

Workshop to focus on future of SLT rec center

There will be a community workshop March 31 to discuss ideas for South Lake Tahoe's proposed renovations of the Recreation Swim Complex.

It is an opportunity for the community to help the city develop ideas for the design of renovations of the complex.

The meeting will be from 5:30-8:30pm at the rec center, 1180 Rufus Allen Blvd.

For more information, contact Jim Marino at jmarino@cityofslt.us.

Reno airport posts 1st passenger growth in decade

By Jason Hildago, Reno Gazette-Journal

New flights and an improving economy helped the Reno-Tahoe International Airport post its first annual growth in passengers in a decade.

The Reno airport reported serving 3.43 million passengers in 2015, a 3.9 increase from the previous year.

The numbers include especially strong traffic during the holiday season. Reno-Tahoe International saw 286,432 passengers in December, an 8.6 percent increase from the same month in 2014. The airport also reported seven straight months

of passenger growth.

Read the whole story

South Tahoe man admits to shooting bear



This bear was killed last summer.. Photo/Toogee Sielsch

A South Lake Tahoe man today admitted to illegally killing a bear near his home in July 2015.

Gilbert Wetenkamp pleaded no contest March 11 to unlawfully taking an animal.

El Dorado County Superior Court Judge Suzanne Kingsbury is scheduled to sentence him on March 18. The maximum penalty is one year in jail and a \$1,000 fine.

The 2½-year-old bear was shot in the backside with buckshot from a shotgun.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

EDC Grand Jury seeks members

The 2016-17 El Dorado County Grand Jury is looking for members.

Applicants must be United States citizens, at least 18, have resided in the county for at least one year at the time of the swearing-in date, and cannot be an elected official.

The judges of the Superior Court select names from those submitted, as well as other nominees and currently seated grand jurors who may be held over to be put into the jury pool. Nineteen jurors are then selected in a random drawing from this pool. Final selection will take place in late June.

Jurors serve from July 1-June 30. A required training session provided by the California Grand Jurors Association will take place June 30 and July 1 in Placerville.

The El Dorado County Grand Jury is an investigatory body created for the benefit of county citizens by providing oversight to the proper and legal operation of public entities.

Meetings are compensated at the maximum rate of \$15 per day. Mileage is compensated at the rate payable to employees of El Dorado County.

The application is available **online**. For more info, call 530.621.7477.

EDC criminals may be able to have clean record

People convicted of misdemeanors or felonies in El Dorado County more than one year ago that resulted in jail time, alternative sentencing, or probation may be eligible to clean up their criminal record.

The Public Defenders Office is putting on a clean slate clinic on April 6. For information on eligibility, go **online**.

Attorneys at the Public Defenders Office will be able to answer questions on March 28, April 4 and April 11 from 2-4pm; call 530.621.6440.

Snippets about Lake Tahoe



• Friends of the South Lake Tahoe Library is having a book sale March 12 starting at 10am at the library on Rufus Allen Boulevard. It includes hundreds of previously read and some new books. FOL members get in an hour early. Not a member? Join now or the morning of the sale.

• The U.S. Forest Service Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit is accepting public comment until April 4 for the Off-Highway Vehicle Cooperative Funds grant applications submitted to the state. For more information about the grants and how to comment, go **online** or email Jacob Quinn at jmquinn@fs.fed.us.

• South Lake Tahoe's newest string band Hare of the Dawg

will be at Whiskey Dicks Saloon in South Lake Tahoe on March 12. Must be at least 21. Doors open at 9pm. No cover.

- Slow Food Lake Tahoe is hosting a Homebrewing with Alibi Ale Works class on April 2 from noon-4pm at 204 East Enterprise St., Incline Village. Cost is \$25. For more info, email info@slowfoodlaketahoe.org.

- There will be community soup nights on March 23 at Red Truck at the Truckee Tahoe Airport and April 6 at Fifty Fifty Brewing in Truckee. Cost is \$5 and run 6-7:30pm. Soup night brings a savory and affordably priced meal made from local, sustainably grown ingredients to the community. This is a collaboration between Slow Food Lake Tahoe and Tahoe Food Hub.

