

North Tahoe Citizen Action Alliance

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Jerry Wotel, Newsletter Editor

NTCAA News letter – March 2009

Where are the Investigative Journalists? You can't read much about the nationwide financial problems of newspapers today without commentary that decries the loss of investigative journalists. What was once the bailiwick of detailed reporting in "the public interest", our newspapers seem unable to fund lengthy research into the facts and activities of local government and public agencies.

This void is being filled by well financed special interests that crank up their marketing machines to generate sophisticated strategies including careful selection of content to sell you what they want. Lake Tahoe may be geographically small, and divided among five political jurisdictions, but nowhere is this trend more obvious and potentially dangerous to our national treasure Lake Tahoe.

NTCAA is committed to investigating and publicizing the real story behind how decisions are being made about development in the Tahoe Basin. The foundation of our work is thorough research of the facts and an insistence on distinctions and clarification of the facts. Our motive is to restore the place of science, engineering, and the whole truth as prerequisites for sound public policy intended to be in the interest of the general public.

Placer County Park Dedication Fee Program

At the North Tahoe Regional Advisory Council (NTRAC) meeting on March 12, 2009, The Placer County Facility Services Department gave a review of the Park Dedication Fee Program and how the fees are generated. To alleviate the effect of new residents on existing recreational facilities, existing amenities will be rehabilitated and new parks will be acquired and/or constructed. The financing to accomplish this is obtained from new residential construction fees based on maintaining the ratio of five acres of active park and five acres of passive park per 1000 residents, as called for in the Placer County General Plan. This equates to a charge on developers, and subsequently the home buyer, of \$3855 per new single family dwelling, \$2805 per second dwelling unit/mobile home, and \$2540 per age restricted dwelling.



The above ratio definition and associated costs are based on the total of Placer County. Once again, applying a primarily residential Placer County infrastructure and real estate costs to the resort area of Lake Tahoe has serious uncertainties.

At the meeting, the Tahoe City PUD, the North Tahoe PUD and the Northstar Community Services Recreation District gave their overview of existing and planned recreational facilities. Tahoe City PUD presented an evaluation of the users of Commons Beach, 64 Acres-Truckee River Access, and the Lake Forest Boat Ramp. Their statistics show that 16% of the users are permanent residents, 12% are seasonal residents, and 72% are visitors. This can be assumed to also accurately reflect the North Tahoe PUD facilities.

It obvious that using the Placer County figures of five acres per 1000 residents and the associated costs, would fall far short of what is required in the Lake Tahoe environment; in fact, about one-fourth of the actual requirements. This situation could be alleviated by sizing Lake Tahoe recreational facilities to the ratio of five acres to 250 residents, however, the cost to the new resident would escalate about 400%. This would be untenable for developers who pass the costs to their home buyers. One might ask, why should new residents pay four times as much for facilities that will be used predominately by visitors? Should not the increased burden be borne by Placer County from the Transient Occupancy Tax (TOT)? The North Lake Tahoe Resort Association does contribute monies for this use, but nothing of the magnitude described.

Tahoe Regional Planning Agency

In February, 2008 the TRPA Governing Board adopted Resolution 2008-11 which reserved specific development rights for nine project proposals in the Community Enhancement Program. The reservation of allocations was set to expire after one year on February 25, 2009, unless adequate progress toward project approval was being made by the CEP project proponents.

The Governing Board approved a 12-month extension to the resolution to give the participating projects more time to complete their applications.

At the TRPA Governing board meeting of March 25, Joanne Marchetta, the current TRPA General Counsel, appointed Interim Executive Director in February, was permanently appointed to that position. Fulfilling a vacant position on the Governing Board is Hal Cole, City of South Lake Tahoe Council Member. There remains one vacancy from California.

Kings Beach Commercial Core Improvement Project

It's a fair statement that the whole town of Kings Beach, neighboring Tahoe Vista and other surrounding communities want to see the Highway 28 corridor through Kings Beach improved. What began as a transportation/sidewalk beautification project modeled on Tahoe City's downtown improvements by Placer County has morphed into a cause for a specific "redevelopment model" that hinges on reducing the lanes and installing two single-lane roundabouts in the center of town.



The impacts of congestion, traffic being diverted through residential neighborhoods, and loss of parking along Highway 28 are collateral damage that is being disputed by the grass roots organization, Kings Beach Business & Citizen Alliance (KBBCA). They propose that the four-lane alternative 3 preserves the current capacity on Highway 28, preserves the integrity of residential neighborhoods, and preserves the on-street parking so essential to existing businesses. These are principles under the Main Street Program that Placer County and the North Tahoe Business Association (NTBA) claim to be following.

