

Resolution to senior center dispute in the works

By Kathryn Reed

A lease or outright ownership of the senior center. That's what South Lake Tahoe and El Dorado County officials are tasked with negotiating.

City Manager Nancy Kerry, all city councilmembers except JoAnn Conner, and Ken Sands from the senior center attended this week's Board of Supervisors meeting in Placerville. The goal was to explain to the county electeds and staff the importance of changing how the senior center is operated.

The county since 1929 has owned the land in the middle of town that also houses the museum, art building and visitors center. The city leases the land and then handles who the tenants are.

The problem is the county hasn't been investing any money into the facilities and has basically been an absentee landlord. The seniors feel at a loss because they have money to invest, but can't get the county's ear. The city, which has been doing upkeep, wants complete control.

The city has written checks totaling \$2.5 million in a 15-year period to maintain the facilities located there. It has taken in revenue of about \$300,000 in that time from weddings and other rental fees at the senior center.

Sands spoke Jan. 26 about how the seniors have money to invest. He gave the example of when the group attempted to put windows in, but the county stopped the process. Then there is the **well-documented** time a few years ago with the county against the seniors' better judgment put the mental health office in the same building. This was in an area of the building the seniors had paid for in an expansion.

Both sides have been talking for months, which some people, including Supervisor Shiva Frentzen, thought were the formal negotiations. Not the case.

The supervisors in closed session agreed to enter formal negotiations.

Supervisor Sue Novasel told *Lake Tahoe News* the negotiations will resolve: "How do we get to where we want to go?"

She added, "For the county we want to try to create opportunities where we can go as county, whether it's transfer or sell or whatever. The details need to be hammered out."

Kerry told *Lake Tahoe News*, "We either negotiate a new facility-use agreement for all properties or we negotiate a transfer of the assets to the city so the city can negotiate with the tenants for long-term improvements."

There is no time line when this will all be settled. The disagreement dates back to the 1990s.