

# Kandel: Ready to tackle Douglas County's issues

**Publisher's note:** *Lake Tahoe News asked the three candidates for District 4 Douglas County commission race, which covers Lake Tahoe, to answer the following questions. Two of the three responded.*



Kristi Kandel

**Name:** Kristi Kandel

**Age:** 31

**Hometown:** Stateline

**Occupation:** President of a real estate consulting company, I&D Consulting Services Corporation.

**Education:** Bachelor's degree

**What elected, civic, nonprofit boards or groups are or have you been affiliated with and in what capacity?:** I've participated in a variety of community groups throughout Ohio, Florida, California and now Tahoe. Currently

in Tahoe I'm a member of the Tahoe Regional Young Professionals, attending Lake Tahoe Business Referral Network meetings and recently volunteered at the Earth Day event that the Alpine Watershed Group held on April 2. I'm looking forward to investing even more of my time in our local organizations this summer.

**Why do you want to be commissioner?:** I've been very put off by politics the past decade. It feels like politics in the U.S. have become an insurmountable mountain with our leaders acting like puppets to their political parties and corporations that fund their campaigns. However, just shutting up and not participating is not the solution. Not being actively involved in our future is not acceptable. It is our civic responsibility to become engaged citizens of the community in which we live. I'm running because I am done sitting on the sidelines. I'm running because I know I can be a positive contributor to our community. I'm running because I want to set an example with the younger generations to show them that each and every one of us has the ability to create positive change. If we are willing to accept that responsibility and take action.

Over my 10-year career in the real estate industry, I've been fortunate to work with hundreds of local governments and utility providers, and agencies throughout the country. I am constantly surprised and rejuvenated by the gems I encounter along the way. The passion that some local leaders have for their community is contagious. Their passion is my constant reminder that we are all capable of, and responsible for, stepping up and doing our part. It is now my turn to engage and give back to my community. The vast experience I've gained from working with hundreds of diverse communities throughout the country will be a tremendous asset to Douglas County. I'm passionate about working with our residents and local government to bring positive ideas and contributions. I will help build a solid path for the implementation of those ideas

to create a County that our children, and our children's children, will be proud to actively participate in and call home.

**Why should people vote for you over one of the other candidates?:** Change is occurring throughout our Nation. We are seeing many more of our young citizens waking up and understanding that the time to take action for our future is now. It is truly inspiring to see our younger citizens engaging in their communities and working with our seasoned leaders to build a bright future for generations to come. Throughout my career, I've worked with other professionals who are typically 20-40 years older than myself. We have been able to successfully collaborate on hundreds of redevelopment projects throughout the county where we all benefited from exchanging a wide range of experiences and perspectives. The experiences that I will bring will greatly benefit our government officials and residents of Douglas County. My experience with hundreds of local governments and utility agencies throughout the Country in such a short time is invaluable. I look forward to sharing what I've learned while working with those agencies as experience is our greatest teacher. I am honored to be considered to represent Douglas County to ensure that we maximize our full potential as a community for generations to come.

**How are you going to resolve pension issues?:** This is a complex topic. In short, we should complete a thorough financial evaluation to fully understand the impact of any decision to our community, evaluate and understand how other communities in our state are currently addressing pension issues and then work together to find a viable pension solution for Douglas County.

**What are the attributes you would look for in a future county manager?:** The attributes I'd look for in a county manager would be the same as any leadership position. Some of those qualities would include:

Honesty and integrity  
Confidence  
Inspire others  
Commitment and passion  
Good communicator  
Decision-making capabilities  
Accountability  
Delegation and empowerment  
Creativity and innovation  
Empathy

Leadership is the most critical part to the success of any organization. The right leader will have the proper vision for how to navigate the complex challenges of our community which is pivotal to our success. Our county manager must have a strong understanding of how to guide our local government offices to help cultivate a positive and empowering environment which allows all county employees to contribute and grow. This type of leadership is vital to building a strong and thriving local government and the betterment of our community.

**When would you want a permanent county manager to be hired?:**  
When the right person who is qualified for the position is found. However, we shouldn't allow ourselves to be indecisive waiting for just the perfect candidate to emerge. If we waited for the perfect moment, or the perfect opportunity, it will never come. We need to understand the strengths and weaknesses of our candidates and assess which one might have the skills to grow into the position and to become our next leader. Creating stability in our leadership positions will trickle down through all government departments and will create a positive and thriving culture in our government offices. However, we must understand that selecting our next county manager is only part of our process and responsibility. We must ensure that we provide our new county manager with the proper tools and support to do their job

effectively. We cannot handicap our leaders and then expect unattainable results. We must set realistic short, medium and long-term goals to give our next county manager the best opportunity for their success and the overall success of Douglas County.

