

SLT revamping what it charges for city services

By Kathryn Reed

The South Lake Tahoe City Council next week is expected to adopt a fee schedule for services that better reflects the cost of doing business.

Last week the council heard a presentation about what is being proposed and directed staff to make some changes. Looking at the campground fees, how nonprofits are treated and possibly charging more than the cost of doing business – where legally allowed – are some issues council members wanted reviewed.

“We’re not in the charity business. I support the full cost of recovery,” Councilman Austin Sass said at the April 21 meeting. “We are a business. We are not in the business of underwriting businesses.”

One could argue giving incentives like commercial floor area for a developer to build on the corner of Highway 50 and Ski Run Boulevard, which the entire council approved, is underwriting a business.

Recreation was kept separate from the fee schedule because that is often an area where municipalities provide a subsidy to its citizens. Still, it is up to the council who pays what for which service.

It had been 10 years since the city last did a thorough analysis of the fees. The goal is for the city to know what the true cost of a service is. This was a cost-recovery study, not a market recovery study.

“The term ‘full cost’ means the direct and indirect costs borne by the city of South Lake Tahoe to deliver the service,”

the April 21 staff report says. "Direct costs are defined by the labor and materials expended specific to that program while indirect costs include city administrative functions such as central support departments that have an indirect role supporting the activities of the departments."

The fee schedule covers everything – from grading permits to getting a copy of a police report to renting facilities. Some fees like ticket counter space at the airport have been deleted, whereas a fire dancer permit is new.

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Notes:

- South Lake Tahoe City Council meets May 5 at 9am at Lake Tahoe Airport.