

SLT mayor engaging residents in conversation



Matt Sanchez talks about issues at the hotel he manages as Councilmembers Wendy David and Tom Davis, back right, listen. Photo/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

While vacation home rentals, marijuana and SnowGlobe were prominent topics at the inaugural “mayor’s conversation,” other issues came to light that aren’t always before the South Lake Tahoe City Council.

Mayor Wendy David launched the monthly get-together on Jan. 24. The purpose is to have an informal discussion with anyone in a relaxed atmosphere. She plans to bring a guest with her each time, with Councilman Tom Davis being her partner on Wednesday.

While people have the opportunity to come before the entire council at the meetings and talk for three minutes on any topic, the state open meeting law prevents the electeds from engaging in a dialogue. These sessions, though, allow for back-and-forth communication without legalities getting in the way.

More than two dozen people wandered in for this first gathering at Peet's inside Raley's at the Y.

Matt Sanchez, the new manager of the Elizabeth Lodge on Pioneer Trail, spoke about his frustrations with a seedy element of the community hanging around his property "because of its past reputation."

"Our place is safe now," he said. There was a time, he said, when a different class of people paid a nightly fee. That's not true anymore. But they are still in the neighborhood, loitering and giving off an unsafe vibe, according to Sanchez.

Police Chief Brian Uhler, who stopped by briefly, vowed to increase patrols in the area. But he said hanging out isn't a crime, pointing to how the U.S. Supreme Court has stuck down most loitering laws.

Another person asked about what is going to happen with roads since the **ballot measure failed** last fall.

David said obviously the need to fix the roads has not gone away, but there is no timeline to put it on the agenda for the council to have a discussion about it.

Davis said pot holes will continue to be filled, touched on **Sierra Boulevard** being revamped, and revealed Third Street leading to Barton Memorial Hospital will be seeing improvements this year.

A former El Dorado County snowplow driver voiced his frustration with snow removal in the city limits.

Dan Browne, a frequent critic of the City Council, was at the meeting with an opinion on just about every topic. He asked why the city spent \$100,000 on the fireplace at the airport when “80 percent of the population won’t see it.”

Instead of listening to the mayor’s response, he got up and went to talk to someone else. David, though, explained to the others who chose listen that the money came from a **land deal with Barton Health** which per FAA rules mandated the proceeds be spent at the airport. In addition, the heating and air conditioning systems had outlived their usefulness, so much of what was done was efficiency oriented, not cosmetic. Even so, what the airport lobby – aka City Hall – looked like prior the renovation was sketchy at best.

As for the VHRs, pot and SnowGlobe, it was like a rehash of any council meeting when those subjects are on the agenda.

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Note:

- The mayor conversations will be the Wednesday after the second City Council meeting starting at 9am. Locations will vary.