

Laine: Banking on experience

Publisher's note: *Lake Tahoe News* asked candidates for South Lake Tahoe City Council, Lake Tahoe Community College, Lake Tahoe Unified School District, Douglas County School District, South Tahoe Public Utility District and Lake Valley Fire Protection District a series of questions. We are running the responses in the order received. All profiles may be found under the Special Projects listing and then the 2106 November Candidate Profiles category.



Brooke Laine is running for one of two seats open on the South Lake Tahoe City Council.

Name: Brooke Laine

Age: 52

Job/profession: Branch manager, US Bank

What boards, commissions, or other experience, including volunteering, do you have?:

Current: Treasurer, South Tahoe High School Alumni Association, 2004-present

Past president, current parliamentarian, Soroptimist International of South Lake Tahoe, 1990-present

Chair, Citizen's Oversight Committee, Lake Tahoe Community College, 2015-present

Past: Lake Tahoe Educational Foundation, California Tahoe Conservancy, Waste Management

JPA, Clean Tahoe Program, Tahoe Transportation District, Local Area Formation Committee,

South Lake Tahoe Chamber of Commerce, South Tahoe National Little League, American

Youth Soccer Organization, South Tahoe Babe Ruth.

Why are you running for City Council?: I am and have always been passionate about our community. I want to help bring professional and respectful discourse back to the public process so that we can work together and focus on moving our community forward.

Why should voters vote for you over another candidate?: I have six years experience as a council member. I fully understand the responsibilities and the time commitment. I will listen to all sides of an issue. While I may believe strongly in my position, I am willing to compromise when necessary for the good of the residents and city.

What distinct experience or competency makes you uniquely qualified to lead effectively as an elected official?: I served on the City Council from 1998-2002. During this time, the council oversaw the successful completion of the redevelopment project at Stateline and the creation of the ice arena. The experience that I gained during this term in office was exceptional as we negotiated complex contracts and funding strategies.

I was appointed to serve on the City Council from 2012-14.

During this term, we addressed the unfunded liabilities. Working with our current and former employees, we were able to negotiate a settlement thereby eliminating a huge financial burden that caused many cities throughout our country to file bankruptcy.

Public agencies have been under scrutiny the last few years for lack of transparency and accountability. What will you do to ensure both?: I would recommend that all public agencies videotape their meetings and make their public meetings available on the government channel just like what the city has been doing for years.

What stands out for you in the current budget that you support and that you would change?: During my recent service on the budget subcommittee we altered how we project our revenues which have improved the city's ability to accurately balance our budget. We lay down a baseline, conservative figure for revenues. Then at the midway mark of our fiscal year, we look at our actual revenue and adjust our revenues accordingly. This has allowed us to budget for one-time projects, knowing we have the revenue to support it or not. I would like to see the budget reflect actual projects. Currently, the budget is simply broken down by department. It is impossible to see the current expenses of an actual project. Being able to see these projects reflected in the budget will allow for even greater transparency and will also help to identify the costs of maintenance and operations.

Do you support current legislation for \$15 minimum wage? Please explain: The average household income for a family in Tahoe is \$36,000. An increase in the minimum wage will greatly assist the average family struggling to keep their head above water. I support an increase to the minimum wage. However, having been a small business owner myself, I understand that this increase has to benefit the employee as well as be affordable to the business owner. If this mandate is too large, businesses will most likely reduce their work force,

which defeats the purpose.

Do you support Proposition 55? Please explain: I do not like this ballot measure. Prop. 30 was to be a temporary tax increase on the wealthiest. Prop 30. included a one-quarter cent sales tax that went toward transportation improvements for the state of California. Prop. 55 proposes to keep the tax on the wealthiest for another 12 years, but does not renew the one-quarter cent sales tax. Prop. 30 was to be a temporary tax and I feel we should honor that.

Describe three attributes for a successful council: Professionalism, respect for the process, and each other, listen and have an open mind

What are your thoughts about public employee defined benefits?: Our defined benefits are appropriate to attract the quality work force, which the city needs in order to fully serve the public.

Please explain your position regarding contracting out work normally done by staff: The city is proud of the work it provides in order to serve our residents. There are times that some labor needs to be contracted out due to understaffing or unexpected increase in demand. Occasionally, the city needs to contract out legal services due to the special nature of a case. These circumstances should not be routine but rather the exception.

What is your 10-year vision for South Lake Tahoe?: I can see a unified Tahoe with lines that used to define us, now joining us. I would like to explore the idea of a Tahoe County with other agencies who could benefit from this realignment. A Tahoe County that could include the city, all of the unincorporated areas perhaps as far up the West Shore to Tahoma, and across the state line to Glenbrook, and why not include Incline. All residents would be eligible to run for election to the county board. We would no longer have a

situation where residents who live in the unincorporated portion of our community feel they do not have a say or a voice. With a Tahoe County in place, we can maintain our fiscal resources for our direct benefit. I believe this is an option worth considering.

What one vote in the last four years that the current council made do you disagree with and why?: I regret that the current council chose to not enforce the faded in ban on plastic bags as it relates to our restaurant industry.

