

Opinion: Loop Road issues need addressing

Publisher's note: *This letter was sent to the South Lake Tahoe City Council and Lake Tahoe News.*

City Council,

The bypass loop road project preferred alternative will be out any day now. We all know what that decision will be. It is obviously awkward to have one of your members suing you regarding Measure T. While the judge did rule in their favor, that was done without the proponents even being able to be in the discussion to present an argument of any kind and your former attorney unfortunately did not defend the citizens but rather evidently rolled over. It seemed that ex parte may have actually occurred.



Duane Wallace

That was then. This is now. We believe the advice you were given was not appropriate. Your simply changing the language in consultation with your co defendants/ us might have worked. And it still may work. We are after all co-defendants not adversaries and your role is to defend your citizens not to side with unknown financiers of an expensive lawsuit against your citizens. That has seemed be lost in the mix.

The proponents have made it seem like birds are going to sing and the sun will shine brighter with pedestrians walking hand

in hand if we will only allow this one mile, \$100 million freeway project to go through one of our neighborhoods. We see only dark clouds ahead. The fact still remains that 60 percent of your voters want a say in the decision regarding the project. It appears that percentage although very high has grown ever larger. The question is, how high does it have to be for the council to accept it as being valid? I have heard some council members say that oh well the voters don't really know what they want so the council needs to decide all issues. We elected people sure think the voters knew what they were doing when they elected us. I know I do when I'm elected. But that doesn't mean we should stop listening but rather quite the contrary. And it is in our state Constitution that the voters have the ability and right to make state, county and city decisions especially when it comes to taxes. (Judges are actually instructed to give great deference to the voters intent). It certainly needs to be explored whether the California side of the bypass will have to use tax funds to put up their share of the federal required match on the \$100 million. Where will that approximately \$5 million come from? The match is usually 20 percent which would actually mean our share is tens of million dollars. Unless it is a straight 100 percent grant, the feds always expect a 20 percent match. The Nevada side has already voted for a gas tax for their share. I asked the TTD representative, where will ours come from? He didn't know. Do you know where our California side share will come from?

Another of the arguments against the initiative was that the city will not have a say in the matter so its unnecessary for the citizens to have to vote. I have attached the TTDs own words from their website (attached) regarding the City as a partner and the fact that you have a decision making say over the project. Please take the time to read that brief statement from their introduction of the project. Certainly changing zoning such as the housing element and densities will require Council votes as well as abandoning of right of ways

dedicating city streets and accepting a U.S. Highway through that mostly Hispanic neighborhood. Since we brought up the website we haven't been able to find that page again. Does that make it less true or just more inconvenient? As we have said before, it is basically taking a traffic problem between the casinos and moving into one of your citizens neighborhoods. In addition the Hispanic Caucus of the California State Legislature has been approached. They may not see it as just a neighborhood especially since this could not happen in any other neighborhood in our City.

Scores of citizens have complained about the loss of all those almost 100 houses. So then the TTD started calling it another name, that being an affordable housing project. It turns out that there is not enough funding for that element from the federal dollars they seek. And there is very little or almost no interest from contractors who would rather build Chateau like projects or McMansions that have profit connected to them. Unfortunately, affordable housing is not affordable for those seeking to build them. While the TTD proclaims possibilities not one single company or contractor has stepped up to commit because no subsidies exist. Simply buying out homes and renters with vouchers or moving the families with up to 100 school children into places in Nevada like the old middle school will not replace the lost housing. Neither will buying homes on the California side and dedicating them. The loss of 100 will still be there. If the kids move into Nevada it will cost LTUSD about a half million dollars at about \$5,000 per pupil per year. Building a project in California might only replace what will be lost and detour us from finding actual additional housing that we so desperately need. In fact, even if the houses were replaced it would still only have us break even and not increase the number of homes we need. That is a zero sum game played out upon our poorest residents.

Another argument was that the B=ypass would relieve traffic

congestion. However, the Chateau project has made that an impossible claim to support. Caltrans couldn't make the numbers work. So now yet another name. It is now called a revitalization project. However, given that Nevada has a convention center waiting at the end of the bypass and the fact that a shopping center is also planned that will also be waiting at the end of the Bypass is problematic. It now becomes a Douglas County revitalization project. For example, when visitors use their GPS as so many now do they will be directed to take pioneer trail to a bypass road that effectively will reduce a large amount of traffic that will most likely move the cars/customers on Highway 50 over to a long line at the junction with Pioneer trail. It won't reduce traffic jams but rather move them. One has only to drive through downtown Carson City to see the empty stores and businesses for sale to envision our fate. Or they can drive down Highway 99 past the towns that were bypassed. All have suffered the same result.

