

Grego: 'Government needs to control its own costs better'

Publisher's note: Lake Tahoe News asked the seven South Lake Tahoe City Council candidates a series of questions. All are the same except for one that is specific to each candidate. The responses are being run in the order LTN received them.



Name: Bruce Grego

Profession/work experience: Attorney/self-employed law practice.

Age: 61

What organizations, committees or groups are you or have you been involved with?: Most recently, I volunteered with Tahoe4Tahoe to remove parking meters from our streets and beach parking lots. I am a board member of the California-based chamber (South Tahoe Chamber of Commerce), been on the City Council 2008- 2012 and on the Planning Commission eight years.

Why are you running for City Council?: I want to assure we have transparent/honest government responsive to those who live here.

Why should people vote for you over the other candidates?: I am independent and free from special interest pressures.

(i.e.: I recently did not accept an invitation from the Nevada based chamber to be considered for endorsement.) I already have city government experience and understand how those pressures can work. As a 46-year resident and South Tahoe High graduate who came back after college, I care deeply about our town, and as an attorney I have legal training to offer.

What do you think is the most pressing issue facing South Lake Tahoe and how will you deal with it?: All too often we make decisions based upon superficial facts, unproven theories, and we fail to have an in-depth understanding of the issues before acting. We try to substitute our lack of understanding with polls and studies or staff interpretations. In November 2012, I voted against the paid parking program that was eventually overturned by the voters with the passage of Measure P. The city has made other errors. We have sustained significant losses concerning the operation of the parking garage. While "The Hole" has now seen some development, we have lost tax income for over seven years, not to mention the injury we caused all the business that were removed at the property. So what is the most important issue? Transparency and thoughtful decision-making. We need to stop making substantial financial errors that affect the future of our community.

If the city cannot reach an agreement with its bargaining units, are you willing to go to impasse? Why or why not? How would you resolve the CalPERS and health care issues in the city?: I have combined these next two questions because they are so closely related. I do not have access to the negotiations presently between the city and its labor units and the details of the issues surrounding the contract. It would be speculation on my part to try to give an answer to these questions as they are written. I would not hesitate to declare an impasse if there is good cause to do so, and after considering all options. But the bottom line is that without having knowledge of the issues surrounding the negotiations, any more substantive response would be worthless.

What is your opinion about term limits for the council?: It sounds like a good idea because it limits those elected from holding office for an extended period of time. But is it? The California Legislature has term limits and can anyone say our state government is better now than before term limits? In many respects, holding public office is no different than any job in the public sector in that you must fully understand how an organization works before you can be an effective policymaker. No one would suggest that we limit the term of a doctor or carpenter. Governing is more than just taking input from the public, it is the ability to understand the relationship between elected officials and staff, applicable law, and understanding what is possible at your level of government. It requires an understanding on what role staff has in decision making. There is more to consider than a simple equation of term limits in trying to achieve better government.

If the city has positive cash flow, where should the money be spent?: It should go toward our stated goals, our debt, and for road reconstruction. I am proud of reconstruction of our roads, such as Glenwood, built in our community when I was on the council, which was discontinued after I left.

What are your ideas for increasing the city's revenues?: New tax revenue should come from assessing businesses that do not currently contribute. Look at Heavenly Ski Resort, just outside our city limits. Past councils have exempted them from a tax of their ski tickets sold within the city. Our city also supports Heavenly Village to the tune of about \$150,000 a year for an indefinite period. There is no expiration in the City's commitment to provide tax dollars to support this private complex. I say no "sweet heart" deals for big corporations, developers or anyone else.

Additionally, the city of SLT had significant surpluses prior to 2006 and the sources of that revenue have not changed; so I think we need to wait for our economy to continue to recover

from the recession instead of just adding more taxes to persons and businesses that already pay their fair share, and are still facing their own economic challenges.

Government also needs to control its own costs better than it has.

