

Clean Tahoe rate increase in the works

By Kathryn Reed

Clean Tahoe, the nonprofit that deals with trash incidents beyond the scope of the garbage company, is looking at ways to increase its rates.

All El Dorado County residents in the basin pay \$4.80 a year for the service. South Tahoe Refuse collects the fee via its bills. The last increase was in 1999.

While the hope was to increase the rate as STR went through its process, legally this cannot happen.

"It's up to the county and city what works best for them to fund the program. I think there are a lot of different ways," Tom Bruen, attorney for the South Lake Tahoe Waste Management Authority, told that board.

It's possible Clean Tahoe could become a subcontractor of STR. This would likely trigger a revision to the franchise agreement.

The rate issue has been a point of discussion for at least 18 months.

The joint powers authority board at its November meeting recommended South Lake Tahoe and El Dorado County electeds come up with a plan to increase Clean Tahoe's rates.

There was even talk of having Douglas County possibly be part of Clean Tahoe. No one in the room had knowledge as to why at least the lake portion of Douglas was not part of this entity.

The goal for Catherine Cecchi, who heads Clean Tahoe, is to make the program sustainable. She told the board further cuts

aren't possible. Benefits for employees were eliminated years ago. The income is so lacking that even buying a wheelbarrow is challenging. The budget has been scrutinized at least by the former South Lake Tahoe city attorney.

Clean Tahoe is also on its last legs with one of its two vehicles.

The JPA board, which is made up of a rep from South Lake Tahoe (Wendy David), El Dorado County (Sue Novasel) and Douglas County (Nancy McDermid), told Cecchi to come back to them with particulars – namely a price – for a truck that Clean Tahoe wants to buy. The three at that time will contemplate offering a zero interest loan through the JPA.