

Letter: SLT council limiting public opinion

To the community,

After attending the March 7 [South Lake Tahoe] City Council meeting and workshop, I have to say that I am very concerned by what transpired. At the beginning of the meeting, prior to “public communications,” [Councilman] Austin Sass read the following statement that had been added to the agenda: “This is the public’s opportunity to speak on any topic not listed on this agenda. Comments shall be limited to four (4) minutes (or less). Please note, however, in accordance with the Brown Act, the City Council cannot deliberate or vote on any matter raised under public communications, but at the conclusion of public comment, the City Council and/or City Staff may comment on any public comment for clarification of the public record. (Government Code Sections 54954.2)”



Tami Wallace

Mr. Sass went on to say that that the council and staff would use this time to “correct any inaccuracies,” as well as doing so “on camera.” Essentially, they will be using this opportunity to call members of the public liars. Mr. Sass and mayor pro-tem, Wendy David, both recently used councilmember reports as an opportunity to call out former Councilmember/former county Supervisor John Cefalu’s comments during “public communications” that the city’s snow removal

operations were perceived as less than satisfactory by many members of the public. This, I believe, is what's known as "a matter of opinion." Yet, members of our City Council have chosen to call this person a liar.

Mr. Sass made the comment during a previous City Council meeting that "he will no longer sit back and allow the public to lie during public communications and on camera." Unfortunately, Mr. Sass has decided to call members of the public, his supposed constituents, liars even when they speak on subjective matters. What may be his "truth" may not be a member of the public's "truth."

As elected officials, the council should 1) have thicker skin or get out of politics, 2) listen to the public they were elected to serve, and 3) be very careful calling members of this community liars when they are coming forward to express an opinion. Isn't this what we elected them to do and are paying them for?

Bottom line, as many are aware, public speaking is the biggest phobia we humans face and knowing that our comments/opinions expressed to our local elected officials – our employees – will be met with scorn and accusations, will have a chilling effect on the public's right to take an active part in local government. I guess when they want our opinion, they will tell us what it is.

Respectfully,

Tamara Wallace, executive director South Tahoe Chamber of Commerce