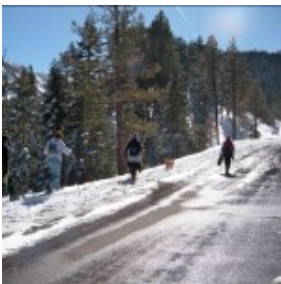


Spring weather throughout Lake Tahoe matches the calendar

It may feel like record heat considering this is just the first day of spring, but the National Weather Service says it would take another 5 to 8 degrees to hit the record high.

Last Saturday after a fresh dump of snow overnight, Highway 89 was closed to vehicle traffic. This brought out carloads of snowshoers and walkers. It was one of those rare opportunities to walk on the highway with Cascade Lake on one side and Emerald Bay on the other.



Snowshoeing on Highway 89 near Emerald Bay on March 13.

Photos/Kathryn Reed

Today is a completely different story with the mercury expected to be in the high 50s all weekend and the road open to vehicle traffic.

It's one of those Lake Tahoe weekends to play in the snow in the morning, then golf or bike ride in the afternoon.

But it's Tahoe, so keep the shovel nearby.

ngg_shortcode_0_placeholder

South Tahoe initiates plan to cutback use of all bags

By Kathryn Reed



Reuse, reduce, recycle. That's the vocabulary the South Lake Tahoe Sustainability Commission wants the community to learn.

The idea is to prolong the life of what's considered a one-time bag from all stores, whether it's plastic or paper, by reusing it, not using it or recycling it. Keeping them out of the garbage and landfills is the ultimate goal.

Commissioners would like to eliminate their use completely, but legal issues prevent that from being the mantra, plus it offends some who may partner with the all-volunteer panel.

Much of Wednesday afternoon's discussion centered on defining the goal of the community education campaign. With input from South Tahoe High School students, South Tahoe Refuse and the American Chemistry Council, the final verbiage of the goal is, "Promote reduction, reuse and 100 percent recycling of one-time use bags to improve sustainable consumer behavior."

Vocalizing the message begins March 27 at Lake Tahoe Community

College at Sierra Nevada Alliance's 5th annual Wild and Scenic Environmental Film Festival.

The idea is a slow, gradual roll-out of what the commission wants to do, with a possible major launch of the education campaign in June. Commissioners are thinking of having one month devoted to not using single-use bags.

Commissioners will spread the R words at the Earth Day celebration at the college on April 17 as well as at the Green Business mixer at Embassy Suites on April 22.

Plastic bags have dominated the commission's agenda in the 10 months that it has existed. This action plan is one of the more substantial things the seven members have accomplished. A full report of their activities and future goals will be presented to the City Council in May.

Bags present several concerns. One is the amount of petroleum products needed to create them, with paper being a bigger culprit than plastic. Plastic bags, though, tend to end up strewn about and create a different environmental headache.

Ryan Kenny with the American Chemistry Council said his group based in Sacramento wants to help South Lake, but believes the plastic bags as garbage is the biggest issue.

"Our membership will have a difficult time participating in a plan that eliminates our product," Kenny told the commissioners.

With that said, commissioners reworded their goal so the word "eliminate" was no longer part of the sentence.

Jeanne Lear of South Tahoe Refuse said her company is talking to Trex, which makes pseudo wood products out of recycled plastic at its Fernley plant.

Right now grocery stores have bins for people to recycle plastic bags that are then picked up by their respective

companies. (STR will separate them out if people put them in the blue bags for recycling.) The refuse company may create a route where it would pick up the bags at the stores, then assemble them to be delivered to Trex.

Ashley Richardson, a senior at STHS, said students have talked about the idea of having bins to recycle plastic bags in parking lots. People could load their goods in their vehicle and then dispose of the bag right away.

The way the commission is going to get the words “reuse, reduce, recycle” out are through advertising; social media and existing websites; signs at businesses that distribute bags; partnering with agencies and interested individuals; and having booths at events.

The end result the commission would like is for the public to change its behavior when it comes to one-time use bags – to essentially eliminate them from their lives. Instead of plastic or paper being the question, the idea is the consumer would come with their own bag.

