

Novasel unable to participate in Meyers plan

El Dorado County Supervisor Sue Novasel, who as a candidate for office said she would be the voice for Meyers when it came to the area plan, has been silenced.



Sue Novasel

This is because she has a conflict of interest. Her 11.5 percent share of a parcel within the commercial core in Meyers is the stumbling block.

This means Novasel will have to recuse herself anytime the supervisors discuss the issue and she will not be able to vote on the plan. She can, however, still talk to residents and others about it.

Robyn Drivon, county counsel, also determined there is no conflict for Novasel to continue serving on the Tahoe Paradise Resort Improvement District board.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

Lack of snow forces Sierra to close

What may be a record year for lack of snowfall in the Lake Tahoe area has claimed another ski resort. Sierra-at-Tahoe will not open Monday.

“There is absolutely a chance of reopening. We are fully committed to resuming operations if we receive the adequate amount of snowfall,” Thea Hardy, resort spokeswoman, told *Lake Tahoe News*.

March 15 is not the earliest final day for Sierra. Hardy said in the 1970s there was an earlier date.

Sierra has received one-third of its normal snowfall this winter. The resort near Echo Summit receives on average more than 400 inches of snow each winter.

“After exhausting all possible tools – even with snowmaking at every opportunity and strategic movement of snow, Mother Nature came up short,” General Manager John Rice said in a statement. “This isn’t goodbye; it’s see you soon.”

Sierra’s Equinox Spring Festival that was to start March 21 is still a-go. The subsequent concerts are on standby. For more info, go online.

Other closed resorts in California include: Homewood Mountain Resort, Donner Ski Ranch, Badger Pass, Dodge Ridge, Mountain High, China Peak, Soda Springs, Mt. Baldy, Mount Shasta and Tahoe Donner.

Normal closing date is mid-April for most resorts.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

Special Olympian: No challenge she can't face

By Alyx Sacks, KRNV-TV

In a week, locals will be braving the cold and plunging into the freezing waters of Lake Tahoe all in support of Special Olympics.

Events like the Polar Plunge support athletes like 31-year-old Maria Delgado.

Delgado is focused on what she can and will do, never considering there could be something she can't do. That attitude is part of what makes her a Special Olympian.

"She didn't really have a good prognosis when she was born and they didn't think that she would be able to do half the things that she is doing now," her mom Carmen Delgado says.

Read the whole story

STHS grad stabbed to death in Sparks

By KOL0-TV

Police have released the name of a man stabbed to death Monday morning.

Police were called about 3am March 9 to Vista de Lago Drive in Sparks on a report of a medical problem. They found three people, one unresponsive after being stabbed in the chest. He was taken to Renown Regional Medical Center, where he died. He has been identified as Mark Allen Smith, a 1982 graduate of South Tahoe High School.

Read the whole story

Sierra, Northstar ski resorts may be sold

By David Sharp, AP

A real estate investment trust that's considering getting out of the snow business could sell more than a dozen ski resorts from Maine to California that are worth hundreds of millions of dollars.

CNL Lifestyle Properties owns 16 resorts including Northstar, Sierra-at-Tahoe, Sunday River and Sugarloaf in Maine, Bretton Woods, Loon Mountain and Mount Sunapee in New Hampshire, Okemo Mountain in Vermont, Crested Butte in Colorado, and Brighton in Utah.

If CNL sells them all to one buyer, industry officials say it would be the largest single ski resort transaction in the history of the sport – though skiers might not notice the sale at all.

“CNL Lifestyle Properties bought Sierra and Northstar a few years ago. Booth Creek Resort Properties manages the resort – the assets and special use permit are property of CNL. I work

for Booth Creek, we pay rent to CNL,” Sierra General Manager John Rice told *Lake Tahoe News*.

In October 2010, Vail Resorts acquired the stock of the companies that operate Northstar from Booth Creek and other sellers for \$63 million. Vail also runs Northstar Village, which is owned by CNL. No one from Northstar or Vail Resorts was available for comment.

Rice said change in ownership would have no affect on Sierra.

“Whoever owns the permit would still need a tenant. Sierra is the tenant. A new owner of the assets would be our new landlord, if you will,” Rice explained.

CNL will evaluate options for its remaining properties including ski resorts, theme parks and marinas “in the near future,” said Steve Rice, senior managing director of CNL Financial Group, and no relation to John Rice. Besides selling them, alternatives include a private buyout or listing on a publicly traded exchange.

“We’re taking a studied and careful approach,” Rice said.

REITs are an investment vehicle for a variety of properties including hotels, office buildings and malls, but they are new to the ski industry in the last 15 or so years.

