

As debt mounts, Caesars in talks with lenders

By Kimberly Pierceall, AP

Caesars Entertainment said Friday it is prepared to start formal discussions with some of its bank lenders as it works to reduce its debt and stave off what some see as near certain bankruptcy.

In a filing to the Securities and Exchange Commission, the casino company announced that it has reached out to some of its creditors – namely bank lenders – to find ways to ease pressure on its \$24.2 billion debt.

Caesars is the parent company of Harrah's Lake Tahoe and Harveys in Stateline.

That came a day after the company promised its creditors who are first in line a claim on cash held by its debt-strapped subsidiary Caesars Entertainment Operating Co. in case it defaulted. It's been in formal talks with that group of creditors, too, for about a month.

In recent years the company has spun off multiple divisions in an attempt to shape up its finances, including Caesars Entertainment Resort Properties and Caesars Growth Properties, dividing its casinos, properties and businesses among the subsidiaries. The operating company has the largest debt load.

Earlier this year, the company sold the Claridge hotel tower of its Bally's Atlantic City property and sold the Atlantic City Country Club to a private buyer. It also closed the Harrah's Tunica casino in Mississippi in June and shut down the Showboat Atlantic City casino in September.

For financial analysts watching the debt-heavy operations

division that includes Caesars Palace on the Las Vegas Strip, the company's trademarks and two of its remaining Atlantic City properties as well as other regional casinos, it's not a matter of if but when the casino company will file for bankruptcy.

Caesars spokesman Gary Thompson said he couldn't comment, citing the company's SEC-mandated quiet period before its third quarter financial results are released Nov. 10. But CEO Gary Loveman has told the *Las Vegas Review Journal* before that the company has no plans for bankruptcy.

Analysts said Caesars' actions could be an attempt to reorganize its financials outside of a federal courtroom or, if that doesn't work, get priority creditors on its side before it inevitably files for bankruptcy.

Alex Bumazhny, a financial analyst with Fitch Ratings, said it's going to be difficult for the company to reorganize its finances out of court or arrange a pre-packaged bankruptcy wrapped in a bow that it can take to a judge.

The tricky part, Bumazhny said, is the creditors who are second-in-line.

He said the company owes more than the company is worth to those who are first-in-line to be paid back. That leaves little for those second in line.

Those in the latter position have declared Caesars already in default of its agreements. The company dismissed the contentions in recent securities filings.

"It's just hard to see everybody agreeing to a deal without a pretty long bankruptcy proceeding," Bumazhny said.

Chris Snow with CreditSights pointed to \$230 million in interest owed to some of the second-in-line holders of debt in December. He said if Caesars doesn't want to pay up, it likely

behooves the company to get the priority creditors on its side now rather than later while it still has attractive cash on hand.

Both analysts said it would be difficult to handicap when the company might file bankruptcy, but Bumazhny said it could be within the year. Snow said it could be imminent or into the middle of next year after the company passes the threshold of time for some transactions that the court would otherwise be able to look back on during its bankruptcy consideration.

The company has 52 casinos in the United States and abroad with most bearing the Caesars, Harrah's and Horseshoe brand. About 68,000 people worked for the company at the end of 2013.

Spooky stories to be told at ZC library

Tilly the Witch (aka Carol Nageotte) will be telling spooky stories at the Douglas County Public Library in Zephyr Cove on Oct. 29 at 6pm.

Dress in a Halloween costume for this special storytime. Children will receive a Halloween treat to take home. Children ages 4 and up will listen to Halloween stories from the library's collection including a flashlight story. Tilly the Witch will end the program with her favorite poem, "Spider on the Floor."

The Douglas County Public Library is located at 233 Warrior Way.

For more info, call 775.588.6411.

Warren Miller movie coming to S. Shore

“No Turning Back”, the latest ski and snowboard film from Warren Miller Entertainment, is coming to Harrah’s Lake Tahoe on Nov. 7-8.

The film crew goes from powder in Niseko, Japan, to the top of Greece’s Mount Olympus, to new corners of the French Alps, mom and pop hills in Montana to ride and the fjords of Norway.

See Ingrid Backstrom and Jess McMillan push women’s big mountain skiing to the edge of Alaska’s Chugach; watch Ted Ligety and the U.S. Ski Team tame the Birds Of Prey World Cup course in Beaver Creek, and witness JT Holmes and Ueli Kestenholz tackle extreme lines off the Swiss Alps.

Show time is 7pm. The \$16 tickets are available online, Sports LTD in South Lake Tahoe and at the South Shore Room box office.

Then and now: Remodel creates a retro look



Shakey's Pizza used to be where Tep's is in South Lake. Photo/Provided

Some of the businesses housed in this long-standing structure have included Shakey's Pizza Parlor (pictured circa 1980), Bijou Furniture Outlet, a black and white shop for casino apparel, the state Department of Employment, Lou Pierini's Gold & Pawn, and others.



