

SLT council candidates try to stand out



Eight of the 10 South Lake Tahoe City Council candidates on Sept. 20 make their voices heard. Photo/LTN

By Kathryn Reed

Watching eight of the 10 South Lake Tahoe City Council candidates answer an array of questions Tuesday night gave the voting public and others an opportunity to see who has prepared well for this four-year job and who needs some polishing.

Candidates Dan McLaughlin and Bob Topel did not attend the forum at Lake Tahoe Resort Hotel that was sponsored by Lake Tahoe South Shore Chamber of Commerce and South Lake Tahoe Lodging Association.

Moderator Evon Yakar tried to keep the candidates on point, had follow up questions to get them to actually answer the question, and asked questions they all answered and interspersed them with ones targeted to individuals. The sponsors prepared some questions, while others came from the audience.

For the most part they all agree listening is one of the best ways to learn.

Some of their responses based on the order they sat:

John Shearer:

- **Regarding how he as a business owner would increase economic opportunities:** He believes the Lake Tahoe Visitors Authority and chamber do well with marketing and that the city does not need to have a role.

- **Asked to define “sensible regulations” that he says are needed to deal with affordable housing:** He wants the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency to change; in particular he has issues with building allocations.

- **How important is it to meet the needs of the people living outside the city, but who are in the sphere of influence:** He would like them to vote. [This would violate the Constitution.]

- **If the loop road measure passes, what should the city do:** Supports the loop road. Recognizes houses won't be torn down without rebuilding new ones. Anticipates more events in that area.

- **How to solve the traffic problem in town:** Free transit; emulate successful ski towns.

Patrick Jarrett:

- **How would he grow the economy:** More events.

- **How important is it to meet the needs of the people living outside the city, but who are in the sphere of influence:** They should have some voice.

- **If the loop road measure passes, what should the city do:** With the number of people who signed the petition, believes the public wants a say; doesn't want project “crammed down our throats.” Doesn't see benefits of project.

- **How to solve the traffic problem in town:** Pointed out how when he lived in Germany years ago the transit was reliable; would like to see that happen here. And sync the traffic signals.

Ted Long:

- **He was asked about his 10-year vision:** Tourism, he said, is a two level platform – to get them here and then to get them back.

- **How important is it to meet the needs of the people living outside the city, but who are in the sphere of influence:** He wants to do more and is open to suggestions.

- **If the loop road measure passes, what should the city do:** He would support the voters, but realizes that still might not be what the majority in town wants based on voter turnout. “I think people who are in charge are going to do what they want.”

- **How would you solve the traffic problem in town:** Put in light rail to get people to Camp Richardson and Stateline. Focus on getting tourists out of their vehicles.

JoAnn Conner:

- **The most urgent issue in the city:** Housing, with roads a close second.

- **With a contentious first term nearly over, she was asked how things would be different the next four years:** “Literally hundreds of people have asked me to run again.” She said she has already put the issues behind her and that there have been many successful meetings. “I have no personal agenda.” [The reality is tension, animosity and lack of professionalism are still the norm at council meetings, and no personal agenda is disputable.]

- **How important is it to meet the needs of the people**

living outside the city, but who are in the sphere of influence: Meyers can vote to annex themselves. She said she understands why they would not want to.

· **If the loop road measure passes, what should the city do:** Better to listen to the citizens, not the five council members. "Caltrans has assured me it will not proceed if the City Council doesn't want it to happen." She believes the project has too many unanswered questions.

· **How to solve the traffic problem in town:** Advocate for bike trails, said she got the snow cleared from them last winter; use smaller buses.

Tamara Wallace:

· **What areas of South Lake Tahoe present an opportunity for redevelopment and what would the appropriate approach be:** She wants the Tahoe Valley Area Plan to be implemented, but did not state a specific project.

· **She was then pressed to answer what she thought the city's role in the loop road would be:** She stumbled a bit, said eminent domain and easements and "things like that" would be the city's role; then she said the council will not vote yes or not on it because it's not a city project.

· **How important is it to meet the needs of the people living outside the city, but who are in the sphere of influence:** "I think we are one community in very many ways. We will always be just a little bit separate." She mentioned how kids in Alpine County go to Douglas County schools and she wishes Whittell students could go to South Tahoe High. [They can.]

· **If the loop road measure passes, what should the city do:** Doesn't matter if the measure is vague, it's what the people want. "I'm against three people making a million vote." [Earlier that day the five councilmembers made a multimillion-

dollar vote when they approved the 2016-17 budget; million dollar votes are pretty routine.]

- **How to solve the traffic problem in town:** Get businesses to subsidize transit.

Brooke Laine:

- **She was asked what a successful vacation home rental program looks like:** She wants the laws on the books enforced, for the code enforcement officers to work more than swing shift on the weekends, bear boxes to be mandatory and for VHRs to pay the same transient occupancy tax as the redevelopment area so that added revenue could pay for enforcement officers.

- **How important is it to meet the needs of the people living outside the city, but who are in the sphere of influence:** She wants to create one Tahoe county so there is a larger voice.

- **If the loop road measure passes, what should the city do:** "I think it's taking the pulse of the community." She also believes the ballot measure is premature.

- **How to solve the traffic problem in town:** Mentioned how in the 1980s the city subsidized transit; wants it to be frequent, fun and free.

Jason Collin:

- **How best to address infrastructure:** "Roads are the most pressing issue." He wants added sales tax dollars to go toward roads.

- **Purpose of loop road lawsuit:** "The intent was to raise awareness to what I feel is an invalid measure. (The measure) would not allow the city to act."

- **How important is it to meet the needs of the people living outside the city, but who are in the sphere of**

influence: When he was on the city's economic development team they came up with the "One South Shore" slogan.

- **If the loop road measure passes, what should the city do:** A vote for or against the measure is irrelevant because it's vague and if it passes, there will be a court hearing on Dec. 5; plus the city doesn't have jurisdiction over the project. Believes educating public is necessary.

- **How to solve the traffic problem in town:** In the short term, work on sidewalks and trails. The trails he was on this winter were not cleared. Would like free transit, but doesn't know how to pay for it.

Trey Riddle:

- **With his platform being all about infrastructure, he was asked which project is most important to support and why:** He said the Mobility 2035 program. [This is a TRPA, not a city program.] He said his 9-week-old son would be in college by then, and that doing more now so his child could experience it as a kid would be ideal.

- **How important is it to meet the needs of the people living outside the city, but who are in the sphere of influence:** Important to listen to friends and neighbors.

- **If the loop road measure passes, what should the city do:** He supports democracy, and wants the public's opinion to prevail.

- **How to solve the traffic problem in town:** Rides his bike to work almost every day and doesn't feel safe; he'd like to change that experience.