Stricter greenhouse gas emission targets in Calif.

By Chris Megerian and Michael Finnegan, Los Angeles Times

Gov. Jerry Brown accelerated California's effort to slash greenhouse gas emissions Wednesday, burnishing the state's reputation as a pacesetter in the battle against climate change.

In an executive order, Brown said the state must cut the pollutants to 40 percent below 1990 levels by the year 2030, more than a decade after he leaves office.

That is an interim target, intended to help California lower emissions to 80 percent below 1990 levels by the year 2050, a goal set by Brown's predecessor, Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger.

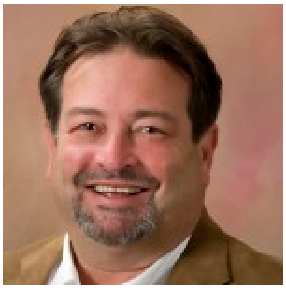
Read the whole story

Letter: SLT needs to rethink motel ordinance

Publisher's note: ***This letter was sent to the South Lake Tahoe City Council and is reprinted upon request.***

Honorable City Manager and City Council,

I am writing to you out of concern about the possible new ordinance regarding motel housing. In the past six years I have been involved with working for and advising various properties. The seven different properties opened my eyes to a separate part of our community that goes mostly unnoticed.



Duane Wallace

This part of the permanent housing fills a need for very low cost housing. The renters can be single moms who for a variety of reasons are barely getting by. They can be elderly people who are on a small fixed income or who have health issues that take a large portion of their income. Unfortunately, some of the people who occupy these rooms are mired in drugs and alcohol habits that eat up their money. But many of these have children who need clothing, shoes and a decent meal. In any case these units are all these people can afford as they bounce in and out of homelessness.

I can see why there is concern for the condition of the properties. There ought to be a minimum health and safety condition. There are human beings occupying these properties. As I have managed these properties or advised the owners, I have actually seen little communities form as the occupants babysit each other's children or share cars. They often help each other ending up working for the same businesses. It is not the type of housing they want or the type of housing we would live in but it is what they can afford. It is all they can afford. As a substitute teacher and a former Boys & Girls Club executive director I have seen how many children are housed in these month to month motels. If it weren't for the Kiwanis, Christmas Cheer and other groups they wouldn't even have suitable coats for winter or shoes.

My concern is that in the zeal to drastically raise the minimum standards that element of the housing mix will either be greatly reduced or completely eliminated. The residents are not an empowered group who will show up at a Council meeting to complain about the poor conditions. They may also not speak up as you possibly take away their only available place to live. They will simply become homeless.

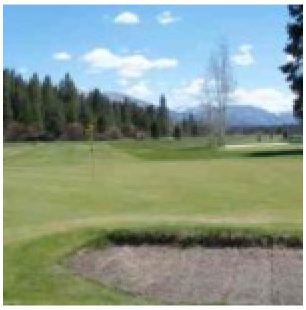
There certainly are motel owners who don’t fix up their properties. And they certainly have health and safety issues. There is a feeling that they should be punished. However, as the various agencies in our County add ordinance after ordinance the residents are getting punished rather than the owners. Jobs are bleeding away to other places. On a macro level, states like Texas are reducing fees and laws while we do the opposite. As an elected person myself, I am pushing for reduced connection fees even as our utility is being forced by state mandates to do things that financially hurt businesses and residents. As a result of TRPA and strict building ordinances and high costs from the city and county who have followed suit, the motels here have become a literal museum of the 1960s. The only customer they are suitable for is for month to month housing. These agencies are dealing with market forces that it appears they do not understand. Until job creation and business advocacy becomes the primary objective there will be a need for the housing type that the old motels provide. Eliminating the motels won’t eliminate the need for housing. Only increased opportunities for work will do that. A comprehensive economic development plan should be implemented first. Maybe it is time for an economic summit that includes every aspect of our town. That of course includes tourism that is often reactive and creates secondary jobs but also retail, government and education as we jointly come up with a plan that creates primary jobs. We cannot legislate prosperity but if we are not careful we can legislate poverty.

My request as a citizen is for the council to set reasonable standards but to also create graduated improvement schedules that do not hurt the very families you would like to protect. By making draconian regulations the motels will either become mini black holes or be fixed up to a level that leaves these lower income community members with no place to live.