Regulating plastic bags can mitigate harmful impacts to oceans, rivers, lakes, forests and the wildlife that inhabit them. Reducing bag use can also relieve pressure on landfills and waste management.

How many City Council meetings have you attended this year?: I have attended, in person, two council meetings this year. However, I watch them on TV regularly and fully support continuing the broadcast of meetings as a means to keeping the public involved.

What do you know about the strategic plan, finances, debt, and goals of the city?: As a council member I participated in the development and review of all of these matters. It is important to regularly review and update strategic plans and goals with community input to make sure they keep up with changing times and challenges. Finance and budgets reflect our values, goals, and execution of the strategic plan. We must constantly work on reducing any city debt and unfunded liabilities so we can focus more on planning for the future rather than trying to take care of the past. The city has made excellent progress in these areas over the past few years and my goal is to continue in that positive direction.

Being on the council means working as a team. How will you work with the sitting members for the greater good of the community?: My past years on council have demonstrated that

under unusual circumstances, I will remain professional and respectful to my fellow council members and to our staff and residents. Any other working environment is detrimental to the progress and growth of our city.

What should be the three main priorities for the council?: A well thought out strategic plan. A budget that allows for the implementation of the strategic plan. Most important, we need to build the public's confidence that the City council is capable of making decisions that are always in the best interest of protecting our natural resources and growing our economy such that all residents can prosper.

What have you done to make yourself ready to be a council member?: I have served as a council member for six years. I have stayed very active in city politics and events and continue to volunteer when asked.

What role should government have in housing for residents?: Our city should have a strong and supportive role in helping to resolve our current housing dilemma. (See below.)

How can the city partner with the school district to improve high school graduation rates?: I believe students are more successful when they can relate their education to the real world, not just as mandatory time spent with no perceived relevance. The city, the school district, and possibly the community college should consider partnering in community service projects that will give students the opportunity, possibly for credit, to be more involved in their surrounding environment.

How can local government support and expand job creation and small local businesses?: Government must support small businesses that then expand job creation by tearing down the barriers that discourage this growth. We must be open and supportive of new concepts; like turning a single-family residence into a fully-fledged business office. Our sign

ordinance needs to be adjusted to allow temporary signage for start-up businesses that are waiting for permanent signage. Examples like these will encourage business creation and will thereby create better job opportunities for our residents. We must look at everything we do and see if we can do it better.

If you believe in the one South Shore concept, what would you do to further make this a reality? If you don't believe in blurring the state line, why don't you?: I believe strongly in blurring the state line. In fact, my idea would be to support a new county: Tahoe County. Perhaps we could join with the lake portion of Douglas County, and create a bi-state county that would include from Echo Summit, down through the unincorporated portion of the city, the city of South Lake Tahoe up to Tahoma, and finally across the state line to Glenbrook. This is an example of the "outside the box thinking" I hope to bring to our discussions

What are your views on:

a: Vacation home rentals: I believe there needs to be much stronger enforcement of the VHR ordinance that relieves our residents from the current complaint driven process. I would propose a full time staff of enforcement officers that could be funded from an increase in the fees that VHR's currently pay. If all VHRs paid the same TOT tax as hotels and motels in the redevelopment area, this increase could fund multiple officers working to ensure that garbage is being properly managed in addition to all of the other issues including parking, noise, etc.

b: Loop road: The real value of this project is that new affordable housing would replace old and tired housing in the Stateline corridor where many of our residents reside and work. If the loop road project proceeds, it is mandatory that work force housing must be in place prior to the start of the project. I understand that the community wants to have a voice in this process. I look forward to hearing the results of the

November ballot measure.

c: City streets: Many of our streets are in very poor condition. I strongly support the one-half percent increase in sales tax as long as it is specifically directed to fund street replacement. The city's current process of simply repairing cracks, etc. is no longer an option.

d: Relationships with other public agencies: We must all work together. I will listen. I will be respectful and professional. I have experience working with other agencies and have a proven record of moving projects forward.

e: Recreation: This is currently a top priority for the city and I support this position. The city has made some important investments in our recreation infrastructure including Lakeview Commons, the bike park, bike paths, and now the recreation complex. We are moving in the right direction and I will be supportive of the maintenance and expansion of our recreational opportunities.

f. TRPA defined commodities: I would love to do away with them. I understand that they are a tool that helps us control growth. However, they have created an enormous financial investment before you can put a shovel in the ground. We must move away from seeing things as "yes" or "no" and, rather, figure out "how" to get things done

g. Transient occupancy tax measure: I fully support the TOT tax measure.

h. Sales tax measure: I fully support the sales tax measure as long as it is dedicated to street replacement.

i. What do you want the additional sales tax money to go to?:
Street replacement

Tell us something about yourself that people may not know: I was born at Barton Memorial Hospital just three months after

the hospital opened for business.

Voters said no to you two years ago, why should they say yes this year?: Times change and issues change. I would like to contribute to a professional, respectful council and work together to move our city forward. I am passionate, experienced, professional, and respectful. I enjoy the political process and will take the steps necessary to reach the best possible outcome through collaboration and compromise. Our residents deserve no less and I believe I am up to the task.