtful in her approach to decision-making, is not swayed by whoever talked to her last and is not climbing a political ladder.

David has demonstrated she is a consensus builder. We need that now.

She is the only one who has the life experience of working with the less advantaged in our community through her endless volunteer and paid positions. She is the one interacting with those who are working three jobs to barely survive. She will bring to the council a depth of knowledge from a sector of the community that is not currently represented.

We expect she will be well versed in the rigors of the city in short order. She has the time and intelligence to be a contributing member of the council from Day 1.

Her tenure on the Lake Tahoe Unified School District board is an asset – she understands a board is a team. Plus, the district is an integral component of future recreation plans. She could be a bridge between the entities, as the city and district have not always seen eye-to-eye.

As with our 2012 endorsement of Sass, we're still wary of his arrogance. It has not been tempered since he last ran. Still, we believe his strengths outweigh his weaknesses. We hope he embraces the team concept quickly.

Sass does his homework as evidenced by his thorough responses to *Lake Tahoe News'* questions and depth of answers at forums, he cares about the economy, he understands numbers and he is without question the candidate who recreates the most. This last fact is important as the area puts more of an emphasis on recreation.

Plus, he has worked for major players like Heavenly Mountain Resort and Aramark. He is the candidate with the most big-business experience. We need that type of diversity on the council.

Lake Tahoe News believes Laine, David and Sass will be a strong team on the South Lake Tahoe City Council who will represent the best interests of residents and the concerns of the greater South Shore area for the next four years. We also believe they will complement the remaining two council members whose terms expire in two years.

Lake Tahoe News could not endorse the other candidates for the following reasons:

- Angela Swanson: She would be better off working outside of Lake Tahoe for the betterment of the basin or being an

employee and not an elected official where there is a light continually illuminating her ethics, judgment and political aspirations. At some point she needs to take ownership for having said before the June supervisorial election that she would not seek to retain her council seat, for having taken money in a paper bag for a charity from someone who is now in prison, and for quitting her term on Lake Tahoe Unified School District and then immediately collecting a paycheck for her work as a consultant with the district.

- Tom Davis: His decisions are not rooted in good public policy. Look at past decisions on the Chateau project, redevelopment as a whole, and the plastic bag ban as examples. He is a follower and not a leader. He is not forward thinking. He can be argumentative and dismissive to the public.

- Matt Palacio: He needs to get more experience before jumping right onto the council. We can't afford to wait for him to catch up to speed. At a candidate forum he mentioned the town doesn't need another car parts store, which spoke volumes about his lack of knowledge of zoning and free market issues. He is good at pointing out a need for younger people on the council, but besides being in his 30s, we don't see that he has anything else to bring to the table. He is lacking vision. And the fact he eliminated a question on *LTN's* form (which we reinstated) instead of writing "no comment" or the like points to a character flaw of taking the easy road, or perhaps not being straight forward and honest.

- Bruce Grego: He was voted off the council in 2012. We believe the public has already spoken. He has done nothing in this time to change our opinion of him when we did not endorse him two years ago.