DUI checkpoint keeps drivers on a straight path

By Kathryn Reed

Balancing on one foot with the other off the ground, but parallel to it, the South Lake Tahoe man counted to 30. He walked a straight line while counting. He did everything the officer asked him to do.

Even though the pupils of his eyes bounced around enough for

him to be pulled out of the line of cars during the St. Patrick's night DUI checkpoint, this local was let go. He and his female passenger, who was wearing a festive green and white hat, were allowed to drive home. At least that's where they said they were headed after being at McP's.



SLT police
Officer Berry
Rider at
Wednesday's
DUI
checkpoint.
Photo/Kathryn
Reed

People under the influence usually cannot track well with their eyes. The same goes for someone with a head injury.

Wednesday night was the second of five DUI checkpoints the South Lake Tahoe Police Department will conduct in a year's time, with funding through a grant.

Another grant that multiple agencies in El Dorado County were just awarded means another three to four more checkpoints will be added to the calendar. The AVOID grant is from the California Office of Traffic Safety.

“The overall goal of the awareness campaign is to let drivers know about the countywide increased enforcement periods and warn drivers that the only way to AVOID the county's law enforcement officers is to drive sober,” the state website says.

Netting drunken drivers isn't the main goal of checkpoints
it's awareness.

It's more of a deterrence," said South Lake Tahoe
police Sgt. Shannon Laney as he stood on the edge of Highway
50 near Heidi's restaurant.

A steady stream of cars passed through the checkpoint near
Fairway Avenue between 9pm and 1am. The backup determined
whether it was every third or fifth car that was stopped.
Driver's licenses were checked. Citations were issued for
those without one.

One young woman said she had a permit from Arizona but
couldn't produce it.

With it being such a small town, officers recognized a parolee
in one passenger seat.

Cabbies seemed to be doing well on this night known for
massive beer drinking. All of their vehicles were full. Even
though they were the designated driver, so to speak, it
didn't mean they automatically got to pass through the
checkpoint without being questioned.

Caltrans workers, semis, beat-up Tahoe vehicles, BMWs
no one was immune from being stopped. One officer asked for to
see the driver's license. The cop on the passenger side shined
a flashlight to see what might be inside an open container,
weapons, drugs, children not in a car seat.

During the December checkpoint three male juveniles from out
town, and all wearing red, were drunk. They also had a Samurai
sword in the trunk. They were detained.

Everyone the cops spoke with was handed a little information
flyer about what to do if they suspect a person is drunk
behind the wheel. Call 911.

Plenty of warning goes into the checkpoints. Besides having

the information broadcast by the media, a sign before the stop alerts drivers about the checkpoint. Legally, officers must allow drivers an opportunity to drive around the checkpoint.

Even with the warning, people still make it to the front of the line.

Laney said it's often people who are too drunk to know any better or someone who had a couple drinks and has no idea they are past the 0.08 limit for blood alcohol.

Young scientists' creativity shines through at school fair

By Kathryn Reed

ZEPHYR COVE – Buy the cheap hamburger. The lean stuff produces about as much grease as the fatty kind.

That's what Aubrey Felton discovered in his science experiment. The Zephyr Cove Elementary School sixth-grader took first place Tuesday night for his grade level.



Aubrey
Felton's
hamburger
experiment was

a winner.
Photos/Kathryn
Reed

He used raw and frozen meat of different grades to see which produced the most grease and if the cost difference was worth it.

Felton concluded, "I would buy the cheapest because all the different kinds of meats contain about the same amount of grease."

The annual science fair is geared toward fourth-, fifth- and sixth-graders, though some in the lower grades entered the contest. Samantha Fonvilly and Gigi Stetler took top honors for fifth-graders for their "Bacteria Among Us" project. Jonathan Duffy won at the fourth-grade level for his "Yeast" experiment.

The top four finishers in grades four to six go on to the next level of competition in Reno on March 26-27.

Judges were three Lake Tahoe Community College instructors and a parent. Millie Oleson, who



Carbon dioxide
and yeast was
one
experiment.

teaches chemistry at LTCC and is a parent of a ZCES student,
organized and helped judge the event.

