Tahoe residents protest in mini occupy movement

By Kathryn Reed

Lake Tahoe residents may not protest by the hundreds or thousands like larger areas, but they were part of Friday's nationwide solidarity movement that is part of the larger Occupy Wall Street movement which started two months ago.

Horns honked and fists pumped from the vehicles that passed the approximately 20 people who were in front of Heavenly Village carrying signs that read: "Remove $$$ from politics", "Bail me out", "We are the 99%", and "End corporate personhood".



Michele Sterling at Occupy Lake Tahoe on Nov. 17.

Michele Sterling spent her lunch break showing her support.

"I feel it's time we stood up for ourselves. The disparity of income is growing more and more each year," Sterling, a bus driver with Lake Tahoe Unified School District, said.

This was the second demonstration of what organizer Tracy Africa hopes will be regular gatherings in South Lake Tahoe.

Last week's demonstration at Bank of America had about 16 supporters. The goal is to have a weekly event.

Occupy Tahoe is on Facebook. Notices of future meetings as well as demonstrations will be posted there as well as through Meet Up and Move On.

Heavenly Village was picked more for its location and being a high trafficked area, Africa said, than the fact it is anchored by two Marriott properties that are separated by Vail Resorts-owned Heavenly Gondola.

"If you come here, you should go to the local businesses," Africa said.

While corporate America is well represented at the village, as well as the casinos down the street that were in view of the demonstrators, corporate employees were lining up to enjoy the perk their employer was giving them. Heavenly employees could ski for three hours Nov. 17.



Demonstrators in South Lake Tahoe show their allegiance.

The irony seemed to go unnoticed by the protestors – that many of the 99 percent they are marching for would rather ski than walk along Highway 50 carrying a sign.

Africa said the Tahoe group supports the goals of Occupy Wall

Street:

- More jobs.
- More health care.
- Fix the political process.
- Remove corporations from the government.
- Reduce the political influence of the wealthy.
- Economic justice.
- Punish the criminals who caused the Wall Street crash.
- Greater regulation of the banks.
- Greater regulation of the market.
- Tax the wealthy and use the money for education.
- Free speech without fear of penalty.
- Stop making wars and focus on peace.

But some of those out on this bitingly cold and windy day believe so strongly about what is going that they drove from the North Shore to participate because they said the people on the other end of the lake have yet to organize.

Trudy Lesem and Gwen Rosser came down from Tahoe Vista for the Nov. 17 peaceful demonstration.



Gwen Fox-Tyson

came from Kings Beach to show her support. Photos/Kathryn Reed

“I feel the country is going in the wrong direction. Politicians are being bought by big corporations and money corrupts,” Lesem said. “Things must change if we are going to continue to be a thriving democracy.”

Rosser said, “People who are fed up with conditions need to make changes. I (wondered) for a long time – Where is all the anger?”

Frustration, more than anger, was the emotion expressed by those in South Tahoe during the noon-4pm event.

Gwyn Fox-Tyson of Kings Beach wants to get rid what she calls freeloaders as well as not having politicians in bed with big business.

“The American people can’t fulfill their dreams anymore,” Fox-Tyson said.

Summer activities at ski resorts expected to grow

By Kathryn Reed

When the National Forest Ski Area Permit Act of 1986 was adopted, the assumption was Nordic and Alpine skiing were the

only activities a ski resort would ever want or need to offer its users.

Clearly, things have changed.

But for resorts that operate on U.S. Forest Service land, the act is a bit prohibitive and some activities that are going on don't truly comply with what's allowed.

That all changed this month with President Obama signing the Ski Area Recreational Opportunity Enhancement Act of 2011. One day "ski area" may have to be removed from the act's name and that of resorts to better reflect all that they offer.



The federal law will provide the opportunity for more hiking trails at Heavenly. Photo/LTN file

"The 2007 master plan said what (Heavenly) could look at in the future. There were things before that they didn't go forward with because we didn't know if it was allowable at a ski area. This will give us a way to consider summer activities and additional winter if they request," Cheva Heck, local USFS spokeswoman, said.

She would not elaborate on specifics so as not to violate proprietary information. A spokesman for Heavenly did not

respond to questions about how the act will affect the resort.

