

# North Tahoe Citizen Action Alliance

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*Jerry Wotel, Newsletter Editor*

## **NTCAA Newsletter – November 2011**

### **Local Governments Asserting More Power**

Headlines in the November 28th issue of the Reno Gazette Journal read, “Tahoe’s local governments may gain clout.” The Associated Press wrote the piece quoting the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency’s (TRPA) Executive Director, Joanne Marchetta, “TRPA’s goal is to operate on a regional scale where we can be most effective at protecting the Lake Tahoe environment and to shift some level of permit review responsibilities to local governments.”

Usually granting more authority to local jurisdictions is seen as a positive direction getting closer to the “nuts and bolts” of the local circumstances. With more authority comes more responsibility, but Lake Tahoe is a very different place. The attraction of the “Jewel of the Sierras” is a magnet for business, but as a national treasure, the interest is in preserving environmental quality.

Where is the evidence that local jurisdictions will “achieve and maintain” the environmental thresholds as they exercise new authority for project approvals? Approving projects, especially ones with tourist accommodations, benefit the five Counties sharing Tahoe by raising property tax revenues and TOT revenues to their respective County seats. None of the County seats are located in the Tahoe Basin, but each has a slice of the Basin pie. Each County is proud of their sovereignty, seeing Lake Tahoe as an asset capable of generating big revenues if redeveloped to suit the resort industry. Would a County genuinely work against its own financial interest? Monitoring thresholds costs money and at some point may severely limit revenue generating projects.



Remember the infamous biomass plant in Kings Beach that Placer County and the TRPA were moving toward approval? Is the approved Boulder Bay project, and likely to be approved Homewood Mountain Resort, evidence of tempering development to account for the reality of threshold degradation.

This subject was discussed at the November 16<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Regional Plan Update Committee and the results were predictable. Joanne Marchetta stated that the TRPA only had a grant for \$2.5 million to set up an integrated system to monitoring thresholds, but did not have the money to sustain measurements year after year.

She suggested that the local jurisdictions start monitoring the thresholds and send the raw data to the TRPA so they can put it in their model. The local jurisdiction representatives immediately said they did not have the money to monitor the thresholds either. Who could trust local governments to produce data that would work against their self interest of generating more tax revenues? It was only “yesterday” that the director of the Placer County Air pollution Control District claimed the biomass plant would actually clean the air in the Lake Tahoe Basin.

The meeting ended deferring the monitoring issue to another committee, the Local Government Committee of the TRPA Board. Could this be a “Super Committee?”

### **Meanwhile... Implementing the RPU Frame Continues**

In TRPA’s latest press release about how well the Regional Planning Update (RPU) process is going, the intentional framing (crafting the context in words that preclude opposition) couldn’t be more obvious. “Restoring Lake Tahoe” and “Creating Sustainable Communities” could never be questioned directly as talking points. Who could be against restoring Lake Tahoe or creating sustainable communities?

This is simply framing the issue or setting the context with an irrefutable generality. Remember, the biomass plant was going to clean the air in the Tahoe Basin. These emotional attractors become the talking points as if this is what the whole discussion is about. Problems only occur when one unpacks the general concepts and examines more closely the specific claims or actions in support of the repeated abstraction.

Restoring Lake Tahoe focuses on “regional environmental gain.” Creating sustainable communities will apparently result from “promoting sustainable redevelopment in town centers.” None of these terms has been defined as it applies to the RPU. Is a “sustainable community” comprised simply of energy efficient buildings? What about the businesses there today that have sustained themselves over decades. Is the rate of approval and scale of Boulder Bay and HMR sustainable? Does having recreational amenities and tourist accommodations make a community sustainable? How does sustainability achieve and maintain the thresholds?



The Kings Beach Town Center designation applies to 127 acres in Kings Beach with allowed densities of up to 25 units per acre and four stories in height. Does this intensification of development make Kings Beach a sustainable community?

“Environmental gain” is another undefined term but used as a frame to make their solution the only way to do something positive for the environment. Is the gain simply the BMP’s that all projects are required to do already? What about conflicts of “gain” that result in the loss of other thresholds? Is catching a few tons of sediment worth adding 3000 vehicle trips daily to Crystal Bay?

While discussing environmental gain, shouldn’t the least expensive method that best targets and extract the fines be the right approach, or at least the first approach? TRPA and the local juris-

dictions are quiet about sanding materials and properly sweeping the roadways (see our October 2011 newsletter). They would rather redevelop buildings.

The most frequent comment NTCAA has received from citizen observers is why TRPA staff and local jurisdictions make their type of redevelopment the only way all of Lake Tahoe has to redevelop. Their way worked for Heavenly Village and Embassy Suite because more TAU's were removed than were rebuilt. That was an anomaly compared to the CEP projects and the preferred alternative in the RPU.

There's a lot more coming on the Regional Plan Update, so stay tuned.

**Are We Redeveloping the  
Redevelopment Agency?**



**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.

December 5 &13, Tuesday	TRPA RPU Committee Mtg	TRPA Stateline Office
December 7, Wednesday	NLTRA Board Meeting	8:30 am, TCPUD Board Room
December 7, Wednesday	TRPA APC Meeting	9:30 am, TRPA Stateline Office
December 8, Thursday	NTRAC Meeting	6 pm, TCPUD Board Room
December 13, Tuesday	NTPUD Board Meeting	9 am, NTEC, Kings Beach
December 14, Wednesday	TRPA Governing Board	9:30 am, Granlibakken
December 15, Thursday	TRPA Governing Board	9:30 am TRPA Stateline Office
December 15, Thursday	TRPA RPU Committee Mtg	TRPA Stateline Office
December 16, Friday	TCPUD Board Meeting	8:30 am, TCPUD Board Room

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

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

***“No person was ever honored for what he received. Honor has been the reward for what he gave.” .....Calvin Coolidge***

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The North Tahoe Citizen Action Alliance (NTCAA) seeks to provide an ongoing voice for ordinary citizens. Planning the future of our communities and providing for communication and education on key issues affecting our communities is of prime importance. We serve the North Lake Tahoe area from Kings Beach to Tahoma. NTCAA is a tax-exempt California Public Benefit Nonprofit Corporation formed in May 2007, staffed by community volunteers. Membership is limited to those who subscribe to the NTCAA Goals and Objectives and are willing to participate in the organization's activities.