

Dispute could keep Park City lifts idle

By Jack Healy, New York Times

PARK CITY — Can a ski town survive if the ski lifts stop running?

The question is gripping this mountain town where celebrities gather each winter for the Sundance Film Festival and summer days glide by as placidly as kayakers on the nearby reservoir. Beneath the calm veneer, a ski resort's eviction battle over land, leases and millions of dollars has erupted into a full-on civic crisis.

Businesses and town leaders worry that the festering dispute could, in the worst case, end up shuttering one of Utah's most popular ski resorts for this winter, crippling a tourist economy that needs the chair lifts to run. Instead, those lifts could be uprooted from the mountains.

"Park City prides itself on its comity," said Myles Rademan, a longtime resident and former town official who carried the Olympic torch when the Winter Games were held in Utah in 2002. "We worked hard to build our reputation as a place that gets along. This is all kind of a shock to our system."

The dispute centers on the Park City Mountain Resort, a popular ski mountain in the heart of town whose lifts practically whisk visitors from Main Street to the slopes. It provides more than 1,200 jobs, draws thousands of skiers and tourists, and is an anchor of Park City's postcard-perfect downtown.

For years, the resort had a lease that would make even a rent-controlled tenant in Manhattan jealous. While the proprietors owned the parking lots and much of the land at the base of the

mountain, they leased the actual ski slopes, paying \$155,000 a year for 2,800 acres of prime downhill terrain. It was an almost unimaginable bargain in a town where an unfinished house lot is on the market for \$1.9 million.

But in 2011, the Powdr Corporation, which runs Park City Mountain, made what the *Salt Lake Tribune* called “one of the most monumental blunders in Utah business history”: It failed to renew the lease on time.

Read the whole story

Soroptimists provide backpacks for students

Every year, members of the Soroptimist International of Tahoe Sierra launch a “Backpack Attack” to ensure students in grades K-12 who need them have a new backpack.

Members of the club donate items to fill the backpacks, including: pencils, paper, notebooks, binders, rulers, erasers, pens, and more.

This year, through a generous donation of 50 Backpacks from JANSPORT, the club was able to provide Live Violence Free with the supply-filled backpacks for the youth being served by that agency serve.

Snippets about Lake Tahoe



- There will be a workshop for landscape irrigation managers on Sept. 5 from 8am-noon at Truckee Donner Public Utility District. Cost is \$20. Register online.
 - The State Water Board has created this video showing ways to save water.
 - Homewood Fine Arts and Crafts Festival is Aug. 22-24 from 10am-5pm at Homewood Mountain Resort.
 - Registration is open for the Heavenly Ski and Snowboard Foundation's competitive and development ski and snowboard programs. For more info, go online.
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Stargazing event at Spooner Lake

Professional stargazer and astronomy instructor Gigi Giles will lead a laser-guided tour of the stars on Aug. 29 at Spooner Lake State Park.

Giles will have high-powered telescopes and astronomical binoculars to look through.

The free event is from 8:30-10pm.

Park in the upper lot. Spooner park is located off Highway 28 near Highway 50.

Dogs are not welcome. Wear comfortable shoes, warm clothes and bring a flashlight.

For more info, call 775.831.0494, ext. 224.

Brown blasts CalPERS for allowing enhanced pay

By Jon Ortiz, Sacramento Bee

A divided CalPERS board on Tuesday approved a regulation that will allow nearly 100 different types of supplemental pay to count toward pension calculations for state and local government employees.

The 7-5 vote drew a swift rebuke from Gov. Jerry Brown, who signed pension overhaul legislation in 2012 that, in part, attempted to crack down on pension spiking. Specifically, Brown objected to CalPERS' allowing pension calculations to include "temporary upgrade pay" for workers who briefly fill a higher-paying position to count toward retirement.

"... CalPERS got it wrong," Brown said in a statement released shortly after the board's action. "This vote undermines the pension reforms enacted just two years ago. I've asked my staff to determine what actions can be taken to protect the integrity of the Public Employees' Pension Reform Act."

That law required pension calculations based on "the normal monthly rate of pay or base pay" of employees who become retirement system members on Jan. 1, 2013 and later. It also disallowed "ad hoc" payments included in retirement benefit calculations, a key provision intended to thwart pension spiking.

Read the whole story

SNC hosting book in common author

Writers in the Woods brings acclaimed authors, poets and screenwriters to Incline Village's four-year, private university for readings and workshops throughout the academic year. The college also annually adopts a book for its Common Read, which is read, discussed and interpreted throughout the curriculum. This year's book is "Being Flynn" by Nick Flynn.