Heavenly already offers a number of things for guests to do during the summer – hiking, tubing, a rock wall, as well as a year-round lodge.

Sierra is keeping its options open for summer fun.

“We at Sierra have no plan to expand summer activities,” Steve Hemphill, resort spokesman, told *Lake Tahoe News.* “It’s a definite possibility in the future. It opens doors.”

The new law does not allow a free-for-all. Parameters are still in place.

“The key is harmonizing with the natural environment,” Heck said. “Tennis courts, swimming pools and golf courses will not be allowed.”

Master plans must be adhered to, the Forest Service must sign off on changes and the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency will have a role at resorts with property in the basin.

“Trail building has come a long way recently and the industry is sensitive to disturbance and erosion concerns. Our goals and policies specifically support outdoor, non-motorized recreation,” TRPA spokesman Jeff Cowen said. “When Heavenly began drafting their master plan, mountain biking wasn’t even considered. As far as recreation allocations, there are plenty available for the use.”

Kirkwood doesn’t have TRPA to deal with because it is part of the Eldorado. Even so, Michael Dalzell, spokesman for Kirkwood, said the changes will not have an immediate impact at his resort.

“We already have a successful summer operation with mountain biking, hiking, disc golf, Zip Tahoe, events, etc. We are looking at potentially expanding our bike park,” Dalzell said. “This new legislation may have a positive impact on how

quickly any new plans will be approved by the Forest Service.”

Even though much of Squaw Valley’s land is privately owned, meaning the act doesn’t have a substantial impact, the resort is happy to see the passage of the legislation.

“I think the act has wonderful implications for the ski industry as a whole. Offering summer activities allows resorts to remain operational year-round, meaning that families can enjoy our terrain throughout the year,” Amelia Richmond, spokeswoman for Squaw, told *Lake Tahoe News*. “It also means that resorts can employ more members of the local community on a year-round versus a winter seasonal basis, which benefits the local economy and employment.”

In California, there are 25 ski areas on 11 national forests.

Regionally they include:

• Eldorado National Forest: Kirkwood and Sierra

• Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit: Heavenly

• Tahoe National Forest: Donner Ski Ranch, Boreal Ridge, Alpine Meadows, Squaw Valley and Sugar Bowl.

Diamond Peak, Homewood Mountain Resort and Northstar operate mostly on private property and therefore don’t come under the umbrella of the two acts.

The Forest Service manages 193 million acres of public land, with recreational activities contributing $14.5 billion annually to the U.S. economy. But that isn’t just at ski resorts.

There are 122 ski resorts on national forest land. The Forest Service averages 27 million visits annually to ski areas, which pumps $4 billion into the economy, and provides 80,000 job.

Officials believe increasing summer recreation could add $40 million more collectively to ski towns.

South Tahoe Officer Poland under federal investigation

By Kathryn Reed

South Lake Tahoe police Officer Johnny Poland turned in his badge and gun Nov. 15, with Wednesday being his first day on paid administrative leave.

“He is under federal criminal investigation. It would be inappropriate for him to continue to serve in a day-to-day capacity,” City Manager Tony O’Rourke told *Lake Tahoe News*. “It doesn’t reflect any guilt. It reflects the process that needs to run its course so we can determine if there were any serious violations of the law.”



South Tahoe police Officer Johnny Poland is on paid administrative leave.
Photo/LTN file

Poland was not available for comment. Nor was Police Chief Brian Uhler.

O'Rourke would not elaborate on what Poland is being accused of. He said the investigation is being handled by the Department of Justice. He said the allegations are "criminal in nature." And he said whatever might have happened occurred was while Poland was "in the capacity of a police officer."

"It's just an investigation. It reached the point and time that it would be awkward for both the department and Johnny for him to be an active police officer," O'Rourke said.

Poland, who has been with the department for 12 years, was fired by the department in 2007 for an incident stemming from 2006. He fought that case and eventually was reinstated.

The full cost of the Poland case from 2007-09 has never been disclosed.

S. Tahoe officials jittery about legalities of medical pot

By Kathryn Reed

Cities across California are fearful of what a medical marijuana decision out of Long Beach will mean to them as well as what the feds may do.

