

SLT pushing forward with recreational pot laws

By Kathryn Reed

The goal is for the initial draft of South Lake Tahoe's recreational marijuana ordinance to be completed by the end of the month or early March so the Planning Commission could discuss it at a special meeting next month.

An attorney with Burke, Williams & Sorensen is writing the document. This is because interim City Attorney Nira Doherty, who works for that firm, is on vacation.

The goal is for the council to have an ordinance to discuss at the March 20 meeting.

After a nearly 3½ hour meeting on the topic on Feb. 20, it was decided that the recommendations of the community working group should form the foundation of the ordinance. From there the Planning Commission and City Council will fine tune things.

The main issues still to be debated are the number of shops (three were proposed by the group), where they would be located (anywhere as long they meet buffer requirements for schools and the like, the group says), and whether micro businesses should be allowed (no says the group).

The Tuesday meeting started out as a rehash of what was presented to the council **earlier this month**.

More than 70 people attended the workshop at Tahoe Beach Retreat. This was a joint session of the City Council and Planning Commission. As the presentation was in progress members could ask for a topic to be discussed in depth later. When "later" will be remains a mystery since it didn't happen

at that meeting.

What was a little different was the preferential treatment given to Lake Tahoe Unified School District and Barton Health. Both were asked to be part of the city's working group, both chose not to. They were called up to the lectern first by Mayor Wendy David.

Reps from both spoke of how there is already a drug problem in town and how there aren't enough resources – aka money – to cope.

Police Chief Brian Uhler was also given the opportunity to spend ample time on how he wants to curtail expansion of marijuana in the city limits.

Ironically, though, it was said there is no base line data from which to prove going forward with recreational pot shops would increase or decrease use or crime. It was not explained why the schools, police and Barton can't collate their respective data to come up with solid information.

Many see pot shops as a cash cow in terms of tax revenue. The potential is there. Caution was urged, though, in terms of implementing too high of a tax so as not to drive the product underground where it would be less expensive for the consumer and possibly more dangerous an unregulated drug. Barton and LTUSD are hoping for a piece of the tax revenue.