

Stand up paddleboard race on Donner Lake

The 2015 Tahoe Cup Paddle Racing Series officially kicks off on Memorial Day weekend with the Donner Lake Race on May 23.

The first of a three-event series, the Donner Lake Race is open to all paddling craft of all ability levels, from the recreational paddler to the SUP elite racer.

Register online or the day of race at 8am.

The race starts at 9am from the West End Beach (pavilion area) in a 5-mile race around the shoreline of Donner Lake.

The start/finish area is open to spectators and will include a free demos provided by Surfttech and Willard's Sport Shop of Tahoe City.

The Tahoe Cup Paddle Racing Series is presented by the Lake Tahoe Paddleboard Association. It features the Donner Lake Race on May 23, Jam From The Dam on July 11, and Tahoe Fall Classic on Sept. 13.

MontBleu fire forces hotel-casino to evacuate

Two people were taken to the hospital Wednesday for smoke inhalation and 200 others evacuated from MontBleu casino in Stateline when a fire erupted in the main kitchen.

The cause of the May 6 blaze is under investigation.

“One of their commercial ovens had a fire and it had about 4-foot-by-8-foot flames coming out of the oven,” Eric Guevin, Tahoe Douglas fire marshal, told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Employees using fire extinguishers were unable to suppress the flames. The fire was contained to the kitchen by Tahoe Douglas, North Tahoe, East Fork and South Lake Tahoe firefighters.

That particular oven is condemned, according to Guevin. The health department will be on scene today.

All of the kitchens at the casino are tied together, with there being one main one and then offshoots for the individual restaurants.

The 200 people who were evacuated about 3:30 Wednesday were allowed back inside the casino and to their rooms within 30 minutes. The elevators were off-limits for about an hour. Casino employees used fans to clear the stairwells and hallways of smoke. Smoke reached the 11th floor.

No one from MontBleu was available for comment.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

Opinion: Locals Taking Action – Lighting the way

By Rebecca Bryson

This column highlights examples of locals making positive change in our community and steps – large or small – that all of us can take to make Tahoe a better place.

The latest in a series of actions to improve our schools' sustainability occurred quickly and quietly over spring break. Several months prior, the Lake Tahoe Environmental Magnet School PTA was pondering how to spend some extra year-end money. They proposed funding a LED lighting retrofit that would not only be good for the environment, but also save money for the school district and, ultimately, taxpayers.



The PTA contributed \$12,121 to replace the existing fluorescent tube lighting in every classroom with super efficient LED lights. The school decided to focus on classrooms first because the LEDs offer a better quality light and none of the visible flickering that can be associated with increased behavioral issues. Lake Tahoe Unified School District will also receive a rebate from Liberty Utilities, which will go toward installing LEDs in the remaining halls and cafeteria area.

Through this project, 870 15-watt tubes were installed, replacing the older 32-watt fluorescent tubes. It was no small feat to get a project of this scale and size completed during the school year without disrupting students. In early spring, district Facilities Manager Steve Morales and Principal Joel Damerl met with Liberty Utilities to assess the options. The Facilities Department then researched current technologies – consulting with various utility and manufacturer representatives, chose several products to test pilot, negotiated the pricing for the selected product, and mapped out a strategy for installing all tubes during spring break and replacing some older ballasts where necessary.

However, the selected tubes only arrived the Thursday before spring break started. School district staff then worked tirelessly over the break and even during their weekends to install all 870 lights before classes started again. The team was led by Eric Voelker and included Jeff Collier, Genaro

Gutierrez, Chris Lauer, Adon Pulido, Juan Marquez, and Tim Torpin, who all worked one or both of the weekends to complete the work. Thanks to their efforts there was no disruption to the students.

While LED lights are definitely more expensive than standard non-efficient lights, the price has dropped dramatically in the past few years. In general, LED tubes use 12 to 14 watts less than conventional fluorescent tubes or 45 percent less energy per tube. This results in a fast financial payback and a high return on investment. The payback time for LED tube conversion should be in the one to two year time frame for the typical business. With an LED lifespan of 10-20 years, savings really begin to add up over the years.

Other benefits of LEDs are that they turn on instantly and work better with occupancy sensors than traditional fluorescent tubes, which tend to burn out faster if they are turned on and off frequently. In addition, LEDs typically have a longer lifespan than fluorescents, which reduces the maintenance costs associated with removing and replacing the bulbs. LEDs also do not contain mercury, and thus are better for the environment, and offer significant savings on waste disposal fees (currently set at \$1/per fluorescent tube).

PTA members will be at the May 12 school board meeting to present the project and officially “donate” the lights to the school. This project is a test pilot and will hopefully be replicated at other Tahoe schools over time.

The great news is that what’s good for our schools is also good for our homes. So what are you waiting for? Liberty Utilities offers free residential and commercial energy audits. Their residential audits provide CFL and LED free lights as well as other energy and water-saving devices. Commercial customers can get rebates for upgrading the efficiency of their building. Contact Liberty Utilities at 800.782.2506, Monday through Friday 8am-5pm.