South Lake Tahoe and Sacramento's city councils on Tuesday wrestled with what to do with their respective ordinances. In predictable fashion, South Lake Tahoe couldn't make a

decision. Sacramento voted to essentially put its 38 dispensaries on hold – with their permit application deadlines extended seven months.



After nearly three-dozen people spoke to the issue Nov. 15, the South Tahoe council voted to continue the meeting to Nov. 29 at 5pm.

The city has three dispensaries that are allowed under an ordinance that was voted on in September. A separate ordinance regulates growing marijuana in residential areas.

One of the options discussed was similar to what Sacramento decided to do. Other alternatives include banning dispensaries or doing nothing – as in keeping the status quo. There is also the Berkeley method that essentially lets the collectives operate under a permit and not an ordinance.

City Attorney Patrick Enright was tasked with finding out more about what Berkeley does.

What many of the people at the Tuesday meeting didn't seem to get was the council has no desire to deny people medical marijuana. What they want to avoid is literally or figuratively having the feds come in with guns drawn.

The federal government in the past has used money as a way to force compliance – just look at how the states all have 21 as the legal drinking age instead of 18 and how speed limits are 65mph. The threat of federal dollars going away brought states to their knees.

South Tahoe would also like to avoid being sued. After all, as was pointed out by Councilwoman Claire Fortier, the Long Beach case was a result of the dispensaries not selected in a lottery system suing the city.

The Pack vs. Long Beach decision by a state appellate court says that city's medical marijuana ordinance violates federal law. The feds believe marijuana is an illegal drug.

A petition has been filed with the state Supreme Court. The court has until mid-January to decide if it will take up the case; then it could be another year before it does. An application has also been filed to have the Long Beach case de-published. This would mean the ruling would only pertain to Long Beach and nowhere else in California.

Michael Stallings, one of the few people who actually spoke to the issue at hand, was articulate as he expressed his desire to suspend permitting of dispensaries – essentially the route Sacramento took.

"The responsible thing to do is allow the state Supreme Court to rule," Stallings said.

Kashon Kohler said, "Be bold and continue to stand up for your community. The country is learning from what is going on in Tahoe."

Even though states are supposed to be able to govern themselves – and 17 have legalized medical marijuana – the Obama administration says otherwise. It is cracking down on weed as medicine. No firm number is out there as to how many collectives exist in California because not all are permitted by a city or county. Estimates range from 500 to 2,500.

South Tahoe Councilman Bruce Grego said he's heard of two in the city limits that are operating beyond the three that are legally allowed.

Californians approved Proposition 215 in 1996. This allowed marijuana for medicinal purposes. Some have said the medical marijuana industry is a $1.5 billion business in California.

Not all cities are running from the feds. The Marin Alliance

for Medical Marijuana is the oldest licensed dispensary in the state, having started 14 years ago. The Fairfax Town Council on Nov. 4 voted to keep the $1 million-a-year business operational despite the threat by the feds to prosecute the landlord.

In other action the council:

• Put off a decision and discussion about funding the economic analysis of the South Shore Vision until the Dec. 13 meeting.

• Agreed to go forward with altering business license fees. The idea is the higher grossing businesses would pay more, while the smaller businesses would pay less. Councilman Tom Davis is against having automatic increases tied to the Consumer Price Index. It was left that the CPI would not be part of the new funding structure. However, that would ultimately mean the city would be collecting less from businesses than it does now because the current fee is tied to the CPI. No one on the council or staff brought the funny math to light. The council will have the business tax as a formal agenda item to approve in January, with the projected date for voters to cast a ballot being in June.

• Heard from Bill Crawford questioning why Measure S (now Measure R) bonds might become taxable. He also said the city should take over operation of the recreation bond instead continuing to have John Upton be the sole paid staff member.

• Sided with Michael McKinney in allowing him to be a BlueGo bus driver.

• Agreed to spend an extra $6,000 on the annual survey that goes out in December to be published in Spanish. This brings the cost to $16,000. Davis voted against it. Councilwoman Fortier had left for the TRPA meeting by this time.

• Was adamant in not wanting to increase fees for vacation rental owners. They were disappointed Finance Director

Christine Vuletich didn’t bring forward ways to increase revenue. The fees are only supposed to cover the cost of doing business, not be a revenue generator. She was directed to bring back in more detail the idea of hiring a company that would be paid a percentage of taxes currently not being collected or fees not being collected.