The business being threatened do not see it as revitalization. We have gone in person to those merchants and restaurants. They tell us that they are scared and not in favor. The ones in the formerly Crescent V have indicated that they have been advised to stay out of the issue. They express concerns about what they have been told will be four years of traffic detours and road reconfigurations. They fear that they will not survive what seems to always take longer. They see that some property owners may have been promised first selection for relocation in order to stop them from being vocal. They also don't understand how diverting traffic around behind them before the cars even reach them can mean revitalization for them. That is especially true since not one single parking spot will be created. That coupled with the casinos now charging for parking will create constantly circling traffic that will not be a safe biking and walking paradise as described. Where will the revitalization come from if all our parking is already full?

The rest of us see a compilation of road projects that could truly ruin South Lake Tahoe's reputation for many years to come. First, we have the ongoing U.S. Highway 50 project through town that will be still happening. Then we have the Echo Summit bridge replacement that will send traffic over Emigrant Trail adding another hour to the drive with no retail, gas or safety services including cell service for the entire trip. Then there is the roundabout in Meyers that will greet them when they come down Luther pass. Then the traffic will be total chaos at the Bypass project. All of these may be happening at once. Then there will still be the usual Sunday backup from Meyers all the way back through town except worse because of the roundabout construction and the Echo Summit bridge added to that queue of outgoing traffic. Then we can add the ski Run project that will divert that traffic back onto the main Highway. Even if we are wrong by one or two projects it will still be more delays during summer than we have ever had. And what will that do to the already poor bus system as riders have to wait in the same traffic in their attempt to get people to their destinations such as work on time. How will that congestion make for a good experience for any mode of transportation?

It is a result the foregoing concerns and for the returning of a better relationship with 60 percent of your constituents that we ask you to allow the people who voted for you to also be given a vote on this Bypass project. Please direct your attorneys to find ways to support your citizens initiative against the outside Sacramento law firm and their mysteriously funded lawsuit that is keeping you from being in concert with the majority of your constituents.

Respectfully,

Duane Wallace

If Colo. makes Winter Olympic bid, it could be game-changer

By Jason Blevins, Denver Post

STEAMBOAT SPRINGS, Colo. – Could we? Should we? And just how would the Winter Olympics in Colorado look?

The committee tasked with weighing support for a possible Colorado Olympic bid visited the state's Olympic breeding ground last week. Beneath almost 100 athlete-tagged flags draped throughout Steamboat Springs' fabled Olympian Hall, exploratory committee member Steve McConahey shared a vision with what he called the community's "thought leaders," a collection of business owners and representatives from the local government, chamber, ski area and Forest Service.

"We are creating a new paradigm about how you can do the Olympics," said McConahey, a former Denver Metro Sports Commission chairman and Vail Valley local who served on a committee that proposed Colorado as a host for the 1998 Winter Games.

While the committee is officially only exploring the possibility of hosting the 2030 – or maybe even the 2026 – Olympics, when McConahey talks, it sounds like a pitch.

If Colorado can host a privately financed Olympics without government subsidies and guarantees, McConahey said, more cities around the world could see a new path toward hosting a Winter Games.

Read the whole story

South Tahoe man arrested in Sonoma County



Michael
Lindauer

By Index-Tribune

A South Lake Tahoe man was sitting in county jail on \$15,000 bail after being discovered with stolen property including keys to 16 different vehicles.

On March 17, Sonoma police received a call about a subject who stole a key from a vehicle on First Street East near the Little League fields.

Read the whole story

Stateline casinos bring in

big bucks in February

Nevada casinos collectively topped the billion-dollar mark for the second consecutive month. Back-to-back billion-dollar wins had not been recorded since March-April 2008.

On the South Shore the gaming win for February was up 32 percent to \$19.86 million from 2017.

Statewide the numbers were \$1.018 billion, a 7.7 percent increase from February 2017.

North Lake Tahoe was one of the six markets to post a decline. The numbers were off by just more than 6 percent.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Invasive species topic of contest for youths

The California Department of Fish and Wildlife is looking for artists and future biologists to participate in the California Invasive Species Youth Art Contest. This year's theme is Pledge to Not Spread.

Students in grades 2-12 are eligible to enter the annual contest. All types of media are welcome, including paintings, animations, comic strips, videos, public service announcements, and more. Entries should depict what Californians could do to stop the spread of invasive species, along with appropriate messaging (for example, a written pledge to not release pets).

Winners will be chosen in three divisions: grades 2-4, 5-8 and 9-12. Winners from each division will receive awards and have their artwork displayed on CDFW's Invasive Species Action Week webpage. The submission judged best overall will receive the Invasive Species Program Choice Award.

The deadline for submissions is May 4, either by email or regular mail. The entry form is **online**.

