

# Opinion: SLT needs to stop breaking the law

By Brooke Laine

I am providing the following information because I can no longer be a party to the violations of law, secrecy, manipulation, lies, and power struggles that are rampant at the city today.

There appears to be a complete disregard on the part of politicians and appointed officials for state law, transparency, and honesty to the public. The interim city attorney has admitted to many that a recent contract she oversaw violated the Brown Act – think Mary Egan contract. To this day, that contract has never been addressed, corrected, or publicly acknowledged.



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Multiple violations of law have occurred in closed session, often relating to discussions involving personal attacks on non-agenda issues. The interim city attorney and the politicians engaged in the violations refused to cease the unlawful discussions, even when asked to do so to avoid continuing the unlawful conduct.

In addition, the minutes of the March 20, 2018, meeting seriously misstated the facts by asserting an action occurred at a prior meeting, but the council never took that action.

The law requires the city to tell the public the truth, follow the law explicitly, and provide accurate public records. This absolute failure at the very top is a violation of law, injures the public's trust, and is currently crippling the city.

Secrecy has no place in local government. If one councilmember is not privy to the same information as other councilmembers, the question is "why?" If one, two, or worse, three councilmembers discussing information the others don't have, not only is that also a violation of the Brown Act, it creates distrust. It results in decision-making taking place outside of the public's view (another violation of law) and it literally has no place in our city. The only purpose of such secrecy is to shift the balance of power from the council as a whole to a few electeds and appointed staff. Worse yet, blindsiding some people through this type of manipulation, fuels the public's distrust of process, transparency, and government in general.

Power struggles, when the struggle for power is not for the benefit of public policy, but rather for personal gain, are selfish, create hostility, and purposely keep many in the dark. The public is a witness to this, which creates confusion and increases distrust. Further, the media that buys into the incomplete and inaccurate information they are fed, unwittingly become tactical participants in this sport to gain personal power. Most important, the public's business is not a priority.

I care deeply about this community. I always endeavor to hold myself to strong ethical and moral standards, as I feel every elected official should. I respect and hold in high regard the law that dictates how we as local leaders are to govern. It is my belief that the only way to address these serious violations, which illustrates a fundamental and complete breakdown of legal process, is to bring this information to the attention of the community. I can no longer be a party to

this unethical, hostile, distrustful environment that currently exists. I have opposed these tactics both publicly and privately, and tried to stand against the illegal and improper actions I have witnessed. However, this burden has become so heavy.

Today, I am choosing to shine light where it is necessary because I believe our community deserves better. Together, we can do better.

*Brooke Laine is a South Lake Tahoe City Council member.*