• Wants to implement a utility cut fee so the entity mucking them up the roads would fix them.

Ingredients for traditional Thanksgiving jump 13%

By Kathryn Reed

This is going to be the most expensive Thanksgiving dinner you’ve ever had.

At least that’s what the American Farm Bureau Federation is saying. Each year the organization prices out what a turkey dinner for 10 people will cost. It’s gone up 13 percent since 2010 – the largest one-year spike since 1990 – with the total cost being the most since 1986 when the federation first started doing its calculations.



I pooh-poohed the study when I first heard about it because I didn’t think anyone could serve a Thanksgiving meal to 10 people for $49.20.

Part of the problem is my menu would be different than the

Farm Bureau's. If they invited you for dinner, you would have turkey, frozen green peas, pumpkin pie from a can with real whipped cream, whole milk, stuffing from a bag, store bought rolls, fresh cranberries, and sweet potatoes.

I decided to price a similar meal at Grocery Outlet in South Lake Tahoe this past weekend on the assumption it's the least expensive place to buy groceries on the South Shore.

I found a 12-14 pound turkey selling for $14.99, 2-pound bag of frozen green beans for $2.99, butternut squash $1.99 each, Truckee sourdough baguette $2.39, a bag of granny smith apples $3.99, a 5-pound bag of russet potatoes for $1.99, and a bag of stuffing mix for $1.89.

So, in Tahoe, I would say people are going to be able to make a basic Thanksgiving meal for 10 people for less than $50. And if there are leftovers, one could say you are eating for free.

I'll admit it's been a while since I've hosted a Thanksgiving dinner. For some reason people veer away from a vegetarian's house on this holiday.

But I have had a bird on my table before. I just didn't cook it. That's what mom is for. And my sister brought the meat thermometer. I know we didn't have 10 people and that it cost more than $50. And this was a few years ago. I decided if I were going to serve meat, it was going to be good meat. The turkey came from Overland Meat Co.

I only make homemade apple pie. A friend bought me some pippins from Apple Hill earlier this month for $1.29 pound. I don't know how many pounds there were, but the bag could have made 1½ 9-inch pies. I didn't know until I saw it at the store on Saturday that apple pie mix is available in a can. It makes me nauseous thinking about it. (I'm a huge apple pie snob.) I read the list of ingredients and couldn't pronounce all of them.

I have no problem, though, with making a pumpkin pie from a can.

My family doesn't do stuffing out of a bag or a box. In fact, mom's is so good that when I visit her we love to have it as a meal or snack – in months other than November.

We don't do frozen veggies as a general rule either – at least not as a side dish. Ironically, though, frozen and canned veggies can be better than the fresh stuff at grocery stores because they are picked at their peak instead of too early – as is often the case for what's in the produce aisle. The other good thing about frozen-canned veggies is you can use them when that particular item is not in season. This can be better than using something imported from another country where who knows what pesticide may have been applied to the field or orchard.

Just watch the salt content, especially on canned products.

Other things that drive up my grocery bill are premium vanilla ice cream for the apple pie, wine (Champagne is good idea to pair with turkey), spices for the various dishes, appetizers, snacks, even napkins and candles.

To lower the price of your holiday grocery bill, coupons are one way. Red Plum is just one of many online coupon sites. Some of the major turkey producers like Butterball and Hormel have discounts on their sites. The Grocery Game has been helping shoppers save money for 10 years.

Funding, details of S. Shore economic study come to light

By Kathryn Reed

While spending $10,000 to help fund the economic impact analysis of the South Shore Vision is on Tuesday's City Council agenda, City Attorney Patrick Enright told *Lake Tahoe News* he wants to delay the vote.

This is because no person or entity is stated on the agenda or the staff report in regards to who would receive the check. That's assuming the council votes to be part of the study and wants a check written. A vote could be taken to not fund the project.

Douglas County and Lake Tahoe Visitors Authority have each put in $10,000 and the South Tahoe Association of Resorts is contributing $5,000.



South Shore visionaries want to change the economic tide. Photo/Kathryn Reed

The South Shore Vision Plan is an idea between public-private alliances to revamp Highway 50 from Ski Run Boulevard in South

Lake Tahoe to Kahle Drive in Stateline. STAR paid $50,000 for Design Workshop to put together a plan.

