

Free food available for those in need

Food Bank of El Dorado County will be distributing food in South Lake Tahoe on April 27 from 10-11am.

The give-away will be at the American Legion Hall, 2748 Lake Tahoe Blvd. These are emergency supplemental groceries to those who need it most. One allocation per household is allowed.

Recipients must live in El Dorado County and meet the state income guidelines please stop by for your food distribution. Income **guidelines**.

For more information on how to give or get help, call 530.621.9950 or email info@foodbankedc.org.

North Shore bus system improvements planned

Placer County supervisors this week approved the 2016 Tahoe Truckee Area Regional Transit Systems Plan.

It replaces the 2005 document. The new plan formalizes many of the recommendations from local government partners, transit advocacy groups and business leaders who want to develop a world-class transit system for residents and visitors.

It will cost \$8.7 million over five years to update the Tahoe Area Regional Transit system. Two models have been drafted, dependent on funding.

The financially-constrained plan upgrades would include:

- Increased overall services by 67 percent
- Increased number of buses in operation from 10 to 13
- Expansion of dispatch and mechanic staff
- Construction of four bus shelters
- Improvement of Crystal Bay bus stop facilities.

The financially-unconstrained plan upgrades would include:

- Elimination of all transit fares
- Extension of winter and summer 30-minute daytime service north of Squaw Valley and Northstar to Truckee
- Extension of year-round night service to Truckee
- Expansion of fleet by two buses.

Funding for the increases in service could potentially come from increased Federal Transit Administration funds, potential transportation sales tax funds, sustained transient occupancy tax funding and contributions from land development.

Calif. rethinks approach to conserving water in drought

By Scott Smith, AP

Water providers throughout California said Wednesday they want to decide how much water their customers need to conserve during the ongoing drought rather than take orders from the state.

Californians remain under strict state conservation orders that have caused many residents to take shorter showers and let their lawns turn brown even as drought conditions ease.

The State Water Resources Control Board had an informational workshop in Sacramento to chart the future of urban water conservation measures. Regulators are considering if they should toss out the restrictions or dramatically change them.

“It’s our responsibility to be sure we have available supplies to meet demands,” Fiona Sanchez of the Irvine Ranch Water District in Southern California told water regulators at the workshop.

Felicia Marcus, chair of the State Water Board, said she would like to allow local control but fears not all local water officials would provide realistic assessments of their water supplies, leading to the possibility of serious shortages.

Nearly a year ago, Gov. Jerry Brown ordered California’s residents and businesses to conserve water during the state’s driest four-year period on record.

Residents statewide used 23.9 percent less water over the nine months ending in February while under orders to use 25 percent less water compared to the same months in 2013.

Residents are now under orders to cut back through October by at least 20 percent.

Several other districts – particularly in Northern California – propose that the state should toss out or significantly relax emergency conservation orders.

Strict orders remain in place, despite significantly more rain and snow this winter flowing into California reservoirs, water officials say.

Continuing to ask Californians to sustain “heroic water conservation efforts” that don’t reflect healthier water supplies today could erode the officials’ credibility with residents when they’re called upon next time to make sacrifices, David Bolland, special projects manager for the

Association of California Water Agencies says in a letter to water regulators.

“It is time to end the State Water Board’s mandatory water use restrictions statewide,” says Bolland, who represents hundreds of urban, commercial and agricultural water districts.

Two Sierra Nevada reservoirs that supply about 31,000 residents in Tuolumne County are expected to overflow, making the emergency regulations there unnecessary, Thomas Haglund, general manager of the Tuolumne Utilities District, wrote to the board.

In a letter submitted by several environmental organizations, Tracy Quinn, a senior policy analyst for the Natural Resources Defense Council, cautioned against abandoning conservation measures in response to outcry from water districts.

There is no certainty of another wet winter and much of the state remains in drought conditions, Quinn said. She added that some adjustment to the drought orders are warranted, but conservation should be a way of life for California.

“California’s water challenges are immense and extend far beyond the current drought,” Quinn wrote.

The board is expected to adopt California’s new conservation method in May.

Letter: EDC needs better CAO hiring practices

To the community,

One of the most important jobs in El Dorado County is the

county administrative officer. El Dorado County is currently looking for a new qualified candidate to replace the temporary CAO Larry Combs. While this process is stated to be an open state and national search, the county's past record shows that it is anything but.

There seems to be a closed loop within several neighboring counties that hires and promotes within a very narrow circle of friends. Apparently background checks were not made, or if the revelations revealed in this newspaper are accurate, these hires should have never been made.

