

Ambulance subsidy rankles SLT officials

By Kathryn Reed

South Lake Tahoe is tired of subsidizing ambulance service on the South Shore and is about to demand El Dorado County pay what it actually costs to run the program.

The bulk of the Feb. 3 City Council meeting centered on the 14-year-old Cal-Tahoe JPA which oversees the ambulance service that is provided by South Lake Tahoe and Lake Valley fire departments.

While the local agencies, with oversight by a board of directors, run the day-to-day operations, it is the responsibility of the county to provide residents with ambulance service. If the JPA were to disband, ambulance service would be solely the county's responsibility.

When the county went out for a bid in 2011 only the JPA made an offer. That contract expires in 2016, though the county has granted the JPA board's request to open the contract.



Ambulance service per law must be provided by El Dorado County. Photo/LTN

The fire departments operate three full-time and two reserve

ambulances. But the county is only paying for two vehicles.

The county has also drained the coffers by reimbursing the JPA for trips to other hospitals at a flat fee. Inter-facility transfers used to garner 93 percent of the cost for the JPA, plus mileage. At that time it was a big revenue stream.

Another financial obstacle is that when the benefit assessment district was formed the engineer's report left out condos and timeshares from having to pay the fee. Wording in the assessment says, "Each property shall be assessed in relation to the entire cost of the provided service." That isn't happening and the JPA board wants all parcels to pay their share.

The county also is not reimbursing the city for what it actually costs to run the dispatch center.

Fire Chief Jeff Meston told the council the JPA has been subsidizing the ambulance service for 13 years for a total of \$13 million. Of that amount, \$8.58 million came from the city's pocketbook and nearly \$4.5 million from Lake Valley.

The council agreed to meet with Supervisor Sue Novasel, who represents Tahoe on the Board of Supervisors, to request an item be put on the supervisors' agenda regarding equitable compensation for the ambulance JPA. The vote was 4-0, with Councilwoman JoAnn Conner abstaining. She is on the JPA board and believes the council is usurping her authority.

Her council colleagues said as group they are a stronger voice than the JPA board, but are not trying to step on the JPA board's toes.

The JPA board is made up of two council members and two Lake Valley Fire board members.

Part of the problem in getting the county be fair is that the JPA board for years was totally dysfunctional. Ever since

North Tahoe Fire Protection District left the JPA in 2006, many votes have been 2-2, so progress was stalled. Slowly they have begun to play nice.

But still, South Tahoe wants a fifth board member, but Lake Valley says no. There has been talk of officials from Barton Health or CalStar being a fifth member or even increasing the board to seven to possibly function better.

It wasn't until Meston came on board that the true operating costs and subsidies made by the city and Lake Valley have come to light.

Lake Valley Fire Chief Gareth Harris was in the room for the entire discussion, but never left his seat in the front row.

Opinion: Don't let your voice be bypassed

To the community,

Written public comment on the draft EIR and the seven proposed alternatives will be accepted until the close of business on Feb. 17. The public should be aware that the current heavy traffic volume which travels east to west through the commercial core of Tahoe City is outside the scope of the proposed project.

With concerns on the already struggling economy in Tahoe City and the potentially significant scenic impacts on recreation user views as noted in the draft EIR, some community members are concerned that the proposed Highway 89-Fanny Bridge Community Revitalization Project is unjustified. Articles

published to date which only show a picture of the existing Fanny Bridge may have misled your understanding and need for the proposed project. If alternatives 1-3 are selected, the west entrance to Tahoe City could see the first elevated roundabout and bridge structure in the Tahoe basin. Alternatives 1-3 will require the existing roadway near the Caltrans yard to be elevated nearly 10 feet to allow the proposed roundabout and multi-lane bridge over the Truckee River to be raised over the existing bike trail. The tops of the PVC poles in the photo, below, are approximately at the elevation of the new road surface and bottom of the proposed multi-lane bridge.



The Caltrans Bridge Inspection Report dated June 9, 2014, notes that the girders and columns on Fanny Bridge are structurally sound. The bridge improvement cost is noted at \$400,000. Caltrans has confirmed that once the minor maintenance work is completed the “structurally deficient” rating on Fanny Bridge will be removed. All of the proposed alternatives except for the “no build” alternative include reconstruction or replacement of Fanny Bridge.