The next step is the economic impact analysis that is estimated to cost no more than $35,000.

LTVA's board voted Nov. 10 to approve allocating its share, with Tom Davis, South Lake Tahoe's rep to the board, abstaining. His issue was with how the item was agendized and that there was no staff report.

Neither board members nor the public would have known money was to be spent that day. In fact, the website as of Nov. 13 only had the Oct. 13 agenda listed.

LTVA board members in an unprofessional, childish banter said things like: "I don't even know what the Brown Act is." "We've always done it this way." "We've never had a staff report accompanying a request for funds." "We need legal advice."

The public-private, bi-state nature of the board makes things dicey. But it's not the only board that operates this way. The bankrupt-defunct South Tahoe Area Transit Authority was comprised of similar type representatives. TRPA as a bi-state agency goes by Nevada's open meeting laws because they are more restrictive. It helps that TRPA's executive director is a lawyer so she knows the law.

But LTVA hasn't addressed the issue as to which opening meeting laws it should abide by and is essentially operating in a void. No one on the LTVA board is an attorney and no legal counsel goes to the meetings. The board blatantly violated the Brown Act, California's open meeting law, at the Oct. 13 meeting.

LTVA was founded in 1986 by a joint powers agreement between South Lake Tahoe and Douglas County and operates as an independent 501(c)6.

After last week's meeting it was left that LTVA Executive Director Carol Chaplin would call their attorney for advice. Davis said he would talk to Enright. Enright told *Lake Tahoe News* he would be calling Chaplin this week.

Nancy McDermid, a Douglas County commissioner and LTVA board member, after last week's tourism board meeting said it was fine for the county to award the money to individuals.

Enright won't let the city do that based on legal grounds. He said he'd prefer the check go to LTVA.

The City Council's agenda line items don't always say a dollar amount, but the staff report will explain what the full action is. It's like knowing the consequences to ones vote.

That isn't the case with LTVA agendas.

New Business G on the Nov. 15 council agenda says: (g) Discussion and Possible Direction/Action Regarding Follow-up from the Joint Meeting of the City Council/Douglas County Board of Commissioners held on Friday, November 4, 2011 at Edgewood Tahoe. It is accompanied by the staff report. All of this is easily accessible by the public.

This compares to the LTVA's website which only lists an old agenda, no staff reports and no minutes from previous meetings.

The economic study

Mike Bradford, with Lakeside Inn and Casino, has been leading the project that started with Douglas County wanting a vision for the casino corridor/Lower Kingsbury Grade area. It has evolved from there.

Bradford said it was through the county's Economic Vitality Department that a request for proposal was put out to find someone to do the economic study.

A firm out of Las Vegas, one from Denver and SMG from South Lake Tahoe sent in their bids.

Bradford and Mitchell Mize, director of real estate for Edgewood Tahoe, are the two who reviewed the three bids. They alone picked Carl Ribaudo with SMG to do the study.

(Lynda Ribaudo, wife of Carl, is CFO for Edgewood Companies.)

Bradford, after he made his presentation to LTVA, told *Lake Tahoe News* the reason he and Mize picked SMG is that the "others were static projections with no ability to adjust the model."

Ribaudo also spoke to the LTVA board. He said he came up with the study idea through years of work with real estate modeling.

He said the time consuming part will be getting the necessary information together to form a baseline model. Within the larger South Shore Vision study will be specifics that would apply directly to LTVA – the Destination Decision Model.

Knowing the number of rooms on the South Shore, then dividing visitors into potential categories like Bay Area, Southern California, out of state, international and knowing the percentage of each group that makes up the total; and putting in dollar amounts for what each group spends on a variety of elements from lodging to restaurants to food in stores to gaming to recreation will reveal the economic impact of the guests, along with the number of people employed to service them, the income of the those workers and the taxes that are generated.

With the SMG model, once the baseline is established, it becomes a "what if?" situation. What if guests increased their length of stay? What if they spent more money? What if occupancy increased? What if the visitor mix changed?

It’s that product that Ribaudo and company is bringing to the table. He said no destination this size is doing this type of economic forecasting.

Bradford, after the meeting, said, “I think on a micro level it happens all over the place, it’s not happening on a macro level.”