“There were some really good original ideas. There are some really bright minds out there,” Oleson said. “They learned how to scientifically test something.”

Jordyn and Hannah Switzer, sixth-graders, created a mini solar vehicle.

“We would put another motor in the back next time,” Jordyn Switzer said. They tried it with both motors in back, but found with the two motors they had that one in front and one in back gave it the most power.

Solar panels on the wood body of the vehicle powered the engines. Alligator clips and Christmas lights are some of the tools they used to rig their hot rod. Next time they may need to add four-wheel drive because as Switzer said, “It doesn’t work on gravel.”

Kristen Oleson, a third-grader, spent her time indoors trying to find out what happens when you don’t follow a recipe. She made several cakes. One was missing the water, another had extra oil and one had five egg whites instead of three.



Kristen Oleson explains what to do and not do with a cake recipe.

Oleson said they all tasted good except for the one with the extra oil. Even though the waterless one was hard and crumbly, she said it had great flavor.

The experiments covered the spectrum of scientific intrigue. One student examined which types of oranges produce the most juice. The effectiveness of magnets at different temperatures was researched. A team studied what plays the biggest role in the speed of a skier or snowboarder. The conclusion was weight helped and pink wax is a bad thing.

Laine Photolabs focusing on closing after 43 years

By Kathryn Reed



After being in the business of chronicling the lives of those on the South Shore since the 1960s, Laine Photolabs is about to close shop.

“It provided me, for 20 years, the lifestyle I needed. I needed complete control of my time,” Brooke Laine said. It meant being able to raise her kids without interference from a boss and serve the community as a member of the South Lake Tahoe City Council.

But it was also a business she inherited from her parents and not one she would have necessarily picked.

“Running a business I’m quite good at. Photography was never my cup of tea,” Laine said.

The 1982 South Tahoe High grad returned to town in 1990 to take over the business.

For the last three years she has been working at Bank of the West. This is something she will continue to do. What else the future holds for the 46-year-old remains to be seen.

The contract with Lake Tahoe Unified School District ends this school year. Laine will shoot America's Most Beautiful Bike Ride in June.

She said the decision to close was not difficult.

"I've been looking forward to it," Laine said. "I'm totally excited about moving on."

She said it's not a coincidence the contract with LTUSD expires the same year her youngest son graduates from high school.

The retail end was shuttered in 2007. The agreement between she and her parents was the family name would not be sold, thus the reason for closing the business and not selling it.

The early years

Ed and Del Laine arrived here through different routes. He in 1957 with his first wife. After divorcing he stayed at the lake. Del started coming here as a toddler each summer with her family. She still spends her summers at the cabin off South Upper Truckee Road.

They met through a children's theater project Del was spearheading. Ed volunteered to do carpentry work on the set. They got engaged, married and raised three daughters and a son here.

For a spell Ed was advertising director at the *Tahoe Daily Tribune*. Del wrote columns for the paper about skiing, hiking, bowling, fishing, gossip and other activities. In 1967 the

couple left the *Tribune* to open Laine Associates.

“We did primarily advertising. Photography was a component of that. It evolved and Ed became more interested in photography,” said Del, who turns 80 Saturday. “The difficulty was the seasonality.”

In the early days the Laines made their money in seven months and ran up the bills the other five. Del often worked at home doing the books as she tended to their offspring. Ed supplemented their income by teaching photography for nine years at Lake Tahoe Community College.

“In the beginning I think it was rough. For some reason or another we made it. We were able to grow into wedding work and portrait work,” Ed, 78, said. “We put a studio together. The wedding business was our main stay.

“I never liked a lot of my work. I was never satisfied with it,” Ed said. “Maybe I was wrong in being overly judgmental. A lot of artists are like that.”

Changing direction

The one-hour photo business became a reality when they moved from South Lake to Round Hill in 1989. They incorporated and created Laine Photolabs Inc.

“Our lawyer made (Photolabs) one word, which was a mistake,” Brooke said.

They sold film, camera bags and batteries – but never cameras. In the late 1990s they began transitioning into digital photography.

The wedding business began to change as digital cameras cropped up. Everyone began to think they could take a picture as well as a professional and the business became diluted with wannabe professionals.

