

City Council Candidate Questionnaire

The City of South Lake Tahoe continuously makes commitments towards sustainability and addressing climate change.

- On October 4, 2022 the City of South Lake Tahoe passed a plastic water bottle ban enforcing restrictions on single-use service ware, and eliminating styrofoam and plastic water bottles.
- On December 7, 2021 the South Lake Tahoe City Council unanimously passed a Resolution to Aspire Towards Citywide 100 Percent Renewable, Carbon-Free Electricity, 24/7 by 2030.
- In 2022, the City created a [Climate Change Action Plan \(CAP\)](#).

Tahoe Climate Change Action Networks seeks to understand each candidates alignment with the City's decisions to place value on the environment. Please answer the following questions to the best of your ability. Your responses will be compiled and published in local media and to our membership and partner groups. **Please fill out this form no later than October 14, 2022.**

Thank you for your candidacy!

1. On a scale 1-5, please rank your prioritization of addressing Climate Change at a local level (1 being the least prioritized and 5 being the most prioritized).

Tamara Wallace

N/a

David Jinkens

5

Scott Robbins

N/a

Chantelle Schenning

N/a

Nicole Ramirez Thomas

5

Nick Speal

5

Sherry Eddy

3

2. Describe your concerns about climate change and its impacts on South Lake Tahoe. What would you propose to do as a member of the city council on this issue?

Tamara Wallace

Wildfire. Continue to increase our defensible space efforts. Continue my work with the Ca Tahoe Conservancy and it's efforts on the WUI.

David Jinkens

The City's adopted climate action plan covers a lot of important actions needed. There needs to be an added element that I have been advocating over four years. Climate change is real as it has been for several millenniums, and it has certainly contributed to conditions that are making the dangers of fire worse in our State and our City. In the City of South Lake Tahoe, we can and should do more to ensure that the large number of poorly maintained and fire-prone parcels owned by the Federal government and State governments are made more fire safe so that we minimize, to the greatest degree possible, the risk of fire inside the city.

City government must be a leader in ensuring that these government lands are made safe by whatever means it takes to do so. We must protect our city, environment, Lake, water supply, habitat, and local economy by making certain that these lands are made more fire safe. In addition, we need to seek Federal and State funds to offer grants to private parties and low-income families to make their property fire safe too. There is no bigger threat to Lake Tahoe than the threat of fire, and City government must be the leader in ensuring that this does not happen. We must become a Fire Safe City and promote "fire safe neighborhoods". I hope as well that County officials consider similar measures to protect our county neighbors.

Scott Robbins

We already face summers so hot and dry that Caldor-level wildfires have become the norm, not the exception, and we will soon begin to see winters too warm for consistent snow. If we do nothing, if we do not demonstrate leadership, then the children learning to ski in Tahoe today will be the parents of the last generation to ski in Tahoe, and our jewel in the Sierras will be lost for future generations of locals.

The cities commitment to %100 renewable energy by 2030 was an important statement of values in addressing this long-term challenge. It was disappointing then, to see the new recreation center, despite being a LEED Gold building, will nonetheless receive a significant amount of its heat through the burning of fossil fuels, rather than using electric heat pumps. In a building that had already gone way over budget, this was apparently deemed wasteful spending. This is short-term thinking about long term infrastructure that will last at least a generation. Climate commitments need to be met with commensurate actions.

The state of California has recently mandated that all new vehicles sold by the year 2035 will be fully electric. We must make real efforts in improving both the reliability and capacity of our electric grid, undergrounding utilities, and increasing clean and reliable generation capacity to sustain an electrified future.

Improvements to our public transit system, especially service hours and service area are badly needed to provide attractive alternatives to car travel. In the longer term, and as technology becomes more affordable, a move to a fully electrified bus and micro-transit should be part of our infrastructure investments.

These goals are difficult, and they will require sustained focus and effort - but they can be reached.

Chantelle Schenning

Climate change is an existential threat that impacts everyone around the globe, and we need community-level and global solutions to curb its harmful effects. Because of my background in healthcare, I am a strong supporter of scientific, evidence-based solutions. As a City Council member, I would review data from community organizations, public databases, and

intergovernmental agencies to analyze trends and advocate for strategies to get our local climate back on track. We need short term, mid-term, and long-term goals for climate change. For example: I support the 100% renewable by 2030 and the plastic ban, but the 100% renewable energy goal is too lofty and the plastic ban is too narrow with challenging implementation. It is great to dream big, but we also must be pragmatic and strategic to have the most impact and to use taxpayer dollars wisely.

