

3 people vie for SLT interim city manager

By Kathryn Reed

While the interim city manager position was on two agendas of the South Lake Tahoe City Council this week, no one has been hired to do the job.

Six people initially applied for the position, with three backing out before there were interviews on April 30 during the special council meeting.

At that meeting each of the three gave a brief overview about themselves before being interviewed in closed session. That item was then continued to the regularly scheduled meeting the following day. No reportable action was taken in closed session May 1.

No one is saying what the delay is – whether background checks are being conducted, or maybe a decision was really made in closed session and negotiations are under way with that person and the council doesn't want to let the others know they weren't the first choice in case they eventually get selected, or maybe the council is divided on who to select since only four were debating the matter. (Councilman Jason Collin was only at the Tuesday meeting until about noon.)

The process has been a bit awkward. On Monday's agenda was a proposed salary and cost of benefits that the council had never discussed and therefore never approved. It was much like what the previous city manager was making and her benefits.

It wasn't until Councilwoman Brooke Laine asked for the council to discuss the whole thing in closed session on April 30 that the council then decided to have some of the interview process in closed session – which is normal.

While it's not known what was discussed in that initial session, based on the fact that at the May 1 meeting the salary and other benefits had been changed, the compensation package was likely a topic on Monday. One would think there was reportable action from Monday's closed session based on what transpired in open session Tuesday.

Tom Stuart, human resources chief for the city, on Tuesday said he had researched city manager salaries from about a dozen California cities and came up with a range South Lake Tahoe should offer the interim – between \$14,583 and \$15,833 a month. (The previous day the recommendation was for a monthly salary of \$14,616.70.)

Direction from council was for the top amount to also include a housing allowance if one is negotiated. The car allowance is likely not to exceed an additional \$400/month.

It's possible the city could be out more than \$20,000/month for the interim city manager once other benefits/costs that are routine for most employees are factored in. This will then require an adjustment to the budget because what was proposed at the mid-year budget review said there would be no additional expenses for city manager.

Where that money comes also has not ever been discussed in open session. The city has a healthy pot of cash in excess reserves, so it could come from there as a one-time expense.

Interim city manager candidates are:

- Dirk Brazil – recently retired Davis city manager
- Bob Perrault – most recently was interim city manager for Willits, prior to that was city manager of Grover Beach for 10 years
- James Hock – (interviewed via Skype) – city manager of Joliet, Ill.

The hope of the council is that whomever is selected will be able to assume the role quickly.

The city is in need of the top executive because the council for reasons that have never been disclosed paid the previous city manager nine month's salary for her to not have the job. Fire Chief Jeff Meston then assumed the role of acting city manager. He told the council he wanted out.