

Collin: Collaborative, positive and optimistic

Publisher's note: Lake Tahoe News asked candidates for South Lake Tahoe City Council, Lake Tahoe Community College, Lake Tahoe Unified School District, Douglas County School District, South Tahoe Public Utility District and Lake Valley Fire Protection District a series of questions. We are running the responses in the order received. All profiles may be found under the Special Projects listing and then the 2106 November Candidate Profiles category.



Jason Collin is running for one of two seats open on the South Lake Tahoe City Council.

Name: Jason Collin

Age: 43

Job/profession: Administrative director of post-acute services at Barton Health, and owner/race director for Epic Tahoe Adventures

What boards, commissions, or other experience, including volunteering, do you have?: Sustainability Commission for city of South Lake Tahoe (2010-2012); Leadership Lake Tahoe (2010);

participant Tahoe Prosperity Plan (2010-2011); Athletes United (past president 2010-2015, current secretary); Rotary Club of South Lake Tahoe (2010-2014), past president (2012-2013); Lake Tahoe South Shore Chamber of Commerce board member (2012-present), executive committee member (2014-present), past chair (2015).

Why are you running for City Council?: I want to be actively involved in the projects and initiatives that are moving, and will continue to move our city forward. We are very fortunate to live in such an amazing place and I want to see our city reflect that beauty rather than detract from it.

Why should voters vote for you over another candidate?: I'm extremely collaborative, positive and optimistic – three things I think we need a heck of a lot more of in our community.

What distinct experience or competency makes you uniquely qualified to lead effectively as an elected official?: A sincere interest in listening to all sides of issues and working collaboratively towards meaningful solutions.

Public agencies have been under scrutiny the last few years for lack of transparency and accountability. What will you do to ensure both?: True accountability is a function of culture. We need to establish a culture of open, honest communication, where the officials, and the public, are held to a higher standard of conduct. I believe in adhering to the Brown Act and will hold myself, my fellow council members and the public responsible for conducting ourselves accordingly.

What stands out for you in the current budget that you support and that you would change?: I like the conservative budget approach and the mid-year reflection that allows for prioritized investment. I also support the commitment the city is making in infrastructure improvement. In the future, I would hope to see increased funding for housing programs and

economic development. As a council member, bringing quality jobs and quality housing to South Lake Tahoe will be a top priority.

Do you support current legislation for \$15 minimum wage?

Please explain: Tough one. I'm definitely in favor of promoting living wages for employees. However, I am concerned that with this big jump we may see businesses cut positions or find ways to automate jobs that are currently performed by employees (e.g. ordering food). I need to do more research and talk to business owners and employees before I come to a conclusion on this one.

Do you support Proposition 55? Please explain:

Another tough one. Although Prop. 55 isn't equitable and it's not fixing the problem of why schools are broke, I do like the idea of increased funding for education and (potentially) health care for low-income families. If we're looking at legislation for the greater good, I think Prop. 55 has more upside than down.

Describe three attributes for a successful council:

Thoughtfulness, respect, sincerity.

What are your thoughts about public employee defined

benefits?: I support the tough decision our city and public employees made to decrease the unfunded liability of health care and public pensions. Very, very tough thing to do but definitely in the best interest of our community's economic well-being.

Please explain your position regarding contracting out work

normally done by staff: I thrive on building teams so I strongly believe in the value of our staff. Contract work is very appropriate for certain circumstances (e.g., coverage for leaves of absence, temporary fulfillment of positions, variable need of services, specific skills that can't be found otherwise, etc.).

What is your 10-year vision for South Lake Tahoe?: I hope that

in 10 years, when my kids are coming back from college to start their careers in the vibrant economy we've established, and have quality options for affordable housing (so they don't move back in with me), they will say: "I can't believe how much progress has occurred! It's so easy to get around now – I may not even need a car. And Highway 50 is amazing. No more run down motels and buildings. People are really taking pride in the community. It still has that laid back Tahoe charm ... but now we've got class too. It finally feels like one community. We're so stoked to move back home."

What one vote in the last four years that the current council made do you disagree with and why?: I think the VHR decision may have been a bit hasty. We need to consistently enforce code before we change our policies.

How many City Council meetings have you attended this year?:
4-5

What do you know about the strategic plan, finances, debt, and goals of the city?: The city's strategic plan establishes these priorities: economic development, fiscal sustainability, improve the built environment, partnership development, public trust and accountability, quality core services. The city's budget reflects these priorities within each department to the community's benefit. With regard to finance and debt, I am still reviewing the budget and developing an understanding of its many facets.