In other words, individual businesses have their own way to budget and plan; but the region is not doing it collectively.

Through SMG’s plan the LTVA will also be able to track its marketing dollars better and see if there is a return on investment.

The benefits to this plan were outlined in a PowerPoint:

• Understand the economic implications of marketing strategies

• Create community cohesion with a unified economic goal

• Facilitates more creative thinking on how to achieve economic goals

• Ties the reason for tourism promotion to the end results of tourism promotion

• (Ability to) consider alternative strategies

• Manage your segments by revenue stream with different investment strategies.

Kirkwood expanding options

for backcountry junkies

By Kathryn Reed

With more than a foot of snow on the ground before this weekend's storm arrived, Kirkwood is eager to power up the chairlifts to get people to all that powder.

"We haven't announced an early opening. We don't intend to do so until after this weekend and we see what kind of weekend it is," Michael Dalzell told *Lake Tahoe News*. With the forecast for the storm to go south, that bodes well for Kirkwood.



Skiers flocked to Kirkwood through late spring this past season. Photo/LTN file

Dalzell, spokesman for Kirkwood Mountain Resort, said Thanksgiving weekend is the targeted opening date so far. But, he added, fingers are crossed it will be top to bottom riding just like last year – which ended with 781 inches falling at the resort off Highway 88.

The bulk of the $6 million in improvements at the resort went to rebuilding the Mountain Club, which caught fire in May. It will open later this month.

Most of the units evolved from hotel-like units to two-bedroom

condos. The Mountain Club includes a full workout room, spa, sauna and steam room. It is a freestanding building in the village that operates on a one-eighth ownership.

Besides the lodging, the bottom level has been overhauled as well as a result of the fire. This includes the popular Monte Wolfe's. A few food items will be changed, but for the most part it will be the same restaurant.

Guest services and the ticket office are new, too.

Across from Chair 6 is the $1 million Expedition: Kirkwood Outfitters building.

While Expedition Kirkwood has been in existence for years, it never had a great place to operate out of. The new facility is designed to be a gathering place, somewhere to get information about avalanche conditions, hire a guide on a whim or just hang. It's from here that cat skiing, avalanche clinics, backcountry programs and all things beyond basic school begin and end.

Meeting space allows for gatherings or classroom time. Retail, demo equipment – it will all be in this one building.

Three times as many cat tours are expected to go out this season. Improvements during the dry season to the winter road to the Martin Point terrain will allow snowcat access almost every day. Expedition Kirkwood also intends to expand nighttime cat tours and hiking tours to new areas.

Kirkwood and K2 believe the snow and terrain are so special the ski manufacturer has created the Expedition Kirkwood K2 Sidestash. It is an all-terrain shovel rocker adventure ski. And only 300 pairs exist.

The price of an all day lift ticket has not been set, but it will be just less than $80, according to Dalzell. What the resort is touting is the inaugural year of having passes that

allow riders to jump between Kirkwood, Homewood and Alpine.

Many of Kirkwood's signature events are returning, like the North American Freeskiing Championships. But new is the Freeride Snow Festival on March 23-25 – which is billed as a winter version of Wanderlust. Women's clinics have been expanded to a weeklong shindig – March 3-11.

All events and details about Expedition Kirkwood are online.

S. Tahoe backpedals on some vacation rental policies

By Kathryn Reed

Google "South Lake Tahoe vacation rentals" and about 319,000 results show up. While there are nowhere near that many residences of any kind in the city limits, it proves this is big business.

And in some ways it has not been a tightly regulated market, with some people suggesting the city is losing six figures a year on uncollected transient occupancy tax from owners renting their property as lodging.

A meeting Wednesday morning geared toward property management companies was said to be the first time the city had asked them to a meeting other than when the contentious vacation home rental ordinance was written about seven years ago and any tweaking to it since then.

Earlier this year the council divided the responsibilities of

vacation rentals between the police and finance departments. Prior to that the finance department had sole jurisdiction. Now the police oversee everything but TOT.

Community service officers Bob Albertazzi, Dannelle Spaeth and Janet Inglis led the 90-minute meeting Nov. 9.

“We want to see if there are things we can do to make it more efficient,” Albertazzi told the more than dozen people at the meeting.

