

TRPA toys with linking building allocations to VHRs

By Kathryn Reed

STATELINE – Residential building allocations and vacation home rentals may one day be linked, but it won't be this year if the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency's Governing Board listens to its Local Government Committee.

The committee is made up of representatives from South Lake Tahoe, El Dorado County, Placer County, Douglas County, Washoe County and Carson City. They all agreed last week that it is imperative the allocations, which are released every two years, go forward as scheduled. The Governing Board at its May 24 meeting is expected to release the allocations.

The bi-state regulatory agency doles out these allocations based on whether the jurisdictions meet certain environmental criteria.

"You can't change the rules in the middle of the process," Shelley Aldean, who represents Carson City, said.

Some on the 15-member Governing Board – the ones who don't live here and don't have to deal with the impacts of their decisions – are advocating for regulations that would prohibit a residential allocation to end up being used as a vacation rental and not for a full-time resident.



Residential allocations:

South Lake Tahoe, 33 for 2017, 33 for 2018

El Dorado County, 30 for 2017, 30 for 2018

Placer County, 37 for 2017, 37 for 2018

Douglas County, 10 for 2017, 10 for 2018

Washoe County, 10 for 2017, 10 for 2018

Source: *TRPA*

There are 46,962 residential units in the Lake Tahoe Basin today. The Regional Plan allows for up to 130 residential allocations per year. The total residential units will be 50,637.

Some of the discussion on May 11 centered on whether people intending to build a house to be used exclusively as a VHR should be denied an allocation. TRPA code already says a residence used exclusively as a VHR must have a tourist accommodation unit assigned to it.

Committee members questioned why this was being discussed. The answer – because other board members want TRPA to be in the driver's seat on the VHR issue. Allowing local control on any

issue has always be an issue for the Governing Board as a whole.

Austin Sass, who represents South Lake Tahoe, said for a science-based organization he is not seeing any science behind making changes to allocation distributions and VHRs.

Enforcement is another issue that really wasn't touched upon. And exclusively can be slippery; an owner can stay there or have friends be there for free for a couple nights. Then it's no longer exclusively rented to tourists. And what happens when the dwelling is sold?

The committee members all recognize housing – or the lack of it – is an issue in the basin. They acknowledge vacation rentals may be impacting availability. However, those in the industry say owners won't turn their property into a long-term rental if VHR rules change. That's the conundrum.

Exploring how many VHRs can be in a neighborhood was brought up.

Douglas County has a VHR policy for the lake, and is now looking to expand it to the valley. A special use permit might also be required.

Local TRPA members are all in favor of discussing the matter further. First, though, they'd like to see the outcome of South Lake Tahoe's VHR economic study that is expected to be released in June. Current VHR numbers supplied by South Lake Tahoe for just the city 1,287 single-family VHRs, 58 multiple family VHRs and 376 tourist accommodations for a total of 1,721.