Furthermore, I am concerned about a multitude of fees promoted by the city. No matter what you call it, fees are taxes. When I paid my business license tax [this year] for example, there was a fee added to process the tax. These kinds of fees are like going to a restaurant ordering and paying for a meal, then being charged a fee for the use of the fork and knife. I hate to be nickel and dimed by the city after we support government with all the taxes we pay. We should not increase revenues this way.

What is your vision for the 56-acre project?: We need to upgrade and expand the recreation center and the campground.

What would you do to improve relations with El Dorado County?: Talk with them. I also support Kenny Curtzweiler [stet] for supervisor. I believe Kenny will make the other four supervisors more sensitive to our needs and goals.

Is the city on the right course with restructuring debt and focusing on recreation? Why or why not?: Yes, I have advocated the restructuring of debt while I was on the council and continue to support such direction. Why would we not seek low interest and lower monthly payments? Yes on recreation because it is obvious.

Name one vote the City Council made in the last four years you are proud of and one you are disappointed in – and why?: I am disappointed in the City Council's vote on Ordinance 1054 to have paid parking on some of our streets and beaches; I was on the council in November 2012 and I voted against this ordinance. My disappointment is based on the facts that they refused repeatedly to hear what the voters said. Many

community meetings were held where the majority of attendees loudly voiced their opposition. The City Council went ahead anyway. When 1,400 signatures were collected in three weeks opposing the ordinance, the City Council further declined to put it on the agenda for discussion. When those signatures were turned into the county elections board to put on the ballot, the City Council only then put it on the ballot themselves then proceeded to spend untold taxpayers dollars to oppose it. Sixty-seven percent of the people voted to get rid of the parking meters and some council members are still not listening. That is disappointing.

What is working in the city and what isn't; and how would you go about changing what isn't working?: As I stated above, in response to what I think is the most pressing issue facing South Lake Tahoe, the manner in which we are making decisions isn't working. We need to change the manner in which decisions are made by the council. All too often we make decisions based upon superficial facts, unproven theories, and we fail to have an in depth understanding of issues before acting. We have to actually use a correct model to change the faulty model to a better one.

Being on the council requires working with four others. Give readers an example of how you work well others in difficult situations with differing opinions: I have always treated my colleagues and city staff with respect. I welcome, even encourage, lively debate about difficult issues. Smart and truthful research aids difficult decisions. I am willing to do thorough research and I am willing to change my position if shown a better way.

What is your opinion about the following topics:

- **Ferry service on Lake Tahoe?:** I believe we should explore different transportation alternatives to facilitate the movement of locals and tourists in our area.

- **Loop road?:** I continue to oppose the Loop Road. It is unnecessary and I strongly believe that the special interest groups are seeking its construction for their private benefit. You cannot relocate the major traffic corridor in the Stateline area without adversely affecting the level of business activities on the California side. I oppose the removal of existing homes and businesses and the use of inverse condemnation to the objectives of this project.

- **Future of Lake Tahoe Airport?:** It is not economically feasible and I see no change in the future.

- **Increasing the transient occupancy tax?:** Please see my response to the question "What is your ideas for increasing the city revenues."

- **Changing the vacation rental ordinance to reduce the number of such units in neighborhoods?:** I need some more figures, however our city should not tolerate abusive vacation rental activities. We need to continue to promote enforcement recognizing that there is a balance between the use of private property and the public good.

What will you do differently on the council compared to when you served before?: I will be more directly involved in labor contracts. I will be more thorough in research before approving goals and objectives for the council. I also will be more stringent before approving budgets.

Tell the voters something about yourself that they may not know: I voted against the application by Randy Lane and Lake Tahoe Development Company for the loan of public funds from the city for \$25 million to "save" the Hole. I voted against paid parking back in November 2012. I graduated from South Tahoe High School.

Opinion: S. Tahoe is being fair to taxpayers, workers, retirees

By Hal Cole

Let me be candid. There is presently a noose around the city's neck titled "pension and health care" and unless we restructure the way these benefits are delivered it will choke our city's future.

