

Letter: Chamber reiterates its South Shore vision

To the community,

Tahoe Chamber would like to thank Councilmembers Tom Davis and Austin Sass, and the council for the invitation to attend the City Council Feb. 14 special meeting and for the opportunity to present the business community's priorities to the city as they prepare for their strategic planning retreat.

Several years ago, the Tahoe Chamber and its members established a vision and a set of priorities for the South Shore community titled Tahoe Future 2020. The vision statement from that document reads:

"In 2020 the South Shore of Lake Tahoe will be a vibrant community with a diversified and robust economy and a built environment that complements the natural environment. Our focus and investments in community, economy and environment balance one another to create an incredible sense of place where people desire to visit, recreate, live, work and invest."

To the Tahoe Chamber, this vision statement is as true today as when it was first written.

The Tahoe Future 2020 states five core principles in order to achieve the vision. The core principles are economic vitality, intellectual capital, infrastructure, sustainability and quality of life. At the Feb. 14 special meeting, the Tahoe Chamber introduced these five core principals and highlighted two critical priorities for the city to focus on in 2017 and beyond.

First is infrastructure, which is essential to the success of businesses on the South Shore. Infrastructure is the means by

which our members deliver their goods and services, as well as how customers access their businesses. Over the past month, we have seen the limitations of our local infrastructure and have directly watched portions of it fall apart. When we say infrastructure we mean more than roads, although roads are the most obvious weakness with potholes growing by the day. Infrastructure includes drainage systems, flood control, trails, sidewalks, recreation facilities and snow removal. It's the hard infrastructure and the equipment, staff and other resources necessary to operate and maintain the capital investments. As we all know, financial resources are at the heart of every infrastructure discussion and are a significant challenge for the South Shore.

With that being said, it is imperative that the city develops, communicates and implements a comprehensive and transparent infrastructure financing plan. We believe the foundation of the plan should be identifying the financial resources necessary to construct, operate and maintain critical infrastructure including roads, sidewalks, trails, snow removal, facilities and parks over the long term. Furthermore, the plan should clearly articulate how existing revenues are used and what shortfalls exist. From there, the city should work collaboratively with the business community, property owners, and others to identify a comprehensive solution to fill shortfalls.

The one-off financing approach of the past two decades is not sustainable and makes the planning process for businesses nearly impossible because each year there seems to be a new uncoordinated request for additional taxes or fees.

Second is economic vitality, specifically creating an atmosphere which encourages existing businesses to invest, grow and attract new business and capital to our community. In order for this to happen the city needs to continue to make strategic and policy decisions that provide fair, timely and predictable outcomes. Only when decisions, policy, and

interpretations of the general plan and code are fair, timely and predictable are businesses comfortable with taking a risk and making investments. The willingness of our Members to invest in the South Shore is based in large part on the ability of the city to perform this function. For more information about the Tahoe Future vision, go **online**.

Jason Drew, chair Tahoe Chamber board of directors