

Code violations surprise SLT rental owners

By Kathryn Reed

The South Lake Tahoe City Council on Tuesday got an earful from a handful of people who are taking issue with having to make changes to their property because they are using it as a vacation rental.

Residents are being hit with unexpected bills to bring their properties up to code.

"We are in strong favor of making things safe, but when our house is suddenly expected to meet all current building codes in the name of safety and we have been misadvised on multiple occasions for what will be over \$7,000 in expenses if we have to remove this new construction and never have a hot tub again, we have a huge problem with it," Sara Cummings said. She read the same letter Feb. 16 that she had sent to the council.

She has a house in the Bijou area that was built in the 1950s.

Building inspector Dave Walker admitted there are some lots with houses that don't conform to today's standards so it creates a conundrum. Some of these dwellings will be grandfathered in.

The discussion on Tuesday was just that – a discussion. The council agreed to have the subcommittee of Wendy David and Austin Sass work out some of the lingering issues. The topic will be brought back to the council prior to June when a more comprehensive report is expected.

Councilman Tom Davis recused himself from the discussion because of his affiliation with Tahoe Keys Resort.

The current vacation rental ordinance took effect last fall. It requires all new permittees to have their residence inspected, and for others to be inspected at the time of renewal.

Joshua Priou with Lake Tahoe Accommodations told the council the city has stepped over the line by insisting owners have a paved driveway, defensible space, drip pans on water heaters and handrails.

He was under the impression the code changes were only to deal with health and safety issues.

“Legally the building official under his license can’t ignore something that is not up to code or that is not permitted,” City Manager Nancy Kerry said.

The driveway issue is a Tahoe Regional Planning Agency rule. The bi-state regulatory agency believes parking on dirt somehow degrades lake clarity. To comply with the VHR ordinance owners must put down \$3,200 as a promise to pave next summer. It will be refundable once the work is done.

Whether taking out a VHR permit should trigger putting in a paved driveway and other erosion control policies will be items for the subcommittee to wrestle with.

Defensible space is a state mandate, though the city has not enforced it with any regularity.

Priou said the issues people are facing range from a few hundred dollars worth of upgrades to thousands of bucks.

To date there have been 380 inspections, with 73 passing on the first try. Many of the violations are for having hot tubs installed without a permit and non-compliant electrical work.

In January 2015, there were 1,549 vacation rental permits in the city limits, that increased to 1,906 in October and as of last month the number was 1,874.

One thing to come out of the new rules is that complaints are not as robust. This could be because the city has made a concerted effort to be the one receiving the call and not just the property manager, which in turn would trigger penalties. Enough infractions could lead to the permit being nullified. The threat could have made a difference in how owners screen potential renters.

“My impression is the enforcement efforts during the last year have led to people feeling more satisfied that something is being done,” Police Chief Brian Uhler told *Lake Tahoe News*. “It seems like the number of those who complain about VHRs in their neighborhood is down. With summer approaching, we expect to continue pressure to strictly enforce VHR related laws.”

Since the new ordinance took effect Oct. 1, 23 people have been cited for renting without a permit, and 41 others were reprimanded for violating the code for things like noise, trash and parking.

In a related matter, the city had planned to do an economic study regarding vacation rentals. The deadline to bid on the project just passed with no one submitting a proposal. How to go forward is another item the subcommittee will be addressing.

Opinion: Opening up about depression

By Steven Petrow, New York Times

I have slogged through a number of difficult situations in recent months, among them the ongoing crises of my elderly

parents' illnesses and the suicide of a friend. I never lost my appetite nor burst into tears, and I didn't suffer from any of the other typical symptoms of depression. Maybe I was more irritable than usual, a bit more prone to snap. And yes, I buried myself in my work. But I didn't think I'd tripped down into the rabbit hole of depression.

You would think I would have been more self-aware, both personally and professionally. As a health journalist, I have often used my own stories to write about difficult-to-discuss medical conditions, including learning I had testicular cancer at age 26 and my misdiagnosis with H.I.V./AIDS – back when it was a death sentence. But I had never written about suffering from depression, even though it's plagued me since I first put pen to paper, at age 11, when I started keeping a diary.

Still, I'm far from alone. At least six million men in the United States suffer from depression, according to the National Institute of Mental Health. The true number is likely to be even higher, said Dr. Matthew Rudorfer, the institute's associate director for treatment research, since men are less likely than women to report classic symptoms like low mood, sadness or crying, so they often go undiagnosed. Men, he told me, more often demonstrate "externalizing" symptoms like irritability, anger and aggressiveness, substance and alcohol abuse, risk-taking behaviors and "workaholism."

