

SLT allocates \$100,000 to fight Conner in court

By Kathryn Reed

South Lake Tahoe is committing \$100,000 of taxpayer money to fight the lawsuit filed by Councilwoman JoAnn Conner. Conner is asking the court and her attorney for a payment plan because of her income level.

The City Council and City Manager Nancy Kerry – the five defendants – met in a special closed session on Dec. 21 to discuss how to proceed. The two reportable actions include the money coming out of the general fund to pay for the outside counsel and that up to \$10,000 of that dollar figure will go to Kerry's own attorney. Both votes were 4-0.

"There won't be duplicative work. Mine will be working in consult in cooperation with them," Kerry told *Lake Tahoe News* of her attorney Stacy Sheston of Best, Best and Krieger out of Sacramento.

Conner named Kerry separately in the filings.

It is normal for the individual parties in a lawsuit to have separate counsel who work together.

Conner is seeking to have the **censure** by the council overturned, as well the ban on her **talking to staff** be ruled invalid.

The city has insurance to handle most lawsuits. It doesn't apply in this instance.

"Insurance does not defend in cases such as this, where there are no damages – financial – and the plaintiff is a member of the governing body. We did submit the cases, as we are required to do, but were advised there was no coverage

available,” City Attorney Tom Watson told *Lake Tahoe News*.

That is why the council had to adjust the budget to take \$100,000 out of the general fund. What services might be hurt from that expenditure remain to be seen. There is also no guarantee the litigation won’t cost more than the allotted \$100,000.

Per city policy Conner’s attorney has the right to be reimbursed for the costs associated with the actual censure hearing. Attorney Jacqueline Mittelstadt, who is the former city attorney for South Lake Tahoe, submitted a bill for \$4,802.01. She charged \$400 per hour.

In contrast, the firm the city hired – Kronick, Moskovitz, Tiedemann & Girard – at most is charging \$300 per hour.

On Friday, Conner was at the El Dorado County Courthouse in South Lake Tahoe asking to be allowed to pay court fees on a payment plan. She is also on a payment plan with Mittelstadt. Mittelstadt would not say what hourly rate she is charging Conner, only that she is paying “my normal hourly rate.”

“She is not receiving free legal advice. She is obligated to pay me for all of my service,” Mittelstadt told *Lake Tahoe News*. “Having a payment plan is very different than not having to pay for services provided.”

If Conner were to be charged a different rate than what Mittelstadt has charged the city, it could be construed as a gift, according to the Fair Political Practices Commission. The FPPC oversees campaign donations for candidates and gifts for politicians.

“Generally, a discount or rebate not made in the regular course of business is a gift,” Jay Wierenga with the FPPC told *Lake Tahoe News*.

The gift limit is \$460 from a single source in a calendar

year.

FPPC documents say, "A gift is any payment or other benefit provided to you that confers a personal benefit for which you do not provide payment or services of equal or greater value. A gift includes a rebate or discount in the price of anything of value unless the rebate or discount is made in the regular course of business to members of the public."

Mittelstadt told *Lake Tahoe News* if she prevails, she would ask the court to have the city pay her legal fees.

Kerry said the city is not allowed to ask for its fees to be reimbursed. The City Attorney's Office bills at \$200 per hour.

Mittelstadt believes the two sides could work things out without the court being involved. Limited talks occurred before the lawsuit was filed. However, Conner doesn't believe she has done anything wrong and the city believes it has taken the appropriate actions.

"There is nothing planned to meet outside of the legal process right now," Mayor Wendy David told *Lake Tahoe News*.

The next court date is Jan. 4.

Letter: Rotary appreciative of community's help

To the community,

Tahoe Douglas Rotary held its annual children's Christmas party and traditional turkey dinner at the Lake Tahoe Resort Hotel. This event was held for Live Violence Free's children

and their families, and also Sierra Child and Family Services, who assist in placing foster children in the South Lake Tahoe area.

Tahoe Douglas Rotary would like to thank the following for again making this event a success for these special children and their families.

