

From: [Wendy Jepson](#)
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: [John Hester](#); [Julie Regan](#); [Kimberly Caringer](#); [Paul Nielsen](#); [Sarah Underhill](#); [Jeff Cowen](#); [Research Generic Mailbox](#); [Tahoe Regional Planning Agency and the Marlette Lake Water System](#)
Subject: RE: Projects with Story Poles during the approval process
Date: Wednesday, April 3, 2024 4:24:05 PM

Some people who received this message don't often get email from wjepson@trpa.gov. [Learn why this is important](#)

Ms. Burden-Austere:

The following is in response to your question on how potential code amendments are considered and prioritized.

Each year, the TRPA Governing Board completes a priority-setting process where staff reviews the current strategic priorities, planning needs, and suggestions on other projects and programs. Staff then prepares a workplan and budget for the coming year for the Governing Board to review and potentially approve. We will include your suggestion to build on our existing scenic resources program, which is recognized around the country for its high degree of environmental protection, during the priority-setting process this year. Although the annual workplan is constrained by limited resources, we are committed to continuous improvement in the agency's policies and procedures. We anticipate workplan discussions by the Governing Board to take place in the May/June timeframe.

Thank you,

Wendy Jepson
Department Manager
Permitting and Compliance Manager
Office 775-589-5269
wjepson@trpa.gov



From: Niobe Burden Austere [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, March 28, 2024 1:15 PM
To: Wendy Jepson <wjepson@trpa.gov>
Cc: John Hester <jhester@trpa.gov>; Julie Regan <jregan@trpa.gov>; Kimberly Caringer <kcaringer@trpa.gov>; Paul Nielsen <pnielsen@trpa.gov>; Sarah Underhill <sunderhill@trpa.gov>; Jeff Cowen <jcowen@trpa.gov>; NV Legislative Committee Research Division staff <research@lcb.state.nv.us>; Public Comment NV Legislative Committee <tahoe@lcb.state.nv.us>
Subject: Re: Projects with Story Poles during the approval process

Hello Wendy et al,

The current story poles policy is VERY WEAK considering TRPA's responsibility for upholding the Bi-state Compact mandated Scenic Threshold. Story-Poles are meant to assist planners and the public in understanding a project's size, bulk and scale in relation to the neighborhood and its effects on important public scenic views. Story poles are meant not only for the planner to envision but for the community to also see and should be in place for more than one day at the planner's discretion. I don't understand why this practice is not more in line with what other communities such as Santa Barbara, Solana Beach and Marin County implement.

As a community member, I want to propose TRPA code to include the implementation of story poles for all projects over 1 story in height on all corners and elevations for a period of time for more transparent rendering of a project for decision makers and the community? How does TRPA write and introduce a new code for approval?

Of course, there are many other policies from other California towns (a couple I've attached below) to consider when drafting this code but it should at a minimum address the following:

- Be implemented on all proposed projects that are more than 1 story (other communities indicate 17 feet from existing grade). There are many additional details in the attached materials including the request to waive to the design review committee, for those projects where it makes sense to do so.
- Story poles should be WHITE (as White shows up best) at each exterior corner to show mass and distance from other structures/streets, poles with white balloons at the various elevations indicating heights (Details of language in attached two examples from Solana Beach and Santa Barbara)
- There should be a minimum time period in place they will be displayed - minimum length of time before public hearing (such as a week like most) for the public to be able to see
- The cost to implement and certification by a land surveyor should be born by TRPA representing the public's interests, while the cost of the story pole plot plan should be at the cost of the builder/developer.

These are of course just suggestions I hope TRPA would consider to improve trust and transparency for the public.

What would be next steps?

Niobe Burden Austere



Tahoe Vista property owner and conservation photographer

On Mon, Mar 25, 2024 at 2:52 PM Wendy Jepson <wJepson@trpa.gov> wrote:

Dear Niobe Burden Austere,

Thank you for your email. I am the Permitting and Compliance Department Manager and I can answer questions about story poles. We use story poles or sometimes a balloon (as a large balloon may be easier to see from a distance) on a case-by-case basis as part of our project review. While there is no requirement for story poles or balloons in the TRPA Code, it is a tool that planners can use. Attached are some sample pictures where we used a story pole or balloon to get a better idea of the height of a proposed cell tower or a larger development project. If a planner chooses to request a story pole or balloon, they are present when it is used in the field. We have been using story poles or balloons as needed for many years.

Please let me know if you have any other questions.

Thank you,

Wendy Jepson
Department Manager
Permitting & Compliance Department
(775) 589-5269



*Connecting people with information to improve decision making
and sustain investments in the Lake Tahoe Basin.*

<https://laketahoeinfo.org/>

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From: Niobe Burden Austere <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Friday, March 22, 2024 4:19 PM

To: John Hester <jhester@trpa.gov>

Cc: Julie Regan <jregan@trpa.gov>; Wendy Jepson <wjepson@trpa.gov>; Kimberly Caringer <kcaringer@trpa.gov>; Paul Nielsen <pnielsen@trpa.gov>

Subject: Re: Projects with Story Poles during the approval process

Hi all,

My email from March 8th may have slipped through the cracks.