El Dorado County schedules two VHR meetings

The El Dorado County Board of Supervisors meeting regarding vacation home rentals has been rescheduled for May 2 at 6pm in the multipurpose room at South Tahoe Middle School.

This proposed purpose of this meeting is to

- Conceptually approve amendments to Title 5 – County Business License Ordinance of the El Dorado County Ordinance Code, Chapter 5.56 – Vacation Home Rentals in the Lake Tahoe Basin;
- Direct staff to work with the VHR Ad Hoc Committee and return to the board with the following:
 - a) Introduction of a revised ordinance that incorporates as many of the conceptually approved amendments as feasible;
 - b) A timeline for inclusion of any remaining conceptually approved revisions;
- Discuss the proposed calendar/work plan for the VHR Ad Hoc Committee.

The VHR Ad Hoc Committee will meet on April 12 at 5:30pm at the magnet school in Meyers to examine all issues regarding vacation rentals and look at possible solutions. The committee will then report their findings and make recommendations back to the full board.

Placerville teen still a contender on 'The Voice'

By Benjy Egel, Sacramento Bee

Placerville native Jaclyn Lovey was edged out by her competitor on NBC 0146s "The Voice" Monday night, but show judge and country star Blake Shelton saved the 17-year-old by pulling her onto his team and pushing her through the singing showcase's battle round.

Lovey and North Carolina native Britton Buchanan both wowed in their rendition of Ed Sheeran's "Thinking Out Loud," with each artist earning "A" grades from TV Line later that night.

Read the whole story

Snippets about Lake Tahoe

- Kirkwood Mountain Resort will be closing April 8.
- Caltrans advises that until further notice it is unsafe to boat under the Highway 49 bridge in the Coloma-Lotus area

due to a damaged and unstable wooden support structure used for construction. This damage was caused by recent high water on the South Fork of the American River. The bridge is safe for motorists to cross.

- Jenifer Davidson is now assistant county manager for Douglas County. Her salary is \$114,920 a year. She had been town manager of Minden since 2011.

- A free screening of the award-winning documentary film "He Named Me Malala" will be shown in Lake Tahoe Community College's Duke Theatre on April 27 at 5:30pm. A discussion panel will follow.

- Tahoe Douglas Fire Association will be sponsoring and co-hosting the annual Tot Egg Hunt at Kahle Community Park on March 30 at 11am for children up to 6 years old. Bring a basket to collect eggs.

S. Lake Tahoe pool to open to kayakers

The South Lake Tahoe Recreation & Swim Complex is offering times to practice kayak rolling skills .

The pool will be open Saturdays from April 21-May 26 (except May 5) from 3:30-4:30pm. There is no instruction available and people must bring your own kayak. Helmets and personal flotation devices are recommended.

For additional information, call 530.542.6056.

Cost is \$6 ages 18-54, \$5 55 and older, \$4 for 17 and younger.

SLT council agrees to help pot shop get permit

By Kathryn Reed

Tahoe Wellness Cooperative could have medicine on its shelves this weekend.

Cody Bass, owner of the lone medicinal marijuana shop in South Lake Tahoe, told *Lake Tahoe News* he intends to be calling people first thing this morning to have supplies replenished in a matter of days.

All of this is allowable because the City Council on March 27 unanimously agreed to have the city attorney write a letter to the state saying Bass is in compliance with city laws per court order and therefore should be granted a state license.

After the vote – which came at about 9:30pm Tuesday – there was applause, disbelief and relief.

TWC has been unable to stock everything people need because Police Chief Brian Uhler at the beginning of the year wrote a letter to the state Bureau of Cannabis Control that essentially put the kibosh on the business.

“In order for a state license to be issued, the local government must also agree to permit the business, and the local government was not willing to permit the activity. So we couldn’t license Tahoe Wellness,” Alex Traverso with the state Bureau of Cannabis Control told *Lake Tahoe News* earlier this year.

Sergio Rudin, who on March 27 was the attorney from the law firm of Burke, Williams and Sorensen representing the city, said crafting the letter isn't a problem. The state still would need to give its OK for the 120-day permit.

Some of Tuesday night's discussion pertained to the **June 2015 raid** on TWC. This then led to a criminal complaint being filed against Bass last fall regarding **income tax evasion**.

A judge on Monday could rule on whether the search warrant affidavits could be unsealed. The thinking is this would give the city an indication of the evidence against Bass. Bass has not seen the information and could choose not to make the documents public.

It was pointed out, though, that in this country a person is innocent until proven guilty – no matter the evidence.

The whole goal of the council's was to be able to provide this type of medicine for people in town.

The issues between the city and Bass remain to be worked out. For now, though, there should be ample medical marijuana in South Lake Tahoe in a matter of days.