

Grego: Expand recreation, reduce unemployment, make TRPA accountable

Publisher's note: *This is one of five Q&A profiles of a South Lake Tahoe City Council candidate running in the Nov. 6 election.*

Name: Bruce Grego

Age: 59

How long have you lived in South Lake Tahoe?: 45 years



Bruce Grego

Work/volunteer experience: Work History: I grew-up helping operate my parents' motel for 30 years between 1967 to 1997; practicing attorney in this community since 1980.

Volunteer experience: In the 1970s, active with groups opposed to TRPA; about 1974, participated in a committee to support a local initiative to require an elected city clerk and city treasurer; in the late '70s participated in a city of South Lake Tahoe planning committee known as the 20-20 Committee (a citizens' planning committee addressing issues for the next 20 years); for about eight years in the 1980s I was a member of the city of South Lake Tahoe Planning Commission; was appointed by the City Council in 1989 to complete a term of a vacant City Council position; 2008, I was elected as a member

of the city of South Lake Tahoe City Council and I am currently a member of said body. During my time on the council I have been appointed to a number of governmental bodies, such as the Tahoe Transportation Commission and LAFCO, and I have attended City Council meetings on a regular basis.

Why are you running for City Council?: To continue with the work I began four years ago and to address the many challenges that face us in the coming years. Also see my comments throughout this response.

What is your vision for South Lake Tahoe, the South Shore and the entire Lake Tahoe Basin?: Better roads and sidewalks, more recreational opportunities for our citizens, local control of land use, and expansion of our economic base.

What are the three best things about South Lake Tahoe?: Our people, our community and our environment.

What three things would you like to change in South Lake Tahoe and how will you go about changing them?: 1. Land use continues to be a key factor in determining our future. TRPA continues to dominate our land use policies in our community and in this basin even though no one is elected to the board. In March 2011, I alone began to engage the Nevada Legislature about the future of TRPA. On March 15, 2011, I attended a subcommittee of the Nevada Legislature and called for TRPA to be locally elected as opposed to appointments; I told the Nevada sub-committee that TRPA has caused our community to be stagnate and left with a 1969 design infrastructure unable to compete with other recreational areas; that we have been denied our civil rights; and I proposed, that without changes, that Nevada deny any funding of the TRPA. From that speech I was invited by state senators and assemblymembers to become involved in the passage of Nevada Bill SB271. I eventually was able to obtain the endorsement of the South Lake Tahoe City Council; and I contacted both our Congressman Tom McClintock and then Assemblyman Ted Gaines to endorse this bill, which

they subsequently did. I wish to continue this effort for another four years. SB271 calls for Nevada's withdrawal from TRPA if TRPA fails to reform. I intend to see that substantial changes occur. Without flexibility in land use, positive changes in our community cannot easily occur.

2. Reduce unemployment. We are tied to the national economy, however, further promotion of special events, broadening our economic base, and maintaining city services should continue to be our focus. Also, as stated above, sensible land use policies can promote the development of new businesses in our community.

3. Expand recreational activities for our youth. The renovation of the recreation center should be a priority for the city in the next four years.

What would you do to balance the budget?: I have voted for a balanced budget for the city of South Lake Tahoe for the last four years. The city of South Lake Tahoe continues to have a balanced budget. We must spend within our means.

What would you like to see in a recreation master plan?: More recreation opportunities for our youth, more parks, and another dog park. Find funding to renovate our Recreation Center on Rufus Allen.

Promoting recreation was touted two years as a means to stimulate the local economy. Nothing has been done in that time. What will you do so that same sentence can't be said two years from now?: This is a leading question, it assumes nothing has been done. I disagree with your conclusion. Since I took office, Lakeview Commons at El Dorado Beach and Bonanza Park have been established. There is no doubt that Lakeview Commons has been successful and a model for other such development. The ice rink has been leased to private parties with the objective of making it a world-class facility.

What types of recreation do you enjoy in Lake Tahoe?: Probably

not enough ... with operating my own business and attending to council duties. I like helping people. I enjoy solving problems, and making sure justice is done. I like what I do. On a more personal level, I like attending special events, attending the Shakespeare Festival and Treat Street, shopping at our local flea market and collecting Tahoe memorabilia. I also enjoy fishing with the grandchildren.