With a projected income loss of 60 percent for businesses within the bypass area, the draft Economic Analysis states, “That because these businesses are established and are popular regional attractions, they are not likely to receive negative impacts from a decline in roadway traffic volumes”.

While two emergency exits are desired in emergency egress

situations from the West Shore, the highway section along the West Shore will remain a two-lane highway from the proposed roundabout south of Bank of the West under all Alternatives for 25 miles to the South Shore. Additional roundabouts proposed under Alternatives 1-3 will require increased law enforcement for traffic control during emergency egress. CalFire has indicated that each alternative would either increase or maintain existing emergency response times, and means of egress, in the event of a fire or other natural disaster.

Information from Caltrans and the North American Highway Standards indicate that additional development of roadways discourages the use of alternative methods of transportation; thus leading to encouraged use of personnel vehicles and increased traffic.

The Bureau of Reclamation is willing to work with the project design team on lane alignments on Fanny Bridge to not impact structures in the area by cantilevering off the existing bridge deck.

Since the 2002 Project Study Report, which is one of the base studies for the proposed project, the traffic has decreased from a 10-year period, peak-monthly daily volume growth rate of 2.5 percent annually to a slight increase of 0.1 percent at six study intersections between 2009-10 and 2013. The current information published by the Tahoe Transportation District indicates that, "It should be noted that some or all concepts developed may not improve levels of service to levels normally considered acceptable to one or more of the agencies' criteria."

With a 2010 report attributing the loss of lake clarity to increased fine sediment run-off with the transportation system as a primary source, the TRPA established an urban boundary to cap the roadway capacity of the basin and reduce the reliance on the private automobile. Members of the community and

environmental agencies are awaiting the vote by the TRPA board on the proposed alternative selected.

Members of the community and environmental agencies are encouraging the TRPA to support their responsibility to protect the scenic resources, minimize greenhouse gases by discouraging use of the personal automobile, minimizing the amount of paved surfaces and associated road sand to improve lake clarity.

The public is invited to a forum scheduled for 6pm Feb. 11 at Dockside 700 in Tahoe City to review the proposed alternatives and provide your comments to the proposed draft EIR.

The Tahoe Transportation District and TRPA board of directors will be voting on the proposed project. Of the approximately 26 voting members, only two members live between Tahoe Vista and Tahoe City. Your voice as a member of our local community is imperative to represent a project that meets the needs of our community.

Comments on the proposed draft and proposed alternatives may be sent to bjudge@trpa.org by Feb. 17.

Jim Sajdak, Tahoe City

U.S. women in top 15 at Beaver Creek

By USSA

BEAVER CREEK – The 2015 FIS Alpine World Ski Championships began Feb. 3 with the women's super G in Beaver Creek. In front of her hometown fans, Lindsey Vonn (Vail) skied her way

to a podium spot, taking the bronze medal. All four American starters finished in the top 15.

The morning's forecast of windy conditions and snow flurries proved to be correct. The women's super G was slated to begin at 11am at the usual super G start on Beaver Creek's famed Birds of Prey course, but due to the weather, officials delayed the start time and moved the start gate down to the reserve start, making the course shorter than normal.

Once things got under way, the windy conditions proved to be challenging for the international field of 46 racers. Julia Mancuso (Squaw Valley) was the first U.S. racer to drop into the course, starting 11th. Mancuso skied aggressively, per usual, but made a few mistakes that kept her from a medaling.

"The super G was a lot of fun," said Mancuso. "I definitely had some mistakes on my run. It wasn't a perfect run, but it was a top-10 run."

Stacey Cook (Mammoth Mountain), who won Monday's downhill training run, skied soon after Mancuso, and also had a challenging run.

"Super G has been a tough event for me this year. I haven't yet found my groove," said Cook. "I'm happy with some of the turns that I made. Obviously, only medals count, but there were definitely some positives for me to take out of today."

Wearing bib 18, Vonn dropped in to the cheers of her hometown fans. She was a bit stiff and hesitant on the top turns, which was reflected in her first split's time – nearly half a second out of the lead.