Lake Tahoe Vacation Resort again this year donated the space for this event. The South Lake Tahoe Fire Department and crew who attended were a big hit with the children. In addition to the gifts donated to the children by Tahoe Douglas Rotary Club and individual members, Sealed With a Kiss and their staff generously provided gifts for the parents and volunteers to help work the event. Special entertainment was donated courtesy of Randy and Theresa Daggs of Dyna-Mic-Duo who provided a photo booth complete with Frosty the Snowman, Whittell High School student Chris Evans as disc jockey and some dancers from the Forever Dance studio, who lead the children with some fun dancing.

This event has a long tradition with Tahoe Douglas Rotary and with the assistance of Jenny Buscher and Jana Walker Spano this year again was a big success.

John McDougall, Tahoe Douglas Rotary

Are bicycle helmet laws dangerous?

By Reid Singer, Outside

There's no question that helmets make cycling safer. A recent study by researchers at the University of Arizona found that wearing one makes you 59 percent more likely to survive a collision.

But according to many bike advocacy groups, laws requiring that adults wear helmets actually lead to more injuries. How's that?

Studies show that the laws deter people from riding, and the fewer riders there are on roads, the more car-bike accidents occur.

Read the whole story

Rare full moon on Christmas

By Blaine Friedlander, Washington Post

As Santa Claus makes his annual toy-distribution trip around the world, he will be guided Christmas Eve by Rudolph's nose – of course – and the light of a brilliant moon. It is the first Christmas full moon since 1977, and just the ninth in the course of U.S. history.

The pudgy Christmas moon rises 99 percent illuminated on Dec. 24, serving as all-night lunar lantern for Santa and his reindeer team. On Dec. 25, the moon officially becomes full at 6:11am, just one hour before it sets. The full moon then rises again at 5:32pm on Christmas evening.

There were only three Christmas full moons in all of the 20th century: 1901, 1920 and 1977.

Read the whole story

Bikepacking the backcountry

By Brad Branan, Sacramento Bee

Earlier this year, I was having a perfectly good time backpacking the Tahoe Rim Trail when I became unnerved by all the people passing me on mountain bikes. The reason for my frustration: They were clearly having more fun than me.

So I did what any self-respecting outdoor enthusiast would. I bought a full-suspension Marin mountain bike the next week.

My interest in backpacking didn't wane, though, with the purchase of the bike. I began to see mountain biking as an extension of the same love for exploration driving my backpacking. So I asked myself: How could I take overnight trips into remote areas like I did backpacking, except on my mountain bike?

Enter bikepacking.

It's backpacking crossed with mountain biking, except most or all of the gear is stowed in bike bags, not backpacks.

[Read the whole story](#)

Tendonitis common with winter

activities

By Alison Ganong

As we gear up for outdoor winter activities, the potential for sports-related injuries stacks up. Tendonitis is a common winter sports injury.

Tendons are bands of fibrous connective tissue that attach muscles to the bones. Micro tears in the tendon can lead to irritation and inflammation known as tendonitis. If the area is not well rested or treated, the tendon starts to degenerate and can turn into unhealthy scar tissue that does not perform or move well.



Alison Ganong

Injuries to tendons are commonly caused by minor stress and repetitive overuse activities, but can also occur from a sudden injury. Symptoms include pain and stiffness where the tendon and bone attach and is especially aggravated by physical activity. Common sites for tendinitis include the shoulder, elbow, wrist, hip, knee, and ankle.

Ways to prevent tendinitis:

- Don't do too much too soon.

Avoid repetitive strain on the tendon. With the arrival of snow, it can be exciting to try a new sport or return to an activity you haven't done for months. The body is not ready to dive into snow sports as if it were the middle of the season.

Ease into activities and, as a general rule, do not increase your intensity or duration in any one sport by more than 10 percent per week.

- Practice using correct form.

Avoid overloading the tendons. Warm up and go slow when starting new activities or a new season of activities. Before hitting the slopes, a ski or snowboard lesson can ensure your technique is safe and sound.

- Follow a well-planned resistance training program.

Light resistance exercises in the gym may help prevent or treat tendinosis. Use lighter weights and higher repetitions to gradually build up tendon strength and length. It helps to discuss this with a sports medicine specialist and to work with a physical therapist to know when and how to start these exercises. This training program should only begin when your pain subsides or improves.

- Be aware of aging tendon issues.