SLT figuring out how to spend surplus funds

By Kathryn Reed

Tourists are rediscovering South Lake Tahoe. While that might be evident by the number of vehicles on the roads, it is even more pronounced when looking at the city's coffers.

When the City Council convenes March 15 the five electeds will be tasked with allocating the revenue surplus of \$5.4 million – a 16 percent increase over this year's fiscal budget.

The hotel tax for the first quarter of this fiscal year, which started Oct. 1, is 20 percent higher than what it was 2014. Even if revenues stay flat the rest of the 2015-16 year, it will generate \$2.3 million more than the previous fiscal year, according to city documents.

Earlier this year the council gave staff direction regarding how to allocate the projected revenue surplus. Tuesday's meeting is about approving the game plan.

"This is the single largest mid-year appropriation of funds that the city has made since the Great Recession," City Manager Nancy Kerry told *Lake Tahoe News*.

She said it reflects the increase in tax revenues, which include hotel, sales and property taxes, as well as reducing expenses, most notably health care costs.

The bulk of the money – \$1.5 million – is expected to be used to repave roads. About the same amount is being allocated to the community play fields, where a soccer field will be installed close to where the field at Lake Tahoe Community College is located.

Moving the public works yard from Rufus Allen Boulevard to the industrial area will cost \$1 million.

The airport will get more than \$600,000 worth of improvements, which include a new heating and air conditioning system, making it compliant with the Americans with Disability Act, as well as renovating the facility to make it more like a visitors' center than its current vacant, open waste of space lobby-like area.

While the city and El Dorado County have not come to an agreement regarding ownership of the property where the senior center is located, the city plans to set aside \$100,000 to upgrade that facility.

Kerry stressed that all of this money is one-time funds.

"With capital needs, community investment and operations, we are tackling all of these things a little at a time," Kerry said.

Notes:

- The City Council meets March 15 at 9am at Lake Tahoe Airport.
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Opinion: Loop road promises are a farce

By Jerome Evans

The Tahoe Transportation District (TTD) has dressed up what has been known for years as the loop road project with terms such as “community revitalization”, “main street”, “gateway”, “walkability” and “affordable housing”, but it still makes no more sense than it did years ago. I believe it is time to separate fact from fantasy regarding this project.

Fantasy: The project is necessary to solve “the long-time problem of improving community traffic flow into and out of its most congested area... This was the original justification for the loop road when it was proposed back in the 1970s, and it appears to be the principal justification today (FAQ, TTD, not dated).

Fact: The most recent (2014) Caltrans data for traffic volume (average annual daily traffic or AADT) in this portion of Highway 50 indicate that traffic has declined by nearly 50 percent during the past two decades. And as early as 2007, “peak hour operations” were found to be “generally acceptable” (Project Study Report, p.9) The traffic congestion that may have once justified diversion no longer exists.

Traffic volume projections for 2035 produced by the project-

engineering firm Wood Rogers Inc. in 2010 to justify the project – an increase of more than 90 percent – are without adequate explanation or plausibility. They do, however, serve the interests of the project engineer.

Fantasy: The project will convert Highway 50 into a “main street” similar to the central shopping streets to be found in Livermore, Sutter Creek, and Lancaster.

Fact: The portion of Highway 50 proposed to become a “local Main Street downtown core” is that portion from Stateline Avenue to Lake Parkway, a stretch of highway now bordered by five casinos, their driveways and their parking lots. (A Transportation Project Evolves, TTD, 12/2015) Why would pedestrians want to walk by the walled-off casinos and their parking lots? This segment of highway 50 does not and never will look like the “main streets” of towns with several tree-lined blocks of two-story, close-to-the-street shops and cafes.

According to the 2013 economic report by Economic & Planning Systems (ECS), “... some of the larger casino structures themselves present a barrier of the built environment that is not necessarily welcoming to pedestrians, bicyclists, and other non-motorized users.” To make this into a “main street” would require a redevelopment project that staggers the imagination.

