

TRPA to fine SLT hotel for illegal tree cutting

By Kathryn Reed

The Landing Resort & Spa got caught illegally cutting down trees after much speculation that such activity had occurred from the onset of renovation at the South Lake Tahoe site.

The Tahoe Regional Planning Agency Governing Board on Thursday is set to approve a settlement agreement that calls for a \$40,000 fine and planting of four mature 15- to 20-foot Jeffery pines in the location where the ones that were removed were located.

The staff report for the March 26 meeting says, "The four planted trees shall be inspected after two years for survival and may not be removed without TRPA approval. If any of the trees die within the first two years, a new tree shall be planted and monitored for two years after planting. The four trees shall be planted no later than May 31, 2015."

TRPA staff in July received a complaint that the South Lake Tahoe hotel had illegally removed the trees. The trees that were removed were 14 to 24 inches around at breast height, according to TRPA. Per TRPA rules, all trees more than 14 inches in diameter must have a permit for removal.

"... TRPA staff found that the previous general manager directed a tree service from out of the area to remove the trees in order to improve the view from the resort. Multiple permits for tree removal have been issued to the Landing over the past few years and TRPA staff therefore believes that the Landing representative did this work with full knowledge of TRPA's permit requirements," the staff report says.

In 2013, the year the hotel – which had been the Royal

Valhalla – opened, there was speculation that trees had been poisoned at the property so then a permit could be obtained for their removal.

Jim Demetriades, owner of the hotel, is the one being fined. He will have 30 days to pay it after the board approves the agreement. He has already signed the agreement.

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Other newsworthy items on the TRPA agenda:

- A briefing on California Pacific Electric Company 625 and 650 Electrical Line Upgrade Project. CalPECO is the parent company of Liberty Utilities, which is seeking to upgrade electric lines on the North Shore and Truckee. No action is expected. This will be heard March 25, no earlier than 1pm when the board meets at the Chateau in Incline Village.
- Expected approval of amending Heavenly Mountain Resort's master plan to accommodate summer activities like Epic Discovery. To be heard March 26, 9:30am at the Stateline TRPA office.
- Aquatic invasive species update – March 26.
- Boat inspection fee schedule – March 26.