

Bennett comes up short in men's alpine combined

By Garvin Thomas, NBC

It wasn't the result he would have hoped for in his Olympic debut.

Bryce Bennett of Lake Tahoe was unable to reach the podium Tuesday (Monday in the United States) while competing in the men's alpine combined at the 2018 Olympic Winter Games.

[Read the whole story](#)

Death in Tahoma declared a homicide



Jeremy David
Virgo

By Cathy Locke, Sacramento Bee

A suspicious death reported Sunday in Tahoma has been ruled a homicide, and the El Dorado County Sheriff's Office has identified the suspect as 47-year-old Jeremy David Virgo.

Virgo was arrested on suspicion of murder, according to a Sheriff's Office news release. The victim's name has not been released pending notification of family.

Read the whole story

Making skis strong enough for Olympians

By Marc Zupan, The Conversation

Olympians expect top-notch performance from their minds and bodies, but they get crucial advantages from the very best equipment for their sports and the weather conditions they're competing in. Skis, for example, must stand up to near-constant changes in stress during races.

The ideal ski provides a stiff and rigid platform for skiers' boots to attach to, flexes to carve through turns, doesn't break under the pressure of jumps and landings and is light enough not to slow the athlete down. But that's not all: Skis must resist damage from collisions, absorb vibrations from icy conditions and withstand the temperature extremes and intense sunlight common in mountain environments.

That's a lot to ask of a single item. The first skis were made of strong, flexible ash wood, but technology has found ways to do much better. Today's materials design and construction processes are closely guarded industrial secrets, specific to individual ski companies. But I and other materials experts know that the essential components and methods are very similar: All skis are like sandwiches, stacking separate layers of different materials with all those separate

properties into a single item, a competition-class ski.



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Elite ski racers rely on state-of-the-art equipment. Photo
Copyright 2018 Carolyn E. Wright

Advanced materials for extreme conditions

Ultra-high molecular weight polyethylene is a highly engineered plastic often used in high-strength ropes as well as in artificial hip and knee implants. It's tough, bends and flexes a lot without breaking, resists scratches, retains its properties across a range of temperatures and has tiny microscopic pores across its surface. When it's used as the base layer of a ski, those microscopic pores act like a sponge into which racing wax is melted to fine-tune the ski's contact with whatever the snow conditions are.

The sides of the ski base are made of high-strength steel alloys that are heated and processed to meet the demanding conditions of skiing. These processes make the steel resistant to rust and able to be sharpened like a knife. The steel needs to hold its edge to carve through snow and ice while flexing with the rest of the ski without cracking or breaking.

Inside the ski

On top of the base is a complex layer in the ski sandwich, an element itself called a “sandwich panel,” made of similar materials and with the same techniques as those used to build spacecraft, aircraft and performance race cars. The center of the sandwich is a core material surrounded by fiber-reinforced composites.

The cores of ski sandwich panels can be lightweight titanium alloys, polymer foams similar to Styrofoam coffee cups or different kinds of woods – such as maple, oak, aspen or poplar. These different plastic, wood and metal materials are layered and combined to tune the ski to the desired levels of strength, stiffness, ability to twist and vibration-damping, all with as little weight as possible.

The outer layers of the sandwich panel are made from epoxy resins – high-performance glues – into and onto which are laid engineered fabrics like carbon fibers, fiberglass and Kevlar. These resin-fiber layers hold the sandwich core structure together and make all of the different material types work as one.

Like the core, these composite layers vary in thickness and makeup along the ski. They’re even applied at different angles to the ski itself to improve ski stiffness and strength.

The sandwich panel ski makes turning quicker and helps the ski ride smoothly over bumps and ruts in the terrain. It’s more responsive to the skier and more stable at high speeds than less advanced designs because it can take advantage of the

best aspects of all its ingredients. Overall, the sandwich panel is built to be stiffest under the binding area where the boot attaches, and more flexible near the ski tips, to glide more easily over uneven terrain. Each ski's sandwich panel is designed and built to optimize performance in a specific skiing event – such as downhill racing, snowcross or jumping – or even a particular skier's preferences.