Can someone please provide the following information as indicated they would:

1. Does TRPA have “photos for the record” of any projects on the lakeside with story poles within the last 10 years? Residential or otherwise?
2. What are the requirements? Any information you provide a builder/developer regarding the requirement of story poles would be helpful.
Long time residents indicate they used to be used but have not seen them in later projects.
3. Who typically is responsible for placing them? Is there a licensed engineer that TRPA contracts like in other jurisdictions? or is it left up to the builder/developer to provide their own contracted story pole placement contractor?

Thank you for the clarification

Niobe Burden Austere

[REDACTED]

On Fri, Mar 8, 2024 at 10:51 AM Niobe Burden <[n\[REDACTED\]@trpa.gov](mailto:n[REDACTED]@trpa.gov)> wrote:

Thank you.

In addition, any information you provide a builder/developer regarding the requirement of story poles would be helpful.

Thanks

Sent from my iPhone
Niobe Burden Austere

On Mar 8, 2024, at 10:42 AM, John Hester <jhester@trpa.gov> wrote:

Ms. Burden:

I am not surprised you haven't seen any with the limited amount of development allowed in the Basin. Nevertheless, I will ask our Permitting and Compliance staff to check recent project files to get you an example of the use of poles and respond to your other questions.

Best,

John B. Hester, AICP
Chief Operating Officer
and Deputy Executive Director
Tahoe Regional Planning Agency
o: 775.589.5219
m: 775.848.6824
e: jhester@trpa.gov

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From: Niobe Burden <[REDACTED]>

Sent: Friday, March 8, 2024 10:29 AM

To: John Hester <jhester@trpa.gov>

Cc: Julie Regan <jregan@trpa.gov>; Wendy Jepson <wJepson@trpa.gov>;
Kimberly Caringer <kcaringer@trpa.gov>

Subject: Re: Story Poles

Thank you for your email Mr Hester.

Strange because I've never seen story poles used in any of the McMansions being built on the lake in the last 20 years I've been here.

Do you have actual "photos for record" of any projects - McMansions on the lake with story poles within the last 10 years? I know there have not been many projects (at lesser in north lake) but plenty of luxury homes which would have had this requirement.

Who typically is responsible for placing them? Is there a contracted licensed engineer that TRPA contracts like in other jurisdictions?

Sorry if I've missed something. Just 2-3 would be helpful to know with photos.

Thank you for the clarification

Sent from my iPhone
Niobe Burden Austere

On Mar 8, 2024, at 10:11 AM, John Hester
<jhester@trpa.gov> wrote:

Ms. Burden:

Julie Regan, Executive Director, asked me to provide this response to your public comment suggesting use of story poles.

The short response is we have and do use them. We also use many other tools as part of our Scenic Quality work. The following provides you with some background on this and links to specific documents.

As you probably may know the TRPA Bi-State Compact requires us to create threshold standards, prepare a regional plan that identifies how to attain and maintain those standards, and a development code that is used to review development applications and require that standards are met. The adoption of scenic standards, goals, policies, and regulations as called for in the Compact have resulted in TRPA having some of the most stringent scenic requirements in the country (e.g., we regulate the color a house can be painted). These requirements also address scenic assessments. We have used story poles (e.g., lakefront homes, cell towers), cranes (e.g., cell towers), tethered balloons (e.g., cell towers, hotels), drones (cell towers, hotels), and require visual simulations from multiple viewpoints including on the Lake and from specific locations on streets and highways.

The standards, etc. can be found here:

Threshold standards – <https://www.trpa.gov/wp-content/uploads/Adopted-Regional-Plan.pdf> The Scenic Quality threshold standards, SR-SR8, are on pages 14 and 15 and in Attachments C-H in the Thresholds Standards section of this document.

Regional Plan goal and policies – <https://www.trpa.gov/wp-content/uploads/Adopted-Regional-Plan.pdf> The Regional Plan goal, SR-1, and policies, SR-1.1 – SR 1.3, are on pages 4.22 – 23 in the Regional Plan section of this document.

Code of Ordinances – <https://www.trpa.gov/wp-content/uploads/TRPA-Code-of-Ordinances.pdf> The Scenic Quality Chapter, Chapter 66, in this Code of Ordinances document is on pages 66-1 – 66.13.

If you have further questions about this information please contact Wendy Jepson, Permitting and Compliance Director. She or one of her staff will be happy to help.

It is obvious from your comments that TRPA can improve how we communicate our standards, plans, and regulations so I have provided a copy of this response to Kim Caringer, Chief Partnerships Officer and Deputy Executive Director. She and her Communications Department staff are continually looking for ways to improve our communications and I hope you will consider providing them with your perspective and ideas for improvements in the future.

Best,

John B. Hester, AICP
Chief Operating Officer
and Deputy Executive Director
Tahoe Regional Planning Agency
o: 775.589.5219
m: 775.848.6824
e: jhester@trpa.gov

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