

Vogelgesang: 'The key word in STPUD is public'

Publisher's note: *Lake Tahoe News is profiling the six candidates who will be on the Nov. 8 ballot for the South Tahoe Public Utility District board. They are being published in the order they were submitted. Randy Vogelgesang is running for the seat vacated by Marylou Mosbacher.*

Name: Randy Vogelgesang

Age: 54

How long have you lived on the South Shore?: 25 years

What water company supplies your home? Your work?: South Tahoe Public Utility District



Randy
Vogelgesang

Job/profession?: Civil and structural engineer

What stands out to you in the 2011-12 budget?: The thing that stands out the most is the decrease in revenues from rates, taxes and grants. The district will have the difficult task of prioritizing expenditures, looking for increased sources of revenues and cutting expenses without raising rates.

What boards, commissions, or other experience, including

volunteering, do you have?: I have been a longtime member of the Building Board of Appeals for the city of South Lake Tahoe and the Tahoe Engineers, Architects & Surveyors organization.

Is there any individual, group or organization you would not take campaign money from? Why?: I would evaluate all campaign donations on an individual basis and would not accept from any group or individual that would create the appearance of a conflict of interest.

What is the No. 1 reason someone should vote for you over another candidate?: When making decisions on behalf of the ratepayers I plan on using the same common sense, fiscally conservative, approach that has worked well for my business.

California law mandates water meters be installed. What is your solution to make the fee equitable for those on meters and those without one?: We need to take a closer look at the metered rate structure. I don't think it is acceptable to have customers using the same volume of water paying very different amounts for the next dozen years. The current metering amounts are based on average usages in order to remain revenue neutral to the district. However, the district is composed of full-time and part-time residents, neither of which fit the average. Until all customers are metered, I would like to lower the metered rate portion of the bill as much as possible without jeopardizing future grants. The meter installations need to be done at a more accelerated pace to minimize these inequities.

To get the remaining 60 percent of South Tahoe PUD customers on meters it will cost \$15 million. As a board member, where will you get the money to pay for the meters?: Grant money has helped and of course should still be sought, but the installation of meters needs to be treated like all other infrastructure upgrades and budgeted for. It has been known for many years that meters were coming, but inaction has caused this fiscal problem.

Do you believe the district should spend money on lobbying efforts in Sacramento and/or Washington, D.C.? Why or why not?: Only if it can be shown that the results of the lobbying have financial value.

What do you know about STPUD getting money from the Lake Tahoe Restoration Act?: The money from the Lake Tahoe Restoration Act helps with water line upgrades for fire suppression. Unfortunately, like most government money in these tight times, the amount will decrease.

How do you balance the economic situation of the community with the infrastructure needs of the district?: It is important to make sure the infrastructure is maintained and upgraded, a poorly maintained system can be more costly in the long run. However, each project considered needs to be evaluated based on its necessity, and less expensive options should be considered given the state of our economy.

With 38 percent of a customer's sewer bill going to meet the needs of the Porter-Cologne Water Quality Act and \$100 million already invested in Alpine County to take STPUD's wastewater, would you leave things as they are? If yes, why? If no, what would you change and how do expect to accomplish those changes?: The district is required to pump its recycled water out of the basin; this water is used by Alpine County ranchers for irrigation. The treated water is valuable for agricultural uses and could be used to generate revenue. We should also actively pursue hydroelectric power generated by the export C-line. The district's purchase of Diamond Valley Ranch appears to have been a good long-term strategic decision because it ensures uses for our export water.

What should be done with the land STPUD owns where the old post office was on Black Bart?: The district should consider demolition of the building on this property. The building has little value as there are zoning issues and there is no water and sewer service. However, if any opportunity that makes

fiscal presents itself, it should be considered.

There has been a three-year wage freeze for employees. What are your thoughts on employee raises and benefits?: Most of the ratepayers that I know have had their income decrease in the past three years. Wages and benefits for the districts employees should be comparable to the private sector.

When would you vote for a hike on water and sewer rates and why?: In this current economic environment we will need to prioritize our spending and cut costs wherever possible. I see no reason to justify a rate hike in these tough economic times.

Lukins Brothers Water District – any comments?: The Lukins Brothers Water District has some serious infrastructure problems which would be very expensive to bring up to even minimum standards. It would not be in our best interest to even consider absorbing this district unless it, and all of the anticipated upgrades, is completely funded by grants.

What should be the main priority of South Tahoe PUD?: The priority of the district is to serve the public. I think the district and its employees provide an excellent product and we should strive to continue this high level of service while keeping a constant eye on spending.

What should be the main priority of a South Tahoe PUD board member?: The priority of the board is to represent the public and oversee how the district spends our money. The key word in STPUD is public and I will always keep that in mind when making decisions.

Tell readers something about yourself that most people don't know: My wife, Cathy, and I have lived in South Lake Tahoe for more than 25 years and have two kids now in college. Before moving to Tahoe I worked for several years for a large public utility company in Southern California. When I first came to town I was in the ski business at Heavenly, then Kirkwood and

more recently I was on the board of the South Tahoe Amateur Hockey Association.