

EDC revs up discord with SLT over ambulances

By Kathryn Reed

El Dorado County Board of Supervisors on Tuesday ratcheted up the turmoil with South Lake Tahoe.

The supes in closed session discussed what to do about ambulance service on the South Shore. In California it is a county's responsibility to provide that level of medical care.

Interim County Counsel Michael Ciccozzi reported out of closed session on April 5 that the supervisors unanimously authorized retention of outside counsel, and the initiation of litigation against the Cal-Tahoe JPA and South Lake Tahoe if it becomes necessary.

Supervisor Sue Novasel, who represents the basin, was not available for comment.

South Lake Tahoe and Lake Valley fire departments formed a joint powers authority to bid on the ambulance contract. While the JPA was awarded the latest contract in 2011, for the past two years there has been much discontent. Even so, the city reps on the JPA – Wendy David and Tom Davis – last year voted to extend the contract to 2019 when it could have expired this year.

The agencies are disgruntled about the compensation from the county, and now the **city wants out** of the ambulance business.. Lake Valley would like to run it, but can't afford to.

Discord between the two departments – mainly the electeds – has escalated because South Tahoe pulled firefighters off the ambulances in favor of only medical personnel. Lake Valley believes a firefighter-paramedic is the better course for

ambulance staffing.

Nothing came of the special JPA board meeting last week. April 11 is the next regular meeting.

The normal first step would be for the JPA, which is comprised of two elected officials from each jurisdiction, to come to consensus, and then for the county to get involved.

“What are they litigating is my first question,” Jeff Meston, SLT fire chief, said when *Lake Tahoe News* informed him of the supervisors’ vote. “I’m confused because they are not directly involved at this point.”

Mayor David said the threat of a lawsuit makes a complicated situation even dicier.

Dave Huber, Lake Valley’s longtime rep on the JPA board, was not available for comment.