The KBBCA filed a lawsuit challenging Placer County's decision in favor of the Commercial Core Improvements that require lane reductions. Settlement discussions are focusing on producing a computerized traffic simulation based on Caltrans traffic counts and the Environmental Impact Reports.

Tahoe City PUD Update

The Tahoe City Public Utility District (TCPUD) has been reviewing the need for water and sewer rate increases for many months now. It now looks like average water rates will go up by about 22% in 2009, and that sewer rates will require no more than a modest increase this year.

The TCPUD identified \$21 million in water and sewer infrastructure projects that need to be funded in the short to medium term, and is using this to justify significant increases in water and sewer rates over the next four years. The TCPUD also has to implement a new pricing system for water based in part on gallons used as required by a relatively new California law. As a result, TCPUD water customers can expect to see a marked jump in their water rates starting in June, with increases being highest for customers with significant irrigation needs.

Starting in October of last year, many citizens became concerned at the scale of the water rate increases and this resulted in one of the largest protests from customers in the TCPUD's history. While the protests fell short of the legally required minimum to stop any rate rises, the numbers are still significant. 1,123 water customers (or 29% of all water customers) protested the proposed water rate rises, and 1,594 sewer customers (or 21%) protested the sewer rate rise.



The TCPUD Board and management does now appear to be responding to public concerns about the level of increased rates, and has a greater emphasis on controlling its costs in 2009 than it did, say, six months ago. One of the utility's greatest challenges going forward will be finding ways to make significant increases in labor productivity or significant decreases in labor cost, since employee-related costs represent over two thirds of the TCPUD's annual operating expenses.

Water rates continue to be one of the fastest growing costs for all north and west shore residents, and have become especially visible in the current economic environment. We encourage all residents and second homeowners to stay informed and involved.

For more information from the TCPUD, please visit www.tcpud.org

Upcoming Events/Key Dates

Agendas for TRPA Governing Board and APC, and also Placer County BOS are not available until a few days before the meeting. Therefore, it is difficult to provide a meaningful emphasis to the meetings. Other meetings/events not shown here, or changes, will be announced by email.

Wednesday, April 1	NLTRA Board Meeting	8:30 am, TCPUD Board Room
Tuesday, April 7	Placer County BOS	8:30 am, Auburn
Wednesday, April 8	TRPA APC Meeting	9:30 am, TRPA Stateline Office
Thursday, April 9	NTRAC Meeting	6 pm, TCPUD Board Room
Tuesday, April 14	NTPUD Board Meeting	10 am, NTEC, Kings Beach
Wednesday, April 15	NTPUD Board Meeting	6 pm, TCPUD Board Room
Friday, April 17	TCPUD Board Meeting	8:30 am, TCPUD Board Room
Monday, April 20	Placer County BOS	8:30 am, Lake Tahoe, Site TBD
Tuesday, April 21	Placer County BOS	8:30 am, Lake Tahoe, Site TBD
Wednesday, April 22	TRPA Governing Board	9:30 am, TRPA Stateline Office
Wednesday, May 6	NLTRA Board Meeting	8:30 am, TCPUD Board Room
Tuesday, May 12	Placer County BOS	8:30 am, Auburn
Tuesday, May 12	NTPUD Board Meeting	10 am, NTEC, Kings Beach
Wednesday, May 13	TRPA APC Meeting	9:30 am, TRPA Stateline Office
Thursday, May 14	NTRAC Meeting	6 pm, NTEC, Kings Beach
Friday, May 15	TCPUD Board Meeting	8:30 am, TCPUD Board Room
Wednesday, May 20	NTPUD Board Meeting	6 pm, TCPUD Board Room
Tuesday, May 27	TRPA Governing Board	9:30 am, Chateau, Incline Village

TRPA – Tahoe Regional Planning Agency
 NLTRA – North Lake Tahoe Resort Association
 TCPUD – Tahoe City Public Utility District
 NTEC – North Tahoe Event Center (NTCC)
 BOS – Placer County Board of Supervisors

APC – Advisory Planning Commission
 NTPUD – North Tahoe Public Utility District
 NTPFD – North Tahoe Fire Protection District
 NTRAC- North Tahoe Regional Advisory Council

“The democracy will cease to exist when you take away from those who are willing to work and give to those who would not.”.....Thomas Jefferson