

Letter: NTPUD article misleads the public

To the community,

Duane Whitelaw, the manager of the North Tahoe Public Utility District (NTPUD), Aug. 31 column regarding the potential 70-year lease of the North Tahoe Event Center to one of Laulima Partner's LLC's was full of spin and factual omissions. Don't the NTPUD ratepayers deserve the whole story? We do.

The event center \$90K yearly loss is a small portion of the Parks and Recreation \$1.5M 2016 budget operating loss. The \$1.5M is before depreciation and the Mellos Roos tax contribution. The Tahoe Vista Boat Launch loses \$75K/year and the Boys and Girls Club cost \$125K/year.

It is clear some of the board and management don't like the event center.

There is no guarantee of affordable accessibility with Laulima et al. What they will charge is up to their "good faith business judgement." After supposedly injecting \$5.6M into the place it is doubtful a local 25 percent off discount will be affordable.

Yes, more than a dozen public meetings have been held, but the public didn't know the terms of the lease until Sept. 7 after almost two years of secret negotiations. Now the public only has less than a month before board approval to digest a draft lease full of errors and incorrect references. The NTPUD legal team, Ethan Walsh and Josh Nelson of BB&K, should be ashamed. At last week's workshop, Walsh sounded more like a salesman than someone hired to protect the NTPUD ratepayers.

Although Laulima initially said they would pay \$200K/yr for the lease; now it starts at \$50K/yr for the first year leasing

16,000 square feet and then goes to \$75K for years two and three; \$100K for years four and five, \$126K for years six and seven; \$165K doesn't start until year 10.

It runs from 26 cents to finally 85 cents per square foot per month in year 10.

The Citizen Advisory Committee will only be able to make recommendations to Laulima. There is no teeth for enforcement.

The NTPUD is trying to eliminate a relatively small operating loss (what community centers make money?) in return for huge potential financial liability for the ratepayers. What if Laulima fails to complete their project or files bankruptcy and the ratepayers have to finish? Is 110 percent bond enough for interest and delinquencies. It wasn't for the Cal-Neva bankruptcy.

Laulima et al is proposing to develop a deck on top of the event center. This will be a discretionary approval because it's located in an environmentally sensitive lakefront location. Who will pay for that? Us? What about the environmental study and parking?

NTPUD justifies this all by a bogus survey sent to ratepayers last year that was frankly incomprehensible. What should have been asked of ratepayers is, "are you willing to contribute \$27/year to support the event center?" I would have resoundingly answered yes.

Under the current NTPUD management and board, we have lost control of the Kings Beach Recreation Area Parking lot and the Dollar Hill Firestone property. Now they want us to lose the eventcenter to any of nine LLC's associated with Laulima Partners. One of which is Laulima Northstar, LLC. Ouch.

The final meeting for NTPUD regarding the North Tahoe Event Center is Sept. 12 at 5:3pm at the center.

Ann Nichols, North Tahoe Preservation Alliance