Fantasy: The project will create “a more pedestrian friendly local street experience in the commercial core”. (FAQ, TTD, undated)

Fact: Isn't that what the ongoing redevelopment project, Redevelopment Project 3, was expected to provide? Has it been a failure in this respect? On the California side, there is only a short stretch on the lake side of the roadway that was not included in that redevelopment. Is it this short stretch that is to provide “a more pedestrian friendly local street

experience”?

Fantasy: The project will “help revitalize local business health.” (FAQ, TTD, undated)

Fact: This, again, was and is the objective of the ongoing redevelopment project. And according to the economic analysis of ECS, the Village Center is “a very successful shopping center that enjoys considerable patronage, low vacancy, and is an established and popular shopping destination for both local residents and visitors to the South Shore.” Much the same was reported for Heavenly Village.” So why is “revitalization” needed?

It should be noted that the economic report also stated that any economic benefit is dependent upon a long list of resort area “best practices” that are not envisioned in the project as it has been proposed to date. (EPS, pp.47-48)

It should also be noted that the same economic analysis stated that “spending among local residents ... could very conservatively increase by 5 to 10 percent as the Stateline area ... is able to capture market share within the South Shore and nearby areas.” Tell that to merchants elsewhere in South Lake Tahoe who are just hanging on by their fingernails.

Fantasy: The project “offers the potential of renovating properties on the city’s redevelopment list to provide some of the necessary housing for impacted tenants, thereby providing better housing.” (FAQ, TTD, undated)

Fact: The vagueness of this claim belies TTD’s lack of experience in housing development and the uncertainty as to whether private developers will be willing to invest in an area that has been losing population for years. The assertion that there will be public/private participation in relocating residents and businesses does not answer questions about the impact of the project on affected residents and businesses.

Fantasy: According to the TTD FAQ sheet, “The estimated cost of the project is \$70 million.” An earlier (2010) estimate by Wood Rogers was \$65 million to \$85 million depending on the alternative selected, and not including the cost of redesigning the roadway from Pioneer Trail to Kingsbury Grade. TTD District Manager Carl Hasty used the figure of \$80 million at the Feb. 10 question and answer session.

Fact: Following the Feb. 10 meeting, I asked Mr. Hasty if TTD had a cost estimate for the project. His reply was, “I wish we did.” Absent an independent cost estimate covering all elements of the project, one can only guess that it will be much greater than \$70-\$80 million. Moreover, absent a reliable cost estimate, how can we give credence to Hasty’s recent statement that, “We are not looking to the city of South Lake Tahoe to finance this project”?

With all this fantasy surrounding the project, it is clear that the South Lake Tahoe City Council should not, cannot, give its approval. Does anyone this side of Stateline believe it should have the same priority with respect to our city’s very limited resources as such projects as completion of Lakeside Commons, the renovation of Regan Park & Beach, the restoration of the Upper Truckee Marsh, and further development of our bike trail system?

Haven’t we done enough for the Stateline area? Don’t we need to focus attention on the rest of our town?

Finally, I should say that I have no financial interest in the loop road project, one way or another, save as a city, state and federal taxpayer.

Jerome Evans is a resident of South Lake Tahoe.

Calif. on cusp of raising smoking age to 21

By Associated Press

California lawmakers voted Thursday to make the nation's most populous state the second to raise the smoking age from 18 to 21 as part of a sweeping package of measures they are considering to crack down on tobacco.

Democratic Gov. Jerry Brown still must sign off on the legislation the Senate approved to make California the first state after Hawaii with the higher age limit. His spokesman said last week that the governor generally does not comment on pending legislation.

The bills also would restrict electronic cigarettes the same as tobacco products. The increasingly popular devices are not regulated by the federal government.

The higher age limit got approved despite amid intense lobbying from tobacco interests and fierce opposition from many Republicans, who say the state should butt out of people's personal decisions, even if they are harmful to health.

The six bills, which the Assembly has already backed, represent California's most substantial anti-tobacco effort in nearly two decades, the American Cancer Society said.