Rapid improvement

The ski industry, and particularly its competitive elements, are willing to take risks and push limits, exploring the most advanced materials concepts to achieve optimum performance. As a result, decades of research have improved Olympic skiers' times significantly over the years.

That work has also spread benefits well beyond the Olympic medal podium and into the recreational market. Amateur skiers can explore more advanced terrain and more challenging slopes with help from the tuned spring response, vibration damping and light weight of their skis. Recreational skiers can also go faster in changing snow conditions and steer more easily through turns because their skis are adaptable and responsive to individual skiers' strengths, as well as slope conditions. The materials advancements help recreational skiers ski well on terrain previously accessible only by superior athletes.

All these advances happen very quickly. Before the next Winter Olympic Games, consumers will likely be able to easily purchase the same kinds of skis and snowboards that the 2018 Olympians competed on – and the 2022 Olympians will be using even better materials that help them go faster, higher and stronger than ever before.

c an associate professor of mechanical engineering-materials and solid mechanics at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County.

Opinion: Transparency like a lead wall in EDC

By Larry Weitzman

If the new El Dorado County “Good Governance” manual were an airliner, it would have already crashed and burned. A total disaster, at least when it comes to conducting county business with transparency. All windows have been shuttered as if to protect from a coming catastrophic storm. It appears that such a storm is brewing.

Here’s the deal. Over a month ago, pursuant to a Public Records Act request, I asked for all outside legal costs and billing with respect to the Austin v/ El Dorado County, et al. litigation. As of the date of this writing I have received no information as to billing or payments since the June 2017 bills from the law firm Abbott and Kindermann, who is defending EDC. At that time the total billing amounted to about \$189,000.



Larry Weitzman

Since that date I have received nothing further. So, what seems to be the problem? Why hasn’t the county come forward with this expense? Who in the county would have the billing since June and why is it being kept secret?

An examination of the of the Abbott contract with EDC shows that the EDC contract administrator is the county counsel. He is the county official who deals with the outside lawyers. He should be receiving the billing and dealing with all questions regarding the contract and the services rendered thereunder. Oversight of the county counsel is the responsibility of the Board of Supervisors.

The contract provides in paragraph 4, "Billing" that "The law firm shall submit to county itemized statements of services rendered and costs monthly." The purpose being that EDC and the Board of Supervisors can keep track of the cost of this litigation so it can be properly managed.

In the process of writing this column and after much prodding, I finally received sanitized answers, but not complete answers. Instead of being given redacted bills, I received an email with some numbers stating the amounts due for the months in question, new billing for each month and one note of a payment being credited. The actual bills, redacted or otherwise are still being withheld. So much for transparency and open government.

In adding up the amounts paid through June 2017 and the new billing, it appears my estimate of \$300,000 was accurate with the actual amount totaling about \$286,000 from the unverified information received and that amount was for the filing of one demurrer and one court appearance. Imagine the cost of a trial. One could easily speculate a cost for the trial in the millions of dollars.

As far back as February 2015, three years ago, when I spoke to the Board of Supervisors and directly at my Fourth District supervisor, Mike Ranalli, I advised the board of this impending time bomb of the county's failure to comply with the law regarding the Mitigation Fee Act. I continued to advise the Board of Supervisors in speaking directly to them and in my columns, many of which were filed into the public record

and more specifically to my supervisor, Ranalli, especially after the Walker appellate court decision of August 2015 that said that a failure to file the continuing five year Nexus studies as required under the MFA mandates the county to refund all unexpended funds in the MFA accounts (money collected from home builders, whether individuals or companies for TIM fees, park fees, etc.). At that time of the Walker decision unexpended funds in MFA accounts amounted to over \$30 million which as mandated by the MFA and by the Walker court decision requires the county to refund to the property owners of record upon which properties those fees were collected from. It was cut and dry, no ifs, ands or buts.