This South Tahoe building was remolded about 10 years ago. Photo/Bill Kingman

The building now houses Tep's Villa Roma (and weddings) plus Pierini's continuing business.

Aside from the facelift and remodeling of about 10 years ago, gone are the overhead poles and wires. This provides an improved street view.

At far left in these photos, the Shell service station has

converted into Ski Run Liquors.

– *Bill Kingman*

Tahoe's colors unfold on West Shore paddle



There is no question why people call Lake Tahoe blue.
Photos/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

HOMWOOD – Judging by the water's colors it could have been the Caribbean. Based on the number of boats it was clearly post-Labor Day. A headwind in both directions – it must be Lake Tahoe.

We opt to head south from the West Shore Café in Homewood to tackle a section of the lake we have not paddled before. Normally this is a pretty narrow section of rocky beach on the West Shore. The drought has even more land exposed.

From the get-go things are different than other mooring areas at Tahoe. The abundance of sailboats is noticeable. Too bad their owners are nowhere to be found because on this particular Monday in mid-September the wind is more suitable for their craft than our canoe.



Expansive view of Tahoe from the pier at Sugar Pine Point State Park

But we don't let that bother us.

We have all day to churn away at what is mostly a rough lake. We had thought we might take a break at Chamber's Landing on the way back, but it's already closed for the season.

It's not until one is on the water that the actual contours of the shoreline are revealed. Driving this section of Highway 89, while scenic, doesn't do justice to the twists and turns that can be encountered while on the water.

It made for some nice reprieves from the wind as we paddled into little inlets.



Chamber's Landing with the

runs of Homewood to the right.

But rounding a rocky bend the wind was like an assault on our muscles as we had to dig in hard to make forward progress, all the while keeping an eye on the waves hitting the canoe at odd angles.

An expansive stretch of sand unfolded in front of us. We knew we had met our destination – Sugar Pine Point State Park.

Via car this is about three miles from the café.

We pull the canoe on shore and then walk to the pier. Several people are milling about the grounds near the Ehrman mansion.

The water here is an emerald reminiscent of the tropics. The temperature, though, is the opposite.

We didn't want to linger too long because the wind was not dying down. We strategize on how best to navigate around the rocks, contend with waves that could tip us and a swirling wind. We make it around the bend into calmer water. But that tailwind we were counting on as we headed back had shifted to be a headwind – again.



Rough water makes for a bit of a challenging paddle

Still, going back we had Homewood Mountain Resort ahead and to our left. Those runs look like they are about to drop into the lake – similar to what it's like when schussing down them.

We had thought about stopping at Obexer's for lunch, but we were so tired we were afraid if we stopped, we might leave the canoe there. It was going to be easier to walk down there for a sandwich and bring it back to eat in our room at the West Shore Inn.

By this time looking at the lake seemed so much more appealing than being on it. A headwind in both directions can have that affect on a paddler.



West Shore Cafe and Inn

Getting there:

From South Lake Tahoe, go north on Highway 89. West Shore Café is on the right across from Homewood Mountain Resort. There is plenty of parking now because the café is closed until Nov. 24.

Opinion: Calif. water bond is

good for Tahoe

By Julie Regan

As we count down the days until the Nov. 4 election, we are in full information overload. Mailboxes are exploding with proposition mailers. Measures seem to run from A to Z. It would be easy to say forget about it all. And that would be a big mistake. Here's why.

Despite this being a non-presidential election cycle, there are some important initiatives on the ballot for Californians. And making your voice heard at the local and state levels is possible by casting your vote.



Julie Regan

Proposition 1, referred to as the California Water Bond, may seem of remote interest to us in Tahoe who are removed from the north versus south state water wars. But the bond is actually important to the Lake Tahoe Basin. The proposition includes grant funding for environmental restoration projects and direct funding for the California Tahoe Conservancy.

The subject of water is notoriously controversial in the American West. Mark Twain has scads of quotes about it including this one: "High and fine literature is wine, and mine is only water; but everybody likes water."

We like it so much in fact that we are running out of it. State water supplies are in dire straits and Lake Tahoe just

dipped below its natural rim. If the drought continues, Tahoe's winter economy will be severely harmed and our shores will be threatened by new and existing invasive species. Add to these factors a changing climate and we could have the perfect storm for water quality and water quantity.

If passed by voters, Proposition 1 would authorize \$7.5 billion in general obligation bonds for state water infrastructure and watershed restoration projects. While we won't see a new line item on our property or income taxes for Proposition 1, the bonds would become part of California's overall debt obligation. The bond is designed to invest heavily in the aging water infrastructure of the state and protect its many watersheds. A significant portion of the bond, \$1.5 billion, is designated for protecting rivers, lakes, coastal waters, and watersheds.

