

S. Lake Tahoe changes arts-crafts policy – again

By Kathryn Reed

In a heated debate Tuesday that included council members making snide remarks at one another, the regulations involving arts and crafts fairs in South Lake Tahoe was changed for the second time this month.

On a 3-2 vote the City Council decided to allow 10 arts and crafts fairs in 2014 and eight in 2015. What the number will be beyond that was not discussed.

At the Sept. 3 council meeting the five had agreed to change the number of these annual events from 12 to four.

On Sept. 17, with the council chambers full of arts and nonprofit advocates, the council changed its mind. Councilmembers Angela Swanson and Brooke Laine wanted to stick with the four weekends. Their contention is that it is time for the city to start looking better and less junky with all the tents cluttering town every summer weekend.

Swanson is also concerned the promoter does not have to donate to nonprofits because of a U.S. Supreme Court case. The promoter of past events has verbally committed to continuing donations, but there is no guarantee he will get all the fairs or that he will continue to do them.

Councilmember Hal Cole's main problem is with the transient shows taking money out of brick and mortar establishments, as well as perceived lack of sales tax collected.

Councilmembers Tom Davis and JoAnn Conner believe the arts and crafts fairs are good for the economy and put money in nonprofits' coffers.

The city has a number of regulations on the books that allow for different types of arts and crafts events. The main way is through the ordinance that was amended this week. Nine such vendors may be part of another event where the main emphasis is not crafts. The Tahoe Regional Planning Agency allows special event districts – such as Heavenly Village and Ski Run Boulevard. These districts have other guidelines to follow beyond the contentious city ordinance.

Beyond the change in the number of arts and crafts events that will be allowed, the city agreed to work with those who want to have special events at their sites to see how best to make it beneficial for everyone.

In other action:

- The council unanimously approved the 2013-14 budget that takes effect Oct. 1.
- A tentative agreement was reached regarding the MV Transportation case. Details will be announced at the Oct. 1 meeting when the council is scheduled to ratify the settlement.
- City Manager Nancy Kerry was given her review. “She has done a wonderful job,” Mayor Tom Davis told *Lake Tahoe News*. Her initial contract from June 2012 was for three years. Her new contract, which will be voted on at the Oct. 1 meeting, has the contract expiring in 5½ years. It moves the expiration and review to the spring so an election does not interfere with the process. Kerry would not allow discussion of a raise. If she were to be terminated, she would receive nine months severance instead of six, which is what was in the original contract.