County counsel of course told the board what they wanted to hear, that I am wrong and I don't know what I am talking about. Ranalli listened to what he wanted to hear, he didn't do his own research, for if he did he would have found out the county counsel was wrong. In the county's demurrer to strike the Austin complaint which cost the aforementioned \$286,000, the court said there was no statute of limitation defense and the county has already admitted in several official documents that they were in violation of the MFA's requirement to file Nexus studies which would then mandate the refund to the property owners of record all unexpended MFA fees collected by the county which at the time of filing the lawsuit totaled about \$33 million and that doesn't include later money collected or illegally expended. As the court said, every time the county collected money without the filing of a timely Nexus studied, it effectively restarted the SOL.

On Jan. 30, 2018, Item 18 was an agenda item for the re-appointment of county counsel. The same county counsel who said the county would prevail in the Austin matter. He's been wrong about that. The same CC who said the Walker case didn't apply to EDC. He was wrong about that. The same CC who told the board not to worry about the MFA or the problems stemming therefrom. He's been wrong about that. The same CC who said he

would get the \$6 million in the Missouri Flat Master Circulation and Financing Plan fund for road maintenance and upon which the board increased the budget for road maintenance by \$2 million. It didn't happen. The same CC who didn't follow the law in the annexation of Latrobe Fire by EDH Fire. And I am sure I am just scratching the surface.

But that didn't stop Ranalli from waxing poetic about the fine qualities of CC during board discussion which was effectively no discussion of his legal abilities and counsel. You can be sure Ranalli had no idea of the legal defense costs regarding the Austin case and perhaps that was by design of the CC. Ranalli voted not only yes to CC's reappointment but also gave him a raise to an annual base salary of \$200,000 plus benefits which adds another 25 to 30 percent to county costs. The county would be better off without this CC than with him. But Ranalli voted yes to the CC's reappointment plus the raise. Ranalli loves to spend other people's money. But you will have a vote with respect to Ranalli continuing his job as supervisor in four months. Supervisors should not take their jobs so lightly.

Larry Weitzman is a resident of Rescue.

Mammoth snowboarders first and fourth in halfpipe

By Shawn Smith, NBC



Chloe Kim

The expectations placed upon Chloe Kim could not have been any higher entering the PyeongChang Olympics. But the 17-year-old delivered on the biggest stage, earning her first Olympic gold medal in women's snowboard halfpipe on Tuesday morning in South Korea.

Kim set the bar extremely high on her first run, landing a backside air, frontside 1080, cab 720, frontside 900, McTwist and frontside inverted 720.

That run scored her a 93.75 and gave her a huge lead over the rest of the field.

Kelly Clark, who also calls Mammoth her home resort, came in fourth.

Read the whole story

California ski resorts embrace renewable energy

By Hugo Martin, Los Angeles Times

In the peaks near Lake Tahoe, the Squaw Valley and Alpine Meadows ski resorts are hoping to draw skiers and snowboarders with some upgrades that have nothing to do with snow.

The two resorts, owned by the same Colorado parent company, plan to become the country's first resorts to operate entirely on renewable energy by December. Squaw Valley also plans to build a mountain-side structure that will contain batteries to store some of that energy.

Other California ski operations also are becoming more environmentally friendly.

[Read the whole story](#)

Tahoe Tails – Adoptable Pets in South Lake Tahoe



Kahlua



Tucker

Kahlua and Tucker came to the shelter together, and we would like them to go to their new home together too.

Kahlua is a 3-year-old female Yorkshire terrier/Chihuahua, and Tucker is a 9-year old male poodle mix. They are very friendly and love to go for walks. Kahlua is a bit of a character, with a cute spring in her step, and Tucker is a bit more sedate, but he has plenty of charisma.

Kahlua and Tucker are spayed/neutered, microchipped, tested for heart worm, and vaccinated. They are at the El Dorado County Animal Services shelter in Meyers, along with other dogs and cats who are waiting for their new homes. Go to the Tahoe animal shelter's Facebook page to see photos and descriptions of all pets at the shelter.

Call 530.573.7925 for directions, hours, and other information on adopting a pet. For spay-neuter assistance for South Tahoe residents, go **online**.

– Karen Kuentz

SLT council prolongs city manager chaos



Former South Lake Tahoe Mayor Hal Cole, right, gives his opinion Feb. 12 about the city manager debacle. Photo/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

Nancy Kerry remains the city manager of South Lake Tahoe, but at this point it is in name and paycheck only.

