

Alessi dragging heels to retire to get most money

By Kathryn Reed

South Lake Tahoe has no idea how long it will have its current city clerk because she can't make up her mind about retiring even though in June she announced she'd be leaving this month.

"We are sort of in limbo here because she has not given me or the council a date," interim City Manager Dirk Brazil told *Lake Tahoe News*.



Suzie Alessi

Alessi on June 19 stunned those in attendance at the council meeting when she said she was retiring before her term expires at the end of the year.

On July 9 she told *LTN*, "I do not have a definite date yet. Waiting to hear back from CalPERS."

Retirement is usually something someone gives a little more thought too. Even on the public employees' retirement website it says, "You may file your service retirement application within 120 days of your planned retirement date."

People do this to ensure they don't have an interruption of taxpayer supported paychecks. Alessi could retire now, she doesn't have to wait for anything from CalPERS. She also can walk off the job without any notice to anyone.

She will make close to \$100,000 as a retiree.

Because the city has an elected city clerk there is no one to hold the person in that office accountable. There is no one to say the person ought to make a decision for the good of the city.

Brazil said he is trying to plan for whatever happens. This is so he has options at the ready for the council.

Legally, the council would have 60 days to appoint a clerk after Alessi's retirement. It is state law the city must have a clerk. There are people who fill in on an interim basis much like what Brazil is doing at the helm of the city. This is a route he advocates.

While the city manager has no oversight of the clerk, Brazil said he does believe the workload is more than one person. Alessi has an assistant. While that woman is a city employee, she reports directly to Alessi, an elected official. This further complicates matters.

Most cities don't have an elected city clerk. It would take the council putting the topic before voters to change how South Lake Tahoe handles the clerk position. This might happen this fall.

While there has not been anything on an open or closed session since Alessi's announcement indicating the council was discussing the topic of the clerk's office, it is expected to be on the July 17 agenda. If the council chooses to take the issue to the voters, there is time to get it on this November's election.

Each of the council members was asked by *LTN*:

- *What is your feeling about having the city clerk position being elected or appointed?*
- *Do you think the public should decide whether the*

office should be elected or appointed?

- *What would you look for in a future clerk?*
- *What are your feelings about the current office?*

Only Councilman Tom Davis responded. He is adamant the position should be elected, saying this gives the public better accountability. While Davis acknowledges it's not a perfect system, he believes the current set is the best for the citizenry.