Flynn will speak on the campus at 7pm Sept. 5 in the Tahoe Center for Environmental Sciences building, Room 139. He will put on a workshop Sept. 6 from 9am-noon. Info about the workshop is online.

Flynn has published three memoirs, but is best known for his first memoir, "Another Bullshit Night in Suck City," about reuniting at a homeless shelter with his estranged father, a narcissistic alcoholic. Both are struggling writers: the elder Flynn homeless and intensely dramatic, the younger Flynn employed at the shelter, yet battling his past. This book, now repackaged as "Being Flynn," was made into a movie of the same name in 2012, starring Robert DeNiro as Flynn's father, Paul Dano as Flynn and Julianne Moore, as his suicidal mother.

Other SNC literary events include:

Sept. 19 – Literary Lollapalooza

A gathering of writers, editors, publishers, book vendors and more to celebrate literature in the Tahoe region.

Oct. 17-18 – Terry Allen

Terry Allen, who has received both a Guggenheim Fellowship and a National Endowment of the Arts award, is a musician, visual

artist, sculptor, painter and writer, blending the forms into museum/theater artworks that reference his Texas roots.

Nov. 7-8 – Kevin Fedarko

Kevin Fedarko's work has appeared in Esquire, National Geographic Adventure and has been anthologized in The Best American Travel Writing of 2004 and 2006. His latest work, "Emerald Mile," won the National Outdoor Book Award.

March 6-7 – Mark Maynard

Mark Maynard is the author of "Grind," a collection of short stories set in Reno. His short fiction has been widely published, and he is the fiction editor of the literary journal, "The Meadow."

April 10-11 – Gailmarie Pahmeier and David Lee

Poet Gailmarie Pahmeier has published the poetry collection, "The Rural Lives of Nice Girls," as well as several other books. She teaches at the University of Nevada, Reno. David Lee was Utah's first poet laureate and is the author of 15 volumes of poetry.

Tahoe-Pyramid Bikeway earns national honor

By Associated Press

A regional boss for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is lauding the work of a Reno-area nonprofit building a 116-mile bicycle path that follows the Truckee River all the way from Lake Tahoe to Pyramid Lake.

The Tahoe-Pyramid Bikeway was one of eight organizations in the western U.S. the EPA named as 2013 winners of its “environmental champion” award.

EPA Southwest Administrator Jared Blumenfeld said Tuesday the group had an “incredible vision” to connect the two lakes with a bike trail traversing the “spectacular landscape.”

The effort that began in 2003 will be 75 percent complete when the newest section is scheduled to open Aug. 23 between Floriston and Farad, Calif.

The final gaps remain in the mountains between Truckee and Verdi, and east of Reno near Sparks and Fernley.

Bear Valley Ski Resort has new owners

By Alicia Castro, Calaveras Enterprise

The forward progress of Bear Valley Mountain Resort will soon be in the hands of Skyline International Development Inc., and leaders of the investment company want to take the Bear Valley Mountain Cooperative along for the ride.

“The co-op is the engine,” said Skyline Chairman and President Gil Blutrigh at a town hall meeting. “Skyline is the supercharger.”

Blutrigh shared his vision at the gathering hosted by the co-op at the Bear Valley Lodge Cathedral Lounge. Co-op members were given information about new options – including opt-outs – and the 250 to 300 people in attendance were introduced to Skyline executives, who enthusiastically spoke to an ongoing

collaboration.

“We see a partnership between Skyline and the co-op as a critical element in the future of Bear Valley by making sure Bear Valley remains a viable and productive resort operation,” Skyline CEO Michael Sneyd said. “The key to making the operation profitable is to continue to improve the brand in the Bay Area and really bring back the ski-area visits that Bear Valley enjoyed.”

Skyline is a publicly traded hospitality and real estate development and management company based in Toronto. Skyline currently owns various hotels and four southern Ontario resorts, two of which include ski amenities.

One member of Bear Valley’s current ownership group – Dundee Resort Development Corp. – and Skyline have been previously affiliated through Ned Goodman, the president and CEO of Dundee Capital Markets Inc. who served on Skyline’s board of directors until Skyline became a publicly traded company in March 2014.

[Read the whole story](#)

Family letters become Tahoe history book

By Kathryn Reed

For 30 years a treasure trove of Lake Tahoe area history sat in a closet unbeknownst to the owners.

The white wooden chest was in Mary K. Sonntag's home in New Castle, Pa. Her mother, Myrtle McConahy Keefer, had sent it to her in 1962. In 1992, Sonntag's daughter, Mary Jo Sonntag, said it was time to open it.

What they found were photographs and more than a century (1842-1962) worth of letters between family members in Vermont, Illinois, Pennsylvania and California. Those in California had settled in the Sierra.