Jim Morris with Lake Tahoe Accommodations is a regular at meetings concerning vacation rentals and often vocal. Wednesday was no different, as he did the most talking by those in attendance.

“I think we are embarking on a whole new era,” Morris said. “I think all of us want to see taxes collected. We need permit numbers posted on websites. I think maybe 10 percent are on there.”

The point of the permit number on the website is then city staff can track TOT that comes in. Calendars on rental sites are an indicator of when a property was rented. However, it was said loud and clear that blocked dates could mean the house was occupied by the owners or their friends.

Spaeth said she recently checked on 10 vacation rentals by owners that someone believed were operating illegally. Eight had valid permits, and the other two have come into compliance.

“We have collected more than $1,000 in fines from people who were not permitted or (had a closed account) and were still renting,” Spaeth said. That’s just in the few months the PD has taken things over.

Albertazzi said they are trying to figure out how to get back taxes from people who are found to be renting without paying

TOT. He said one person just paid about four months worth of TOT.

But if a person is not reporting the income to the IRS, it would be hard to prove a paying customer had been there on which nights.

MaryAnne Brand, accounting manager with the city, said the law is the city could only collect three years worth of delinquent TOT. She said the city deals with between 600 and 700 vacation home rentals each quarter. (Vacation homes pay TOT quarterly, while hotels/motels pay monthly.)

While suggestions were made and emotions escalated at times, by the end of the workday, long after the meeting had ended, city staff met among themselves. Change, as a result of what was said at that meeting and letters sent to staff, is coming.

To counter the outrage expressed by vacation rental owners to report to the city all of the names and contact information of renters, the city is doing away with that requirement. That will be evident on the monthly forms that go out in December.

Also erased from the form is the line that says, “Under penalty of perjury I swear that all the information supplied in this form is true and accurate.”

Morris bragged at the meeting about having a role in getting that language on the form. He was instrumental in the added paperwork being asked of vacation rental homeowners to fill out. But no individual renter was ever at the meetings orchestrated by the finance department that created the policy changes.

“We could have done a better job reaching out to the vacation home rental group,” Nancy Kerry, spokeswoman for the city, told *Lake Tahoe News*. “We are getting input after the fact. Next time we will reach out ahead of time.”

Kerry said the form has been modified to achieve the original goals – to allow the finance department to do quick audits.

Julie Lucksinger with Lake Valley Properties at the morning meeting said many of her clients believe the information being sought would be a violation of privacy. She was not alone in that sentiment.

Brand said hotels collect private information that can be reviewed at any time the city wants and she at the time saw this as no different. But the difference would have been having to turn guest information over each month to the city and to sign the disclaimer.

No one at the city could recall a time when a hotel's guest list was reviewed.

Kerry said going forward "confidential" can be written as who the occupant is. She added, what's important is the number of nights the property was rented, not who was in it. Changes do not negate the property owners from maintaining records outlined in the ordinance that city staff could review with 10 days notice.

An item that may bring the group back together is on the Nov. 15 City Council agenda. The five are slated to discuss raising the $144 annual vacation rental permit by 40 percent. The meeting starts at 9am at Lake Tahoe Airport. This will not be an action item.

Delinquent permit payments were part of Wednesday's discussion. Spaeth, with the city, said since her department has taken over, those numbers have decreased and more people are complying.

To keep better track and avoid double or no payment, a property agent suggested putting on the form whether it's the owner or property manager responsible for paying the permit fee. Albertazzi said they'd look into that.

South Shore residents take time to honor veterans

By Kathryn Reed

STATELINE – Veterans on both sides of the South Shore were honored Friday for the time they spent serving in the U.S. Armed Forces.

Veterans Day tributes started at 11am Nov. 11 in South Lake Tahoe as the American Legion honored those who have served and those who continue to.

Patty Smith, whose son Tim died in 2008 fighting in Iraq, recited a moving poem – getting choked up reading the segment "some have fallen".

In Stateline, the Tahoe-Douglas Rotary's noon program was the annual recognition of vets.

Brian Williams, who emceed the event, said three words bind Rotary and the military – "service above self" –the Rotary mantra.