Here are a few ideas on climate change as it relates to wildfires and pollution:

1. Immediate Action: I am endorsed by the South Lake Tahoe Firefighters Association. During a recent meeting with them, I learned about the challenges with retention, affordable housing for our first responders, and low wages. We need to better fund and support our firefighters. We should consider the better implementation of the water bottle plastic ban and also explore expansion beyond only water bottles.
2. Short Term: Allocating resources to better care for and maintenance of our parks, including by ensuring appropriate clearance of dead vegetation and litter, creation of defensible space. Regulating sales of firewood and charcoal to prevent fires from starting. Ensure our city is aware and engaged in the federal/ state incentives for energy efficient houses and vehicles. Evaluating a more concerted, funded effort to clean up the lake.
3. Mid & Longer Term: Fines or incentives for large corporations to engage more in preventing pollution and protecting against wildfires. Improving our energy use through promoting energy efficiency, electric vehicle infrastructure, and renewable energy sources. The Inflation Reduction Act is historic for climate change and had significant funding for these efforts which the city should explore capitalizing on the funds to address climate change priorities of our city.

Nicole Ramirez Thomas

Climate change is a huge concern. I think it is important to not try to turn back the clock but rather to determine how we mitigate and adapt to the changes we are facing. How do we stay safe? How do we help the health of the Lake as its water levels fluctuate each year? Those types of things. As a City, there are many things that we are not in control of when it comes to our surrounding environment, so we have to consider what we can do at the local level that will have far reaching impacts and drive other policies and change. I think that South Lake Tahoe can be a leader in the Basin by adopting local policies that other jurisdictions could also adopt or support. As a member of the City Council I would look to develop these types of policies; policies that create connectivity and are distinctively Tahoe.

Nick Speal

Climate Change is the biggest long-term threat to everything we know and love in South Lake Tahoe. Last year we saw the snowiest December in history, followed by the longest dry spell ever. Previously no fire had ever crossed the Sierra Nevada, but last year this happened twice with the Dixie and Caldor fires. Scientists tell us we need to take aggressive action to cut 50%

of carbon emissions by 2030, and we need to build local resiliency to protect ourselves from increasingly frequent natural disasters.

Resiliency comes in all forms! Fully funding our fire department and enforcing defensible space precautions protect us in the face of drought and wildfires. Upgrading stormwater management and snowplow equipment protects us when atmospheric rivers cross the threshold from powder day to natural disaster. Local energy storage and underground utility lines keep the lights on when we need them most. Finally, diversifying our economy can build stability and financial predictability, because pure reliance on tourism comes and goes with the weather. We saw last year that tourism doesn't work when we are buried under 25 feet of snow or the basin is filled with smoke. Creating more diverse job opportunities helps smooth that out.

Sherry Eddy

Climate has been changing since the beginning of time and will continue to change. The earth has went through an ice age, the dark ages, extreme storms, droughts and weather cycles.

In regards to the second question, I do feel that people need to be responsible for keeping our environment clean.

Instead of being a fast forward, front runner on this issue, as most of the current City Council are in favor of, I would like to research more data and reviews to see how it is working for cities similar to ours, and learn from their pros and con experiences. Also, research more on how the electric charging stations will effect the grid and how they will function in our wind, heavy rain and heavy snow storms. Along with the frequent blackouts that last hours to days in our community, that we already experience. Will power be rationed to households like I have seen in Sacramento, L.A. and other cities? Sacramento has their residents use their oven only on certain days, as well as their washer and dryer one day a week. These are all a concern to me. Our California Governor had told residents at one point, not to use their air conditioners in the peak summer heat and to not charge their EVs due to grid overload.

The electric city bus that is already in use in our community, has proven to have issues in our winter months, having trouble driving up small hills due to loss of energy, and when the time comes to replace the battery, it will cost tens of thousands of dollars. Where does that money come from? Electricity is 90% coal, which is fossil fuel. The lithium batteries are very expensive to replace, very toxic, non recyclable and bought from China who owns the lithium mines, that leave gigantic , deep holes, in the earth and slave labor is used to get the minerals for the batteries. I feel that electric vehicles should be a choice, not forced upon the people. The fear factor from the media and many news outlets, use to be Global Warming, that was proven wrong. So now the key trigger word is Climate Change. Are our Government leaders following the guidelines they want us to follow. I think not, when they own million dollar mansions, jet set around in private planes and drive, (or are driven in) gas SUVs, leaving a huge carbon footprint. It seems they have the attitude of "Do as I say, not as I do."

3. Do you believe we are on course to adapt to a noticeably changing climate?

Tamara Wallace

Yes

David Jinkens

Yes

Scott Robbins

No

Chantelle Schenning

No

Nicole Ramirez Thomas

No

Nick Speal

No

Sherry Eddy

I don't know

4. Do you support the resolution to ban plastic water bottles that was passed on October 4, 2022?

Tamara Wallace

Yes*

Tamara Wallace voted "No" on October 4th

David Jinkens

Yes

Scott Robbins

Yes

Chantelle Schenning

Yes

Nicole Ramirez Thomas

Yes

Nick Speal

Yes

Sherry Eddy

No

5. Traffic is becoming a huge issue for both our roads and our climate. How do you propose to improve South Lake Tahoe's transportation services?