Brooke was more than ready to stop taking wedding photos. Cranky people and having to dress for the occasion are some of the reasons she was glad to move out of that genre.

“We decided we would transition from wedding to sports photography. That was my decision,” Brooke said. “I was a mother with kids. I wanted to be where they were. They were in sports.”

Her computer background made the digital work an easy leap. They bought a processing machine in 2000. Though the upfront costs were expensive, it didn't take long to see a savings.

For a time father and daughter ran the business as equal partners. Then Ed worked a few days a week before calling it quits for good.

Brooke's children have worked at the lab during the summer, but neither has a desire to carry on the family business.

“Brooke was the mainstay. She did one tremendous job in terms of public relations and fairness,” Ed said. “She is such a fair person. The business was respected from that standpoint.”

A collection of photos

It's not just memories of vacations that came through the lab. Law enforcement had Laine Photolabs develop pictures.

Nothing was put in the trash. It was either destroyed or given back to the agency. This way no one could dig through garbage cans for evidence.

Confidentiality was a huge part of the business. Most of the crime work was done at night so a customer couldn't walk in.

Brooke said she would try to inspect the photo for quality and ignore the image as best she could.

Easier photographs to deal with are from schools. Brooke

approached LTUSD in 2003 about doing school shots. She bid on the project, got a one-year contract that turned into a multi-year contract.

Community events, lawsuits, weddings, the development of Tahoe Keys – it's all part of Laine Photolabs' history.

"We have a huge legacy of photographs which chronicle that era," Del said of the city's early years.

The family isn't sure where the photos will go, but possibly one day to the local historical society.

Play provokes frank discussion of hate in Tahoe

By Kathryn Reed

Laramie, Wyoming, and South Lake Tahoe, California, have more in common than the latter would probably like to admit.

The populations are about the same. Both are small Western towns. Both have snowcapped mountains to look at this time of year. One relied on the railroad and now mostly ranching, the other had logging and now tourism as the economic heartbeat.



Panelists

discuss "The
Laramie
Project" and
hate in South
Lake Tahoe on
Sunday.
Photo/Kathryn
Reed

Hate crimes is the sinister link.

Laramie, for what two men did in Matthew Shepard in 1998. They beat him to death because he was gay.

South Lake Tahoe, for what a local couple did to two tourists in 2007. Last week they were convicted of the brutal beating of the Indian-American man at El Dorado Beach.

Hatred is alive in Lake Tahoe. Ethan Niven has been a victim for years. It started when he was a freshman at South Tahoe High School. At 20, the homosexual taunts have continued in town.

He and six others were part of a panel discussion Sunday after the matinee performance of "The Laramie Project" at Lake Tahoe Community College.

(The play is based on how the town of Laramie dealt with Shepard's killing.)

Joining Niven were Robert Autre and Alisa Bindel, both of the South Lake Tahoe Police Department; Lisa Utzig-Schafer of South Lake Tahoe Women's Center; businessman and City Councilman Jerry Birdwell; FBI agent Chris Campion; and Matt Huckabay with the Center for Violence Free Relationships in Placerville.

"I was scared to try out for this play," Niven, who is a student at LTCC, told the audience. He and the nine other

actors each play a variety of roles.

Campion pointed to 2004 when Nazi graffiti littered Temple Bat Yam.

“We don’t want to think it happens in our community and it does,” Campion said of hate crimes.

Birdwell spoke of how when he was appointed as a judge in Texas that he and his partner had security living with them because they were openly gay. Death threats were multiple. Property was destroyed. Their home and work picketed.

“In 1969, when I started practicing law the hate in Dallas, Texas, was tremendous. We made progress just by working,” Birdwell said. “People were afraid of losing their jobs and they still are. When we moved here we didn’t see the hatred.”

Much of the afternoon’s discussion, with input from those in attendance, centered on the need for education inside and outside of the classroom.

“Think about the power of community. The bottom line is it really isn’t about being right, but the values we share as a community,” Huckabay said. “We can all agree it is not OK for kids to be unsafe at school.”

Utzig-Schafer spoke of the curriculum she takes into the schools, with this being the first school year an 11-week segment on violence is being taught to freshmen.