Lake Tahoe could see the return of funding which has run out for environmental projects in the Lake Tahoe environmental improvement program (EIP) if Proposition 1 passes. The Tahoe Regional Planning Agency leads the EIP in partnership with nearly 50 different implementing agencies including the Tahoe Conservancy and other California state agencies. The EIP, in combination with sound land use policies and other factors, has driven one of most significant improvements in the Tahoe environment in decades – the stabilization of lake clarity and an end of the precipitous decline that plagued us for decades. California water bond funds are essential to continue the state's commitment to protecting Lake Tahoe and to continuing this progress.

Overall, the passage of the California Water Bond would mean additional dollars for investment in many environmental restoration projects for the Lake Tahoe Region which also drives infrastructure, construction, and other jobs in our local economy.

With the future of funding for environmental restoration and

EIP projects uncertain, the California Water Bond would provide a secure funding source. Money received through this bond could also be used to leverage funding from other sources, including federal, and private.

As a local homeowner, I feel the pain of taxes and consider every new measure and proposition carefully. Please do the same. And please think of the future. Warren Buffet said it best: "Someone's sitting in the shade today because someone planted a tree a long time ago."

Julie Regan is the chief of external affairs at the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency and works with the states of California and Nevada, along with the federal government, in her role in government relations.

Eldorado National Forest to begin pile burns

The U.S. Forest Service will begin its fall prescribed burn program in the Eldorado National Forest next week with 250 acres of the Iron Trap Understory Burn project located along the eastern end of the Mormon Emigrant Trail.

At 6,800 to 7,600 feet the weather and forest conditions on the Iron Trap project is significantly cooler and moister than the lower elevations of the forest where the King Fire burned.

Prescribed fires and pile burning are intended to reduce the amount of vegetation, such as needles, small plants, brush, and small trees, which can carry fire from the forest floor into the canopy.

For additional information, call Nickie Washington at 530.621.5237 or email at nickielwashington@fs.fed.us.

Opinion: Crowd gets credit for soccer win

To the community,

After a mistake late in the second half by our goalkeeper, the LTCC men's soccer team found themselves down 2-0 with 6:46 seconds left to go in the game. Coyote players lay on the pitch with their hands over their faces in shock that we had let in a second goal, and defeat seemed imminent.

And then something happened.

The crowd started cheering.



Lake Tahoe Community College's men's soccer team feeling dejected on Oct. 17.
Photos/Provided

I thought to myself on the sidelines, "Wow, that's a nice gesture since their team is being beat 2-0." Everyone on the

bench and on the field thought the game was most likely over.

And then the crowd go even louder. Coyote howls were echoing throughout the field. I couldn't believe it – most American sports fans would have started to trickle away, sensing defeat. And yet no one in that crowd moved to leave. Instead, they stood and cheered even louder!

Writing this brings back all the emotion I felt – to think that our fans would stick it out and stay there on the field with the sun setting and the wind blowing, and yet they were there, still cheering on their Coyotes.

And a funny thing happened. The guys started to believe. They started to believe that they were still in the game. I spoke to many of them afterward, who said the turning point in those last few minutes was the crowd.

We scored a goal to make it 2-1.

And then we scored again in the last few minutes to tie the game 2-2. It felt like a victory.



It's a celebration – with the crowd getting much of the credit.

I have never experienced such a comeback in all my coaching career.

Thank you fans and to LTCC for being there and sticking it out with us. It was an incredible experience.

My quote of the week: While there is still breath in our lungs and blood in our veins, if there is still time on the clock ... we believe. We believe we can do the impossible. We believe in a miracle. And we believe that our fans are the greatest in all of college soccer!

With Friday's tie, the LTCC Coyote men's team is now No. 1 in the Golden Valley Conference. Playoffs, here we come!

Benjamin "Coach" Wade

Zombies to take over DC library

The Douglas County Public Library Teen Advisory Board is putting on "Zombie Cannibal Asylum," a teen mystery play, on Oct. 24 from 5-7pm at the Minden library.

Investigate a murder witnessed by a room full of insane zombies. The staff of the zombie facility will be charged with solving the crime. Everyone attending will take part in the play and a costume contest.

This free program includes a zombie themed dinner.

Sign up by Oct. 22 – 775.782.9841.

Nev. takes steps to be prepared for Ebola

By Steve Morre, Las Vegas Review-Journal

An advisory task force to oversee Nevada's preparations for Ebola is being organized to ensure plans are in place to contain the deadly virus in the event of an exposure in the state, Nevada Chief Medical Officer Tracey Green said Friday.

An Ebola tool kit is available online with information about what steps need to be taken to reduce the risk of infection for emergency medical responders, health care workers and the public.

Gov. Brian Sandoval has called for health care experts and public health officials to enhance communication, training and responsiveness on the Ebola situation, and to provide regular updates to his office. Green, Nevada epidemiologist Ihsan Azzam and others in the state's Public Health Preparedness and Emergency Management Services agency have followed directives and alerts from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Read the whole story