Cole excited to be South Lake Tahoe's new mayor

By Kathryn Reed

South Lake Tahoe has a new mayor of sorts – Hal Cole. He had the position during his first tenure on the council, so he knows what he is getting into. He was mayor in 1998, 2001 and 2006.

Claire Fortier, the top vote getter in the November election, was unanimously appointed by her colleagues to be mayor pro tem.

Hal Cole is ready to lead South Lake Tahoe into a new era. Photos/Kathryn Reed

Councilman Bruce Grego was on teleconference for only this part of the meeting.

Fortier, Tom Davis and Angela Swanson were sworn in Nov. 14. Prior this happening, outgoing members Bill Crawford, Jerry Birdwell and Kathay Lovell each said a few words as they were about to resume their lives as non-elected persons. None of them chose to run for re-election.

Also sworn in on Tuesday were City Treasurer Dave Olivo and City Clerk Suzie Alessi.

The morning was filled with moments of levity – Crawford saying the reason he did not want a plaque is because he found his last one in the garage behind some canned goods.

The morning was filled with tears – Lovell tried to maintain her composure, but was overcome with emotion in her goodbyes. The packed room gave her a standing ovation.

The morning was filled with the continued acrimony between Crawford and Lovell – she not turning to shake his hand as he walked back to his seat after everyone else had.

The morning was filled with promises of things to change.

Cole, as mayor, expressed how this policy making body is a "we" and not an "I" – to which his colleagues later expressed their same desire to work as a team.

Cole acknowledged the hard financial times the state and country are in, and that South Lake Tahoe is right there with those bodies.

"We are at the point where we may have to look at how we deliver services," Cole said in reference to having balanced recent budgets with reserves. But he also pointed out how the town is resilient as is the staff. "We have a rare opportunity to reinvent our organization."

Part of the reinvention will be with establishing work sessions outside the council meetings for one or two issues to be hashed out prior to a vote needing to be taken. All of these will be open to the public. The schedule is being worked out.

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