Concessionaire has 6 weeks to get Fallen Leaf Lake ready

By Susan Wood

The community services district managing Fallen Leaf Lake operations put to bed months of ambiguity by awarding its concessionaire contract to Rob and Sandy Wirth, who run a South Shore electrical company with ties to the mountain haven.

The Fallen Leaf CSD board voted 4-0 Saturday in a special meeting at Lake Tahoe Airport for the Wirths to take over the store and marina business. Now the clock ticks for the duo to get the operation going by summer's kickoff on Memorial Day weekend.



For the first time in 14 years, Fallen Leaf Lake's operations are in different hands. Photo/Susan Wood

Sandy Wirth told *Lake Tahoe News* she's well aware of the task before them. They have pledged a number of improvements during the upcoming months and years, plan to conduct community

outreach and offer an enhanced experience at the popular gateway to the Desolation Wilderness outside South Lake Tahoe.

“It’s going to be exciting,” she said.

Wirth has supported her husband’s dream of expanding the options at the store and café – with a little help from qualified friends. He spent seven years working at Stanford Sierra Camp as the electrician for the university’s lake retreat. They will continue to own and run Innovative Electric.

“We feel we can keep the electrician part going while running the marina and store,” she said.

Their desire is to stay grounded on what can be delivered immediately. The couple would like to offer lakeside dining, but that idea may come to fruition down the road. The Wirths expect their background in business and desire to please the community to be their recipe for success.

CSD President Mike Kraft said Monday he was in full support of their plans.

“Rob has a great reputation with our community for being an outstanding person with good business ethics. This is a win-win situation for the board and the Wirths. Not only is the minimum payment (to the district) much higher, we have also negotiated a completely open-book contract. This will allow the transparency required to be able to work together as a team,” Kraft told *Lake Tahoe News*.

The final contract includes $110,000 to be paid by the Wirths to the board for rent and access to the store, café and marina operation for six years. The Wirths agreed to put up a $20,000 security deposit.

Kraft had major issues with some of the business practices that helped lead to a breakdown in talks with former

concessionaires John and Ruth Rich. An impasse with the Riches, who ran the operation for 14 years, led to shouting matches, legal threats and a divided community for almost a year. (See *Lake Tahoe News'* article on the intent to recall two board members.)

The turmoil resulted in one of the board's earlier choices to run the operation to resign after less than a month of accepting the job. At Saturday's meeting, the board approved canceling the contract with caterer Rick Firkins.