

Opinion: Police duties change with time

By Brian Uhler

As you might expect, once the city was incorporated in 1965, it took some time to create a police department. On July 1, 1967, the police department began providing police services to the city.

In 2017, we'll plan a small public 50th celebration at the police department. Our initial plans include hosting and honoring some of the department's original members. Over the years there have been many changes.



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Some points of interest include:

- A police building was christened in 1973 and Chief Crow was quoted as saying the building would serve our needs for between five and seven years. There were plans for expansion which were never realized. We are still in the same building.
- Police officer staffing levels grew from an initial compliment of 30 officers to a high of 55 in about 1988. We currently have 36 police officers.

Police personnel have certainly stepped-up enforcement for those who are illegally operating vacation home rentals (VHRs)

in our community. With some of the latest efforts to manage VHRs in our neighborhoods, the police department was able to focus more attention on those who are operating without permits (and probably not paying transient occupancy tax—TOT).

While most people who own or operate VHRs are doing so properly, there are still those who are not obtaining permits and probably not paying taxes which help pay for important core city services for our entire community. For those who are operating a VHR “under the radar” or thinking of doing so in the future, get your permits and pay your taxes.

Penalties for operating without a VHR permit include:

- \$5,000 fine
- pay back taxes or get a lien on your property
- risk your ability to get a VHR permit in the future.

We have found 21 VHR violators in just the last month.

We hope that nobody would violate this law. Our efforts to make sure everyone knows the permit requirements included mailing a notice to every residential property owner in the entire city. Further, there have been numerous discussions at City Council meetings and a variety of news articles on the topic. Bottom line: excuses for not having a permit will probably not get you any leniencies. Game playing with flimsy excuses will also be easily debunked.

It is worth noting that it is not too terribly difficult to find those who are breaking the rules. Consider that VHRs normally advertise—we know where and we’re checking. Further, neighbors who are fed up with the impacts of a VHR could report the existence of illegal operators. Once reported, our VHR enforcement officer will visit on a holiday or weekend and confirm a property is being used as a VHR. This will kick the sanctions into motion—simple message: you’d be far better off

just getting your permit and paying your proper taxes. It's just the right thing to do.

Brian Uhler is police chief of South Lake Tahoe.