We are not alone. Most cities are experiencing the same predicament. Those who address it head-on will survive, those who don't will go the way of Stockton, San Bernardino and Vallejo.



Hal Cole

Our past efforts to address our rapidly rising payroll costs included reducing other expenses by way of debt restructuring, layoffs, and tightening department budgets. In spite of the rapid rise in our employee benefits costs, we have still been able to present a balanced budget. Our actuaries today reveal that unless we address this issue now, we will be facing deficits again within a few years.

As we enter negotiations with our employees, we must partner with them and create a financially sustainable agreement that will allow us to refocus our attention on growing our economy by way of reinvestment in our infrastructure.

Simply put, the problem is the taxpayers are essentially paying for two groups of workforces. One made up of current employees, the other retirees. Our city residents cannot pay the estimated \$75 million it would cost to fully fund the health care and pension plans for both groups as they exist today. From our polling of other California cities, very few offer full medical insurance for their retirees. We did. We were told by experts at the time that medical costs would go up gradually and that the cost of the employee retirement program (PERS) was "superfunded" and would require no more contributions from either the employees or the employer. Neither of which was true.

Although we have no control over the state controlled retirement program, we can address our health care costs. The city of South Lake Tahoe is different than most other agencies insofar as we are self-insured. We arrange the plan and we pay the medical bills.

Not to be lost in this process is the commitment we made to our retirees. We must offer them the same plan we offer our current employees. This plan has changed over the years (increased deductibles, removal of prescription plans, increased co-pays, etc.) and our retirees have incurred the same modifications.

We are now offering our employees an option of plans. Employees and retirees will all receive a basic plan in accordance with the Affordable Care Act. The new program will allow both current employees and retirees the option to "buy up" their coverage to meet their family's needs. Our employees are being asked to do something unique in public service. They are being asked to put the wellbeing of their city and its

taxpayers ahead of their personal gain. So far many of them are willing to partner with us and we are negotiating as I write this piece.

I would ask our community to thank these employees as they recognize that we all, both in the private and public sector, must accept the new financial landscape we are entering. I am as optimistic as I have ever been for the future of our city.

I also want to thank our city manager and her staff as they have endured the months of negotiations and remind the community that it was with the unanimous and unequivocal support of the City Council that she initiated these discussions. Any complaints or criticism for these changes should be directed at the council and me. Without financial stability, we cannot deliver the services our residents deserve.

Hal Cole is mayor of South Lake Tahoe.

Colten John Kingman – 1991-2014



Colten John Kingman

Colten John Kingman, 22-year-old son of Paige and Bob Kingman of Newcastle, passed away suddenly the morning of Sept. 5, 2014. Colten was born Oct. 9, 1991, in South Lake Tahoe. He attended Scarselli Elementary School in Gardnerville and middle school in South Lake Tahoe. He was a straight-A student while attending Silver State High School in Carson City.

He spent his adult years living in various communities in Placer County and regularly attended St. Joseph Catholic Church in Lincoln.

He had a passion for natural hot springs and seeking out waterfalls in the wilderness. He traveled with his parents to the Caribbean and learned to sail and kayak. The family also enjoyed floating the Green River in Utah and made trips to Hawaii where he made many memories with his childhood friend, Kaisha Martinez of Gardnerville. He loved traveling in Mexico where he convinced his grandmother to attend an all-Spanish Mass even though they didn't speak the language. In 2010 he and his maternal grandmother completed an adventure camping their way to Vancouver, British Columbia, and Victoria Island and back, seeking out natural hot springs to explore on the way. In 2013 they made a similar excursion to Yellowstone National Park.

From the time he was 2 years of age he had a love for learning that culminated in passions for a wide array of subject matters that included: vacuum cleaners, wild cats, islands, astronomy, locks and keys, high performance and old cars, coins, beanie babies, herbs, and alternative medicines. He loved music and was a natural musician, enjoying both acoustic and electric guitars.

Colten forged wonderful friendships with people of all ages and found something to value and love in everyone he met.