However, as Vonn skied down the course she started to make up time towards the third split, creeping milliseconds under the leader's pace. As she crossed the finish line, Vonn had a tenth of a second lead. She held first place for a short time as Slovenia's Tina Maze immediately followed Vonn and quickly

usurped Vonn by 0.12.

"I thought I skied really well. I'm happy with the way I skied and with the result. I just wish that the weather was a little bit better," said Vonn. "I definitely had a pretty strong headwind right out of the starting gate and for the first couple of gates. I fought my way down. On the bottom part where there wasn't any wind, I was pretty fast."

In the end, Austria's Anna Fenninger skied the fastest time of the day. Always a viable contender in super G, Fenninger skied a nearly flawless race down the shortened Raptor course. "Anna [Fenninger] skied very well and I'm very proud to be on the podium with those two," said Vonn.

Free radon kits available to Nevadans

Winter is a peak time for radon accumulation in the home. Radon is a colorless, odorless, radioactive gas that comes from the ground into a home.

University of Nevada Cooperative Extension is offering free, easy-to-use kits to test homes and offices for radon.

Nevadans may get free kits through February.

The Environmental Protection Agency estimates 21,000 Americans die each year from radon-caused lung cancer, killing more people than secondhand smoke, drunken driving, falls in the home, drowning or house fires. Radon-caused lung cancer is preventable. A simple three-day test can determine if a house

has a radon problem.

In Nevada, one in four homes tested found radon concentrations at or above the EPA action level, according to officials.

For more information, call 888.723.6610.

2 El Dorado County residents headed for prison

Two Meeks Bay residents are about to spend several years in prison on burglary and other charges.

After more than three days of deliberations following a three-week trial in Placerville, an El Dorado County Superior Court jury on Jan. 29 found Craig Ivan Adams, 34, guilty of 17 felony charges, including nine counts of burglary, four counts of a felon in possession of firearms, and grand theft of a firearms.

Katy Manoff, 30, earlier had pleaded guilty to similar charges. El Dorado County Superior Court Judge Suzanne Kingsbury sentenced her to 22 years and four months in state prison.

Between June and November 2010 the two went on a drug-induced crime spree between South Lake Tahoe and Cameron Park, according to court records.

The El Dorado County District Attorney's Office in a press release said, "The defendants would knock on the front door of a residence and if the homeowner answered the door the

defendants would ask for a fictitious name and when told the person didn't live there, they would leave. However, if no one answered the door the defendants would gain entry through an unlocked door or force entry. The defendants would then utilize a pillowcase from the home and burglarize the residence."

Adams is scheduled to be sentenced Feb. 27.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

Obama's budget good for Calif. parks, wildlife areas

By Michael Doyle, McClatchy Washington Bureau

California would get its share, and then some, from the Obama administration's \$4 trillion budget proposal delivered Monday to a skeptical, Republican-controlled Congress.

There's money for restoring the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta, which is likely to survive congressional winnowing. Proposed upgrades at places including Yosemite National Park probably will find Capitol Hill favor, as well, along with funding for Central Valley flood control and dam improvements.

The budget, for instance, would offer \$3.5 million to complete the Army Corps of Engineers' design and engineering studies for protecting the Sacramento area's Natomas Basin. It would provide tens of millions of dollars to upgrade Folsom Dam northeast of Sacramento and improve the safety of the earthen Isabella Dam in eastern Kern County. These projects enjoy bipartisan support.

But the president's budget includes more fanciful proposals, including some familiar spending cuts and fee increases that invariably fail. A renewed proposal to eliminate the State Criminal Alien Assistance Program, for instance, would cut federal reimbursements for prisons and jails that incarcerate undocumented immigrants.

Read the whole story

Knorr's tenure as EDC's top official continues

Pamela Knorr has job security at least for one year.

The El Dorado County Board of Supervisors today unanimously appointed her chief administrative officer for the next year.



Pam Knorr

This is a job she has had since November when then-CAO Terri Daly abruptly left after having lost the confidence of three supervisors. (The two supervisors who liked Daly – Norma Santiago and Ron Briggs – have since been termed out and replaced.)

Knorr was hired by Daly to be in charge of the Human Resources Department, a position she still has and that the board has no

problem with. No background check had ever been done on Knorr. She and Daly are friends.

In closed session Feb. 3 the board agreed to spend a year looking for a permanent CAO. Normally, these types of hires take much less time.

