

Editorial: Vote no on South Tahoe's Measure C

By Lake Tahoe News Editorial Board

"Don't tell me what you value, show me your budget, and I'll tell you what you value." – Joe Biden

That sentiment needs to be applied to the city of South Lake Tahoe and all other public agencies.

When looking at the city's budget for this fiscal year, which began Sunday, there are zero dollars for roads. If the former vice president of the United States is correct, that shows the five elected members of the City Council who last month approved this budget and the staff who presented it don't value roads.

Shame on all of you.

For months, even years, people associated with the city of South Lake Tahoe have touted how important roads are. They say what we drive our cars and ride our bikes on are in disrepair. They say something needs to be done. We agree.

But what are they doing?

Not a single road was paved in 2000, 2002, 2004, 2005, 2011 and 2016.

Still, from 1995 to today the city has spent \$11,792,473.10 on pavement rehabilitation. That is an average of \$512,7616.22 per year in each of the last 23 years. So, clearly, the city has money for roads when it wants to. At least some councils saw it as a priority.

This money was solely for paving.

Measure C on the November ballot is projected to bring in \$2.5 million annually. The proposal would have money going toward complete streets – meaning more than an overlay. It would include curbs, gutters and striping for bike lanes where appropriate.

We believe safe roads is one of the basic fundamentals government is supposed to provide. Clearly, based on this council's budget priorities, the five disagree.

This current group has neglected its duty to be fiscally prudent, cut costs, increase revenue and provide the basics for their constituents. They, instead, want people to pay a higher sales tax to fix the roads.

Measure C on the November ballot asks the residents of South Lake Tahoe to raise the sales tax from 7.75 percent to 8.25 percent.

While advocates say 75 percent of the local sales tax is paid by people who don't live in the city limits, they have not provided any proof to substantiate that fact. Even if tourists, and not just our neighbors in El Dorado and Douglas counties, were paying the bulk of the tax, that should not be a reason to say yes.

At some point the people we elect and nearly 200 workers employed by the city need to make roads a priority. It is their job to work within the budget to provide all of us with safe roads. It is not the taxpayers job to come to the rescue every time they want something.

Higher taxes for the extras in life are one thing – like an increased hotel tax for recreation amenities or property taxes for improved K-12 facilities – are logical. Another tax for the basics, like roads, is ludicrous.

Come on city officials, do your job – make roads a priority by funding them out of the General Fund.

And voters, do your job – vote no on Measure C on Nov. 7.