

Letter: Spike in SLT sign permit fee a mistake

Publisher's note: *This letter was sent to the South Lake Tahoe City Council and is reprinted with permission.*

To the community,

Landscaping and signs are to a community what icing is to a cake. It's the pretty stuff on top, the colorful thing that makes it inviting. You can have the most delicious chocolate cake, but if you frost it with ugly, nobody's gonna want to eat it.

I just learned that a sign permit went from \$235 to \$878 – darn near a 400 percent increase. This degree of increase should require a little notice, maybe a warning or grace period, don't you think? Seriously, there are only four sign shops in town, you could have sent a note.

Whether you know it or not, I, along with our other local sign professionals, spend a tremendous amount of time explaining the ins and outs of your sign ordinance. I patiently and repeatedly let business and property owners know the importance of maintaining the beauty and consistency of signs – because signs are the icing on our cake. I back you guys up every single day. I don't really enjoy it or get paid for it, but treat it as though it is part of my job, however, I will not steal for you.

The \$878 for a sign permit is wrong, really wrong, so is waiting six to eight weeks for a permit that should be stamped, initialed and completed over the counter, on the same day. No one is going to get permits for their signs now, not when, for example, a \$200 sign will end up costing over a thousand dollars.

Increasing this permit fee by 400 percent simply makes it impossible to get people to comply with the ordinance, not to mention they will start throwing up ugly signs again. This is a "get rich quick" consultant idea, one that would never have come from a qualified business person, and it will backfire, just like it did years ago.

Perhaps you don't remember? We were selling signs, getting our permits, the city was making money from permit fees, businesses were cooperating and you guys had photos and records of all signs, thereby enforcing your own sign ordinance. Then, just like now, the city brings in an outside consultant, increases the cost of sign permits to \$600, nobody got permits, the city got plastered with illegal signs, our town looked awful and the city could not control the sign clutter.

It's taken years to correct this problem and now you're doing it again. Need I remind this council that the city had to reduce the sign permit fee back to its original cost in order to get control again?

Mass quantities of ugly signs make a community look cheap and blighted. Drive through any impoverished area and it will be smothered with signs. Paper "\$15 Rooms" signs, reader boards, A-frames and tattered old banners everywhere, all things that are prohibited under our current sign ordinance. Right now, this town, this City Council, has spent gazillions of hours and dollars on beautifying the scenic corridor, organizing and funding lots of wonderful projects, only to turn around and throw away the power to protect what you've invested in.

Please reconsider this permit fee. It is out of line and ultimately not good for the community.

Angela Olson, Angie's Signs