Knorr has served in various positions in Amador, Napa, Placer, Alpine and El Dorado counties. Before coming to El Dorado County she was CAO in Alpine County for five years. An employee from Alpine County has since filed a lawsuit against her.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

Opinion: Use common sense to not be a victim

By Brian Uhler

All too often, we hear from people who have been victimized by some sort of scam. Before the Internet existed these “confidence scams” were frequently perpetuated through direct contact and bolstered by a victim who is too trusting. With the Internet and other technology, criminals have shifted their efforts so as to accomplish their rip-off over long distances and without direct contact.

Unfortunately, local law enforcement has limited capacity to track and ultimately prosecute such crimes. Foremost, the volume of these crimes is overwhelming, but from a practical standpoint it makes little sense to spend hundreds of

investigative hours, costing thousands of taxpayer dollars for a crime involving small losses.

Our best offense against this type of crime is through education and prevention.



Brian Uhler

Here are a few simple techniques to safeguard you from becoming a victim:

- Live with a healthy level of skepticism. If someone tells you they've inherited millions of dollars and they need to post surety cash to recover the money, it's a lie. Have you ever heard of a "real" situation like this? The old adage, "if it sounds too good to be true, it probably is" can help.
- Email with a real looking logo or from a company with whom you do business is not always legitimate. That email from PayPal, as an example, asking you to click a link (then asking you to verify security information) is probably from someone trying to steal your online identity. In response, consider signing-on to your PayPal account and checking for legitimate messages.
- Phone calls from unknown people should be treated like a stranger on the street. Suppose someone walked up to you and told you they were from your bank, used your name, and asked you to verify a personal identifying number (PIN) or credit card security code. You'd never give your sensitive information in these circumstances. Change this to a phone call with other "confidence

building” questions in between and a confused victim will often give-up the PIN (or other data) – even when feeling uncomfortable inside. Legitimate businesses would never put you in this position. In this situation, you can say, “I’m busy right now, I’ll call the bank in a couple minutes.” Use the number you know, not the one provided by the caller.

Here’s a recent scam in South Lake Tahoe that more than one person fell for:

Caller: Hi, I’m Robert, I’m calling from the _____ Court (fill in the blank). With whom am I speaking? (This caller uses good English.)

Victim: (Hearing “court” and with anxiety building, the caller answers) I’m Pat Smith.

Caller: I show an outstanding parking ticket and we’re about to issue a warrant for your arrest. I want to give you a chance to clear this up without the need for your arrest

Victim: Where was the ticket issued?

Caller: I’m sorry, I don’t have those details, but if you take care of this now, it will cost you \$75, if your arrested this will cost you \$275.

Victim: (Fearing arrest) OK, what do I need to do?

Caller: I need you to get a green dot card at a local convenience store (caller continues to make arrangements to retrieve the prepaid card, which is as good as cash).

Another variation also recently used by crooks is to claim they are from the IRS. In these cases, tension causes victims to acquiesce, believing they are “getting off easy.” Please be alert and avoid becoming a victim.

Brian Uhler is South Lake Tahoe's chief of police.

LTWC looking for wildlife volunteers

Registration for the 2015 Lake Tahoe Wildlife Care Training Seminar is open.

The seminar is intended for those interested in working as a wildlife care volunteer with LTWC, caring for injured and orphaned birds and animals.

The seminar will take place May 16-17. The seminar is \$75 for the first family member and \$55 for each additional family member.

Seats are limited, and the seminar is expected to sell out.

For more info or to register, go online.

Late interception deflates sportsbooks' profits

By David Purdum, ESPN

Nevada sportsbooks won \$3.2 million off \$115.9 million wagered on the Super Bowl, according to numbers released by Nevada Gaming Control on Monday. But it could have been so much more.

The New England Patriots winning in a higher-scoring game than expected was the worst-case scenario for the majority of sportsbooks, and they still posted a profit for the 24th time in the last 26 Super Bowls. The point spread closed at pick 'em at most books with the over/under total 47.5.

The Patriots defeated the Seattle Seahawks 28-24 Sunday, with Malcolm Butler's last-minute interception on the goal line sealing New England's victory and taking a giant chunk out of the books' profits.

Read the whole story