Sincerely,

Duane Wallace, South Lake Tahoe

Snippets about Lake Tahoe



· Bijou Golf Course in South Lake Tahoe opens May 15.

· South Lake Tahoe Police Department's annual awards ceremony is May 14 at 2pm in front of the police department. There will also be an open house at the police department as part of the city's 50th anniversary.

· South Lake Tahoe Fire Department is having a blood drive in honor of Fresno fire Capt. Pete Dern who was injured this spring. The drive is May 15 from 11am-3:30pm at Fire Station No. 3, 2101 Lake Tahoe Blvd. To schedule an appointment, contact Kim George at 530.307.9596.

· Washoe County Sheriff's Office and Truckee Meadows Fire Protection District's Guns and Hoses Charity Golf Tournament is at Lakeridge Golf Course on May 4 starting at 11am. The cost is $100 per person and registration includes a round of golf, cart, lunch and non-alcoholic beverages. For more information, call 775.328.3012.

· An 11-mile stretch of Highway 49 between Cool and Coloma is being repaved. Work is expected to last through July. The contractor is working from 6am-7pm, Monday through Friday with one-way traffic control using a pilot car. There also will be some night work in Cool later into the project.

Classical music concert returning to Tahoe

Lake Tahoe SummerFest’s fourth season, “Passport to a World of Music,” will bring Mozart, Beethoven, Mendelssohn to audiences July 31-Aug. 16.

The three weekend series of nine concerts will include renowned artists and a nationally acclaimed orchestra of 40 players.

It marks a return for pianist Joseph Kalichstein, the guest artist who opened SummerFest’s inaugural 2012 season.

Special guest artists during the following weekends feature guitarist Ana Vidovic on Aug. 7-9, and cellist Paul Watkins of the Emerson Quartet and music director of the English Chamber Orchestra for the festival’s finale on Aug. 14-16.

Joel Revzen, artistic director and conductor, leads the orchestra. The orchestra is comprised of musicians from symphonies including the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra, the philharmonics of New York and Los Angeles, and the symphonies of San Francisco, Seattle, Dallas, and Vancouver.

The event is in a 500-seat concert tent pavilion at Sierra Nevada College in Incline Village.

For more info, go online.

5-year sentence in DUI conviction

A Bay Area man with multiple DUI convictions is going to prison for five years.

Michael Charles Ramirez of Concord was sentenced April 27 by El Dorado County Superior Court Judge Kenneth Melikian after a jury had found him guilty of two counts of felony driving under the influence and driving with a suspended license.

When Ramirez was stopped by a sheriff's deputy on June 1, 2014, on Highway 50 on the West Slope he had a blood alcohol level of 0.11 percent. The legal limit is 0.08.

Ramirez had four prior driving under the influence convictions and has served two prison terms.

— Lake Tahoe News staff report

Chateau project given go-ahead for next phase

By Kathryn Reed

While concern remains about the adequate number of parking spots and the safety for pedestrians crossing Highway 50, the South Lake Tahoe Planning Commission on Thursday unanimously approved changes to the next phase of the Chateau project.

A special meeting was required April 30 to answer questions from a meeting earlier this month.

The approval will allow Tahoe Stateline Ventures (TSV) to proceed with the 32-unit condo project. This full ownership lodging facility will give owners the opportunity to put their units into a rental pool.

Also part of the next phase are amenities for the lodging property, like a pool; 19,477-square-feet of retail; upgrades to the streetscape; and public fire pits.

This next phase encompasses 3.4 acres and should break ground this summer.

The project requires 6,307 square feet of commercial floor area from South Lake Tahoe. The City Council already approved that allocation, but it must come back to that board for the commodity to be assigned to this project. That is likely to occur May 19.

TSV is a subsidiary of Owens Financial. This is the lending institution that acquired all of the parcels on the 11.4-acre site near the state line after the project went bankrupt under Randy Lane of Lake Tahoe Development Company.

“They are trying to sell it to a real developer,” Lew Feldman, attorney for the TSV, told the commissioners.

It is unusual for a bank to become a developer. The thinking was if the project that was first approved in 2007 made progress from being more than concrete and rebar that it would be more enticing to prospective developers.

TSV has permits with the city and TRPA, with the former having been revised a couple times.