Tamara Wallace

Support Microtransit. TTD has proven time and again that they are unable to provide transit, so we will do it for them.

David Jinkens

Improving public transportation is definitely needed, but we still have to deal with the thousands of people who drive to South Lake Tahoe to visit. They are the most important component of our economy. Their experience must be good if we want them to come back, and measures must be taken to ensure that the people who live here are not part of a living nightmare when people visit. We can do both. A good, reliable, and affordable transportation system is needed. More parking garages and/or park and rides are needed to house visitor vehicles, and better traffic controls, signage, visitor education, and enforcement etc. are needed to keep our neighborhoods safe during peak visits by tourists. Once visitors get here, we want to have transit available so that they can keep their cars parked. We can and must value our visitors and value the people who live here. We must look at all of the money we are currently spending on public transit now and re-evaluate how it is spent to ensure that public transit is working the best for locals and visitors. The new Micro-Transit system seems to be a start in the right direction. It must be affordable, convenient, efficient, and safe.

Scott Robbins

The regular traffic jams stretching to Placerville are possibly the most visible contribution to our total carbon pollution. Accelerating work on a tourist-specific (non-resident, non-workforce) basin entry fee system, used to fund mass transit services around and especially into the basin from Sacramento and San Francisco, could go a long way towards sustainable transit that reduces total carbon output.

Locally, a significant proportion of our tourism service sector work dinner shifts which typically don't end until 10-11pm, well after local transit services have stopped. For too much of our workforce, public transit simply does not exist. We can and should extend service hours to enable our whole workforce to be able to use our bus and micro-transit services.

Chantelle Schenning

While tourism is a contributor to traffic, we must not ignore the large number of residents (~23k) within a small footprint of our city. For both reasons, I do believe we need to improve our public transportation and transit infrastructure. So long as we rely on experts to evaluate data and develop plans for transportation and effectively engage residents as well as other cities/counties, I believe we can reduce the traffic burden and impact on our environment by providing a desirable, accessible alternative to private vehicles. Here are some thoughts on potential actions:

Immediate: I would like to evaluate the data on Lake Link to explore if the city accomplished anticipated outcomes, reduced the number of vehicles on the streets, and if it is worth the investment. I am disappointed that Lake Link does not utilize electric vehicles and appears to be circulating with empty vans. I suspect we can be more strategic to improve the performance metrics while being good stewards of our environment. Additionally, the city could work with Lime Micromobility (scooters) and strategically position scooter parking throughout our city to encourage better usage.

Short/ Mid Term: Many vehicles are on the road due to the challenges with walk/bike-ability in our city. I am impressed by the city council and city manager's efforts to invest in our own road repair equipment to improve efficiency and cut costs. We should continue focusing on road repair while also creating more walk/bike/scoot lanes throughout our city. I also believe incentives from local businesses for walking/ biking/ scooting instead of driving would be helpful. City council should communicate and facilitate federal and state incentives that exist for electric vehicle purchases and use.

Longer Term: We can explore funding from state and federal governments to support development of an electric transportation infrastructure like electric buses for folks who cannot walk or bike and as an alternative to private vehicles.

Nicole Ramirez Thomas

I think that when thinking about transportation in South Lake Tahoe we need to consider several things. One, we have two needs: the need for locals to have reliable transportation to reduce vehicle use and the need to reduce visitor traffic. Busses, micro transit, bike, and other group or small transit options can be explored but demography and equity must be considered. Who are the modes of transportation intended to serve and how are they reliable and attractive for people to use? Bike paths are great, but not everyone can use them. Someone might have a disability, or not like to ride a bike. People might find the public transit system to be unreliable (some of this is related to visitor and other traffic). There are road diets and other traffic calming measures that might not reduce traffic so much as they make local transportation easier, and they may encourage other types of transit around the city. I think there are a lot of ways to improve the traffic situation, but the question of who is being served by particular options or what challenges might be created with certain options is important to look at.

Nick Speal

As a board member on the Lake Tahoe Bicycle Coalition, I have long advocated for some of the sustainable transportation initiatives that we love in South Lake Tahoe. We've got excellent bike paths, plowed year round, and I will prioritize extending the Greenway through the Bijou and Rocky Point neighborhoods. From an equity standpoint, these neighborhoods have been left out of bike path development for too long.

I also love riding our electric busses and Lake Link micro-transit around town. I'll collaborate with the Tahoe Transportation District and put up the funding to extend our free bus options with more frequent service, running later at night.