Mary Jo Sonntag speaks Aug. 13 at South Lake Tahoe Library. Photo/Denise Haerr

Mary Jo Sonntag was in South Lake Tahoe last week talking about "Write If You Live to Get There", the book she and her mom wrote from the letters and subsequent research.

In 1862, Sonntag ancestors bought 160 acres at what is now Phillips Station for \$2,000. An old cabin is still inhabited there by family members. It's on Highway 50 at the intersection of the road that leads to Sierra-at-Tahoe.

"Phillips burned down multiple times and they kept rebuilding," Sonntag told the audience gathered at South Lake Tahoe Library.

The resort was rustic. Electricity didn't exist. Icehouses were on the river. Meat came Placerville, vegetables from Gold Hill. It was a bit of a haul to get eggs and butter from Camp

Richardson, which had been delivered there via train.

For \$12 per week people could camp out at Phillips Station. Swimming, tennis and horseback riding filled days. Sitting by the bonfire was a ritual in the evening.

In the winter of 1952 most of the cabins collapsed from the weight of the snow in what turned out to be an epic year.

Throughout her talk, Sonntag read passages of letters that are woven into the book.

The mother-daughter duo first came to California in 1993 to begin their research. Soon they discovered how their family had left quite a mark on the region.

Family is buried in Placerville and Truckee, as well as the private family cemetery at Phillips Station.

Meeks Bay Resort employees helped piece together facts. A curator at the El Dorado County Historical County Museum in Placerville said, "Sally must be thrilled you are here." They didn't know who Sally was.

Thus began the introduction to West Coast family. Those out here thought the Sonntag clan had long since perished. Mom Sonntag is now 94.

In addition to Phillips Station the family ran Meeks Bay Resort for the McKinnys and leased property at Rubicon Springs, where they ran another resort.

It was Joseph W. D. Phillips who started Phillips Station. His daughter, Sierra Nevada "Vade" Clark, took over. When she inquired with the Postal Service about what to call their post office because a Phillips already existed, she was told to call it Vade Post Office. At one point it was part of the Pony Express Trail.

Letter: Golf course at Washoe Meadows not all bad

To the community,

I was the Sierra District superintendent for the California Department of Parks and Recreation when the state acquired and classified Washoe Meadows State Park and Lake Valley State Recreation Area during the 1980s. During the 1980s the state was in protracted litigation with a developer who had approval from El Dorado County to construct thousands of homes on the property that became Washoe Meadows State Park and Lake Valley State Recreation Area.

The state opposed the development for environmental reasons. It was estimated litigation costs would be in the millions. Greg Taylor represented the state from the Attorney General's Office. All concerned believed it would be best if we could settle the matter out of court with the state buying the property. El Dorado County and the city of South Lake Tahoe would only agree to the state's purchase of the property (concern of losing tax revenue and tourism) if the golf course would remain. Negotiations were held with State Parks, AG, city of South Lake Tahoe, El Dorado County and the League to Save Lake Tahoe. It was agreed the state would purchase the property for \$5 million, the golf course would remain, and the property would be managed by California State Parks. The developer was required to relinquish all development rights.

State Parks structured the golf course concession contract with very tight environmental restrictions. The concession contract was written in close consultation with the Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board. We had concerns about

fertilizer entering the Upper Truckee River. We limited the amount and type of fertilizer used on the course and we required that the golf course establish monitoring wells above the golf course, in the middle of the course, and downstream from the course. Results of the tests were sent to State Parks and Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board.

All parties agreed that it would make good environmental sense to move the holes away from the Upper Truckee River to lessen impacts to the river. To attain this goal it may require some of the holes be moved.

If the state did not take a lead on this issue in the 1980s, we would have thousands of homes instead of an environmentally sensitive golf course (acknowledged by the Audubon Society) and several hundred of acres in open space park lands.

It is my understanding that the current proposed plans call for the removal of 10 percent in the turf area, this results in reducing water usage, and reducing the footage next to the river from 8,000 linear feet to about 1000. These proposed actions have a positive environmental effect on the Upper Truckee River watershed and water quality at Lake Tahoe.

Charles Goldman is an outstanding environmentalist and is very knowledgeable about Tahoe issues; however his recent viewpoint article did not fully share the history and politics of the acquisition of Washoe Meadows SP and Lake Valley SRA by the state of California. State Parks share a common vision with Dr. Goldman's of protecting Lake Tahoe, but an understanding of the history of the property and the politics is necessary to make informed decisions.

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to comment on this issue.

Bob Macomber, Graeagle (Sierra District superintendent 1979 to 2000 – California State Parks)