

EDC wants vacation rentals to be good neighbors



C.L. Raffety, El Dorado County tax collector, leads a meeting Oct. 23 about vacation rentals.
Photo/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

Vacation rentals aren't going anywhere, so El Dorado County officials want to find a way for neighbors to get along with these temporary guests.

C.L. Raffety, the county treasurer-tax collector, hosted a meeting in South Lake Tahoe on Oct. 23 for people who manage vacation rentals or own them. Her department oversees vacation rentals throughout the county.

"We want to work to prevent violations," Raffety told the group. "They have a right to rent their home, but neighbors also have rights. Everyone has rights that need to be respected."

The county has devised the Good Neighbor Program. A trifold brochure has been created with the intent that it be handed out to all renters. It touts how to be a good neighbor by

following noise, parking, garbage, pet, and occupancy regulations.

It says, "Renters please keep in mind that you may be cited or fined or evicted for creating a noise disturbance or violating any of the provision of the county vacation home rental ordinance chapter 5.56. Neighbors are provided contact numbers and should an occasion arise they are encouraged to report disturbances. Your permanent neighbors have a right to peace and repose and this must be respected at all times of the day but especially into the evening hours."

The goal of the whole program is to reduce the number of complaints.

"It starts with VHR (vacation home rental) owners taking the responsibility to communicate with their VHR neighbors in a diplomatic outreach effort to prevent incidents that lead to complaints," reads a letter the county sent to owners. "The outreach includes distributing to the permanent residents in the vacation home rental neighborhood, a brochure with your local contact person's phone number."

Every vacation rental has to have a person who can be at the property within an hour – no matter the time of day or weather conditions. That person, the owner or property managers are being encouraged by county reps to walk the neighborhoods to get to know the permanent residents before there is an issue.

There are about 700 permitted vacation rentals in the unincorporated area of the Lake Tahoe Basin of El Dorado County. All are supposed to be permitted. County officials at the meeting said they regularly peruse vacation rental websites to check addresses to see if they have a permit.

Those without permits are also not paying transient occupancy tax – which is another issue.

People have 10 days to get into compliance before a fine would

be levied. County officials said only once has someone not complied. The county does not mandate owners put their permit number on any website advertising the property.

South Lake Tahoe, however, does have that rule in its ordinance.

Several representatives from property management firms urged Raffety to get the Board of Supervisors to make that change to the county ordinance. She said she would see what she could do.

Enforcement of rules in the ordinance is an ongoing battle.

"They hired two code enforcement officers for the community development agency. They are so busy with health and welfare issues," Raffety said. "They don't do vacation rentals."

El Dorado County sheriff's deputies can enforce some aspects of the ordinance, but for a citation to be issued the reporting party needs to sign a complaint. That has been a sticking point with some people because they don't want their name to be known. Property managers asked Raffety to coordinate a meeting with the higher ups in the sheriff's department to discuss how things might be able to work better in the field.

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Notes:

- Complaints about vacation rentals may be made to the El Dorado County Sheriff's Office at 530.573.3000 or to Raffety's office at 530.621.5800.
- South Lake Tahoe will be revisiting its vacation rental ordinance early next year.