How will South Lake Tahoe be different in four years after the end of your term?: I cannot promise to remake the entire town in four years; only the promise that I will continue to keep our city in the right direction. Always looking for opportunities to better our community. I will continue to work for reasonable land use policies controlled by the people affected by those policies; continue with road improvement that we started this year; continue to push back against the agencies; continue to seek solutions to complete Project 3, the Hole.

Being on the council requires working with four others. Give readers an example of how you work well others in difficult situations with differing opinions: The last two years have clearly demonstrated that I have worked well with the other councilmembers. We have voted together often, and we have disagreed without being disagreeable. Example: see the two or more televised council meetings each month that I participated in that involved every issue that faces our community. I work well with my colleagues in the other governmental agencies that I have been appointed to by the City Council, such as the Tahoe Transportation Commission and LAFCO.

An example of a difficult situation. Even though I have opposed the operation of marijuana dispensaries in our city, when this issue first was addressed, the council created a subcommittee of two councilmembers to work with citizens for and against this issue for the purpose of proposing an ordinance regulating the dispensaries. Bill Crawford and I made up this subcommittee, and for many months we, with other

appointed members, had public and open discussions with marijuana supporters during the process of making recommendations for a proposed ordinance to the council. I fulfilled the charge by the council, even though I fundamentally opposed the continuation of the dispensaries. And even though Bill Crawford and I had disagreements on the council, we worked together on this subcommittee.

What are your opinions about the following issues and/or entities?:

- **Loop road** – First of all, in responding to this issue, I am including in this response issues relating to the Project 3, the Hole at Stateline, and the South Shore Vision Plan. What is the most fundamental concern that affects these three issues, and this election? It is electing persons to the council that are independent and whose sole allegiance is to the people of South Lake Tahoe. Why? In the past large developments have occurred at the expense of small business and our community (small business employ many local people). The South Shore Vision Plan and the current Loop Road proposal seeks to remove additional businesses in our community as well as many residential properties, and redirect traffic. Consider the past: a) Randy Lane was able to destroy blocks of small businesses and financially impact the city's tax revenue based upon a development proposal not adequately funded. Until I was elected in December 2008, no one at the city was aware that Randy Lane had not purchased the properties within the Project 3 (the Hole) free of debt, and acquired said properties with mortgages; this among other things, prevented a consolidation of the properties that was a prerequisite for development. b) PADMA, the common interest maintenance entity for Heavenly Village mandates approximately \$130,000 annual contribution from the city of South Lake Tahoe in perpetuity because the city owns the sidewalks and the restroom and signed an agreement to such effect; c) Heavenly Valley has an agreement with the city that their ski tickets sold at Heavenly Village

would not be taxed for about 20 years. Why are these sweetheart deals being made? Not because these corporations are bad (there are good people that work for them), but because the persons you have been electing have not been independent and/or have not been able to resist the continued advocacy and lobbying effects by such corporations. In spring 2009, Randy Lane sought from the council support to sell public bonds for the purpose of funding Randy Lane's project in the sum of \$25 million. I opposed this request because it made no financial sense, and it would have impaired the city's future credit standing. Ultimately, the entire council rejected his proposal for a \$25 million "loan". I demonstrated the independence required to have a seat on the council. I have opposed efforts by special interest groups for projects that are not in the interest of our community. One of the current issues facing our city is the Loop Road. I do not support this proposal for the following reasons: the use of eminent domain/condemnation to achieve the ownership of the loop road corridor, the destruction of small businesses and residence in our community, and the redirection of traffic away from our city's business centers. I believe we need to revitalize the Stateline area through a vision type plan, but no plan will be approved by me unless the benefits are fairly distributed, and the city's interest are protected. Another issue: Presently, some of the major investors are seeking to acquire other holdings in Project 3, the Hole at Stateline. The council has sought to encourage development at the Hole, and has spoken to developers and property owners alike. We have to make sure that any permits issued for the project address all concerns, including, and most important, that the new developer/owner has sufficient resources to proceed. Independence, reviewing projects on their merits, and looking out for you is a summary of my history and voting record on the City Council in the last four years, and will continue to be my objective, if you grant me another term.