Ben Lehman and
Frank Reynolds

Six World War II veterans were among the attendees. Most of

the tables in the room at MontBleu had at least one vet – some guests, some Rotarians. They ranged from infantry to rear admiral.

Ben Lehman, the retired rear admiral, dressed in his Navy blues looked like he could command a ship today. He joined the military just after the invasion of Pearl Harbor.

As a 20-year-old with an engineering background, he was told by his bosses he would be well suited to design ships. They sent him to MIT, gave him a four-month apprenticeship and said if things didn't work out, there was always the South Pacific.

Some made the military a career. There were those who enlisted, and others who were drafted. Some saw combat, others did not.

But a certain pride emanated from each man who spoke – a selflessness, a commitment to those they served with, and to a country that didn't and still doesn't always understand the wars and conflicts they were involved in.

Bob Albertazzi, who works for South Lake Tahoe, was a guest Friday. Always one who speaks with a deference of respect to others, he didn't elaborate on his Army years (1968-93) that included stints in Vietnam and the Gulf War.

Frank Reynolds never thought he'd make a career out of the Marine Corps. He is still involved as a civilian as the commandant for the Marine Corps League in Carson City.

A recruiter in May 1969 told him he would be going to Paris for boot camp. He was giddy. Parris Island, South Carolina – is what the recruiter meant. Reynolds finagled his way to San Diego instead.

He put in 20 years. Thought he was done. Then he got a call that he been activated for Operation Desert Storm. Reynolds said he spent most of his time roping goats, having snared one

camel, too.

One vet had been in the current conflict in the Mideast, but didn't say anymore.

Fittingly, bagpiper Sean Cummings broke up the event with various military songs – offering a bit of levity, while keeping with the solemn tone of the afternoon.

Music students provide moving tribute to veterans

By Kathryn Reed

Across the room the trumpets echoed "Taps" – the distinctive military call also known as Last Post.

Lauren Tang was on one side of the South Tahoe Middle School auditorium, Christina DeLallo on the other. Their duet of sorts visibly moved the nearly 500 people who turned out Thursday for the fourth annual Veterans' Musical Tribute.



The national anthem was one of the first songs played Nov. 10 at the

veterans concert in South Lake Tahoe. Photos/Kathryn Reed

The hundreds of students who performed Nov. 10 were part of the South Tahoe High School Symphonic Band, STMS 6th Grade Concert/Advanced Bands, Tahoe Intermediate Honor Choir, STHS String Orchestra, Blue Ribbon Choir, STMS Symphonic Band, or STMS String Orchestra.

J.J. Clause and Linda Kurek, two of Lake Tahoe Unified School District's music directors, were in Disneyland when the idea hit them to do this concert. They were there with students for an event when at sunset the Disneyland Band came down Main Street playing patriotic music and took down the flag.

"Linda and I were in tears," Clause recalled. They decided a concert for vets was something they had to put on – especially with both of their dads being World War II veterans.

This year's concert was even more moving for Clause, who as she honored the World War II vets in attendance, was able to acknowledge her father's contributions to history as well. Harry Jenkins served in the Navy. Also recognized Thursday were John Filas, George Waymire and Jim Brathoude.

This tribute is about those who have or are serving in any branch of the Armed Forces. Uniforms dotted the audience of mostly civilians.

This concert is also an opportunity for the students, who have been practicing since the first day of school, to give something back, to become aware of what the men and women in the military have done, and to put a face to people who may seem more like historical figures in a textbook.

Each year the concert is a little different, though a handful of traditional songs – like the “Star Spangled Banner” – are performed each year. Each year the concert ends with a sing-along – “This Land is Your Land” – was the culmination this year.

Besides Kurek and Clause, the other instructors making the concert a reality are Casson Scowcroft, Paul Kushner and Sheri Schimmel.

One of the more haunting songs was “Adagio for Strings” performed by the high school String Orchestra. While Samuel Barber’s song was first performed in 1938, more people today would remember it from the 1986 movie “Platoon”.

Keeping with the emotional aspect of the night, a moment of silence was observed for the South Lake Tahoe men who have died in either the Afghanistan for Iraq conflicts – Garret Fant in 2011, Tim Smith in 2008, and Brandon Williams in 2006.

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Note: Veterans will also be honored at 11 this morning at the American Legion in South Lake Tahoe.

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