"With California having such a huge population, it's going to be very impactful nationwide," said Cathy Callaway, associate director of state and local campaigns for the American Cancer Society.

The Senate vote comes just more than a week after San Francisco officials opted to raise the tobacco buying age to

21, making it the largest city to do so after New York. Nationwide, more than 120 municipalities have raised the smoking age, according to Tobacco 21, a group that advocates the policy shift nationally.

Hawaii was first to adopt the higher age limit statewide. New Jersey's Legislature voted to raise the smoking age from 19 to 21, but the bill died when Republican Gov. Chris Christie decided not to act on it before a January deadline.

Advocates note that the vast majority of smokers start before they are 18, according to data from the U.S. surgeon general. Making it illegal for 18-year-old high school students to buy tobacco for their underage friends will make it more difficult for teens to get the products, they say.

Critics say adults are trusted to make weighty decisions to vote or join the military once they turn 18. In response, Democrats changed the bill to allow members of the military to continue buying cigarettes at 18.

"You can commit a felony when you're 18 years old and for the rest of your life, be in prison," Assembly Republican Leader Chad Mayes said. "And yet you can't buy a pack of cigarettes."

Another bill would classify e-cigarettes, or "vaping" devices, as tobacco products subject to the same restrictions on who can purchase them and where they can be used.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration proposed regulating e-cigarettes but the rule has not taken effect.

Anti-tobacco advocates fear that vaporizers are enticing to young people and may encourage them to eventually take up smoking. Others say they are a less-harmful, tar-free alternative to cigarettes. They have not been extensively studied, and there is no scientific consensus on their harms or benefits.

The package of bills would expand smoke-free areas to include bars, workplace breakrooms, small businesses, warehouses, and hotel lobbies and meeting rooms. Smoking bans would apply at more schools, including charter schools, and counties would be able to raise their own cigarette taxes beyond the state's levy of 87 cents per pack.

Anti-smoking groups are collecting signatures for a November ballot initiative that would raise the cigarette tax to \$2 a pack and direct the money to health care, tobacco-use prevention, research and law enforcement.

Bowman on top of podium at World Cup halfpipe

By USSA

TIGNES, France – The U.S. scored three podium finishes at the final FIS World Cup halfpipe event of the season in Tignes, France. Maddie Bowman (Meyers) won the event for the women, while Annalisa Drew (Andover, Mass.) was second. Lyman Currier (Boulder, Colo.) took second for the men. Devin Logan (West Dover, Vt.) became the first freeskiier (halfpipe/slopestyle/big air) to win the FIS Freestyle Skiing overall crystal globe.

Bowman's win in Tignes marks her second World Cup victory on the four-stop tour for the 2015-16 season, and she finished third in the overall halfpipe standings. It was a dominant win for the Sochi Olympic champion, who landed all three of her runs.

"It feels great to be here in France and ski in front of such

an amazing crowd,” Bowman said. “I’m stoked that we’re able to put up such a cool show for all the fans that gathered in Tignes tonight. I’m also very happy to finally finish the season healthy.”

It was Drew’s first career World Cup podium in her 20th start; her run included back-to-back 900s and a 1080 to finish it off. Brita Sigourney (Carmel) was fifth and Devin Logan (West Dover, Vt.) was sixth. Logan, who competes in both slopestyle and halfpipe, made history by becoming the first freeskier (halfpipe/slopestyle/big air) to win the FIS Freestyle Skiing overall crystal globe.

“Being the first freeskier to win the overall World Cup globe feels pretty awesome,” Logan said. “I’ve been working really hard doing both slopestyle and halfpipe events and I’m feeling like I’m going in the right direction and overall I’m in a good spot, so I’m really happy.”

Currier finished just one point behind winner Kevin Rolland of France to score his first career World Cup halfpipe podium.

David Wise (Reno) finished just off the podium in fourth, Aaron Blunck (Crested Butte, Colo.) was fifth, Broby Leeds (Vail) was sixth, Alex Ferreira (Aspen, Colo.) was seventh and Kyle Smaine (South Lake Tahoe) was eighth.