

Board of Directors Biographies



Jeff Connors, President



Jeff Connors grew up on Long Island in a close family that consisted of six boys and two girls. As the third child, he fondly remembers living in what he calls “organized chaos” with his seven siblings, and having to negotiate through a variety of issues given the 23-year age spread of the clan. He left the roost to attend college in Minnesota, completing his degree in three years, after which he went back home to earn an MBA and a Master of Science degree at Long Island University, where he also taught in the MBA program. While working toward his doctorate he was introduced to JP Morgan Chase, and began a 26-year journey that would lead him to live in many U.S. cities

and countries worldwide.

“You learn from both living in a large family and culturally different cities and societies that the world is comprised of many gray areas and differing perspectives,” Connors said. “I realized that it’s necessary to creatively develop solutions in which all parties—large and small—feel a sense of accomplishment and progress.”

Connors and his wife Tracie, a headhunter with Amazon, have three grown children and one grandchild and moved from Boston, Massachusetts to Livermore, California in 2006. The couple met while skiing in Chamonix, France, and the avid skiers and mountain lovers soon found their way to Truckee and Tahoe Donner, where they’ve had a second home for the past nine years. Early on, their focus was almost exclusively on enjoying the mountains with family and friends during weekends and holidays; like many second homeowners, their time was very limited given family demands and business commitments. Slowly, however, Connors found himself getting further involved with Tahoe Donner and saw areas in which the membership could be better served.

Summarily, it is Connors’ strong belief that the board works for the members. “It relies on a competent and knowledgeable Tahoe Donner staff that tactically executes on the board’s key goals and objectives, which should lead to an end result that exceeds member expectations,” Connors explains. In parallel with this approach, he says he holds a macro belief that Tahoe Donner—unlike the smaller, significantly more expensive gated communities—has scale with its 6,500 homes, and if properly leveraged, can always be an affordable HOA with a cast of desirable family-oriented amenities. As stated in his candidate statement, his goals include

ensuring that Tahoe Donner is focused on 1) the needs of its members, 2) managing its financial and environmental resources in an effective and efficient quality manner so that Tahoe Donner remains affordable, and 3) being a transparent association to the diverse social and economic constituencies that it serves.

“I am looking forward to being part of a dynamic and involved board that ensures Tahoe Donner will continue to flourish in the years ahead.”

Jeff Schwerdtfeger, Vice President



Schwerdtfeger has been living in Tahoe Donner full time for over three years with his wife Jules and 3-year-old daughter, Ella. He has two older grown sons, Jeff and Linsey, and also became a grandfather last year when Linsey and his wife welcomed their new daughter into the family. Self-described as a dedicated family man who enjoys Tahoe Donner amenities with his family as well as dining at The Lodge Restaurant & Pub every week, Schwerdtfeger originally moved to Tahoe Donner to enjoy retirement. “We went on an extensive search for the right place to retire,” explained Schwerdtfeger. “After searching, my wife and I felt at home here in Tahoe Donner. The Town of Truckee, the Tahoe Donner amenities and all the area has to offer is perfect for my family.”

Originally from Santa Cruz, Calif., Schwerdtfeger was raised in both Santa Cruz and North Lake Tahoe. While in Tahoe, his love of the Sierra Nevada mountains grew from a young age and this is also when he learned to ski, which is still one of his favorite pastimes today. In fact, for the past two winter seasons, Schwerdtfeger has worked as a professional ski patroller in avalanche control at Sugar Bowl Mountain Resort. This position comes naturally to Schwerdtfeger, who has 34 years of fire service under his belt, last acting as captain/paramedic/special operations task force coordinator for Santa Clara County Fire Department and manager for FEMA/California Task Force 3.

Being a public servant for over thirty years is one of the main reasons he had an interest in joining the board. “I feel the need to serve my community and being a board member will allow me to make a positive impact for my fellow Tahoe Donner residents,” said Schwerdtfeger. “During my tenure in the fire service, I have had extensive experience with budgeting, grant funding, personnel management, training and negotiating. My skillset is unique, which will bring a fresh perspective to the board of directors.”

Schwerdtfeger’s perspective includes a desire to enhance communication of board decisions and topics to members in order to garner further membership involvement. “There are several areas that I feel need improvement. First and foremost, the board of directors needs to be transparent and keep the HOA membership informed on large financial expenditures,” he explained. “We

need to improve public safety here in Tahoe Donner. We need to work with local agencies to improve response times and ensure the health and safety of our community.”

Jeff Bonzon, Treasurer



Jeff Bonzon also brings extensive experience to the board. With 34 years under his belt in finance and corporate banking, including five years on the finance committee, Bonzon is now enjoying his presidency on the board.

“In my time on the board, we have completed the Alder Creek Adventure Center and installed snowmaking equipment at the ski hill,” said Bonzon. “I was involved in both of these from the finance committee perspective as they began. The Adventure Center is living up to expectations, and has become a vibrant, well-used component of our amenities package.”

Bonzon knows firsthand what it means to be a member of the board. “The board is charged with the responsibility of acting in the best interests of all our members, not just the loudest or the largest groups,” he said. “We help set the vision and direction of the association, to ensure that we provide our members with the activities and environment they desire: our full-timers with a comfortable and enjoyable year-round living environment, and our second-home owners with the recreational activities they seek.”

Bonzon has had the privilege of being both a full-time and second-homeowner of Tahoe Donner, so he relates easily with both sides of our community. He became a vacation owner with his wife Carolyn in 1991 and they moved here full time in 2004. But even with the permanent move, he still makes time to catch all the Giants games in San Francisco, including all three World Series. Since moving here, Bonzon has enjoyed several amenities Tahoe Donner has to offer, including Tahoe Donner Golf Course, playing bocce ball at Northwoods Clubhouse and dining at The Lodge Restaurant & Pub, where he can’t get enough of the short ribs.