There’s only one other REIT that’s a big player in the ski industry, Missouri-based EPR, said Michael Berry, president of the National Ski Areas Association.

CNL Lifestyle Properties was valued at as much as \$3 billion in 2012 with ownership of more than 100 water parks, ski resorts, marinas and senior housing developments before the value dropped in the aftermath of a real estate downturn. The REIT is nearing the end of its projected lifespan and anticipates having an “exit strategy” in place by Dec. 31.

In June, CNL agreed to sell 48 golf properties for \$320

million. In December, it announced an agreement to sell its senior housing for \$790 million.

Ideally, the remaining ski properties, theme parks and marinas would be sold, and the company enlisted Jefferies LLC, an investment bank, to evaluate options.

Any sale wouldn't have any significant impact on skiers because the resort operators' long-term leases will remain in place even if the properties change hands.

"At the end of the day, from a customer standpoint, it's not going to alter reality that much," Berry said.

Ski resorts, which are at the mercy of weather and the economy, can be good investments as long the owners have a long investment horizon, said Michael Krongel from Mirus Resort Capital in Burlington, Mass., who's been involved in buying, selling and developing ski resorts for 45 years. REITs like Florida-based CNL bring in revenue through rent paid by ski resort operators.

Lake Tahoe News contributed to this story.

How humble salt became king of ingredients

By Maria Fitzpatrick, Wall Street Journal

You could say it all started with a deconstructed lasagna. When a small, century-old, family-run saltworks in Maldon, England, got a call from El Bulli, they couldn't have imagined what would happen next. Wanted: one case of their finest crystals, in perfectly uniform but oversize pyramid shapes,

individually wrapped in cotton wool and dispatched in haste to Ferran Adrià—the finishing touch for his latest culinary creation.

It was the mid-1990s, and the revered Spanish chef's molecular gastronomy had yet to filter through to the masses; to anyone outside the business, treating salt crystals like precious jewels would have seemed like madness. Today? Not so much.

Thanks to the influence of tastemakers like Mr. Adrià, the humble substance has become a status ingredient not only in restaurants but in our own kitchens. We're taking everything with a pinch of the stuff, be it smoked and sultry, coarse and colorful, or delicately interlaced with celery, truffle, cumin or chili.

According to David Turner, global food and drink analyst at market-research firm Mintel, there's been a marked jump in premium salts coming to market worldwide – 22 percent more in 2014 compared with a year earlier.

Read the whole story

Snippets about Lake Tahoe



- Tahoe Regional Planning Agency is accepting nominations for its Best in the Basin awards through March 30. The program recognizes projects that demonstrate exceptional planning and design, and compatibility with the environment and TRPA guidelines. Forms are online.

- Here are the El Dorado-Tahoe and Sierra roadwork schedules

for the week from Caltrans.

- Lake of the Sky Outfitters (1023 Emerald Bay Road, South Lake Tahoe) is showing "Eiger Solo" the story of Eric Jones' 1981 solo attempt of the notorious north face of the Eiger on March 20 at 7pm. Admission is free. Limited seating. RSVP to 530.541.1027.
- Somebody purchased a winning Powerball ticket at the 7-Eleven on Pioneer Trail in South Lake Tahoe on March 11. The ticket has the five correct numbers, just not the Powerball number. The ticket is worth about \$700,000.
- KNPB is hosting a PBS KIDS Writers Contest workshop at the Discovery Museum in Reno on March 21 from 10-11am. The contest encourages children in grades K-3 to submit original pieces. For more info, go online.

Cost, confusion plague Nevada public records

By Ken Ritter, AP

Cost and confusion can be obstacles to obtaining public records in Nevada, where reporters are sometimes quoted high fees for research, redaction and copying.

Sure, the Silver State has open record and open meeting laws. But it might be unique in the U.S. for not defining what a public record actually is, officials said.

"There is no single definition that can be found within Nevada Revised Statutes," said Colby Williams, a Las Vegas attorney who has handled access-to-records cases for the Associated

Press, the *Las Vegas Review-Journal* and *National Review*.

State law section 239 lets agencies at all levels charge 50 cents per printed page for “extraordinary use of personnel or technological resources.” But Barry Smith, executive director of the Nevada Press Association, said he thinks some entities use the rule as a moneymaker – or a barrier.

“The trouble comes when some agencies see it as an opportunity to discourage people from obtaining public documents by jacking up fees as much as possible,” Smith said. “I hear from newspapers and reporters that they want to charge for redaction by an attorney at \$100 an hour. That can easily run into thousands of dollars.”