Niven didn’t have anything good to say about how his situation was handled at the high school “ by staff, administration or law enforcement.

Alex Boyar, a friend of Niven’s who was in the audience, spoke to the need for educating youth as prevention so laws like the federal Matthew Shepard and James Byrd Hate Crime Act that was passed in October don’t have to be used by

prosecutors.

Apparently the education needs to start at the college. Unbeknownst to director Susan Boulanger until after Saturday night's performance was a group of LTCC students taunting the actors.

Utzig-Shafer said that as enthusiastic as students are with what she has to teach, it has to continue at home.

"You need to talk to your kids. There are a lot of things going on at the high school," she said.

Huckabay said, "Education is key, but we have to educate ourselves. If you really care, then you have to get involved otherwise the status quo continues."

A white South Tahoe High School sophomore attending the play said he believes Hispanic students get more help with harassment.

To this, Autre said, "Our officers try to be racially sensitive."

Jen Gurecki, an attendee, asked what was going to be done about the planned protest on March 19 by the Kansas Westboro Baptist Church followers.

The college has hired a police officer to be on duty. Peaceful protests are in the works starting at 7pm March 19. Champion said he doubts they'll show, but said the First Amendment protects their right to protest the play. Huckabay called it an opportunity.

"The best thing is to fill this theater," Huckabay said. "The thing you can do is be proactive. Have fun with them. It's not new to use religion as a tactic to keep people down and oppressed. Show them the hypocrisy."

A candlelight vigil is planned for March 20 following the

performance.

“The Laramie Project” will be at the Duke Theatre at LTCC in South Lake Tahoe on March 18, 19, 20 at 7:30pm and March 21 at 2pm.

Iron Girl tri tops list of first-time events in Lake Tahoe

By Kathryn Reed

Sorry guys, but you aren't invited – at least not as a competitor.

Iron Girl is rolling into the South Shore on Sept. 19. This women's only triathlon will have participants swimming in Lake Tahoe (wetsuits OK) near Lakeside Beach for 800 meters, then riding their bike 24 kilometers to Cave Rock and back to the casino corridor, and then running through the streets of Nevada and California at the state line for a 5K.



“We have been talking to Iron Man and Iron Girl for a couple years,” said Mike Frye, events coordinator for Lake Tahoe Visitors Authority. “We signed a three-year contract. If we make this thing rock, we will get an Iron Man out of this.”

Iron Girl events is part of the larger, better known Iron Man. The women's division was launched six years ago.

“Iron Girl's mission is to empower women toward a healthy

lifestyle," according to their website. No one from their Florida offices returned phone calls.

Their events are growing in size at a rate of more than 20 percent a year, with the average age being 35, according to Frye.

The goal is to have 500 participants the first year, with that translating into an infusion of \$200,000 into the South Shore economy.

Who the local competitors might be remains to be seen. Nancy Harrison of South Lake Tahoe won her age group and placed second overall in last summer's Xterra event in Incline Village. It's running on asphalt that has her questioning the Iron Girl.

"I might consider a team. I would love to be the cyclist," Harrison said. "Lately I really don't enjoy running, especially when it's on the road."

But she hasn't ruled out doing it solo and not as a team.

"I'm very excited the event is coming to Tahoe. Because it's in town I may have to come out of retirement," Harrison said.

Erika Mathews who runs Moxxy Fitness on the South Shore often uses events as training for her clients. She is still weighing her options before committing to the Iron Girl being one of the goals she sets.

One of the things LTVA has been trying to do is lure event promoters to the South Shore. The tourism agency then helps streamline the permitting process. Hoteliers and retailers point to events being the difference between cash registers ringing and them being silent.

Other events in the works

Another athletic event coming to the South Shore is Thin Air

Distance Festival Aug. 12-15.

It's possible to run a marathon in four days, or a half in two days.

"It speaks to a lot of people. Not everyone has time to train to run a marathon," Frye said.

John DuCray out of Sacramento is putting on the event. Part of the proceeds will benefit local high school running programs and recreational teams in the area.

Events include a 10K, 12K, 21K, 5K, free 1 mile for those 14 and younger, and family-stroller fun walk. Individuals and teams are invited.