Read the whole story

The rise of the Sagebrush

sheriffs

By Jonathan Thompson, High Country News

On the morning of May 10, 2014, San Juan County Sheriff Rick Eldredge waited on horseback in the sagebrush of Recapture Canyon in southeastern Utah. In his faded jeans, boots and white cowboy hat, he looked as if he were out for a casual ride in the cool spring air. But what appeared to be a bulletproof vest underneath his shirt and the 30-odd deputies scattered amid the canyon's scrub oak and sandstone hinted at a different story.

Eldredge and his deputies were braced for a mass act of motorized civil disobedience. Frustrated by "unconscionable acts by the Bureau of Land Management," including the 2007 closure to motorized vehicles of the trail down Recapture Canyon, San Juan County Commissioner Phil Lyman and 40 to 50 followers were driving their ATVs toward the closed section of the canyon. They were there to defy federal regulations to protest what they consider the BLM's heavy-handed management of the public lands that comprise so much of their county.

In promoting the ride, Lyman, soft-spoken with a boyish face and salt-and-pepper hair, invoked one of America's favorite civil disobeyers, Henry David Thoreau. Thoreau, however, seemed an unlikely role model: Several of the protesters carried firearms, including a clean-cut guy with a "Regulator" neck tattoo and a semi-automatic Glock on his hip. A young man wearing an "American Venom" T-shirt had an assault rifle in one hand, his finger never leaving the trigger, while he piloted his four-wheeler with the other. Others carried signs: "Transfer (sic) Federal Lands to Western States" and "Stop BLM Agenda 21 Road Closings." Ryan Bundy, the son of scofflaw rancher Cliven Bundy, rode a four-wheeler down the canyon, as did a handful of self-professed militiamen who, just weeks earlier, had supported Bundy in his heavily armed standoff

with BLM agents in Southern Nevada.

Read the whole story

Significant snowfall expected in Tahoe this week

A winter storm warning has been issued for the Lake Tahoe Basin from 7pm Wednesday through noon Thursday.

Rain will precede the white stuff.

The National Weather Service in Reno is calling for 2 to 3 inches of snow per hour between 10pm Feb. 17 and 8am Feb. 18. At lake level between 4 and 10 inches are expected to fall, while above 7,000 feet totals could reach 20 inches.

The Weather Service has also issued a wind advisory for most of the duration of the storm.

While the sun is expected to return Friday, that evening there is a chance of a snowstorm.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Snippets about Lake Tahoe



• Fast Company has named Vail Resorts one of the world's 50 Most Innovative Companies for 2016.

• Beach Retreat & Lodge in South Lake Tahoe has partnered with Stash Hotel Rewards to enable the independently owned hotel to offer guests reward points that may be redeemed at nearly 200 independent hotels.

• The June 15-20 Great American Tour, which will run in conjunction with the Great Race, will pass through Placerville, South Lake Tahoe and Carson City before ending in Reno. For more info about the classic car event, go **online**.

• Partners Against Trafficking of Humans (P.A.T.H.) had been formed in South Lake Tahoe to abolish human trafficking.

California might be in the dam-building business

By Tara Lohan, Huffington Post

Historically speaking, when the going gets tough, California builds more dams. "If you look at the history of California since the 1930s, every time there has been a drought people have been interested in expanding surface storage," said Jay R. Lund, a professor of civil and environmental engineering at UC Davis.

When it comes to water, things have been pretty tough in California for the past four years. So bad, in fact, that in 2014 California voters passed Proposition 1, a bond to funnel \$7.5 billion to water projects, including \$2.7 billion that would go to the California Water Commission to dole out specifically for storage-related projects.

During the 20th century “storage” was virtually synonymous with dams. The construction of big dams is what shaped the West, California especially. Dams gave us water and power and propelled development. We later learned they also gave us spoiled rivers, silted reservoirs and devastated fisheries. For decades, it was a trade-off we were willing to make.

Dams are undoubtedly an important part of our history. But what’s their place in our future?

Read the whole story

Tahoe woman bringing awareness about obesity

By Zak Dahlheimer, WJHG-TV

PANAMA CITY, Fla. — Ari Ramos is on a journey.

One stretching more than 2,700 miles from Jacksonville, Fla., to her hometown of South Lake Tahoe raising awareness about obesity, and speaking to children about healthy lifestyles.

And even along the way, she said she’s run into some interesting questions.

For Ramos, she said obesity has been a battle she’s faced ever

since she was a child.

Read the whole story

All-star 'Hail Caesar' cast delivers a hit



By Howie Nave

First off you can tell right from the start that every actor here loves being in a Coen Brothers movie. And can you blame them? The minds behind such gems as “The Big Lebowski,” “Fargo,” “Burn After Reading” and “Raising Arizona” brothers Ethan and Joel have once again restored my faith in Hollywood by making a movie that is an incredible send up of the movie making industry.