**Should the government be responsible for solving the affordable housing issue as well as homelessness? Why or why not to both? If yes, how would you solve those issues?:** These topics are too often looked upon as if they are black and white with a single and potentially simple solution. Regarding homelessness, I've spent quite a bit of time volunteering in multiple states. Over the years I learned to stop trying to solve the hurdles I perceived for the homeless and instead I started to listen and understand their real issues. Once I stopped trying to force my solutions on them and started listening I was able to gain clarity on how we could actually help the homeless in our communities. Solving homelessness is not something that happens overnight, nor can it be solved by just throwing money at the situation. A "simple" housing solution with taxpayer dollars does not exist or government would have solved this problem by now. Homelessness is a much larger social issue impacting every community. I'll work with our local government to help create programs that will actually facilitate positive change, show our residents that we do care about them and provide hope to everyone. A chain is only as strong as its weakest link and as Mahatma Gandhi said, "A nation's greatness is measured by how it treats its weakest members."

Affordable housing is another complex issue that will not be solved simply by building a high-density apartment complex. We must first understand where the demand for affordable housing comes from. A large portion of our lake economy is from tourism. As a result, there is a great need for people to work in the lower paying hospitality jobs that tourism and global demand for those positions create. However, due to our

proximity to the Bay Area and Southern California, the local home values are not representative of actual living wages in Douglas County. The homes are owned and occupied by our retired residents, professionals working remote or self-employed and second-home owners who are actually saving money due to the tax advantages that Nevada provides. Additionally, second-home owners have found that by utilizing their homes as vacation rentals they can help recoup some of their added costs while preserving the ability to use their homes a few times a year when work permits. Whereas, renting their homes full-time would not allow them to personally enjoy their homes and take advantage of everything our community has to offer.

Like most issues, once we decide to truly understand the root cause of these problems we can then work together to create solutions that work for everyone. I have several ideas for how to create an affordable housing paradigm shift and I encourage you to check out my website for more information.

**What are your thoughts of making Lake Tahoe its own county?:** Conceptually this is a very interesting idea since the lake and valley both have many different challenges with little overlap. However, in practice this is actually a much larger undertaking than it would seem. I would not pursue merging the California and Nevada counties as it would deplete many of our resources to make this happen without providing an adequate return. I would take the same approach for merging only the Nevada counties. Due to the complexity of working with multiple counties and two states neither of those ideas seem to be viable solutions considering other immediate and more pressing issues Douglas County currently faces.

I would be interested in forming a focus group to look into the benefits and challenges that we would face in just separating the lake portion of Douglas County from the valley. If the results of the focus group indicate that it would be advantageous to continue pursuing this path, then I would

support a more in-depth evaluation. Ultimately, we will need to determine that the creation of a new Lake County would position and allow for both communities to be successful on their own.

**What entities would you not take money from?:** I've never agreed with the amount of money spent on campaigns to elect our officials, and will not be accepting donations in this election. I will be using the District 4 commissioner race to help build awareness on the amount of money that is poured into campaigns throughout the country rather than being donated to the betterment of our communities.

Winning at all costs is no longer acceptable. It is our civic responsibility to evaluate outdated processes and to reform political practices. Today, the citizens of the United States are no longer fighting to have a voice. We all have a platform due to the emergence of social media outlets. We can no longer afford to simply vote every four years and expect our elected officials to fix our problems. It's time to use our voices to take action and bring reform to antiquated practices. It is time for us to join together to completely overhaul campaign finance reform starting in our community.

In support of the Kristi Kandel District 4 Commissioner campaign, we would love to see your donations go to some of the amazing local organizations working hard to preserve and share the Lake Tahoe paradise in which we live:

<http://www.alpinewatershedgroup.org/>

<https://tahoerimtrail.org/>

<http://www.tahoefund.org/>

*Become a Member*

<http://www.tamba.org/>

**What is the No. 1 issue facing District 4 and how do you propose to resolve it?:** Utility infrastructure. Our district faces very unique infrastructure challenges due to costly physical and environmental barriers to upgrading our aging infrastructure. Currently, our wet and dry utility systems are only “upgraded” when they break, creating a very reactive environment that is not healthy or sustainable. I will pursue available state and federal grant programs to upgrade rural water/wastewater systems and will do my best to provide our residents with a better solution than the ones provided by our elected officials to date. We will create focus groups with residents and work with public works to provide a detailed analysis of the impact of the merger to better understand the economic impact to each district.

Resolving the aging infrastructure will also result in more feasible solutions for other challenges our district faces regarding affordable housing and vacation rentals.