Courses are throughout the South Shore, with one being at Edgewood Tahoe Golf Course.

About 400 people are expected the first year.

Also on the books for this summer is Hot August Nights. It is expanding from Reno to the South Shore July 30-Aug. 1.

Hot rods will cruise down Highway 50 from Lakeside Inn and Casino to Ski Run Boulevard and back.

The first week of registration 250 people signed up their vehicles.

Another event the LTVA wants to tap into is Street Vibrations, the annual motorcycle event in Nevada.

SLT providing bridge for businesses to be successful

By Kathryn Reed



Start-up mode is stressful in any business, but especially when you don't want your boss to know about it. That's the situation one South Lake Tahoe couple finds themselves in as they are about to branch out on their own.

To get ready for a spring roll out the couple used the city's TIES program. TIES, or Tahoe Inventors Entrepreneur Services, has several components – coaching, relocation, business loans, website design, business plans and more.

“(They) are still in the process of starting their company. They've come a long way since they started with us. They still have a long way to go. For our part, we've helped map out a reasonable road to success, but it's their sweat and persistence that will make it happen. It's a daunting task to start a company, and I daresay they are a little bit stressed out right in the middle of it,” Jim Mikles of Golden Capital Network said of the couple.

Golden Capital Network is one of the consultants the city contracts with to provide the services.

All of the money in the program is from grants. None is from the general fund. The city tries to use local businesses to provide the services.

The first \$300,000 grant for coaching came three years ago.

About 30 people are in the program today.

It's not just about people starting a business. These programs are for people in all phases. For some of the assistance income eligibility guidelines need to be met, but most people in town qualify.

"Before you go under, before you go into default we can be that bridge. We can make a difference," Nancy Kerry, a TIES adviser for the city, said. She also said to let the city determine eligibility and to not assume you don't qualify.

Karen Estes, who owns Simple Tahoe Weddings, participated in the program a couple years ago.

"We realized my website was outdated. I wanted it to be hip, simple and easy to navigate," Estes said.

Grants the city secured paid for her website. She said the site is making her business even more successful.

Kerry said it's not the city's job to solve people's problems, but it can give them direction

"We want people to succeed. It's advice and information. It's linking you to the right sources," Kerry said.

Through TIES workshops are offered on how to keep costs low, becoming green, being an effective leader, making sure employees represent your business appropriately, networking, cross-promotional ideas, and social media.

Information discussed in the one-on-one sessions is confidential.

Business loans are what are called micro-loans because they are small, the business must have five or fewer employees, and the business is considered low income or is creating jobs for low-income people. Average loans are \$25,000.

The money comes from the state. As people repay their loans, then more money is available for the next person in need.

This is a small component of the TIES program because fewer people qualify. Ten open loans exist today.

“The bottom line is the city is a business. We need business in the community to be successful for us to be successful,” said Gene Palazzo, one of the city’s TIES advisers.

For more information, call (530) 542.6044 or (530) 542.6043.

Ski Run enthusiasts ‘on the run’ to make it the place to be

By Kathryn Reed

“On the run” is about to steamroll through the South Shore as those involved with promoting Ski Run Boulevard use that tagline on all future marketing material.

Events will use it as a marketing tool. The whole area will be branding itself that way. Another way to brand the street is create a logo via a contest.



Consultant
Lani Lott
records Don
Huggins'
comments.
Photo/Kathryn
Reed

In a two-hour workshop on Wednesday at the Blue Angel Cafe Loft, more than 40 people broke into four groups to solidify plans how to ensure the street that runs from Lake Tahoe to the mountains becomes the focus of South Lake Tahoe.

The four board members of the Ski Run Business Improvement District led a group. Barbara Tenney handled marketing, Shannon O'Brien the events, Don Huggins beautification and Brian DesRochers business development.

Before the groups were formed, consultant Lani Lott reminded everyone, "This is for the long term, not something you do for two years and you're done. This is not a city committee. This is a private organization that will work in partnership with the city."

That partnership was evident with having a city staff person at each table.

The marketing team talked about being a multi-generational destination, needing to have a good energy, and be the heart of South Lake Tahoe.

