

Snippets about Lake Tahoe

- El Dorado County's mobile food pantry will not be in South Lake Tahoe this week. It will be here May 4 at the American Legion parking lot.
 - Former Douglas County Manager Jim Nichols is a finalist for a similar job in Glenwood Springs, Colo. Tony O'Rourke, ex-South Lake Tahoe city manager, is a contender for the administrator job of Cañon City, Colo.
 - El Dorado County's IT Department will be performing extensive data center maintenance and equipment moves April 30 from 5pm-midnight. During this period IT services may be interrupted for several hours, including our public website.
 - Tahoe Women's Community Fund's first grants gala is June 3 from 6-8pm at Tahoe Beach Retreat in South Lake Tahoe. The \$35 tickets are available **online**. The deadline to buy a ticket is May 27.
 - On April 27 drivers should expect heavier than usual traffic near the Truckee High School in the morning because first responders and the school will be conducting a presentation near Northwoods and Donner Pass Road intersection.
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Snowpack melting fast despite April storms

By Paige Blankenbuehler, High Country News

Throughout late March and into April, much of the West

experienced unseasonably warm days. Then, in late April, temperatures plummeted in Southwest Colorado's San Juan Mountains and more than 2 feet of wet, heavy spring snow fell. Suddenly, ski boots were out again and for a day or two, it felt like winter was back.

But those storms have only helped a small fraction of the West, with much of the moisture buoying snowpack levels along the Eastern Rockies in Colorado and Wyoming. Meanwhile, the rest of the region is on the opposite trajectory, losing snowpack at record-breaking rates.

At the beginning of April, snowpack levels across the region were "near normal," says Cara McCarthy, deputy director for the National Water and Climate Center in Portland, under the Natural Resource Conservation Service.

But in just the few short weeks since, that snow is melting faster than climate hydrologists have seen in nearly four decades, bringing the snowpack far below normal in most states in the West.

For California, in its fifth year of drought, this season has been a bit of a roller coaster. In January, snowpack readings increased to 127 percent of normal (up from 90 percent in December) – good news for a state where 30 percent of the water supply is dependent on snow.

Read the whole story

STPUD proposed rate increases to be discussed

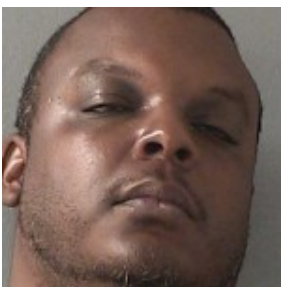
South Tahoe Public Utility District board on May 12 will be discussing raising water and sewer rates.

The 6pm public hearing is to discuss the 2016-17 budget and capital improvement plan.

In 2014, the district sent a five-year Proposition 218 notice to all customers that calls for water rates to go up no more than 6.5 percent each year and sewer rates to spike by 6 percent annually. Staff is recommending the full increase for this next fiscal year that begins July 1.

The meeting is at the district offices, 1275 Meadow Crest Drive, South Lake Tahoe.

Reno man arrested in murder near Truckee



Maurice Di
Aundra Rogers

The Reno man accused of shooting a woman to death and leaving

her body under an overpass near Truckee is due in court May 12 after not entering a plea earlier this month.

Maurice Di Aundra Rogers, 33, is being held without bail in the murder of Felicia Romaine Spruell-Jones, 46, of Reno. Her body was found April 4 about 6:20am under the Interstate 80 overpass at Farad.

Detectives are still trying to determine if she died there or someplace as well, as well what the relationship between the two was.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Plein air artist to give demo in SLT

Tahoe Art League is hosting an oil painting demonstration by one of the best contemporary plein air painters of the West.

Charles Muench will be in South Lake Tahoe on May 11 at 6pm.

The title of his presentation is Pack Mules and Plein Air – Exploring the Sierra Backcountry.

The free demo starts at 7pm at the senior center, 3050 Lake Tahoe Blvd. The meeting and refreshments are at 6pm.

For more info, email info@talart.org.

Author: Vigorous climate change fight needed

By Linda Fine Conaboy

RENO – Climate change isn't new news, but it is big news now and its effects are becoming increasingly obvious in the forms of horrendous wildfires, extreme weather conditions and the slow strangulation of some of the ocean's most beautiful fields of coral.

In the words of journalist, syndicated columnist and best-selling author Naomi Klein, climate change is an unfolding disaster.



Naomi Klein

Klein forcefully and without hesitation spoke last week to a large crowd at the University of Nevada's 2016 Forum for Excellence. This group didn't have to be persuaded that Klein's topic is a life-changing consequence of man's greed and that it isn't a problem to be dealt with in the future. It's here and the fallout of climate impacts everyone on the planet.

