Vogelgesang: Fiscally responsible approach

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.***



Randy Vogelgesang is running for one of two open seats on the South Tahoe Public Utility District board.

Name: Randy Vogelgesang

Age: 59

Job/profession: Civil/structural engineer

What boards, commissions, or other experience, including volunteering, do you have?: City of South Lake Tahoe Building Board of Appeals, member Tahoe Engineers Architects and Surveyors, member South Lake Tahoe Rotary, president

Why are you seeking re-election to the South Tahoe PUD board?: To continue building upon my goals and accomplishments of my first term, which I outline below.

Why should voters vote for you over another candidate?: Because of my knowledge, experience and fiscally responsible approach to the challenges the district faces.

What distinct experience or competency makes you uniquely qualified to lead effectively as an elected official?: The experience I have gained making common sense engineering decisions in my business has helped greatly when making decisions for the South Tahoe PUD. I try to always use my knowledge of the district and its workings to make decisions in the best interest of the ratepayers. As president of the board for the past two years, I have made it a point to work with all the board members and to treat them with respect.

Public agencies have been under scrutiny the last few years for lack of transparency and accountability. What will you do to ensure both?: This has been an important issue for me and I have made it a priority to get as much information as possible about the district out to the public. I have long believed that better decisions are made when the public is informed. During my first term the district hosted numerous public workshops focusing on the budget, priorities and long term planning. In addition I have encouraged (along with the board) Richard Solbrig, general manager, to be very active with public outreach on radio, TV and to numerous service organizations. The district's website (www.stpud.us) has recently been upgraded for easier use and greater access to information. At my recommendation, the district started archiving audio files of all of our meetings, which can be heard on the website. In the near future video files will be available on the website.

What stands out for you in the current budget that you support and that you would change?: The district's property tax

revenue is still below the level of 2010. The challenge is to offset that revenue loss by increasing efficiency and seeking other sources of revenue such as grant money. It should be noted that the district has cut operations and maintenance spending by 20 percent since 2008-09.

Do you support current legislation for $15 minimum wage? Please explain: No comment

Do you support Proposition 55? Please explain: No comment

Describe three attributes for a successful board: Communication, respect, cooperation.

What are your thoughts about public employee defined benefits?: I would prefer a defined contribution over a defined benefit plan as a way to control costs.

Please explain your position on contracting out work normally done by staff: I like to have work done in-house as much as possible but sometimes it is more economical to outsource due to expertise or staff work load.

What is your 10-year vision for STPUD?: I would like to continue with steady needed improvements to the infrastructure to keep the quality of our service high, while being mindful of the cost to the ratepayers.

What as an elected official are the three things you are most proud of during your tenure?: Revising the rate structure (consumption vs. fixed costs) to more accurately reflect actual costs, reducing capacity charge fees, increasing transparency, water line upgrades and adding hydrants for fire protection.

Which votes would you change and why?: I am comfortable with the decisions I have made as a board member.

Being on a board means working as a team. How will you work with the other board members for the greater good of the

community?: I touched on this above, but let me add that during my first term this board has worked well together, without acrimony, despite differences in opinion.

What should be the three main priorities for the board?: Striking a balance between infrastructure spending and rates. Salary negotiations. Public outreach.

How do you balance the economic situation of the community with the infrastructure needs of the district?: This is the most important question that I deal with on a daily basis. Too much spending on needed infrastructure burdens the ratepayer, but not enough could end up in costing more money in the long run. As a member of the finance committee I spend quite a bit of time working on both the annual budget and the 10-year plan. The way I try to achieve the balance between rates and spending is gathering as much information as I can to make the best decision I can.

STPUD is often criticized for having some of the highest paid public employees on the South Shore. Any comment?: Salary negotiations are one of the most important jobs that the board has. During these negotiations I have always fought for what is best for the ratepayers and will continue to do so.

When it comes to permits for construction, the district has high fees. Do you believe they are fair? Why or why not?: During my first term the board not only stopped large planned connection fee increases, they were lowered. It is my belief that these fees are still too high. I would rather make it easier for us to have more customers using our services than discouraging connections.

Tell us something about yourself that people may not know: My wife Cathy and I have lived in South Lake Tahoe for more than 30 years and raised two kids, Laura and Scott, who are now adults.