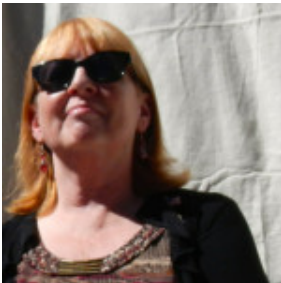


SLT councilwoman banned from talking to staff

By Kathryn Reed

South Lake Tahoe City Councilwoman JoAnn Conner is no longer allowed to speak to city staff.

This edict came about last week after a closed session meeting in which the agenda item was the city manager's review.



JoAnn Conner

City Manager Nancy Kerry told *Lake Tahoe News* on Monday that as a result of the review Conner is to have no interaction with staff and staff is not to engage Conner.

Kerry would not say why this occurred or why Conner is being singled out.

City Attorney Tom Watson, who met with department heads and had meetings with other staff about the new protocol, passed down the directive. All communication involving Conner is to go through him.

Watson deferred comment to the City Council.

Mayor Hal Cole and Councilman Tom Davis said it was a personnel matter and therefore they could not talk about it. Councilmember Wendy David told *Lake Tahoe News*, "Council is committed to running a professional organization where we can

move our city forward in the best way possible.” Councilman Austin Sass could not be reached.

Conner, who has one year left on her four-year term, acted like she wasn’t aware of the communication ban when *Lake Tahoe News* called Sept. 21.

“I have to make some phone calls to find out what is going on,” she said.

About 30 minutes later she emailed saying, “It is unfortunate internal issues have been made public. I generally deny any allegations and look forward to working with my colleagues to resolve any issues and move forward with positive accomplishments.”

However, 30 minutes before she was to attend the Sept. 21 Waste Management JPA meeting as the city’s representative Conner lined up alternate Davis to fill in.

Conner is known to have a short temper, and use profanity and derogatory words verbally and in writing. Her targets have been staff, elected officials and community members.

Duane Wallace, who is a member of the chamber Conner used to be president of, said, “She can be very caustic to people who disagree with her. I think I’m just one of a bunch.”

During the paid parking brouhaha Conner verbally berated people outside Grocery Outlet who were against the measure.

Former City Councilwoman Brooke Laine told *Lake Tahoe News*, “She would use colorful words to refer to me when she was talking to other people in the city.”

Instead of using Laine’s name, Conner’s favorite two words for her were “f-ing b--.”

Laine had multiple examples of how Conner acted as a bully toward her beyond the name-calling.

Conner has been a bully for much of her tenure on the council. This was first documented in a column on ***Lake Tahoe News*** in **October 2013**.

While Conner has the right to be a bully and say what she wants, as a city councilmember she is an employer. She and the other councilmembers are the employers of Kerry and Watson.

Kerry and Watson, and the city as a whole, could be held liable if they don't take action to protect the rest of the staff. A handful of employees have approached the city attorney asking for guidance in how to deal with Conner's abuse. No communication is one way staff can be protected.

Aside from the verbal and written abuse, there are staff members who are leery of crossing Conner in any manner because she has a concealed weapon permit and often has her gun in her purse at meetings.