

Opinion: Time to oust some Tahoe incumbents

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By Kathryn Reed

Today is one of the most important days on the calendar. In many places it is the official start of the election season.

California candidates for races in November may take out papers today; this includes in South Lake Tahoe, El Dorado County and Placer County.

There are myriad offices to run for. Just on the South Shore there is the South Lake Tahoe City Council, South Tahoe Public Utility District, Lake Tahoe Unified School District, Lake Tahoe Community College, Lake Valley Fire District, Tahoe Paradise Recreation and Park, and Tahoe Resource Conservation.

I admire anyone who runs. It takes guts to put yourself out there, to have your personal and professional lives scrutinized, to be criticized, and basically be a verbal punching bag for the next several months. And then someone has to lose; and losing is never easy or fun no matter the contest.

Something to think about when evaluating incumbents is what they have accomplished in the last four years, as well as their entire tenure. Attendance is another criterion. No local board meets more than twice a month unless there is a special meeting.

Of the 25 meetings from July 6, 2017, through July 5, 2018 – Kelly Sheehan missed six meetings, Chris Cefalu five, Duane Wallace three, and Jim Jones and Randy Vogelgesang each one. It is the seats of Cefalu, Wallace and Jones that are up this

fall.

According to the STPUD board policy, "Members of the board of directors shall attend all regular and special meetings of the board unless there is good cause for absence. After a total of three consecutive absences the board president will discuss any problems with the offending director."

On the council it is the seats occupied by Wendy David, Tom Davis and Austin Sass that are up this November. **Earlier this year** I advocated for the removal of all three. I still stand by that belief. All have indicated they intend to run for re-election.

The deadline to file is Aug. 10. That will be extended to Aug. 15 if an incumbent does not file. This is true for all the races.

Unfortunately, I was wrong in my prediction that David wouldn't run. She is the only one of the three to have publicly declared her intention to run. She made the announcement earlier this month via social media.

She has been mayor or mayor pro tem the four years she has been on council. This is highly unusual, especially in a first term. Those two positions have more access to the city manager, are more involved in the agenda planning, and have early insight into things. "Just" councilmembers have to do a little more leg work, don't know what is on the agenda until it arrives in his or her in box at the same time it is available to the public. So, David has had it a bit cushy this term.

One would expect her to be a little more versed on how things work, especially since she spent eons on the LTUSD board – many of those as president. But there isn't a meeting that goes by that she doesn't appear to be in over her head.

Then look to the demise of the relationship the city had with

the former city manager and how it cost taxpayers more than \$200,000. The finger-pointing goes to all five council members for that. For now, though, only three can be held accountable.

To this day there have been no straight answers explaining why Nancy Kerry isn't the city manager of South Lake Tahoe.

It is common for councils to tire of a city manager, want to go in a new direction, seek new blood. There is also a professional way to go about parting ways. The council managed to do so with Dave Jinkens. That didn't happen with Kerry. Instead, Kerry's name was dragged through the mud, and her reputation tainted for no apparent good reason. If Kerry had done something so egregious, she would not have been paid out what she was owed per her contract.

The settlement agreement prevents her from explaining to potential future employers that the city clerk who was in rehab is the one who brought her down, along with a weak mayor – that would be David, and Sass, a councilman who has issues with women and wants to be the supreme ruler of South Lake Tahoe.

And yet every council member still has his/her job as does the city clerk.

Before voting for the incumbents you should demand they each explain why they chose to get rid of Kerry, why it was worth more than \$200k.

I don't trust this council to do the right thing. They didn't with Kerry. I'm fine with getting rid of her, but be professional in how you conduct yourselves and the business of the city, and be forthcoming with the public who has put you into office.

South Lake Tahoe deserves better than it is getting today. Run for office. We need people who are smart, engaged, honest, have integrity, follow the law, make decisions for the greater

good, and aren't in it for their ego, the perceived prestige, the health care benefits or some other perk. And be sure to vote out the City Council incumbents.