

Dear Town Council,

Thank you for your time here tonight. Your commitment to our town, to the well-being of our residents, and your interest and work to maintain our local economy are greatly appreciated.

I have owned and operated a business in Mammoth Lakes for 14 years. I am fortunate enough to have called this place home for over 40 years.

When the TBID was first established, I was not in favor of the assessment. I have since become aware of the benefits that the TBID provides for our town, and I work towards positive, educated conversations about how we can use the increased visitation dollars to elevate the Town of Mammoth Lakes. Yes, I realize the impact of this increase and how it affects our environment. The increase in traffic on the road and the trails is a concern for many locals, myself included. This is understandable. Population is on the rise on this planet, and outdoor recreation is more accessible than any other time on Earth. It is incredibly important to recognize the role of using marketing dollars as a means of educating our visitors. MLT has made great strides towards increasing awareness and education amongst our tourists and our locals.

After the established TBID assessment, it didn't take long for me to realize how incredibly valuable it is for our business community to have a marketing source reaching out to bring people to town during the off season. Two years after the TBID was established, when I was generally laying people off for the season, I found myself keeping employees through what used to be the slow spring season. I was suddenly looking to hire more people than previous years. I watched as business rapidly grew more than it had in the first 4 years that I was in business prior to the establishment of the TBID. I was able to see this as a direct correlation to the work that MLT had begun. I still see the numbers increasing during the times that used to be the shoulder seasons and I am grateful for this growth; it has allowed me to keep employees and create sustainable year-round jobs.

For the last year I have been having conversations with regards to renewing a 5 year TBID term or extending it to 10 years. I am highly in favor of the 10 year TBID. The process of renewing the TBID is long and it is expensive. It takes over a year to go through the renewal process, this means that out of a 5 year term, the process steals valuable time and money from the 5th year of the term. Limiting the renewal of the TBID to 5 years is not efficient. Good growth takes time, and we have seen good growth over the last 10 years, so why try to stunt that growth by limiting the TBID to a 5 year term. As a local business owner, I would like to know that our main marketing source is supported and sustainable for many years to come.

It concerns me that there is not consistent messaging from Town Council with regards to the benefit the TBID has on the town as a whole. TOT is a huge source of funding for TOML and the TOT comes exclusively from visitation dollars. Not all people see how tourism has a benefit for them personally, but overall, as a whole, it truly is how this town has managed to survive for decades. The only time this area was viable solely on its residents was when it was inhabited by the indigenous people who cared for the area. Then there were the miners, they didn't need tourists either. Next this area became a summer fishing spot and embarked upon its long journey as a tourist destination, relying on visitors to come and enjoy the area as a means of economic growth. Now as a year-round resort, visitation from tourism is what drives the economy and provides a healthy income for the Town of Mammoth Lakes.

It concerns me that many people in town believe that it is MLT's job to fund public works projects. MLT staff and its board are not contractors, they cannot build infrastructure or conduct these projects. However, the money that is brought in via the TOT can be used for these projects. TOT is driven by visitation. With this funding it is then up to the Council and the town staff to decide the best way to use the money to elevate the experience of our residents and our visitors.

As a business owner on Main Street I would like to suggest the use of these funds to construct a central localized bathroom and trash station on Main Street for our visitors and residents. Also, it has been years since the sidewalks on Main Street were put in. Our residents and our visitors are all waiting for this project to be finalized beyond layers of asphalt, dirt patches and concrete. We have an opportunity to make our Main Street a space to be proud of. I would like to suggest adding curb appeal in the form of art, and native plants.

Moving forward, I hope that more energy is put towards conscious conversations about how to manage and educate the people coming to town. I hope that there is a stronger relationship between Council and MLT and that you look towards MLT as a partner in the economic livelihood of Mammoth Lakes. I hope to see Town Council strengthen the bond with MLT to work towards the potential this town has to be a leader in sustainable tourism.

Thank you for all you do!

Andrea Walker

Stellar Brew, Owner

Chair for The Board of Directors of the Mammoth Lakes Chamber of Commerce