

Riddle: Preparing for this his whole life

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.



Trey Riddle is running for one of two seats on the South Lake Tahoe City Council.

Name: Harold "Trey" Thomas Riddle III

Age: 38

Job/profession: Bar manager

What boards, commissions, or other experience, including volunteering, do you have?: My wife and I have spent the last few years settling into South Lake Tahoe after moving here

from Hermosa Beach, where we were small business owners and active members of the Hermosa Beach Chamber of Commerce.

Why are you running for City Council?: We can do better.

Why should voters vote for you over another candidate?: Voters shouldn't vote for me over another candidate. A voter should vote for me because they feel my views as a whole align with theirs and that I would be their voice on the City Council.

What distinct experience or competency makes you uniquely qualified to lead effectively as an elected official?: I've always naturally gravitated toward leadership roles. From team sports to work environments, I have vast experience as a leader. I lead by example, and I believe a true leader is there to serve others. Others are not there to serve the leader.

Public agencies have been under scrutiny the last few years for lack of transparency and accountability. What will you do to ensure both?: I think we should investigate the possibility of merging some of the many agencies in Tahoe and ensure that all meetings held by these agencies are open to the public.

What stands out for you in the current budget that you support and that you would change?: The largest revenue sources for the general fund are property taxes and transient occupancy taxes (TOT), both being at 19 percent. I like that a strong portion of the city's budget comes from outside the city. I would like to keep it that way, and look for ways to increase that percentage (Measure P, if it passes, is a special use tax so it won't go into the General Fund. If it fails to pass, I would consider amending it for the next ballot so that it goes into the general fund and only requires a simple majority for approval).

Nearly two-thirds of our city's general fund is spent on personnel; salaries, pensions, health care and other benefit costs. Police services comprise the largest share of the costs

at 25 percent of the annual budget. Fire safety is a distant second at almost half of that. I believe we can reduce those costs and create more money for other community improvement projects by reducing overtime for police personnel and increasing volunteer patrols such as the STAR program.

Do you support current legislation for \$15 minimum wage?

Please explain: Yes. In fact I believe the minimum wage for South Lake Tahoe residents should always be 20 percent more than whatever the California minimum wage is at any given moment. I feel this way because we are a town that runs on tourism, which makes us unlike other towns. We're not just moving money back and forth between our own residents; we have a large influx of money from outside of our city. The people who bring this money in also put a heavier burden on our infrastructure which our residents must pay for, and they also force businesses to hire more people in the busy seasons than they can support in the off season, so our residents face layoffs and reduced hours in the shoulder seasons. A lot of businesses are all too happy to charge higher than average prices for this destination location, but they don't bother sharing that money with the people who make this town function. We can do better than the California bare minimum.

Do you support Proposition 55? Please explain:

No. Higher income taxes are not the answer. When a government is irresponsible with the money it's been given, you don't respond by giving it more money.

Describe three attributes for a successful council: Open ears, open minds, and the willingness to compromise.

What are your thoughts about public employee defined benefits?:

I wish every worker, public or private, could retire at 50 and receive 3 percent of their salary for every year they've worked, but that's not sustainable. I think we should honor the agreement we've already made with the current public employees and make some adjustments for new employees.

Please explain your position regarding contracting out work normally done by staff: People should do the jobs they've been hired to do.

What is your 10-year vision for South Lake Tahoe?: I would like to see the revitalization of South Lake Tahoe, with fresher, more homogeneous building facades and a well thought out and completed infrastructure that encourages an active and healthy lifestyle among its residents and guests alike.

What one vote in the last four years that the current council made do you disagree with and why?: One of the most recent votes, and that was the one to eliminate VHRs on multi-unit properties. Whether we like it or not, VHRs are vital to the success of this city. VHR owners contribute to the largest sources of revenue for the city's general fund. Those are property taxes and TOT. Together they comprise 38 percent of the General Fund revenue. You can read more about my opinion on VHR's below and how we should treat them in relation to other property types. The reason I disagree with City Council's decision to ban any new VHRs on multi-unit properties specifically is because this is the only way some people can afford to own their own home. They live in one unit and have to vacation rent the other side. The City Council talks about affordable housing and then in the same breath turns around and eliminates the only chance some families have at owning their own place and maybe even gaining a little financial independence. It's hypocritical.

How many City Council meetings have you attended this year?: I watch all of the City Council meetings online and I encourage every resident to do the same if they can't make it there in person. Just go to www.cityofslt.us and roll over the government tab, then roll over City Council in the drop down box and click on Watch Council Meetings. There you can watch all of the council meetings as far back as 2007.

What do you know about the strategic plan, finances, debt, and

goals of the city?: You don't have to read beyond the first sentence of the strategic plan to know all you need to know about it. It refers to the residents of South Lake Tahoe as the city's "customers." The City needs to get one thing straight; in business parlance the residents of South Lake Tahoe are not "customers." The residents of South Lake Tahoe are "the boss."

Being on the council means working as a team. How will you work with the sitting members for the greater good of the community?: I'll compromise where I can. Where I can't, I won't.