The events gang is ready to start farmers markets every Thursday night in the summer, with the first one possibly leading into Memorial Day. Alex Mellon who started the Meyers market last summer plans to run this one from 4-8pm.

Creating new events isn't the only focus, but tying into existing ones is also a goal. With the Great Lake Tahoe Sternwheeler Race on June 13, it's logical to be part of that

since the Tahoe Queen is docked at Ski Run Marina and is one of the two participating boats.

Though specific events were not mentioned, it was acknowledged that having things to do in the shoulder seasons is imperative.

In the winter, Santa could be at various businesses 'on the run' and on New Year's Eve a family event with a snowflake drop instead of a glittery ball could be staged.

When it comes to sprucing up the street, committee members want to enlist the help of property owners who have let their buildings become blighted and others that allow 3-foot tall weeds to grow.

Consulting with owners of vacant lots was also mentioned so they could be turned into a better use – parks, green areas or developed.

Hanging baskets like the ones Black Bear Inn puts out seasonally were praised and others were encouraged to follow suit.

Having signs on Highway 50 and Pioneer Trail alerting people the boulevard is not just another streetlight was talked about.

Parking and land use issues are big concerns for the business development team. So is having a mix of uses.

"We want it so on every lot there is something to do and it's eye-catching," DesRochers said.

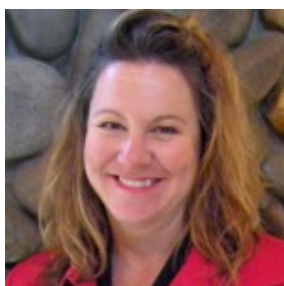
The entire group plans to meeting again on April 7, with the committees meeting more often.

South Lake Tahoe city attorney resigns

By Kathryn Reed

Jacqueline Mittelstadt is moving on – this time by choice.

She gave notice Wednesday. Her exact last day still needs to be negotiated, but it will be a matter of weeks.



Jacqueline
Mittelstadt

Mittelstadt came on as South Lake Tahoe's city attorney in June. Three months later on a split decision the City Council began the process to fire her for reasons that remain murky and were not fully aired in open session.

Two months down the road, in early November, the council reversed course and decided to keep Mittelstadt as assistant city attorney and bumped Patrick Enright into the city attorney's seat.

What direction the council will take now is unknown. This had been the first time two city attorneys were on staff. Mittelstadt said there is more than enough work to keep two attorneys busy.

Enright was not available for comment. Mayor Kathay Lovell and Mayor Pro Tem Hal Cole were not aware of Mittelstadt's impending departure until *Lake Tahoe News* called.

"The city seems more divisive than I've ever seen it. It comes from the top down," Cole said. "There is a morale problem in the City Council and I see that trickling down into the whole organization. It seems like personality becomes more important than policy."

Mittelstadt sat down with *Lake Tahoe News* on Wednesday to talk about her brief stint here. She said many have encouraged her to stay until after the election in November when three seats are up on the council. But she isn't willing to take that gamble.

Asked what she would do if she were mayor or city manager for the day, Mittelstadt said, "I would invite disagreement, open dialog, be forthright in what I say. My actions would be consistent with my words. Above all, I have the philosophy of doing the right thing, what is in the best interest of the community."

She simply said, "I don't fit into the culture here."

Mittelstadt says there's nothing she would have done differently that could have avoided the brouhaha last fall.

"I followed the direction the City Council gave to me and that's what city code required me to do," Mittelstadt said.

Financial issues about the use of out outside counsel, whether contracts were in place, whether bids for this work were sought, and how City Manager Dave Jinkens could hire outside counsel without the city attorney or council knowing all came to light upon investigations by Mittelstadt and Enright.

Life for Mittelstadt unraveled from there. Like Cole said, personalities seemed to become more dominant than policy.

She says there is a need for outside counsel because of their specialties. But she also said the city was in the habit of paying \$30 per email from an attorney.

Mittelstadt has a number of job offers on the table. She won't say if it's public or private practice she is looking at or where.

She leaves with a heavy heart, having made friends, joined Soroptimist, and having fallen in love with the beauty of Lake Tahoe.