While enjoying our amenities, Bonzon realized he could be doing more, outside of the finance committee. “I wanted to ensure that we kept strengthening Tahoe Donner Association’s financial condition,” he explained. “It is a continuous process, but one that is vital to the overall health and growth of our association.”

Jennifer Jennings, Secretary



Jennifer Jennings has been a Tahoe Donner homeowner for six years, and has lived here full-time for four years. Jennings and her husband, Michael Bledsoe, bought their Tahoe Donner house after the last big winter in 2011, a house that was on the market most likely because of its challenging driveway in the winter. They survived last winter – barely.

Jennings is a second generation Northern Californian and was raised in Orangevale, a small community near Folsom. She graduated from the University of California, Davis with a degree in political science. She put her degree to immediate use by becoming one of the leaders of Friends of the River, at the time a new environmental organization dedicated to the preservation of California’s rivers. Testifying before Congress and lobbying the California Legislature was a baptism by fire.

As a young activist in the relatively new environmental movement, Jennings went to law school when she grew tired of being told that the law did not protect our environment. After law school at UC Berkeley, she worked in Washington D.C. for a year before heading back to Sacramento. The nation’s capital could not hold Jennings – her first love is whitewater kayaking and she did not feel the rivers in the East could compare to California’s rivers.

After a career working for environmental organizations and public agencies and a five-year stint in criminal law, Jennings and Bledsoe decided to leave Sacramento and make Tahoe Donner their home. They are fortunate that their children (20-somethings) also live in the area. You may come across their daughter, Claire, who works as a scribe in Tahoe Forest Hospital’s emergency room, and their son, Charlie, who is a ski patroller at Mt. Rose as well as a river guide.

Ever the activist and optimist, Jennings’ love of Tahoe Donner and her community spirit drove her to run for the board. “I respect what has been achieved here and I want to be part of making it better. We need to focus on the members’ priorities for Tahoe Donner,” Jennings explains. “There is so much talent, knowledge and experience in the membership; the association needs to tap that resource more. Tahoe Donner needs to be more effective and timely in communicating with the membership – soliciting input during every step of the decision-making process.”

Jennings also wants Tahoe Donner to become more connected to the broader Truckee community. Until her election to the board, Jennings served on the Tahoe Donner committee focused on that mission, the Tahoe Donner Giving Fund. The Giving Fund provides scholarships to needy students and grants to community organizations. “I reviewed the students’ scholarship applications – it was at once heartbreaking and inspiring. There is so much need and so much potential in our local young people,” Jennings said, urging fellow members to consider donating and supporting the Giving Fund’s annual events.

Darius Brooks, Director



Originally from Telluride, Colo. and later moving to California, Brooks is an avid outdoorsman who enjoys camping, fishing, hunting, biking and skiing. He first discovered Tahoe Donner back in the '90s and became a frequent visitor, often sharing ski leases with friends. As an avid skier, Brooks competed at the national and international level on the U.S. Junior Freestyle Ski team for about a decade. In 2013, he and his wife decided Tahoe Donner would be their second home away from home for themselves and their three children, so they purchased a home and Tahoe Donner became a frequent retreat for them year round. They even have a family tradition of enjoying Pizza on the Hill and a movie every Friday night they are in town. “Tahoe Donner is our escape from city living and the fast pace of San Francisco,” said Brooks. “My wife and I both grew up enjoying rural settings during much of our childhood. I was raised in the small ski town...exploring some of the most beautiful and scenic mountains as my own backyard. My wife grew up on the outskirts of San Diego but would spend summers on their family farm in Sweden. So Tahoe Donner allows us to pass along just a bit of our love for the outdoors to our own kids.”

Brooks’ family and love of outdoors were a few of his motivations behind deciding to run for board. “I remember reading an article a while back which suggested that nearly 80 percent of owners in Tahoe Donner have kids under age 18. So fostering an HOA and environment which allows parents and kids to spend more quality time together enjoying the many amenities is a big priority,” he explained, adding, “From the most recent survey of Tahoe Donner owners, it’s clear that expanding and enhancing the trail system is a big priority, so I hope to push this initiative as well.”

Brooks has a unique perspective when it comes to viewing Tahoe Donner and its potential future growth. While living in Telluride, he watched his town transition from a small mining outpost to a world class resort. “I had the chance to see many things the town either did right or wrong and developed a deep appreciation for taking a long-term view when allowing communities to change and evolve,” recalled Brooks. “In Tahoe Donner I see a community now facing many similar questions—largely focused around the importance of defining a long-term vision for the HOA and ensuring the community who calls Tahoe Donner home permanently is able to stay and not be pushed out by ever-increasing fees or cost of living.”

Along with this perspective, Brooks also has a background in environmental engineering and focused for several years on cleantech and energy investing. Additionally, he has experience as a private equity investor, has served on multiple corporate boards, and has spent over twenty years in the finance industry. “I have developed deep financial and analytic skills and hope to bring those to the table as Tahoe Donner explores ways to control cost creep while maintaining the high level of service and amenities available to owners.”



Ultimately, Brooks noted he feels Tahoe Donner is a well-run homeowners association that is capable of more. “I hope to expand the amount of control the HOA has over many factors that may now be in the hands of city or county politicians who are not accountable to most Tahoe Donner owners, and many of whose viewpoints might differ from Tahoe Donner owners’ vested interests,” he said. “This was a fundamental position in my campaign position so I hope to push on this front in the years ahead.”