

Business couple chastise SLT councilwoman

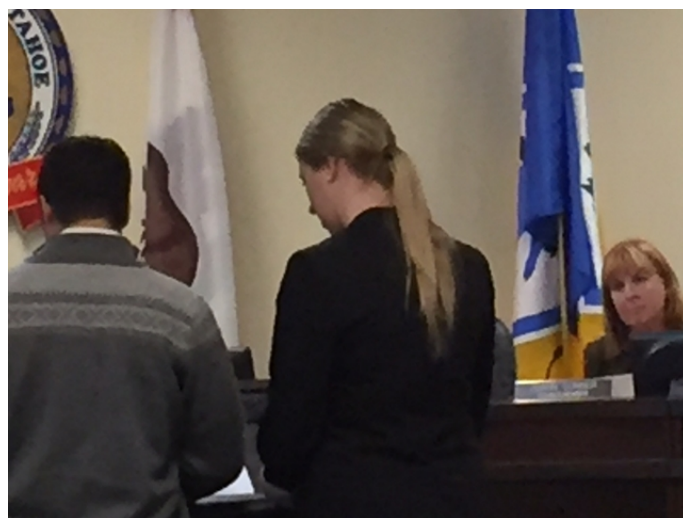
By Kathryn Reed

It was a war of words at today's South Lake Tahoe City Council meeting, with David and Jamie Orr voicing their anger about their perceived treatment by Councilwoman JoAnn Conner.

The Orrs, who own Tahoe Mountain Lab, had a contract with the city to do an economic report. They had been reluctant to make the presentation while Conner still sat on the council because they felt threatened by her.

The alleged threats began in January on the public Facebook page called South Lake Tahoe & Around the Lake. The couple passed out a copy of the exchange to the council members at the meeting.

David Orr, in reading from prepared comments on Oct. 18, was clearly not comfortable doing so. The comments came after the couple had delivered the economic development report.



South Lake Tahoe Councilwoman JoAnn Conner, right, listens as David and Jamie Orr complain

about her behavior. Photo/LTN

“The reason I’m bringing this up is because in our opinion it would seem that Councilmember Conner sought to use our contract with the city, and the ‘favours’ she had done for us as a way to keep us from publicly denouncing her actions,” Orr told the council. “Councilmember Conner’s comments made us feel small. It made us feel intimidated and threatened.”

Conner throughout Orr’s short statement kept interrupting him, saying it was “illegal” and “against the law” to repeat the words she had typed onto what she called a “closed forum.”

The page is public. And, really, nothing on social media is private. Plus, Conner’s statements were clearly coming from her capacity as an elected official and not a private citizen, thus making them unquestionably public.

Conner, in her outbursts, said, “This is not public comment time” and that this was a “shameless political speech.”

Conner is up for re-election, neither of the Orrs has run for local political office.

On the Facebook exchange the context of the conversation was Tahoe Prosperity Center had just released the Indicators Report. What the Orrs took issue with in particular was this item from Conner, which he read into the record:

“David and Jamie Orr, what exactly is your issue with me? I supported your business and referred people to you when you first came to town. I suggested you be considered for and supported you for those thousands of dollars you received from the City of South Lake Tahoe to help business owners. You obviously have a great loyalty to our employee, the city manager. For some reason, and it is disappointing to see you resort to hateful attacks with no substance. You often criticize the very city that gave you a lot of money – you want them to do more for

small business and the citizens. Perhaps you could tell the people here what you have accomplished for business and the citizens. Perhaps you could tell the people here what you have accomplished for businesses; where their money has been put to use. It seems to me you could help with some of the things you keep saying the city should do. I hear you criticize a lot, but I don't hear solutions offered. What are your ideas and how would you make them happen?"

Orr told the council, "This interaction made it incredibly difficult for us to want to come to you today."

He added, "For the record, we worked very well with the city. We have been working incredibly hard at fostering and bringing change to this community to spur economic development."

After the awkward exchange the mayor called for a brief recess. The Orrs left and the council went about its business without a word about what had just transpired.