He is survived by his parents, Bob and Paige Kingman and his sister, Cambria, all of Newcastle; maternal grandparents, Larry and Gail Davenport of Lincoln; paternal grandparents, Bill Kingman of Stateline and Vickie Kingman of Gardnerville; and an abundance of aunts, uncles, and cousins, as well as his special companion, John Naylor of Citrus Heights and his beloved little dog, Buddy.

A rosary will be said in Colten's honor at 7pm Sept. 15 and a Mass for the celebration of life at 11am Sept. 16 at St. Joseph Catholic Church, 280 Oak Tree Lane in Lincoln. A reception will follow the Mass with directions available at the church.

It was always Colten's wish that attendees dress in lively, happy colors to celebrate his life. In lieu of flowers, please make donations to National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) or St. Vincent de Paul Society.

Letter: Tahoe Keys comes clean on dredging

Publisher's note: *The following letter was sent Sept. 10, 2014, to Tahoe Keys Property Owners Association members. It was sent to Lake Tahoe News by a resident of the South Lake Tahoe community.*

To TKPOA homeowners,

I personally apologize for the misleading statements that I have made and that have been made by association management over the past three months regarding the timing of the West Channel dredging. Initially we did significant additional

investigative work and modified our project based on discussions with the regulatory agencies; they gave us assurances that these efforts, which delayed the permit application, would expedite permit approval. The assurances were honored by some of the agencies but other agencies treated the permit application with a “business as usual” approach which has resulted in the delays.

At this time we are waiting on permit approval for dredging (see details below). We recommend that boaters keep an eye on channel depth based on their individual needs to determine when it will be necessary to pull their boats out this Fall.

West Channel

Water depth in portions of the West Channel is approximately 3.5 feet.

We started work on obtaining a dredging permit in April 2014. The permitting process has been long and frustrating as Lake Tahoe has many layers of federal, state, and local regulatory agencies. Obtaining a permit to dredge the West Channel is dependent these agencies giving their blessing before the Army Corps of Engineers (ACE) will issue us a permit. Here is the current status:

Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board – This agency approved our project by letter dated September 8 following a 10-day public comment period on our project that ended on Sept. 6. They received no adverse. The Lahontan approval also includes the TRPA approval for the project.

California State Lands Commission – This agency notified us on Sept. 8 that they have decided that their approval of our project requires Commission concurrence. The next Commission meeting is Oct. 14 and, if approved, they will notify ACE after that. This was unanticipated and is a major setback for completing the dredging this year.

California Department of Fish and Wildlife – This agency is considering whether additional studies are needed for the project. We are actively pursuing an answer from them. The timing of their action and its impact on our project timing is unknown.

Army Corps of Engineers (ACE) – We have been working with this agency to overcome their contention that our project cannot be approved under the Nationwide Permit covering this type of work. We know of at least three other approvals given in the Lake Tahoe Basin that directly contradict their position. If it is covered, they can issue a permit when all of the other agencies have given their approval (e.g. sometime after mid-October). If it is not covered, then it will take an additional 90 days or longer to obtain approval.

The bottom line is that we will not be able to start dredging before the middle of October at the earliest and it is possible that we will not be able to start before Spring 2015. It is important to note that any and all of this is subject to change at the whim of the myriad of federal, state, and local agencies that regulate the Lake Tahoe Basin.

East Channel

Water depth in portions of the East Channel is approximately 2 feet.

Tahoe Keys Marina (TKM) told us [Sept. 10] that they intend to submit their application to dredge the East Channel by Sept. 19. The East Channel dredging is a much larger project that is estimated to cost \$1.5 to \$2 million. While our application for the West Channel has paved the way for the review of their application, they will likely run into the same hurdles and the same timeframes for approval. At this time, it appears unlikely that they will do the large scale dredging in 2014 and they may be able to do a limited dredging project in the channel area between the sheet pile bulkheads. TKM told us

they intend to complete the dredging in Spring 2015 if it cannot be completed this year.