Being on a board means working as a team. How will you work with the sitting members for the greater good of the community?: It all comes back to respectful communication. We don't always need to agree, but we need to respect each other and each other's right to voice their opinions. We also need to avoid belaboring points, move conversations forward and be willing to make, and stand by, decisions.

What should be the three main priorities for the council?:

Housing, jobs, infrastructure.

What have you done to make yourself ready to be a council member?: Learning more about people's needs, wants and concerns is one of the most important things I've been doing. I will also be meeting with key city staff and agency partners to become better informed on the issues I will address as a council member.

What role should government have in housing for residents?: We have an important role in being part of the solution. A good starting point is improving our existing house stock through enforcement of residential building codes. Too many properties have been allowed to become run down in our city. If there are grants or programs that are available to public agencies then I feel we have an obligation to pursue those to create quality workforce housing like the Aspens project. The city can also have a profound impact by helping to lower barriers that prevent investors from building affordable housing.

How can the city partner with the school district to improve high school graduation rates?: First, the graduation rates at STHS and Mt. Tallac are actually really good. In 2014-15, 97.1 percent of the senior class graduated. But, getting to the heart of your question, the city can be a better partner to Lake Tahoe USD and our community's families by creating a vibrant economy and affordable housing to reduce our issues of transiency, food insecurity and poverty. Our kids are a reflection of the values of the environment in which they live. We have an obligation to give the children in our community every opportunity we can for them to succeed.

How can local government support and expand job creation and small local businesses?: Let's start with supporting and growing the businesses that are already here by getting out of the way. Lowering barriers (i.e., permitting) will also attract new businesses, fill vacant commercial properties and create jobs. By supporting innovation and embracing the

millennial mindset of the current workforce (e.g., Tahoe Mountain Lab), the city can help pave the way for entrepreneurs and capital workforce investment into our community.

If you believe in the one South Shore concept, what would you do to further make this a reality? If you don't believe in blurring the state line, why don't you?: I absolutely believe we are one South Shore community. The us vs. them mentality has to stop. My friends in "the county" are just as much a part of South Lake Tahoe as my friends up on Kingsbury Grade. We all work together, shop together and play together. Let's keep the focus on what we have in common and how we can bolster the community as a whole and everybody wins.

What are your views on:

a: Vacation home rentals: VHRs serve a critical role in our community. How many VHRs should be here needs to be figured out. We also need to keep the pressure on code enforcement.

b: Loop road: I think the project has the potential to have a very positive impact on the make-up of our community. I support the vision of a renewed state line area with improved housing, neighborhood parks, well-lit streets and improved walkability for locals and visitors alike.

c: City streets: The street, curb, gutter and sidewalk work that has been done has been great but it's a drop in the bucket. The council needs to make it a priority to find funding to complete the sidewalks and lighting along Highway 50 that Caltrans removed from its project. It is no coincidence that private investment has occurred in areas with complete streets. From the highway, we need to move the street investment into our neighborhoods, with an annualized paving program.

d: Relationships with other public agencies: Partnerships with fellow agencies like El Dorado County, LTCC, LTUSD and STPUD

are critical to making our city and surrounding areas a more vibrant place. Achieving that vibrancy requires active and good relationships with our regulatory and land partners at TRPA, TTD, Lahontan, the Tahoe Conservancy and Forest Service. Council needs to take a more hands-on approach to forging those relationships than has been done in the past. We are all incredibly interdependent.

e: Recreation: Recreation opportunities are at the core of our quality of life and also our economic sustainability. I'm excited about the Recreation Master Plan and the interest the community is showing in expanding and improving our infrastructure with projects like the renewal of Regan Beach and modernizing the recreational center complex.

f. TRPA defined commodities: I can't claim to understand the complexity of the TRPA commodities. With environmental safeguards in place, I am in favor of decreasing regulatory hurdles.

g. Transient occupancy tax measure: Support.

h. Sales tax measure: Support

i. What do you want the additional sales tax money to go to?:
Roads

Tell us something about yourself that people may not know: My ears are totally uneven. Like a centimeter off.

Your quest to stop the loop road failed. Is litigation how you believe issues should be resolved?: No. My goal was to highlight the fact that the initiative was poorly worded. If the citizens of our city are voting on an issue, we have an obligation to provide clear and accurate information.