Because the county failed to do basic background screening, the actions of several CAOs have cost the county millions of dollars in excess hiring and raises way above what the employee union asked for. Our Board of Supervisors should have demanded accountability and proof of thorough background checks with this hiring process. They did not. They just accepted the findings of HR or the prior CAO who are part of the problem.

The County Administrative Office monitors and oversees county operations to assure that board policies are carried out. The CAO recommends an annual budget and has the responsibility to administer that budget as approved by the BOS. The CAO is to provide organizational leadership and foster collaboration and partnership among all offices and departments, both elected and appointed

You would think that the BOS and the department heads directly affected by this person would have some role in the hiring process. I believe that the BOS, if they interview at all, just believe what they are told without the needed thorough background check. The department heads have not been a part of the interview process for years.

Since the selection of a new CAO has been in the control of those who are in the circle of friends, the Board of

Supervisors needs to witness just what is being circulated for the position and where they are being recruited from. They should have the pluses and minuses of each applicant, not just who the CAO or HR selects, and then be a part of the interview process along with select department heads. Maybe then we can get a capable, experienced candidate that may actually be more interested working for the county's best interests instead of feathering his or her own nest.

This is too important a position to continue with the round robin of friends that has been the case.

Paul Freeman, Cameron Park

Taking notes by hand better for retention

By James Dousek, NPR

As laptops become smaller and more ubiquitous, and with the advent of tablets, the idea of taking notes by hand just seems old-fashioned to many students today. Typing your notes is faster – which comes in handy when there's a lot of information to take down. But it turns out there are still advantages to doing things the old-fashioned way.

In the study published in Psychological Science, Pam A. Mueller of Princeton University and Daniel M. Oppenheimer of UCLA sought to test how note taking by hand or by computer affects learning.

“When people type their notes they have this tendency to try to take verbatim notes and write down as much of the lecture

as they can,” Mueller tells NPR’s Rachel Martin. “The students who were taking longhand notes in our studies were forced to be more selective – because you can’t write as fast as you can type. And that extra processing of the material that they were doing benefited them.”

Read the whole story

Snippets about Lake Tahoe

- South Lake Tahoe is offering an American Red Cross lifeguard certification course. For more info, go **online**.
 - The nearly 30-mile Tour of Carson City Bike Ride & BBQ is May 1 starting at 9am at Bike Habitat. For more info about the free ride, call 775.267.5053.
 - Rep. Tom McClintock, R-Elk Grove, is having a town hall May 3 at 6pm at South Tahoe Public Utility District’s board room, 1275 Meadow Crest Drive, South Lake Tahoe.
 - El Dorado County Health and Human Services Agency, Mental Health Division is seeking comments through May 23 on the 2016-17 **Mental Health Services Act Plan update**. Email comments to MHSA@edcgov.us. A public hearing will be on May 25 at 5pm in Placerville.
 - Michael Ciccozzi is now officially the top lawyer for El Dorado County.
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Liberty on target to use more renewables

Construction has begun on Liberty Utilities' first solar facility.

The Luning Solar Energy Center in Mineral County will be a 50 megawatt project. In addition to the solar facility, a 120 kV power line approximately 1.6 miles long will be constructed from the solar facility to NV Energy's existing Table Mountain substation. NV Energy will then deliver the energy to delivery points within Liberty Utilities' California service territory.

Liberty Utilities currently purchases all of its power from NV Energy, except for emergency diesel-generated power. Last year Liberty renegotiated the agreement with NV Energy to exclude coal-fired power whenever possible.

Liberty provides electricity to the California side of the Lake Tahoe Basin, as well as to Truckee and Alpine County.

Renewable resources currently comprise approximately 22 percent of Liberty's total power mix and meet California's current mandate, which is scheduled to increase to 33 percent by 2020 and 50 percent by 2030.

SLT councilwoman blurs

elected, personal lines

By Kathryn Reed

South Lake Tahoe City Councilwoman JoAnn Conner sat in her official chair on Tuesday lobbying for special favors for her business, though she denied that is what she was doing.

Conner, who owns Golden Bear Events, is putting on an event at the South Lake Tahoe Recreation Center this weekend. She went through the normal permitting process – sort of.

The gym, meeting rooms and kitchen each have an hourly rate.

Her permit does not include the kitchen.

At one point Conner seemed flustered, not even sure that the kitchen rental was even a separate item. Coincidentally, on that day's agenda was an item to finalize the master fee schedule for all city property. City Attorney Tom Watson showed her how the kitchen is separate.

Yet, Conner had been having correspondence with staff for weeks about the kitchen rental.



JoAnn Conner during the April 19 council meeting claims her issue with the kitchen rental at the rec center is not personal.

