Tap on beer sales at S. Tahoe ice rink may be cut off

By Kathryn Reed

While beer is available at the South Lake Tahoe ice rink, those days may be numbered.

City resident Eric Thelin filed a petition with the Alcoholic Beverage Control to prevent the sale of alcohol at the city owned rink. While South Tahoe owns the facility, it is Tahoe Sports Entertainment that runs it and sought to sell beer.

Administrative Law Judge Nicholas R. Loehr sided with Thelin, though not necessarily for the reasons he was arguing.

Loehr's decision is that for the city to be collecting a percentage of the gross sales from the ice rink operators that include alcohol sales it presents a conflict for the city in how ABC licenses are issued. Cities are not allowed to own a license.

City Manager Nancy Kerry said one alternative is to tweak the contract so gross sales do not include alcohol.

City Attorney Patrick Enright told *Lake Tahoe News* the judge's ruling "seems like a broad interpretation" of how the city is supposed to deal with concessionaires selling alcohol.

If the ruling stands, the city would have to look at all of its concessionaire agreements – including the one with the restaurant at Lake Tahoe Airport, where a large percentage of its sales are alcohol.

Thelin's issue is with the effects of alcohol on an ice rink. The skater said when he was in Santa Clarita the rink operators got a liquor license. He said the whole mood of the place changed, people were skating impaired and the attendance

declined. This in turn, he said, led to prices going up for ice time.

The ABC is weighing if it wants to challenge the judge’s rule.

TSE owner Chris Cefalu did not return a phone call.

“I’m in limbo waiting for the next move,” Thelin said.

And Enright said he is investigating what other locales do in similar situations.