

S. Tahoe beach brouhaha not resolved

By Kathryn Reed

South Lake Tahoe officials and operators of the Beach Retreat & Lodge agreed to sit down to figure out solutions to what has become a contentious issue regarding access to the beach.

This centrally located lakefront hotel has changed general managers multiple times since Urbana Realty Advisors became owners a few years ago. But Brandon Reed (no relation to this reporter) told *Lake Tahoe News* he is here to stay and wants to build relationships.

He was put on the hot seat Nov. 18 during the South Lake Tahoe City Council meeting.

Issues include when the public has access to the beach, to what areas, and if the 18 public parking spaces really are available.

Councilwoman Brooke Laine shared her experience this summer of being told by hotel staff there was no parking by the pier only to make her way back there to find out they were lying. She said antics like that are fueling distrust. She had been honest by telling the worker she was not a guest of the hotel.

Reed said when the construction is done in the coming months on the conference center that parking will be easy to come by. The city would like stenciled markings to indicate the spots are public. That is still up in the air.

Reed added, "We have no intention of disputing that the public has access to the beach."

The problem is for years many people believed this whole stretch of sand was public. In reality it is a private beach

with public access. All of that is based on a 1980's court decision. And the public agency with control is the State Lands Commission.

The city wants better signage to explain to the public where they are allowed to go and when.

Leniency during the Fourth of July and Labor Day fireworks was also requested. This is because part of the beach is off limits to the public after dark.

In return, Reed wants people to be respectful when weddings are going on.

The public, though, doesn't want the prime part of the beach cordoned off all day for a one-hour event.

Peggy Bourland submitted 900 signatures on a petition to allow the public the right to access the beach.

It was pointed out how the city picks up trash from the beach, and how U.S. Bank and Deb Howard and Co. have adopted it for cleanup after fireworks shows.

City Attorney Tom Watson during his presentation said the point of the dialog was "to reduce disputes rather than exacerbate them."

What the two sides come up with, and how the public and hotel treat each other will determine if Watson's wishes come true.

In other news:

- Scott Blasser, president of the South Lake Tahoe Firefighters Association, told the council one-third of the department is looking for a new job because their compensation is not adequate. However, the department just agreed to a 9 percent raise over three years, and was the only department to get a 2 percent raise under the former city manager because they signed the agreement first.

- Outgoing Councilwoman Brooke Laine thanked her colleagues, staff and the public for their support these last two years.