If you would like to get involved in supporting an LED retrofit at another school or your place of work, contact the Energy, Water and Waste Workgroup at eww.ltsc@gmail.com.

Rebecca Bryson wrote this in collaboration with members of the Energy Water and Waste Workgroup of the Lake Tahoe Sustainability Collaborative. The Collaborative is a group of more than 100 community members, business owners, agency representatives and nonprofit employees committed to supporting and accelerating the changes necessary to create a thriving, vibrant future for Lake Tahoe.

100+ weigh in on Meyers Area Plan

By Jessie Marchesseau

MEYERS – More than 100 people packed into the auditorium of the Lake Tahoe Environmental Science Magnet School on Wednesday evening for the Meyers Area Plan open house.

Large tables encircled the room offering seven workstations for attendees to visit. Each station represented a key topic related to the plan: design and implementation, transportation, land use, Meyers Advisory Council, recreation, California Tahoe Conservancy asset land, and conservation. The stations were staffed by personnel involved in plan development and offered presentation boards with insight into the particular topic in addition to copies of the original 1993 Meyers Area Plan alongside the most recent draft of the new Meyers Area Plan. Some stations showed colored maps, photos or sediment samples, all with staff to explain, answer questions and accept feedback.

This open house format was a change from previous meetings regarding the plan. It allowed for more direct interaction and conversation between residents and planners.



The Meyers Area Plan meeting May 6 brought out more than 100 people. Photo/Jessie Marchesseau

Dave Defanti, assistant director of El Dorado County community development agency, greeted people as they came in, answered questions and encouraged attendees to pick up and fill out comment sheets. He said they chose this type of format because they wanted more interaction with community members and to encourage one-on-one conversation.

Residents' feelings on the meeting format were mixed. Jan Roman-Gonzales was disappointed there were no opening remarks from the El Dorado County Board of Supervisors Chairman Brian Veerkamp or a breakout session with opportunities for public questions and comments as was advertised on the county's website and the postcard she received in the mail. She believed the open house format did not give her and other community members a chance to have their voices heard. (Veerkamp is supposed to be Meyers' point person on the board because District 5 Supervisor Sue Novasel has conflict based on her property she owns.)

Joseph Restaino, on the other hand, liked the one-on-one

interaction. He told *Lake Tahoe News* it was a good way for him to really learn about the plan and to get excited about what's happening in Meyers.

At the open house, public input was encouraged in ways other than just speaking aloud. Poster-sized flip boards offered a place for attendees to write down suggestions and comments such as "community garden," "flashing red light at Apache," and "leave Park City in Utah." At another station, people were given stickers to place on a board with various transportation goals and design options to indicate which items were the most important to them. By the end of the night, the winners of the most stickers were buffered or protected bikeways, separated bike paths, economic viability, and pedestrian safety. The items with the fewest stickers were bicycle signals and in-roadway signs.

Brandy McMahon, acting long-range planning manager for the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency, was staffing the design and implementation station. She said she answered a lot of questions on everything from bike paths to the bug station, but the overall feeling she had for the night's open house was positive, a change from the tension she felt at previous meetings.

Defanti, McMahon, and Brendan Ferry, principal planner for El Dorado County, all said input from the May 6 open house will be considered for changes to the Meyers Area Plan when the Board of Supervisors meets again next month and in the future. According to Defanti, it could be at least nine months before anything is voted on, so there is still plenty of time for residents to offer their comments either on paper, or online.

Ferry said that while people can't agree on every little thing, their goal is to please everyone as a whole. "I think the community in general is excited about getting the plan done and implementing something cool in Meyers."

Most U.S. middle-school kids don't know how government works

By Laura Colby, BloombergBusiness

More than half of U.S. eighth-graders say Americans believe the U.S. government should guarantee them a job when they grow up.

That's one of the findings of a federal test of children's knowledge of history, civics and geography. Only 32 percent correctly answered the question about a belief shared by most people in the U.S. The right response: the government should be a democracy. Eleven percent said citizens favored a single political party and 6 percent, an official religion.

The results of the 2014 test, called the National Assessment of Educational Progress, were released Wednesday as Congress considers replacing the federal testing law known as No Child Left Behind, which President Barack Obama and others blame for promoting too tight a focus on math and reading at the expense of other subjects.

Read the whole story

USFS going after invasive weeds

Don't be worried if someone with a backpack is spraying weeds on U.S. Forest Service property.

The agency is trying to eradicate, control and contain known infestations of invasive plants in the Lake Tahoe Basin by using chemical treatment. The work will occur at about 70 sites between May 15 and Sept. 30.

Project areas include: the 64 Acres parking lot, Angora burn area, Baldwin Beach Meadow, Burke Creek trail, Camp Richardson Corral, Luther Pass Campground, Heavenly Creek Meadow, Heavenly Mountain Resort, Rabe Meadow, Lower Truckee River below Tahoe City, and the Spooner Summit fire station.

Crews will treat infestations on Forest Service urban lots on Ralph Drive, Terry Lane, Ski Run Boulevard and Mt. Rainier Drive in South Lake Tahoe; and on Sugar Pine Drive in Incline Village; Marge Court in Zephyr Cove; and Pine Street in Stateline.

