

S. Tahoe in search of city manager, city attorney

By Kathryn Reed

South Lake Tahoe is looking for at least one recruiting firm to search for city attorney and city manager candidates.

While the issue of the city attorney was on the March 20 agenda, both positions were discussed at the meeting. This is just another violation of the Brown Act – talking about a non-agendized item.

The council realizes it needs a bit of a refresher or education in the state's open meeting law. Councilmember Tom Davis requested someone be brought in to explain the rules, which others were in support of.

Acting City Manager Jeff Meston told the council he had already sent out requests to search firms, with the hope something could be brought to the council in the next month or so.

"I think it is my job to anticipate what you want," Meston said Tuesday.

However, the council at no time in open session discussed wanting him to do this. Nor was it announced after a closed session that this was the route the council wanted to go down.

The selection process could take months. What the council hasn't discussed is if they want to leave an acting manager in place during this process or bring in someone else in on an interim basis who doesn't already have a full-time job.

Meston envisions three groups – professional, City Council, and community panels – interviewing city manager candidates.

As for the top legal position, interim City Attorney Nira Doherty has given her notice, wanting to be out in the summer. Her firm will continue to work for the city at a rate not to exceed \$33,000 a month.

If the need for legal services exceeds that amount, Doherty said her firm "would eat those costs."

Doherty told the council that financially she believes a firm like hers is more efficient, but that this city "would be well served by an in-house city attorney."

There was no real discussion by the electeds as to the route to take – in house, or an outside firm to be hired.

It was just assumed that a recruiting firm needs to be hired, and then the unanimous vote was taken.