TSV is working under the 2007 permit from the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency that lists Lake Tahoe Development Company and the now defunct South Lake Tahoe Redevelopment Agency as the permittees. While people keep saying the permit goes with the landowner, nowhere in the permit does it state that. The permit says, "[The permittee] also understands that if the property is sold, [permittee] remains liable for the permit conditions until or unless the new owner acknowledges the transfer of the permit and notifies TRPA in writing of such acceptance."

TRPA has not received anything in writing from TSV, though TRPA and Feldman said something would be forthcoming.

In the interim, it is not known what kind of liability the city may still have if someone were to be injured at the site or other legal issues arose because City Attorney Tom Watson refused to return *Lake Tahoe News'* phone calls.

The overpass for Highway 50 linking the Chateau to Heavenly Village that was in the 2007 plans was eliminated with a recent revision. Commissioners on Thursday discussed whether this next phase should trigger TSV having to put in upgrades to pedestrian crossings along the highway.

A traffic study has shown no pedestrian accidents since the improvements were made to Friday Avenue. Jan McCarthy, who owns the nearby Stardust Lodge, said her guests do not have difficulty crossing the highway.

It was decided that in Phase A, which includes the bulk of the lodging, that the property owner will have to pay his share for improvements.

While there are not enough parking spots for all of the potential users at the site – especially and maybe only if a convention center type entity were built – the commissioners spent the most amount of time on that issue. It's an issue that was brought up when the project was first approved. At that time using casino lots was the answer.

The commissioners acquiesced; realizing at least with the next phase there should be ample on-site parking.

No one has a crystal ball to know if a convention center will ever be built. When the Redevelopment Agency was part of the project it was going to invest $55 million in what was to be a 40,000-square-foot community facility. That money is off the table since Gov. Jerry Brown dissolved redevelopment agencies.

In order to substantially change the project, the developer at that time would likely have to go through the environmental process again. That takes years and costs six figures. What the build out at the site will look like will in large part be determined by what the market dictates.

Track spending habits with money-management apps

By Reid Abedeen

Money management is probably at the forefront of your mind.

While everyone should have a long-term plan for their investments, yours will do you no good if you aren't also watching your money on a day-to-day basis. You should have a monthly budget, spending categories with soft and hard caps, and a system to keep track of it all and rein in your spending. If you don’t have responsible spending habits, you don’t have responsible saving habits; it’s that simple.

There are a multitude of technologies that can help you pay attention to your spending budgets. These include money-management apps on your mobile phone or banking websites that let you categorize your expenditures for easier totaling, among other things.

For most of us, keeping a close eye on our spending is all it takes to make more responsible money decisions. When you have to notice every dollar as it comes in and goes out, the awareness of your accounts creates its own incentive to spend carefully. It’s the same principle behind calorie counting: Even if you don’t adopt any special diet, having all the information in front of you — and the awareness of how many minutes of exercise it takes to balance out that one candy bar — will tug you gently in the direction of prudent decision-making.

Here are a few of our few favorite daily money-management hacks.

EveryDollar

Financial guru Dave Ramsey has plugged this iPhone app (there is not yet an Android version). It’s simple, yet elegant and effective. After installing it, you create a monthly budget on the app’s corresponding website. You link it to your various credit, debit, savings and investment accounts, and the app tracks your expenditures proportionate to your budgets. When you spend money in a category, the app shows you how much you have left to spend for the month.

For one-time or annual expenditures, EveryDollar has you create a Fund that’s paid into every month and then zeroes out when the expenditure is made. The basic version of EveryDollar is free. If you get the premium version of the app, you can drag and drop transactions from your bank to one of your budgets, making it easier to ensure that every expenditure is properly accounted for.

Mint

Another budgeting and money-management app, Mint (available on iOS and Android) has the same basic functionality. You create monthly budgets in several different areas, taking up a portion of your monthly projected income. You can then set goals with the remaining funds. An example goal might be “Pay off credit card” or “Save for vacation.” Most of the differences between this app and EveryDollar are cosmetic.

Assigning categories to credit or debit card transactions in Mint is a little more tedious. Instead of dragging and dropping from transaction to budget, you have to scroll down a submenu, for example. Then again, this is a premium feature on EveryDollar, so it comes at a price of $99 yearly. Mint is free for all users, although the app does offer “advice” in the form of advertisements for credit cards and other financial solutions. These are customized to your spending and saving habits, which could make some users leery of just how much financial data they are sharing with the manufacturer.