The Nevada System of Higher Education told the *Las Vegas Sun* that agency staff members spent 54 hours, at a cost of \$5,579, to compile 844 pages of documents sought for a story, said Ric Anderson, managing editor of the newspaper.

University administrators eventually agreed to limit the overall cost to 50 cents per page, or \$422. Anderson said the *Sun* arranged to have a reporter review the documents at the system office in Las Vegas to avoid the cost.

Clark County charged \$150 – tallying three hours of work at \$50 per hour – to produce 125 emails by seven Clark County commissioners after a reporter asked last May for communications relating to medical marijuana licensing, Anderson said.

“We believe documents should be readily obtainable and available at minimum cost,” Anderson said. “We understand there are instances where frivolous requests tie up peoples’ time. Our requests are reasonable. We’re working on behalf of the public.”

Sparks police charged AP in Reno \$67 for 1,300 pages of records relating to an October 2013 school shooting, or a

little less than 20 cents a page. Reno police charged \$50.95 for a compact disc with 1,168 pages of documents about a December 2013 shooting at Renown Regional Medical Center, just less than 23 cents per page.

Wes Henderson, executive director of the Nevada Association of Cities and Municipalities, denied that government officials try to gouge people who make freedom of information requests.

"The argument that the intent is to limit public access or to make money is a red herring," Henderson told a state Legislature panel taking up a bill to let public agencies begin charging 50 cents per page for electronic documents. The association supports the bill.

"Most requests for copies or records, people ask for it; they get it. No charge," Henderson said in an interview. "We want to be able to recoup some of the cost for the requests that take more time and effort."

The measure, Senate Bill 28, would let agencies collect an additional fee for a record requiring more than 30 minutes of staff time, or totaling more than 25 pages.

Henderson said the intent was to clarify confusion about the "extraordinary use" clause.

He acknowledged the proposal is unpopular with the media. He pointed to a *Las Vegas Review-Journal* editorial calling it the worst bill of the 2015 state Legislature.

Stanton Tang, news director at KOL0-TV, the ABC affiliate in Reno, said reporters and editors understand that it takes time for staff members to make physical printouts.

"But to drag-and-drop a file takes moments," Tang said. "What's the need for them to increase expenses for these files other than to discourage people from asking?"

Agencies that field open-record requests counter that turning

over email records is nothing like pulling a piece of paper from a file and making a copy.

Police employees have to review the entire record to remove birthdates, Social Security numbers and other personal identifiers, said Charlotte Bible, a Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department lawyer.

“We always have to be concerned that the records that are produced ... may be posted on the Internet,” Bible told the state Senate Committee on Government Affairs.

Smith said another impediment to openness and transparency is the lack of any entity with authority to enforce open-record laws.

“In Nevada, the only recourse we have when someone denies a record or tries to charge us is to go to court,” the press association chief said. “That, in itself, can be a barrier.”

But Williams said that once a civil complaint is filed, state judges and the Nevada Supreme Court usually order a record to be released.

“I’d give the courts an ‘A’ in the way they interpret the statute,” he said.

California fire fee lawsuit progressing

The Howard Jarvis Taxpayers Association’s is encouraging people to file protests regarding the fire fee in order to be part of the class-action lawsuit that is under way.

CalFire is in the process of sending bills to homeowners, including those in the Lake Valley Fire Protection District and other parts of the Lake Tahoe Basin.

The next hearing on the lawsuit is scheduled for June 12 at 11am in Sacramento Superior Court.

To file a protest, go online.

Girl Scout cookies not created equally

By Mike Pomranz, Food + Wine

Here's a dirty little secret the Girl Scouts don't want you to know: Not all Girl Scout cookies taste the same. And I'm not talking about how Samoas taste delicious, whereas Do-Si-Dos taste like someone rubbed your tongue with peanut butter sandpaper. I mean that the exact same cookie can look and taste differently in different parts of the country.

Those in the know have been aware all along that Girl Scout cookies are made by two different bakeries.

The Girls Scouts of America doesn't try to hide this fact too much: It's listed under each individual cookie on their website. But from there, the story blurs a bit.

In some places, they admit that "recipes and ingredients may differ slightly" between cookies made by the two licensed bakeries – which, for the record, are ABC Bakers (based in Richmond, Va.) and Little Brownie Bakers (located in

Louisville, Ky., and owned by parent company Kellogg's). However, some cookies have different names depending on where they're produced. For those varieties, the Girl Scouts say, regardless of the name, "it's still the delicious cookie you've grown to love."

Read the whole story