

Opinion: ST Chamber defines goals for 2016

By Dave Jinkens

President Duane Wallace and the board of directors of the South Tahoe Chamber of Commerce held an all-day strategic and legislative planning session on Feb. 6 at the Best Western Station House Inn.

The board of directors held an extensive discussion of goals it wished to set for the organization and the legislative issues and concerns that need to be addressed by governmental bodies at all levels if we are to have a strong and viable economy that benefits all who live and work in our community. The South Tahoe Chamber of Commerce supports vigorous economic growth in the city limits and South Shore, new private-sector investment, and the retention and expansion of existing businesses in the community.



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We look forward to a good year in 2016. The board's legislative strategy will be a guide for chamber action in 2016 and the goals are clear and transparent. The board encourages positive and collaborative partnering opportunities with other community-minded organizations and community members. We want to build a strong local economy; foster the creation of good-paying jobs; respect the rights of the existing business owners and operators and residents (i.e.

homeowners and renters); foster and develop opportunities for community success; and help and support initiatives that create a bright future for all who live and work here. We want to grow the economy not the local tax burden. We want change that makes a positive difference for all those who live and work here, and we need the help and support of elected and appointed leaders and the community to do so.

The Legislative Strategy

- **Airport:** Support efforts that recognize the Lake Tahoe Airport as a vital regional and local transportation resource. It is a connector between the Tahoe basin and the U.S. Transportation System. It is an economic engine for the South Shore and non-aviation lands at the airport should be made available for economic growth opportunities to help our local economy, promote job growth and diversification and broaden the city's tax base.
- Recognize as well that the airport provides very high safety and emergency value to our community in a crisis situation.
- Support the idea of the return of commercial air service to South Lake Tahoe without burdening local taxpayers or businesses.
- **Arts Committee:** Form and organize an arts committee and develop an arts plan. Seek City Council support for plan implementation.
- **Building and Permitting:** Urge the adoption of regulations, policies, and fee structures that encourage and make it easier and less expensive for people to remodel and repair their homes and businesses. Streamline and expedite the processing of building permits and plan checks.
- **Business Friendly Rules:** Encourage and support timely city government initiatives and processes that update and

streamline city codes and policies to promote the success and expansion of existing businesses citywide and protect existing city businesses. Ask that city and county governments weigh new rules and regulations against their impact on the success of the existing business community.

- **Caltrans Road Repairs/Closures:** Encourage and support continued work by Caltrans to repair and improve highways serving the Lake Tahoe Basin and the South Shore. Ensure that any proposed highway closures needed provide adequate alternate routes to minimize negative impacts on the business community.

- **Campaign Contributions to City Elections/Full Disclosure:** Urge adoption by city government or by the public of full and complete campaign disclosure information and donation from all sources to candidates for City Council whether made by individuals, political action committees or businesses in state or out-of-state in order to create an open and transparent municipal election process.

- **Charitable Raffle:** Support changes in state law to allow a 50/50 formula for the operation of charitable raffles to encourage local charitable giving as was provided to professional sports teams in 2015 (i.e. by SB549).

- **Collaborate with Other Organizations:** Endeavor and work toward ways to support and cooperate with other business and charitable organizations that are working for the betterment of the entire community and in ways consistent with adopted South Tahoe Chamber goals and strategies.

- **Cross Lake Ferry:** Support in "concept" the Tahoe Transportation District to develop a cross-lake year-round ferry system between the North and South shores. The ferry would be an alternative to the vehicle to move people around the lake throughout the entire year. Examine the option of creating an auto-carrying ferry. Support funding from federal

and state sources for capital costs and operations with no burden to the local taxpayer.

- **Economic Development Corporation:** Evaluate the feasibility of forming a local economic development and/or community development corporation to assist local businesses and grow the local economy and promote the creation of quality and attractive workforce housing using state and federal grant seed money and private-sector donations.

- **Fees, Charges and Taxes:** Oppose increases in fees, charges, and taxes by any governmental agency during these times that are found to be detrimental to business owners and operators and the general public. Grow the tax base instead of the tax burden. Advocate for policymakers to have prepared an unbiased economic impact statement be made before new fees, taxes, and charges are proposed. Ensure that fees assessed by local governments do not exceed the cost to provide the service.

- **Housing:** Support initiatives to encourage the availability of safe, sanitary, and quality workforce housing in the City limits without burdening local taxpayers and identify federal and state resources to preserve and upgrade existing housing. Urge all permitting agencies to come together around the goal of significantly streamlining the process for affordable rental housing including finding ways to turn older motels into nice conversions of two-bedroom units.

- **Lighting:** Support in "concept" the installation of city street lighting in the Y area to promote the safe passage of pedestrians, encourage walking and biking, and promoting local businesses;

- **Loop Road:** Advocate for and insist on a complete and unbiased disclosure of all environmental, housing, resident and economic impacts of the proposed loop road project on the

city of South Lake Tahoe before decisions are made to give project approval. Determine if the proposed project is consistent with the city General Plan and adopted Housing Element. Provide specific and complete written answers to questions posed on behalf of the South Tahoe Chamber of Commerce and the community in regard to project impacts.

- **Meyers Area Plan:** Advocate for a complete, scientifically sound, transparent, and unbiased survey of all Meyers residents and parties before adoption of a Meyers Area Plan by local and regional governments.

- **South Y Community Plan:** Support efforts to identify reasonably and responsible and economically sound ways to implement improvements to the Y area in a business-friendly manner. Don't let the new Y plan sit on a shelf.

We look forward to working with all community-minded organizations to make South Lake Tahoe and the South Shore the best that it can be for all those who live and work here.

Dave Jinkens is the Government Affairs co-chair for the South Tahoe Chamber of Commerce.