- **Hole at Stateline** – see above.

- **Tahoe Valley Plan** – No question ... I support the Tahoe Valley Plan that calls for consolidation and concentration of commercial land uses. The revitalization of the Y is equally important to the Stateline.

- **Giving money to any chamber or tourism bureau** – I support the current practice, that with the exception of some special events, the city does not provide funding for these bureaus. They provide an important service to our community, but this is not the role of our council. But it is equally important to note: that we have increased contributions by city employees; we have reduced the number of employees by 30 percent; we continue to keep a balanced budget; we continue to maintain city services to the public, and the general duties of this city is much greater than most (i.e. addressing land use issues with TRPA and other agencies in the basin). My point is that making any additional contribution to the chamber and tourism bureau will take money from essential city services, and I cannot support that.

- **Benefits, including pensions, for city staff** – See above. Based upon the pattern set by prior councils, our contracts with the labor units for city employees are not annual contracts. Nevertheless, the council has obtain concessions on those contracts, making employees more responsible for health care and pension costs, and I am determined to bring such contracts in line with what we can afford.

- **Tahoe Regional Planning Agency** – see above.

- **Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board** – At the first strategic conference of the council in 2009, each member of the council proposed goals and objectives. My proposed objective was that the City Council have a “foreign policy” – not to deal with other nations – but to interact with our neighbor governments and to reach out to Sacramento and Carson City. We have not only been able to impact TRPA, but for the first time in memory, Placer County, El Dorado County and the

city of South Lake Tahoe have joined together to oppose Lahontan's water quality proposals (BMPs).

- **South Shore Vision Plan** – see above.
- **Lake Tahoe Airport** – I believe we should support commercial operation at the airport.

Why should voters vote for you over someone else?: Proven record of accomplishments. Independent, not tied to special interests. A decision-maker. Not afraid to take a position not supported by the rest of the council. I do look “outside the box”.

Four years ago you said you would change how the TRPA Governing Board is elected. You haven't done so. Any comment?: I still support an elected board by the people in the basin. I believe that land use, water quality issues, transportation, and other environmental issues should be decided by elected local governments, and not bureaucratic, appointed boards of special interest groups controlled by staff with no understanding of economics or the needs of our community. Our community's 1969 stagnate design is a “tribute” to the misdirection of TRPA and other land use agencies in the basin. We have been locked in to old infrastructures and obsolescent. Four years ago, many commentators and many citizens questioned whether I could fulfill the promise of trying to establish an elected TRPA board or, for that matter, impact the direction of the TRPA in any manner whatsoever. I hope that you recall that in 2009, I, standing alone, proposed a resolution demanding an elected board, and no one else on the council would second my motion. Or when I, on March 15, 2011, standing alone at the Nevada Legislature took the initiative to attack TRPA's land use policies, and demanded a cut off of all funding to the TRPA. Look at the situation today. As a direct result of the passage of SB271, where TRPA's very existence has been threatened, TRPA has finally engaged local government, and the proposed regional plan update addresses

some of the important concerns of local government. We are even going to have a test case for drive up windows for pharmacies. Look at the situation today, not only was I able to have the City Council (the only California elected body to support SB271), but we are, the City Council, actively engaged in addressing TRPA regulations and addressing other environmental regulation. There is no doubt that TRPA finally began the process of a long past due Regional Plan update, if not for SB271. There was no concerted effort by the City Council to "push back" against the agencies prior to my election to the council. We have a very different perspective on the council today on land use issues than four years ago, and I believe that I caused this difference to occur. The accomplishments to date are just a beginning. We must do much more to bring sensible land use policies in the basin and keep the pressure on TRPA.

Is there a person or business you would not take a campaign contribution from?: Yes.

Tell readers something about yourself that they may not already know: I have a mole on my left knee. My point is, citizens have observed me over the last four years, and have contacted me to discuss concerns and to show support of my decisions on council. I have been transparent. You have seen how I have made decisions, and you have seen my concerns for you. It is important in this election that you examine the history of the new candidates for office. Can they make decisions, have they worked for industries that have or will seek "sweetheart" deals from the city, can they be independent, and how long have they participated in public affairs? I ask for your support in November.