**What is your opinion about recreation marijuana?:** It was voted in by our residents. As the governing body it is now our responsibility to make sure we create and adopt the appropriate codes and enforcement to oversee the new marijuana industry. Like any new technology or industry, we should take additional steps to educate ourselves and our residents of the uses and impacts of marijuana. Knowledge is vital to creating a community that is well educated on the actual facts and effects of marijuana instead of how mainstream media and propaganda have portrayed marijuana for over 50 years. My firm belief is that we have a much larger, and very deadly, prescription drug issue that needs to be addressed at our local, state and federal government levels.

**Do you believe vacation home rentals should be allowed in the valley? Why or why not?:** Douglas County should provide equal opportunity to all residents regarding vacation home rentals. The same permit requirements for homes at the lake should apply to homes in the valley. The VHR ordinance is currently



being reviewed by the commissioners and Planning Department and it should provide the mechanisms necessary for proper code enforcement. It is my hope that this ordinance update will ensure that the quality of life and rights of all Douglas County residents are protected. Regardless of where their homes are located or how residents choose to use their homes.

**What changes would you make to the VHR ordinance affecting the**

**lake?:** As a vacation home owner and real estate professional, I thoroughly reviewed the VHR ordinance in Douglas County as well as several other communities prior to purchasing a home in Douglas County. The current Douglas County ordinance does not address all of the issues facing VHRs in our community today and should be updated to reflect an understanding of today's challenges and opportunities. Much like Uber and Lyft have successfully disrupted and transformed the taxi industry, VHR online hosting platforms have disrupted and are transforming a very old housing industry in a much needed way. As such, clear code enforcement parameters should be adopted which will ensure the quality of life and rights of all Douglas County residents are protected. A large portion of our community is sustained by tourism and with the proper enforcement tools the current issues surrounding vacation rentals should start to subside. Code enforcement, creating an environment that facilitates bringing higher-paying jobs to our community and retraining our residents on the latest technologies to assist them in switching industries should go a long way towards reimagining the future of our community.

**How does climate change play a role in how you would make decisions affecting the county?:**

Our Lake Tahoe community currently does an excellent job of trying to reduce our environmental footprint. It is our civic and social duty to be conscious of our actions, and inactions, both as individuals and as a community. I will work with the local

government and residents to help Douglas County become the leader in Nevada for reducing our environmental footprint.

**Tell us something about yourself that people might not know:**

I grew up in a small Ohio town of 2,500 people, three stoplights and no fast-food. We had 10 pizza places and what felt like 100 churches. My family was fairly poor and for a portion of my childhood the six of us lived in a pretty small trailer. At 17 I graduated high school and immediately enrolled in college summer sessions. I proceeded to complete a four-year bachelor's degree in three years. At the age of 20 I took the belongings that could fit in my car and I moved to Florida to start my career in the business world. I managed the Florida office for a national sign company for 3½ years while working on projects worth \$1-3 million annually. It was during that time that I became close with the CVS Pharmacy real estate and development team as well as their preferred developer in the southeast region. In the fall of 2010, and at the age of 23 I started working for that development company. By the first quarter of 2011 I had convinced my new company that I was the best option at our organization to relocate and open our Orange County office. One of our primary clients, Family Dollar, had decided they wanted to expand to California and my company had agreed to take the risk and try to develop in arguably one of the most difficult states in the U.S. In the industry we joke that if you can develop in California, the Northeast and parts of Florida you can be a developer anywhere. From the ages of 23-27 I was the development project manager for 30 new construction projects a year from San Francisco to Calexico. I was working 60-80-hour weeks and in those 3½ years obtained more real estate experience than most people do in a lifetime. While it was never easy, company resources and support were scarce and often I felt like I was fighting alone for our company's survival in California I would not trade those experiences for anything. Without persevering through those challenging circumstances I would not be where I am at

today or more importantly be the person I am today. At the age of 27 I decided to join another developer in Newport Beach so that I could gain experience on larger 5-30 acre developments. It took all of three months for me to realize that development is development regardless of the project size. I immediately began planning for my next career move. I had decided that it was time to fulfill the dream of starting my own company. In the spring of 2015 I officially quit my cushy development job and set course on a path that changed my life forever. As of April 2018 I've now completed three very successful years as a business owner, own a couple properties, recently adopted an amazing 9-year-old dog and get to live in paradise.

On paper I have beat the odds and accomplished the American Dream. However, I know I'm just now getting started. Money and possessions have very little value in the grand scheme of life. Life is about the human interactions we have on a daily basis and the relationships we cultivate. It's the way we treat our neighbors and choosing to make decisions that are best for our entire community and not just what's best for ourselves. It's about working together to build an accepting and understanding community that leans in instead of leaning out. It's about taking responsibility for our actions and the impact that our choices have on those around us. It's about creating and impacting a future that we will never see but we know our future generations will inherit. I can promise you that if I am elected as your District 4 commissioner I will hold myself to these standards every single day.