

Interim SLT leader jumping into all topics

By Susan Wood

Interim City Manager Dirk Brazil sat across the table from citizens Wednesday for a fireside-type chat where he heard topics as diverse as the ones he's faced in the two weeks of being on the job.

South Lake Tahoe Mayor Wendy David introduced Brazil, who replaced former manager Nancy Kerry after a whirlwind of events, to the gathering of 15 people at the senior center June 20. This was David's fifth such "conversation" she stages each month to get up-close-and-personal with the citizenry.



South Lake Tahoe interim City Manager Dirk Brazil and Mayor Wendy David talk city issues with the public on June 20. Photo/Susan Wood

Topics ranged from dogs off leash, television reception and broadband expansion to vacation home rental permits, snow clearing and beautification of town. It might have been a welcome sign to Brazil, who rattled off a list of interesting issues that have crossed his desk in half a month.

A small sampling includes Lime bike safety, lake erosion, a murder, a clerk's sudden resignation, parking problems, solar power issues and even offensive public art. The crowd giggled, but no one asked for the background on the last one. Perhaps that stays under wraps.

Brazil has been keeping his eyes and ears open since coming out of retirement from his post in Davis, something he initially didn't expect he'd do.

"The right people asked. I don't know if it's an addiction, but it certainly is a calling," Brazil said about returning to government. CalPERS retirement guidelines allow him to work half the year once retired.

"It's pretty nice to be here. I've never worked somewhere where there's an ice arena, lake and airport – one that I work in," he said.

This doesn't mean he hasn't been around. Besides his three-year stint managing Davis, the government official worked in Yolo County in administration, California's Legislature under former Gov. Gray Davis and for the Fish and Game departments in this state and Washington.

Brazil knew that whatever post he might fill in for he'd see three constants every city manager in California must deal with: homelessness, vacation home rentals and cannabis.

Getting an update from Tahoe Prosperity Center's director Heidi Hill Drum on upgrading sketchy cell phone reception through the use of new towers and microcell sites put a whole new dimension on where he's landed.

He seemed fascinated about the patchwork nature of town, along with its unique quality and cultural character.

The latter is what Melissa Wong said she would like discussed and addressed more.

This message blended nicely into common courtesy when a woman who lives in the Bijou neighborhood expressed concern about dogs off leash that may look menacing.

David appreciated the comment, having shared her own experience.

"I'm glad you brought that up. We're paying a lot for (animal control)," she said. At Tuesday's meeting, the city was forced to grapple with a more than 50 percent increase in fees for its portion it pays El Dorado County for the service.

Governance is not easy and for the faint of heart.

One attendee even asked if Brazil would stay on, but he can't. Brazil is filling in until a permanent replacement is found.

"He reminds me of Kerry Miller," Carol Olivas said, rather smitten with Brazil. The 40-year Tahoe resident was referring to the former city manager from the 1980s.

When asked by *Lake Tahoe News* what he does in his leisure, Brazil told the gathering he likes to run, play golf and cook (though he humbly kept his specialty to himself). The adrenaline rush of running comes in handy after enduring long City Council meetings.