She opened her talk discussing the December 2015 meeting of world leaders at the Paris Climate Summit, where an agreement was forged to maintain the increase in the average global temperature warming at or below 1.5 degrees Celsius, or 2.7 degrees Fahrenheit. The agreement was formally signed at the

United Nations on April 22, leaving many observers scratching their heads, wondering how this aggressive stance will be obtained and then maintained given the world's continuing dependence on fossil fuels.

According to a press release from 350.org, a group of global activists who have come together to battle climate change, the signing is purely ceremonial until at least 55 countries representing 55 percent of global emissions have ratified it.

Klein calls the Paris Agreements "a concrete plan for disaster. We know what we need to do to stay strong and safe, but we're only willing to do half of it. What happened in Paris is the best our governments have been able to come up with, but we still have an ecological disaster."

She said the targets reached in Paris are not binding and there are no repercussions built into the agreement. "The same leaders who set the noble goal of 1.5 Celsius are not really willing to go along with it.

"It was a real fight in Paris to keep climate change below 1.5 degrees Celsius," she said. "But in Bolivia people depend on glaciers for water. If we allow the climate to warm, many cities will drown."

Klein said that if we stay on the road we're now traveling, a temperature increase of 6 degrees Celsius is possible, an untenable figure. "We're headed there now. Pakistan suffered a heat wave where thousands died and no one even reported on it. India and Pakistan are now in the early stages of a heat wave with another coming next month."

There was no dodging the fact that Klein is not a fan of the Paris agreement. "The Paris accords are a fake," she said. "They are just words. Political reality does not match up with reality. We are in such contradiction—our political leaders are not willing to take the needed steps."

She said she came upon the climate issue later in life—she's 45 now—describing her previous state as one of “soft denial.” Her wakeup call came 10 years ago when she saw what she called the “tragedy of Katrina” in New Orleans.

“Katrina was ferocious and we're going to see more Katrina's as the Earth warms.” She described the dilapidated state of the levees, pre-Katrina, followed by apathy after the heavy weather slammed into the area.

“There was no evacuation plan. If you had money, you could get away; if you were poor, you were abandoned. FEMA couldn't find New Orleans. This was a case of institutionalized racism,” she said.

Climate change, Klein said, is an accelerant to everything else, making some things uglier and meaner. “Each shock [similar to climate change] will create deeper divisions. Think Flint, Michigan. What makes this possible is perpetual crisis.

“Transition is inevitable, justice is not,” Klein said. “We have to see how the issues are connected.”

According to Klein, we are stuck when it comes to climate change. She calls it a “really bad case of historic timing.”

However, she said that climate change is not a new concept—it's been acknowledged for decades. She pointed out that as long ago as 1988, Earth was *Time's* “Man of the Year”, appearing on the magazine's cover. That was also the year the first climate change meeting occurred.

But the 1980s were years of many changes such as the fall of the Berlin Wall and NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement). These events, according to Klein, meant that capitalism could be brought to the entire world and at the heart of this revolution is privatization.

"It's hard to regulate privatized entities like railroads and public transit. Climate change is a huge political challenge," she said.

At this point in her talk, she referenced the challenge faced by those in Nevada who invested in solar energy. "In Nevada," she said, "the Public Utilities Commission did the bidding of NV Energy, destroying an industry. People are being penalized for doing the right things. Corporate money is corrosive," she said.

Klein opined that it is difficult for politicians to stand up and take courageous positions, but she mentioned President Obama's stand on the Keystone XL pipeline, when he cited climate change for the first time. "More victories like this are now being won," she said.

"We have a lot of no's when it comes to climate change," she said. "But we need the yes's too. If the climate movement is to expand, the movement must articulate what the positive side is."

She named undertakings like "Black Lives Matter," where people are refusing to be treated as if they are disposable; fewer fossil fuel projects; women and indigenous people on the front lines; and the BLM's thwarted push to open public lands for gas and oil drilling as just a few of the positives coming out of the climate change movement.

Fossil fuels, she said, need to stay in the ground. "Small steps won't help this problem, it's time for big steps. The time to start is now, but at this late hour, now is not the time for small steps."

Klein is the author of several books, including her latest bestseller "This Changes Everything; Capitalism vs. the Climate."

Letter: Warm room a success because of community

To the community,

Tahoe Coalition for the Homeless would like to thank the many community members and volunteers who helped in the cleanup and closing of the South Lake Tahoe Warm Room in early April. The Warm Room was open from Dec. 18 through April 1, and provided the first overnight homeless services in the Tahoe region.

We received help from the South Lake Tahoe Challenge Program through the Juvenile Treatment Center. South Tahoe Middle School supported our cleanup efforts as well. We appreciate students and staff from Whittell High School and South Tahoe High School Interact Clubs. We also are grateful for the efforts of the many Tahoe Douglas Rotarians who participated.

The South Lake Tahoe Warm Room closed on April 1 for the season. The Warm Room served 107 unduplicated individuals during this cold and snowy winter and provided 1,820 shelter bed nights. We appreciate our volunteers who dedicated over 1600 hours to this project this winter.

