



**TRUCKEE TAHOE AIRPORT DISTRICT
BOARD OF DIRECTORS STAFF REPORT**

AGENDA TITLE: AGENCY-SUPPORTED INDEPENDENT JOURNALIST
MEETING DATE: FEBRUARY 28, 2024
PREPARED BY: DIRECTOR DAVID DIAMOND
REPRESENTED BY: DIRECTOR DAVID DIAMOND

With so many government agencies in the Tahoe Truckee region, it’s not easy for constituents to follow or understand the items of consequence our agencies are considering, or will consider. Rolling and posted agendas are vague and often require historical knowledge in order to gain the context required to understand what’s at stake.

The “public process” provides opportunities for members of the public to comment on items during public meetings. All too often, we see public interest pique only when an item is nearly or finally decided. This suggests early discussions can lack adequate information for the public to meaningfully participate in the discussion.

This proposal suggests the hiring of an independent professional journalist to research and report on the ongoing business of local agencies. The agencies included would opt in by participating in the hiring, oversight and costs of the journalist. (Note that this position could be 100% remote.)

The journalist would follow the agendas of each agency, and arrange interviews with elected and heads of agency to distill goals and intents into news items that can be widely understood.

The journalist’s findings would be published online and, optionally, re-published by local news agencies. These findings would inform the general public, and could also be used by educators to help students better understand what’s happening in local government.

The journalist might also publish a calendar that informs the public of meetings and agenda items. Included could be reminders of when topics are to be brought back for discussion, so individuals can more easily track topics of interest.

Examples of considerations to be decided by participating agencies:

- Does the journalist work exclusively for a local news source, or are findings available for syndication by any news source?
- What form of oversight will be provided to make sure the journalist functions without bias?
- How would member agencies provide guidance without unduly influencing the journalist's methodologies?

Virtually all local agencies have expressed an interest in increased transparency so that we have a better-informed constituency. Increasing the availability of information does not address this goal, if that information is not consumable by most constituents. The hiring of this position could serve this goal more effectively because it will lead to content that includes context and requires no prior knowledge of the topic.