15 million people visit Lake Tahoe every year, and we need to work with our neighbors to enhance the regional transit that will enable more people to get here without a car. Once they are here, we have micro-transit and a connected trail network that enables folks to easily get around.

Sherry Eddy

Our city has city busses running throughout our town that arrive for pick up every 20 minutes. Many times I see these buses running with empty seats or just a few people in them. And in the Summer time, we have the Trollies and buses running, and bicycle/electric bikes for rent for the tourist (locals usually own their own bikes).

If I were elected, there would need to be discussions on this issue with the Transportation Department and at the City Council meetings to see if there is anything else that can be done. This is not an easy fix.

6. Do you support the City's goal to become 100% renewable by 2030?

Tamara Wallace

Yes

David Jinkens

Yes

Scott Robbins

Yes

Chantelle Schenning

Yes

Nicole Ramirez Thomas

Yes

Nick Speal

Yes

Sherry Eddy

No

7. If so, how do you propose we meet this goal?

Tamara Wallace

N/a

David Jinkens

The City and STPUD are already moving forward with steps to realize 100% renewable. I support these goals. Achieving them will require cooperation from utility companies, owners, and renters, and help from the CPUC. It will require an extensive educational outreach as well to our business community and people who live here. Where the challenge comes up relates to 1. Getting property owners to retrofit their properties to renewable energy and this will take positive incentives to do so. These incentives will likely require Federal and State grant support that City officials should aggressively seek. The property owners and renters cannot be expected to bear the cost of retrofit, and if government at all levels want them to retrofit and use renewal energy, they will have to make it affordable. As we pursue our goals to 100% we must also consider the impact on the cost of housing and rents and how we will ensure that they are made more affordable for our workforce. It is important as well that City leaders keep in close contact with members of our building community to hear their thoughts, suggestions, and concerns on these important matters. It will take us all working together to achieve our goals.

Scott Robbins

N/a

Chantelle Schenning

N/a

Nicole Ramirez Thomas

I support this but I think its a big push that we need to get started on ASAP! Approaching projects with idea that they can meet multiple goals in the strategic plan is efficient and fiscally responsible. It also offers a more comprehensive approach to accomplishing goals and recognizes the interconnectedness of the things we want for the community (housing, transportation options, reduced carbon, good land use, etc.). Picking one big project- like transit- that can meet multiple objectives in the strategic plan and working toward this goal is something that would appeal to me as a decision maker.

Nick Speal

I'm so proud of South Lake Tahoe for its bold commitment to not only offset our annual consumption with renewable electricity, but to completely eliminate electricity from fossil fuels every hour of every day. It won't be easy but we have 7 years to make it happen.

One key pillar of the strategy is energy conservation. We need to reduce waste by insulating buildings and shifting individual car travel (which should be mostly electric by then) into bikes and busses. We can support homeowners to upgrade windows and insulation, especially for rental properties where tenants are stuck with skyrocketing gas bills.

We need to expand our sustainability department (currently 1 employee, go Sara!) to direct the growing federal and state investment into our economy via grants and collaboration with the private sector. They can work with Liberty Utilities to shift our electricity grid to 100% renewable sources. Liberty is already providing 100% solar electricity during the day in the summer, and we need to invest in local battery storage to use solar energy at night and provide backup resiliency.

With a bit of optimism and the right prioritization, we can get on track and demonstrate leadership in sustainable energy.

Sherry Eddy

Our present Governor is the one that pushed for this to happen. If this is enforced, City Council will have no say in the matter. But we will have 8 years to watch other cities, learn and figure out what is the best approach for our city.

As I stated in the first question, Instead of being a fast forward, front runner on this issue, as most of the current City Council are in favor of, I would like to research more data and reviews to see how it is working for cities similar to ours, and learn from their pros and con experiences. Also, research more on how the electric charging stations will effect the grid and how they will function in our wind, heavy rain and heavy snow storms, along the frequent blackouts that last hours to days in our community, that we already experience. Will power be rationed to households like I have seen in Sacramento, L.A. and other cities? Sacramento has their residents use their oven only on certain days, as well as their washer and dryer one day a week. These are all a concern to me. Our California Governor had told residents at one point, not to use their air conditioners in the peak summer heat and to not charge their electric cars due to grid overload.

And on the issue of the plastic water bottle ban. It will hurt small local businesses and markets. Tourist will bring them with them by the case when visiting Tahoe or go across Stateline to buy them, and locals will go off the hill to Costco or Walmart and buy them by the case. The water bottles are recyclable, thin plastics are not...even the thin plastic blue bags for recyclables So. Tahoe Refuse has been made to supply are not recyclable. For people that do not separate recyclables, South Tahoe Refuse has employee who's job is to separate them from any bag comes across the conveyer belt, then they get put into the recycling center.