Tahoe Coalition for the Homeless is looking for businesses to run supply drives in the fall of 2016 and for volunteers for the 2016-17 winter season. We can be contacted at tahoewarmroom@gmail.com or 775.573.0822. Please visit our **website**.

Donations are welcomed to aid in funding the Warm Room 2016-17 season. Checks can be made payable to Live Violence Free (our fiscal sponsor), note "Warm Room" in the memo line and mail to P.O. Box 13514, South Lake Tahoe, CA 96151 or make donations

online and note “Warm Room” in the additional information box. We will be accepting supplies again in the fall 2016.

Sincerely,

Marissa R. Muscat, executive director

Improving mental health resources could help global economy

By Willa Frej, Huffington Post

Ineffective treatment for anxiety disorders and depression is leading to significant economic problems and hinders human development, suggests research from the World Health Organization.

Those mental health disorders cost the global economy \$1 trillion every year, according to the study, which was published this month in the Lancet Psychiatry. Furthermore, mental illnesses cause “a lot of death and a lot of disability,” WHO’s Shekhar Saxena told NPR.

The study estimated what would happen if more resources were dedicated to improving treatment for depression and anxiety in 36 low-, middle- and high-income countries between now and 2030.

[Read the whole story](#)

Study: Roof racks great for bikes, bad for mileage

By David R. Baker, San Francisco Chronicle

For snowboarders, surfers and mountain bikers, the car roof rack is an indispensable accessory, essential for weekend getaways.

Unfortunately, it's also a bit of a gas hog.

A study published Monday found that a seemingly innocuous rack can cut mileage by as much as 25 percent, depending on its configuration and whether it's fully loaded.

[Read the whole story](#)

More questions than answers in EDC budget

By Kathryn Reed

El Dorado County has substantial money issues with no obvious solutions.

The Board of Supervisors on Tuesday begins the process to come up with a budget for 2016-17. The fiscal year begins July 1. By law the budget has to be balanced.

The staff report says the county will be nearly \$5 million in

the hole in 2018-19 if things don't change. The structural deficit will be part of the discussion April 26.

Even though CAO Larry Combs says the budget is balanced, that's a bit of misnomer and not everything department heads or electeds want is getting funded.

Combs, in his report, does not suggest any ideas of how to come up with more revenue or to cut expenses. Combs, who is the interim CAO, only works a few hours a week. (One of his other primary jobs is to find a permanent leader for the county.) In the past the CAO has been proactive with the budget, even starting in the fall.

All he offered in his report was, "For any items that the board wishes to add to the budget, something must come out of the budget or a new funding source must be identified."

The staff report for Tuesday's session also says, "Use of one-time revenue or one-time savings to fund ongoing operational expenses will not help future year deficit, but will only buy time."

As with most organizations, salaries and benefits are the biggest drain on the General Fund.

However, the CAO has been driving up those costs. And in doing so he keeps violating board policy when it comes to hires. Anyone hired at step 4 or 5, the latter being the highest, must have this run by the supervisors. Combs hired his friends for the assistant CAO and risk manager positions at the higher levels. The recently appointed chief counsel is also at a higher step. The board has not been brought into the loop on these decisions.

Various county departments put in requests that totaled \$7 million more than revenues. There is another nearly \$25 million that is also not accounted for and some of those are ongoing expenses.

“Department requests exceed our available revenues by \$7 million. If we maintained our ‘status quo’, in other words, no new positions or other appropriations increases and no decreases to department revenues, the budget would be balanced. Requests came in \$7 million higher than status quo,” Laura Schwartz, chief budget officer, told *Lake Tahoe News*.

The job of the electeds is to prioritize spending. There will be several budget hearings in May, with approval set for June.

Schwartz in an email that Combs was copied on did not explain why General Fund money is not being used for road maintenance when this has been the norm for years. This \$3 million line item is part of the nearly \$25 million that isn’t being funded.

Also not in the budget is the \$2.2 million needed to pay the debt on the new sheriff’s headquarters.

“We have purchased the property for the new public safety facility, but we are still researching financing options,” Schwartz said. “You are correct. Currently we do not have funding to build the facility allocated.”

The unfunded list also contains \$1 million for land use litigation. In other words, there is no money budgeted to fight the lawsuit challenging the General Plan. Neither Schwartz nor Combs explained how the lawyers would get paid.

One item the five all agreed to was approved last week when they allocated \$256,651 in property taxes – annually – to El Dorado County Hills Fire Department. This is the richest fire district in the county.

They went against Auditor-Controller Joe Harn’s recommendation. He told them in writing, “I believe that it will be a major challenge to continue to provide existing services at current levels in future years.”

This is also the same fire district from which Supervisor Brian Veerkamp receives an annual pension of approximately \$200,000 from having been the fire chief. He voted for the allocation, even made the motion, without anyone stating this is a conflict of interest.