You have to set up each of your monthly budgets yourself, but there is a drop down menu’s worth of spending options to choose from, so this isn’t too onerous. Mint has additional features such as spending reports, divided by category (into a pie chart) or by month (in a bar graph). If one of the spending categories looks suspicious, you can easily navigate to the list of transactions to make sure they all belong there, and have a clear sense of where your money is going. Even if you don’t change a penny of your spending habits, being able to view and justify every dollar will have you feeling good about your decisions instead of wondering why your wallet is always empty.

Mint’s main screen is a snapshot that shows every connected account balance and a summary of those accounts. (You can get this in EveryDollar as well, but it requires paying for the Plus version.)

One-time or annual expenditures are also a little trickier to manage on Mint, but there are workarounds that can make them feasible. At free, it’s a bargain at twice the price.

Know Thyself and Save

Whatever money-management app you decide to use, the automatic transaction tracking will make it easy to keep track of your budget and find corners to cut. When you do, make sure to turn those extra discretionary funds into progressive investments, to make your retirement richer – and possibly sooner.

Reid Abedeen is a partner at Safeguard Investment Advisory Group LLC.

China overtakes France in wine grapes

By Rudy Ruitenberg, BloombergBusiness

China now uses more land for growing grapes than France, the world’s largest wine exporter and home of the most expensive bottles from the Burgundy region.

Chinese vine planting increased by about 5 percent last year to an estimated 799,000 hectares (1.97 million acres), according to the International Organization of Vine and Wine, known by its French acronym OIV. France’s grape area slipped about 0.1 percent to 792,000 hectares.

China more than doubled its vineyard since 2000 as domestic wine consumption increased about 45 percent, with the Asian nation last year boasting close to 11 percent of the global grape area from 3.9 percent at the start of the last decade, according to the OIV. The numbers include table grapes as well as those for wine and raisins.

Read the whole story

ZCTC offering youth tennis instruction

Expect to see more kids running around the courts at Zephyr Cove Park this spring and summer. This is because the Zephyr Cove Tennis Club is launching an after school tennis program for students in grades 1-6 as well as a summer session.

The instruction is available to any student currently in first through sixth grade – no matter the school they attend. A tennis pro and volunteers will be leading youngsters through a variety of drills with the goal of getting them to be proficient enough to play on their own. For experienced players it will be about refining their strokes.
The first session is the weeks of May 11 and May 18 on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays from 3:20-4:45pm. Cost is $50 per player. The second session is the weeks of June 8, June 15 and June 22 on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays from noon-1:30pm. Cost is $100 per player.

Space is limited and online preregistration is required. For more information, contact Bob Beut at 530.314.3588.

Zephyr Cove Tennis Club is partnering with Douglas County Parks & Recreation Department to offer a free weekend of tennis for youngsters. The June 20-21 event is for ages 8 and older. It will be from 11am-12:30pm each day. Attend one or both days.

Space is limited and preregistration is required. To register or for information, call Kahle Community Center at 775.586.7271 or Douglas County Community Services at 775.782.9828.

No prior experience is necessary and all abilities are welcome for all of the events. There will be a limited number of rackets available to borrow. Players should be dressed in athletic wear so they can easily run around and tennis shoes that won’t leave black skid marks. Bring a water bottle, sunscreen and hat.

Meet outside the clubhouse (next to Zephyr Cove Library) 10 minutes prior to the start of each program.

Calif. tribal gaming market regains momentum

By Howard Stutz, Las Vegas Review Journal

Eight years ago, California’s Indian casino market was approaching $8 billion in annual gaming revenue. By comparison, Nevada casinos in 2007 brought in a single-year record $12.8 billion, of which $6.8 billion came from the Strip.

The recession knocked the California casino market down a few notches, as it did in Nevada.

But the Golden State’s tribal gaming industry is firing up again.

California’s 69 Indian casinos produced slightly less than $7 billion in gaming revenue in 2013 — $6.994 billion to be exact — according to the recently released Indian Gaming Industry Report for Casino City, authored by California economist Alan Meister.

The state’s casinos accounted for a fourth of the nation’s $28.3 billion in total Indian gaming revenue in 2013.

Read the whole story