Set in Hollywood in 1951 “Hail, Caesar!” gives us a slice of what it was like when the studios were making movies like a Detroit assembly line factory turning out cars with studio

owned actors as the parts to keep the dream machine of movie making running. Throw in a Communist subplot, twin Hollywood gossip columnists (both played brilliantly by Tilda Swinton) and studio fix-it man Eddie Mannix with a Catholic conscience (in one of Josh Brolin's best roles ever) who's also the in-house babysitter for Capitol Studios' actors and you've got the ingredients to one of the funniest movies the Coen Brothers have made in a long time.

The cast of characters is incredible and includes Scarlett Johansson as the sweet and innocent swim-star sweetheart who off camera is a foul-mouthed, knocked up street gal who needs a husband to maintain her studio image of girl next door. And Channing Tatum as a song and dance man? I had no idea he had the moves and was so versatile. And George Clooney as the lead star of the movie within the movie, "Hail, Caesar!", absolutely had the time of his life as the diva actor Baird Whitlock who not blows his lines during climatic moments but is easily swayed to believe that maybe the Russians aren't so bad after all even after he's kidnapped by the Commie bastards!



Clooney is no stranger to the Coen magic having appeared in two of their other off-the-wall flicks, "O Brother, Where Art Thou?" and "Intolerable Cruelty." And leave it to the Coens to introduce a breakout star in the way of a young Alden

Ehrenreich, who plays a singing cowboy star forced to be in a stuffy socialite movie (looking and sounding very uncomfortable) directed by a stuffy British director played by real life Brit Ralph Fiennes in a role he too looked like was relishing the part.

With all of the big name actors in "Hail, Caesar!" it's Brolin's character as Mannix that keeps the movie flowing

throughout. He's not only the soul of this flick, but the moral compass going to confessional daily to the point where his priest tells him that he doesn't have to go to confessional every day. Since "Hail, Caesar!" is Mannix's latest and biggest budgeted project that involves Jesus Christ he seeks out the advice from four religious leaders to make sure that Christ is being properly portrayed. Of course the rabbi (played by Robert Picardo) could really care less because Jesus isn't his God (or son of God) since his peeps (the chosen people) don't believe he's the Messiah. Playing the Protestant clergyman is comedian/actor Allan Havey (AMC's "Mad Men," "The Office," "The Informant!") who's actually Catholic but is such a convincing actor pulled off his Protestant role quite convincingly.

"Hail, Caesar!" has plenty of cameos to not only keep your attention span in "on" mode, but will make you think, "Was that Oscar winning actress Frances McDormand I just saw?" or Jonah Hill in a brief scene as the guy does what it takes to keep the studio's actors on the straight and narrow. It's a good ride throughout and clocks in at 1 hour, 45 minutes and is rated PG-13 for some suggestive content and smoking.

Howie Nave is host/emcee/manager of The Improv at Harveys. You can hear him Monday-Friday 6 to 10am on KRLT FM-93.9.

Studying the heart of El Niño

By Henry Fountain, New York Times

HONOLULU — A thousand miles south of Hawaii, the air at 45,000 feet above the equatorial Pacific was a shimmering gumbo of thick storm clouds and icy cirrus haze, all cooked up by the overheated waters below.

In a Gulfstream jet more accustomed to hunting hurricanes in the Atlantic, researchers with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration were cruising this desolate stretch of tropical ocean where the northern and southern trade winds meet. It's an area that becalmed sailors have long called the doldrums, but this year it is anything but quiet.

This is the heart of the strongest El Niño in a generation, one that is pumping moisture and energy into the atmosphere and, as a result, roiling weather worldwide.

The plane, with 11 people aboard including a journalist, made its way Friday on a long westward tack, steering clear of the worst of the disturbed air to the south. Every 10 minutes, on a countdown from Mike Holmes, one of two flight directors, technicians in the rear released an instrument package out through a narrow tube in the floor. Slowed by a small parachute, the devices, called dropsondes, fell toward the water, transmitting wind speed and direction, humidity and other atmospheric data back to the plane continuously on the way down.

[Read the whole story](#)

Man arrested in Colo. chairlift pushing case

By Denver Post

Pitkin County authorities have arrested a 31-year-old man on suspicion of pushing a snowboarder off a chairlift last month at Aspen Highlands.

Thomas Proesel is accused in the case of attempted second-degree assault, a felony, and reckless endangerment. Records show he appeared in court Thursday for an advisement.

Proesel's bond was set at \$10,000. He is due back before a judge on March 7 to be arraigned.

Read the whole story