In a March 30 email to Lauren Thomaselli, who oversees the rec center, Conner wrote, "I received the contract for the facility rental for the Home and Garden Show, but there is an error. We do not rent the kitchen for this show as the food vendors have their own set up."

Five hours later, Conner received an email from City Manager Nancy Kerry stating, "JoAnn, Lauren has revised the contract to reflect the change as you have described, no rental of the kitchen."

The two engaged in another exchange of emails on April 13 regarding access to the kitchen.

Kerry wrote, "In regards to the rental and use of the kitchen, your application indicated Golden Bear Events does not want or need to rent the kitchen, which is why the [facilities use permit] was revised and sent to you without the rental of the kitchen. [On April 12], we heard very clearly from the court that it is very important to you and to the court to be treated the same as every other business and not receive any adverse impacts, as well as any advantage or favor. Any other business or person who uses the kitchen must pay the rental fee. The city's permit is with [Gold Bear Events] and you requested the application be amended without the kitchen, which results in the kitchen being locked."

Conner, after the contract was signed, asked for the kitchen to be open without expecting to have to pay for it. At first she claimed it was only to get water to make coffee.

"I just want to clarify the issue of accessing the kitchen just for water has nothing to do with my business. I just want someone to draw that line," Conner said at the April 19 council meeting. She called the Humane Society a separate entity and said the nonprofit only needed the water for coffee.

The Humane Society actually needs hot and cold running water

because it is selling food, and will need to wash utensils. The county Health Department requires access to the water. If it were only a case of potable water, it would be cheaper to bring in gallon jugs than to rent the kitchen at \$25 per hour. (Nonprofits receive a 25 percent discount on rentals.)

Conner claims it is all about a vendor needing access – not her. However, all the vendors are working under Conner's business license and permit. Vendors pay her as the producer of the event to have access to things like running water, electrical outlets, chairs and tables. (However, the Humane Society has been given a free booth.)

The rec center does not charge renters extra for tables and chairs, though event promoters may tell vendors there is a special fee for those things.

Instead of footing the bill for the kitchen, Conner said the Humane Society would have to pay for it.

On April 13, Niki Congero, who heads the Humane Society, emailed Thomaselli, regarding the kitchen: "I think it might be best if we, the Lake Tahoe Humane Society, rent it then as we are the ones using it. When would be a good time for me to pop in and take care of details/contract and whatever you need?"

In the end, an anonymous donor paid for the kitchen rental on the Humane Society's behalf.

If Conner were to be seen doing something special for anyone because of her real or perceived pull with city staff because of her elected position – like getting fees waived, this would be currying political favor and is unethical at a minimum, and would be potentially illegal. She could have made her points from the public podium and not her council seat to have ethically avoided the conflict of interest.

South Tahoe house fire kills 3 dogs

Three dogs died in a South Lake Tahoe house fire Thursday night.

Firefighters were able to keep the blaze to the interior of the two-story house, so it's possible it could be rebuilt. In the mean time, the two occupants of the 3701 Aspen Ave., Unit 4 residence are displaced. There was extensive smoke and fire damage.

A floor heater is being blamed for causing the fire that started on the first floor at 8:22pm April 21.

"There was a bunch of debris around it. When the pilot light kicked on, it ignited the contents," Fire Chief Jeff Meston told *Lake Tahoe News*.

He estimates the damage to be about \$75,000.

Meston warns people to never place anything on or around a floor heater.

"It's almost like putting something on top of a barbecue grill," he said.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

Snow + bad driving = multiple crashes



Slushy roads are contributing to multiple crashes and spin outs in the Sierra, like this one April 22 at Echo Summit. Photo Copyright 2016 Carolyn E. Wright

Roads in and around the Lake Tahoe Basin are a mess with wet snow and errant drivers.

Interstate 80 going east is currently closed near Boreal with no estimated time of reopening as the California Highway Patrol clears multiple crashes.

Traffic on Highway 50 at Echo Summit was stopped for at least 30 minutes this afternoon while crews cleared several spinouts.

Ruthe Loehr with the Meyers CHP office told *Lake Tahoe News*, "It is a mess. Right now we called in extra units to work overtime. Everyone is on the road right now."

A three-car accident near Echo Summit included the vehicle in the back rolling over after it slid into the mountainside. No one was injured.

Loehr said a lot of people are driving in the snow without the proper tires or not having all-wheel or four-wheel drive. She said crews clear one spinout and then go to the next.

A winter weather advisory remains in effect for the basin until 11pm April 22.

While Saturday is expected to be mostly sunny, rain is in the forecast for Sunday and snow on Monday.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report