What should be the three main priorities for the council?: The residents of South Lake Tahoe should always be the main priority, meaning we should take care of our neighborhoods first, then invest money in the tourist areas. Second, City Council should foster positive growth by making it easier for the private sector to grow South Lake Tahoe, then fill in the gaps with government funded improvements. Third we should investigate merging some of the many agencies in Tahoe to cut down on all of the red tape that has been preventing positive growth.

What have you done to make yourself ready to be a council member?: I've been preparing for this my whole life.

What role should government have in housing for residents?: None, directly. There's a lot of chatter about affordable housing. When I hear "affordable housing," I hear "let's round up all the poor people and stick them in one spot." The only role the government should play in housing is making sure that local residents are paid a fair wage and can afford housing that already exists. Then we wouldn't be spending tax dollars on housing projects and residents would be able to buy more luxury items thereby generating more revenue for the city in sales tax dollars instead of costing the city money in project housing.

How can the city partner with the school district to improve high school graduation rates?: That's something that needs to take place in the home. The city can monitor test scores and evaluate teacher performance, but if parents aren't teaching their kids the importance of education, none of that really matters.

How can local government support and expand job creation and small local businesses?: We need to refine the whole process when it comes to entrepreneurs trying to start a new business. All of the rules and regulations that have been put in place to try to improve the South Shore have had the opposite effect and they're choking the life out of our city. Everything is so cost prohibitive that people can't afford to create their own startups here. So, our highway is littered with old outdated motels and dilapidated buildings instead of fresh new job-creating businesses.

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?: We are one city divided by a state line. We share common interests. We're neighbors. It's important for us to work together as such. But, I also feel we need to get our own affairs in order before we start meddling in our neighbor's business.

What are your views on:

a: Vacation home rentals: I feel that a person's house is their domain. When someone purchases a home it comes with what's known as a homeowner's bundle of rights. One of those rights is the right of disposition. This means that the owner has the right to sell or rent their property at will.

I am aware that some residents take issue with vacation home rentals (VHRs), and the issues can sometimes stem from real problems, but I don't believe it's fair to say all VHRs cause problems or that it's solely VHRs that cause problems in our

neighborhoods. We all have neighbors that are long-term renters or even homeowner occupied that generate as much if not more noise, more trash or more parking issues than the VHR's.

City Council should not be singling out VHRs when it comes to policymaking. If a VHRs spa jets are loud after 10pm are long-term renters' and homeowner occupied spa jets not equally loud? If a long-term renter or homeowner occupied unit has three cars in the yard and two illegally parked on the street is it not equally if not more burdensome than a VHR that's typically occupied only 25% of the time?

If City Council is going to regulate these issues, they need to do it equally for all homeowners and hold everyone accountable for violations, not just VHRs.

I believe we can make our neighborhoods more pleasant with increased STAR patrols and stiffer penalties for infractions by VHRs, long-term renters, and homeowner occupied units alike, without singling out any one type of homeowner.

b: Loop road: I support democracy. Let the residents decide.

c: City streets: They're not safe for pedestrians or cyclists. Addressing this will be my number one priority on the council.

d: Relationships with other public agencies: Interagency cooperation is essential to progress.

e: Recreation: I love recreation. I recreate as much as possible. We should encourage more people to do it. I feel making our streets safer for pedestrians and cyclists is a great way to do that.

f. TRPA defined commodities: TRPA defined commodities are just one more thing getting in the way of positive growth.

g. Transient occupancy tax measure: I am voting yes on the transient tax increase. I feel tourists should share more of

the burden they place on our infrastructure. The only thing I would have done differently is to have it go into the General Fund instead of being designated solely for recreation.

h. Sales tax measure: I am 100 percent against a sales tax increase. Sales taxes are a regressive tax that take a larger percentage from low-income individuals than high-income individuals, so it hits lower-income people harder. Here we are going on about affordable housing, then we turn around and try to raise taxes on the lowest-income people in the city. We can do better.

i. What do you want the additional sales tax money to go to?:
N/A

Tell us something about yourself that people may not know:

Anyone who knows me knows I'm a new dad. Even if we just met. I can't stop talking about my 6-week-old son, Hank. He's by far the coolest thing I've ever done with my life.

Something people may not know about me though is my first brush with Tahoe. In college I was captain of the cross country team, and president of the student government and Herodotus Society, but I couldn't help but feel there was something missing. Then my counselor suggested I join one of the school's community service organizations. So I did, and immediately became more fulfilled. In 2001 I had the honor of riding my bike with the Journey of Hope team over 4,000 miles from San Francisco to Washington, D.C., to raise funds and awareness for children with disabilities. On one night of our 72-day adventure we stayed at Kirkwood after a full day of climbing. It was without a doubt one of the toughest legs of the journey. I grabbed a Kirkwood sticker and put it on my bike frame as if it were a trophy. It was one of the two stickers that I put on it throughout the whole trip. The other was from Roswell, N.M., of course. I still ride that same road bike with my trophy Kirkwood sticker on it. When I put that sticker on there, I had no clue I would wind up some day

living in Tahoe and riding Kirkwood on my snowboard every winter. It's funny how things happen like that, almost like it was fate.