TKM, under our 1991 Settlement Agreement, is responsible for taking the lead role in dredging the East Channel. The options available to TKPOA range from seeking court action to enforce the 1991 Settlement Agreement which requires TKM to take the lead on any dredging project to working with Tahoe Keys Beach and Harbor Association to get the channel dredged in Spring 2015. The later option includes the risk that recovering TKM's portion of the cost (approximately \$1 million) may entail legal action.

Contingency plans

In the event that neither channel dredging is completed this fall, there are two options for boat owners to consider. For boats that use the West Channel (moored in the Main Lagoon to the west of Ala Wai Boulevard), the owners can take them out at either Cave Rock or Obexer's Marina both approximately 10 miles from the Tahoe Keys by water. If there are problems with these locations or water levels fall further, TKPOA may open one of the lagoon maintenance ramps for its members use. For boats moored in the Marina Lagoon (east side of Ala Wai Boulevard), the owners can take them out at TKM.

John Larson, TKPOA president

International curlers take over Tahoe arena



LTEC co-founder Ray Sidney, left, plays with curlers from Austria, Turkey and Brazil. Photo/Provided

Athletes and curling leaders from 34 countries descended on the South Tahoe Ice Arena for a friendly curling event last weekend.

This was the first time World Curling Federation members have visited a United States curling club as part of their congress meeting.

Eight teams of four curlers competed in a modified bonspiel and skills competition. Five curlers from the host Lake Tahoe Epic Curling club took part in the competition, alongside such big name curlers as two-time Olympic gold medalist Cathrine Lindahl of Sweden, and Bent Ånund Ramsfjell, vice president of the World Curling Federation and a member of Norway's 2002 gold medal-winning men's curling team.

The visit was part of a weeklong WCF Congress taking place in Reno.

Curling is the fastest growing Winter Olympic sport in the United States. For more information about curling in Tahoe, go online.

Landing Tesla is latest chapter in Reno's reinvention

By Dale Kasler, Sacramento Bee

RENO — It seems hard to believe, in the afterglow of the Tesla jackpot, that Reno was an economic basket case just a few years ago, with even bigger problems than Sacramento.

Yet even as unemployment soared and its casinos struggled during the recession, the “Biggest Little City in the World” was reinventing its economic base. The Reno-Sparks region marketed itself to distribution and manufacturing companies, and big names like eBay and Toys R Us began opening warehouse facilities.

The latest victory exceeded anyone's expectations. After months of anticipation, Tesla Motors Inc. last week chose a sprawling industrial park east of Reno for its 6,500-employee “Gigafactory,” which will build batteries for the electric-car maker's new mass-market vehicle. The news sent community and business leaders grasping for ways to describe how Tesla will transform the Reno area.

“They're going to change the course of history within this community and within this state,” said Lance Gilman, the Stetson-wearing developer of the industrial park where Tesla will build.

Gilman compared Tesla's pending arrival with the discovery of silver in northern Nevada in the 19th century and the opening of casinos in Las Vegas in the 20th. Gov. Brian Sandoval, announcing the company's decision at the Capitol in Carson City, said Tesla will deliver \$100 billion in economic benefit

over the next two decades and expand the region's economy by a whopping 20 percent.

Read the whole story

Hike for Health events in Carson Valley

The Carson Valley Trails Association is having its annual Hike for Health Trail Adventure Day on Sept. 20.

This year's event is a multilocation Family Day with a barbecue at the Nature Conservancy's River Fork Ranch. Interpretive hikes and activities will occur at the River Fork Ranch, Fay Luther Trail, Genoa Canyon Trail and Minden Gazebo from 8am-1:30pm. The event is free.

Participants must sign a release and waiver form. A parent or guardian signature is required for participants age 17 and under. No dogs allowed.