Be patient as your tendons may not bounce back from overtraining or injury the way they did when you were younger. Tendons gradually lose their elasticity with age which makes anyone over the age of 40 more prone to tendonitis.

If you suspect you have tendinitis or tendinosis, consult a medical professional for treatment options. Options may include modification of activities, a sports rehabilitation program, or regenerative medicine techniques, such as injections of platelet rich-plasma and stem-cell therapy.

Alison Ganong is a board-certified physical medicine and rehabilitation physician who specializes in interventional sports medicine and spine care. She works at the Tahoe Center for Orthopedics.

Squaw-Alpine boss looks to turn page on 'divisive' fight

By Benjamin Spillman, Reno Gazette-Journal

The past few years haven't been easy for Lake Tahoe's north shore communities.



Andy Wirth

An epic drought took a toll on winter resorts and small business which depend on them.

And in addition to the natural challenge the communities faced a political challenge in the form of an incorporation battle over the picturesque Olympic Valley, home to Squaw Valley Resort and some of North America's most iconic winter sports terrain.

The good news for Andy Wirth, president and CEO of Squaw Valley Ski Holdings, LLC., is that there could be relief on both fronts.

[Read the whole story](#)

Portion of Meyers without power

A small area in the North Upper Truckee area of Meyers is without power this afternoon.

A power pole has been damaged and needs to be replaced.

Liberty Utilities as of 3:30pm Dec. 21 had no estimate of when the power will be restored. The power has been out since about 1:30pm.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Parallel giant slalom tricky for racers

By USSA

VAL GARDENA, Italy – Tim Jitloff (Reno), fresh off a seventh-place finish in Sunday's traditional giant slalom, finished ninth to lead the way for the U.S. Ski Team in Monday night's new Audi FIS Alpine World Cup parallel giant slalom. Ted Ligety (Park City) and Andrew Weibrecht (Lake Placid, N.Y.) were both knocked out in the first round, finishing 24 and 29, respectively.

The first of its kind on the World Cup, the PGS was full of surprises, with many pre-race favorites making early exits and

a dark horse or two providing thrilling action in the new format.

Two very familiar faces, though not from recent GS races, were left standing in the final heat. Norwegians Kjetil Jansrud and Aksel Lund Svindal had spent the last hour methodically picking off opponent after opponent on the modified two-jump Gran Risa slope. When the snow dust finally settled, it was Jansrud who took his first victory of the season, just edging out his compatriot in the simple, cross-the-finish-first-and-win format.

Third-place finisher Andre Myhrer of Sweden took the victory in the small final by a sizable margin over German surprise contender Dominik Schwaiger, whose best World Cup result before the night was 19 in the previous day's GS. This result marks Myhrer's first trip to the podium since his runner-up finish in the 2014 Adelboden slalom.

Surprisingly, many of the World Cup's top GS skiers looked uncharacteristically sluggish on the relatively flat course, perhaps flustered by having a racer next to them or by two sizable mid-course jumps that quite literally threw almost every racer off line at one point in the night.

Ligety, Marcel Hirscher of Austria, Felix Neureuther of Germany and Henrik Kristoffersen of Norway were all knocked out in the first round. In fact, six of the top seven finishers were seeded outside of the top 15, perhaps indicating that success in traditional GS is not indicative of success in the parallel format.

The night began with the opening round of 32 competitors skiing head-to-head in a two-run format, giving each racer a chance to ski both the red and blue courses. The 16 round was two runs, but through the rest of the rounds to the final, it was a one run knockout with one very clear rule: Win, or go home.

The entire event took less than 90 minutes to complete, providing intense, spectator-friendly action in a reasonable amount of time compared to a traditional daylong ski race.

Calif.-caught Dungeness crab off the holiday menu

By Mary Callahan, Press Democrat

With less than two weeks left in 2015, state health and wildlife officials say chances are slim to none that Californians will be feasting on local Dungeness crab this Christmas or any time before next year.

Though overall levels of a naturally occurring neurotoxin called domoic acid have diminished off the coast, enough crabs are still coming back with concentrations above the allowable limit that the fishery will remain closed at least into January, they said.

Public health representatives have said test crabs must come back completely clean for two weeks in a row before they will lift the advisory that prompted Fish and Wildlife officials to put the season on hold.

[Read the whole story](#)