

SLT establishes goals for next 18 months

By Kathryn Reed

A to-do list filled a large swath of one wall inside the South Lake Tahoe City Council chambers. These were the marching orders delivered to staff by council for the next 18 or so months.

Upon completing a multi-day strategic planning session, the electeds a week ago today reconfirmed projects on the list as well as added new things for staff to accomplish. The time period coincides with how long this council will be together until the next election.

While not everyone was in agreement that everything should be done, at least three people said each item is a priority.

A fee study is going to be conducted. This will show what the actual cost of a service is. It will also reveal what is being subsidized by the general fund or some other pot of cash.

Instead of continuing to take a hodgepodge approach to improvements at Bijou Community Park, a master plan for the facility will be created.



Lake Tahoe Airport's lobby doubles as the entrance to

South Lake Tahoe's city offices. Photo/Kathryn Reed

Mayor Hal Cole lobbied hard for the airport lobby to be overhauled at an expense of about \$200,000 so it is reinvented into a true city hall.

Councilman Tom Davis sees this as a complete waste of money. Councilman Austin Sass advocated for not only renovating the lobby, but expanding the offerings so Lake Tahoe Visitors Authority has a presence and possibly the U.S. Forest Service. The latter could issue wilderness permits from there.

Those in support of the upgrade believe this will give locals something to be proud of – a city hall for the first time in the city's 50-year history. Plus, it could be a destination of sorts for tourists.

A sampling of other items in the work plan include:

- Capturing more revenue through vacation home rentals, business licenses and transient occupancy tax;
- Complete Tahoe Valley Plan;
- Improve how the town looks;
- Increase hotel occupancy;
- Analyze return on invest;
- Better retention of employees, especially in the fire department;
- Expand recreation;
- Tackle single room occupancy hotel problem;
- Create events center;
- Decrease the cost of Cal-Tahoe JPA;

- Citywide area plan;
- High quality housing for all income levels;
- Improve stormwater system;
- Broaden public outreach;
- Create better, stronger partnerships.

A piece that has been missing from previous powwows like this is a discussion about how the council would measure success.

The work was placed under one of six categories, with some overlap:

- Fiscal sustainability
- Improve built environment
- Economic development
- Public trust and accountability
- Quality core services
- Partnership development.

City Manager Nancy Kerry wanted the council to look at why they wanted something to be done. It's up to staff to figure out how they get done. The items will be added to the business plan and brought back to the council for adoption in May.