The schedule for the day is as follows:

At the Nature Conservancy's River Fork Ranch on Genoa Lane: ● 8am: Identifying Birds of the Carson Valley Hike led by Jim Woods of Birding Under Nevada Skies. ● 9am-noon: Art Activities and Trail Treasures ongoing with Genie Littlebeaver and Joni Jackson, CVTA Board Members. ● 10am: Explore River Fork Ranch by Bike (bring your own bike) led by Norah Gastelum (24 miles dirt road) ● Noon-1:30pm BBQ Lunch free to CVTA members, donation requested from nonmembers.

At FayLuther Trailhead on Foothill Road: ● 8am: Forest Mysteries "Bugs and Crud" (1 mile easy) presented by Gene

Phillips, Nevada Forestry Tree Health Specialist. ● 10am: Glacier & Earthquakes in Your Backyard. Learn about the geology of the Carson Valley. Led by Peggy Ristorcelli, CVTA member and geologist (13 miles/easymoderate). ● 8-11:30 a.m. Fay Luther Trail Treasures. Ongoing, self led, using CVTA's Trail Treasures guide. At Genoa Canyon Trail: ● 8am Genoa Canyon Hike led by Steve Hale, CVTA board member. (46.5 miles moderate/strenuous). Meet at Genoa Canyon Trailhead on Carson Street in Genoa.

At the Minden Gazebo: ● 9am: Minden History Walk led by Charlotte Settelmeyer Bass.

For more information, contact Chic and Sue Moxley, 775.265.-0766, or email info@carsonvalleytrails.org.

Park City to pay \$17.5 mil. bond to keep lifts running

By Daniel Fisher, Forbes

Park City Mountain Resort has agreed to pay \$17.5 million bond to keep the ski lifts running this year, postponing a showdown with rival Vail Resorts over who will operate one of the nation's most popular ski areas.

Park City's owner, closely held Powdr Corp., faced the potential loss of most of its skiable acreage after somebody in the organization mistakenly allowed the company's \$150,000-a-year lease on the mountaintop – arguably Park City's single most valuable asset – expire in 2011. Vail pounced on the situation last year, signing a \$25 million-a-year lease with the neighboring Canyons resort and taking over litigation

against Powdr with an eye toward ejecting it from the site and combining the two into a single ski area.

Things didn't exactly go Vail's way, however. In an Aug. 27 hearing over the bond, Judge Ryan Harris expressed extreme skepticism over Vail's claim landowner Talisker was entitled to more than \$100 million to protect it against losses from Park City's continued use of the mountain top. Not only does Park City own the parking areas, base amenities and water supply for snowmaking, but Talisker traded away the development rights on the land so it can be used for little other than skiing.

Read the whole story

Slowdown brings awareness to net neutrality

By Nancy Scola, Washington Post

Wednesday, forces aligned in favor of stronger net neutrality rules will rally under the banner of Internet Slowdown Day, the latest push to funnel the public's attention to the Federal Communication Commission's on-going rulemaking on open Internet principles and practices.

First things first. Slowdown Day will not feature any actual slowing down of the Internet. The reason it won't? The same reason why this is a fascinating moment in the history of Internet activism. Companies participating in the protest, like Vimeo, Etsy and reddit, have become the digital infrastructure of the Internet age. Slowing down their services is likely to anger their audiences (not to mention,

in some cases, their shareholders). In other words, they've become essential – Too Big to Slow? – but that also gives them enormous power. They have the ability to draw millions upon millions of eyeballs to the spinning loading icon that will be featured on their sites.

That spinning logo is one way that Web sites and Web users will be participating. Another is changing one's avatar, on Twitter or Facebook or what have you, to the icon. The hope is that the action will spread like a contagion, if one given a little push. Commit, the campaign is asking of its allies, to getting one person or company with a bigger reach than you to join in as well.

Read the whole story

'Damnation' to be shown at LTCC

Patagonia's "Damnation" shines the spotlight on dam removal, an ecological solution that can restore compromised watersheds, revive fisheries and more.

The movie will be shown at Lake Tahoe Community College on Sept. 12 at 7pm in Duke Theatre.

It is free.