Herbicides used in treatments include Rodeo, Milestone and Telar. Crews will apply the product with backpack sprayers and other hand held tools. Caution signs will be posted in treatment areas and remain for at least 48 hours after application. Orange and black caution tape will mark the boundary around each treatment area. A marker dye will be used to identify locations that have been sprayed.

Access to treatment sites will be restricted during and after the application.

Target invasive plants include tall whitetop, Dalmatian toadflax, yellow toadflax, hoary cress and Canada thistle.

Drug bust in rural El Dorado County

By Bill Lindelof, Sacramento Bee

A man and a woman were arrested on drug-related charges after deputies searched a trailer near Georgetown.

Deputies came to the trailer in the 5000 block of Reservoir Road in a rural area outside Georgetown Sunday to serve a felony arrest warrant on 28-year-old Lainey Porter.

When they arrived, they found three men inside and Porter running from the rear of the trailer, according to an El Dorado County Sheriff's Office blog. She came to a halt when a deputy ordered her to stop.

[Read the whole story](#)

Safety, connectivity in S. Tahoe may improve

By Kathryn Reed

South Lake Tahoe is going after a \$2.1 million grant that would make Al Tahoe Boulevard less nightmarish for those on foot or a bike as well as improve the intersection of Highway

50.

Jim Marino, assistant public works director, called this the second most important intersection in the city after the Y. This is because of everything that is going on in such a small area. South Tahoe Middle School, Lake Tahoe Unified School District offices, Lake Tahoe Community College, ball fields, law enforcement, adult and juvenile detention facilities, community park and a shopping center are all located within blocks of each other. They are connected by a five-lane road and state highway.

With all of the driveways and lack of sidewalks, it is not an ideal place to be unless in a vehicle.

The grant would change that because it would provide the necessary funding to make upgrades.



The LTUSD bus barn will not be relocated, but the center ingress/egress may be removed. Photo/LTN

Steve Morales, facilities director with LTUSD, said one of the driveways to the bus barn would be eliminated. The district would also look at how people access the middle school.

A class 1 bike trail would be built from the highway to Johnson Boulevard as well as class 2 along the road.

The California Tahoe Conservancy is also applying for a \$2 million Active Transportation Program grant.

Officials believe because the projects would link together, this is a strategy that should show those who control the purse strings that there is a collaborative approach to the local process. CTC wants the money for the Greenway bike path.

The city is the lead on the other grant, with other partners part of the process. This area was identified last year as a significant gap in the connectivity piece.

How everything will look remains to be seen. The city is in the conceptual design phase now.

Six people spoke at the May 5 City Council meeting in support of the city going after the grant. Another nine letters of support were submitted.

Even without the grant there will be new sidewalks coming. This is the result of Southwest Gas working in the area and coming to an agreement with the city to make the improvements while the utility relocates its lines.

In other action:

- Connolly Beach will be a topic at the May 19 meeting.
- Most of the master fee schedule was approved. Recreation fees will be brought back at the end of the year and ice arena fees in three months.
- The council approved refinancing bonds.
- CTC staff gave a presentation about how \$1.5 million is spent each year treating parcels so they are fire safe and hazards are removed.

TCPUD looking to build treatment plant

Tahoe City Public Utilities District is considering building a water treatment plant on the West Shore.

Three locations are being considered:

- Lodge Road for water treatment plant (WTP) and Chambers Landing for the lake intake
- Chamberland Drive WTP and Chambers Landing lake intake
- Lagoon Road WTP and McKinney Shores lake intake.

Each of the potential WTP sites are vacant parcels located west of Highway 89.

The project will be discussed by the TCPUD Sewer & Water Committee on May 7 at 8am, TCPUD board room, 221 Fairway Drive, Tahoe City. There will also be a public workshop May 9 from 9-11am at Chambers Landing Restaurant, 6300 Chambers Lodge Road, Homewood.

The environmental documents are anticipated to be released in June.

South Tahoe shining light on mental health

May is National Mental Health Awareness Month and as such South Lake Tahoe has proclaimed May 10-16 Mental Health Awareness Week.

Throughout the week, local health service providers and agencies from the Mental Health Cooperative will raise mental health awareness through films, stories and events. South Shore residents, families, and visitors are encouraged to show support and participate in the following ways:

- Open house and movie at El Dorado County Mental Health's South Lake Tahoe wellness center (1900 Lake Tahoe Blvd.) on Ma 13 from 6-8pm. The open house at the Wellness Center will include refreshments and door prizes, and a chance to meet with mental health employees. Special activities include a showing of the film "Each Mind Matters", featuring Californians living with mental health issues, and a reading from the book "Regular and Decaf", focusing on schizophrenia and bi-polar disorder. The event is free and open to the public.
- Police Station's Open House and Peace Office Memorial Week Awards Ceremony on May 14 at 2pm. Children are welcome. There will be displays and officers will talk about the K9 and SWAT units. There will also be a mental health awareness booth with posters, resources, buttons, and the week's events.

Additional event information and community resources are available online.

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