The City Council on Feb. 12 discussed her future for about 2½ hours in closed session. The only item on the agenda was “public employee discipline/dismissal/release.” There was no reportable action.

“She is the city manager and is getting paid as the city manager. She has not been terminated and if she is, that will be reportable action,” interim City Attorney Nira Doherty told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Under the Government Code reportable action includes change in employments status, salary increases/decreases and a settlement.

At this point, it's likely a settlement will be the ultimate outcome. Kerry per her contract is guaranteed nine month's severance if she is let go without cause. Like all employees, she is also entitled to any unused sick time and vacation days.

Expressions on the five council members' faces upon the end of the session Monday ranged from anger to sadness to frustration. All briskly walked past *Lake Tahoe News*.

What has led to the bad blood has not been disclosed to the public. If it were a criminal allegation, that would have been handled differently.

All the public has been told is that **Mary Egan of Municipal Resource Group** came in last October to assess the culture of the city. Sources have told *Lake Tahoe News* this was spearheaded by then-Mayor Austin Sass who had a vendetta against Kerry. City officials have said Egan did not give them a written report. She talked about her findings in closed session Jan. 23.

Two weeks later Kerry's evaluation was again on the closed session agenda. It is not known if new information came forward in that time period or if council wanted to digest what they had heard from Egan. The outcome of the **Feb. 6 meeting** was that Kerry was immediately placed on indefinite paid leave, with Fire Chief Jeff Meston stepping in as acting city manager.

It was obvious by comments before the public was kicked out of the council chambers on Feb. 12 that not all the council members are happy with how the city's business is being conducted.

"I'm not even sure why we are here. You need the employee," Councilwoman Brooke Laine said. She hinted to being surprised about finding out about the meeting on Friday.

"We had a discussion that we would bring this back March 20. Why are we here?" Councilman Tom Davis said. "I want the opportunity to see if she wants this in open session."

Kerry was not invited to the Feb. 12 session – with or without her own legal counsel.

It is up to the employee being disciplined whether she would want the hearing in open or closed session. The council legally cannot unilaterally make the decision for open or closed.

Sass questioned whether having it in open session would violate the rights of others.

To that, Davis said, "No employees have come forward."

To this date there have been no complaints filed against Kerry. The only former employee to have sued the city during Kerry's five-plus tenure was Stan Sherer, who was the Community Services director. That case was **settled in 2014**.

There are protocols in place if someone wants to file a grievance against the city manager. The Human Resources Department and city attorney would do so. Complaints can also go to council members, who are the boss of the city manager. Whistler-blower laws and other state and federal laws are also in place to protect employees from their boss.

After the curt exchange among the council, Mayor Wendy David with the assistance of Doherty said it was time to go into closed session so as not to violate the Brown Act.

There is a question, though, whether that in itself was a violation of the open meeting law. Discussing the merits of the meeting, whether the accused should be in the meeting and

whether it all should be heard in the open do not fall under the protections of the Brown Act. Litigation and personnel are closed session items. Policy surrounding all of that is not completely protected.

Five people were in the audience Monday, with three speaking. Public comment was taken before going behind closed doors.

Former Councilman Bruce Grego advocated for the dispute to be aired in public.

David Kurtzman, who years ago was elected to the local school board and therefore understands these processes, said it would best for the city to retain outside counsel – not the current law firm on retainer – to sort through the chaos.

This might bring trust and transparency to a process that has been shrouded in secrecy and innuendo.

Former Mayor Hal Cole spoke of how during his 20-plus years on the council consultants were brought in to do evaluations of the city manager, but all had a defined scope of work. He questioned where that was the case with Egan.

“I have never seen one done with such haste or so disrespectfully,” Cole said.

He spoke of how he was a member of councils that got rid of city managers and city attorneys, but it “was done respectfully.”

It is not known when the council will discuss the issue further. Nor is it known if the direction given was for the city attorney to negotiate a deal with Kerry.

Also not known is why all of this is happening after Kerry had only received positive evaluations, as recently as June 2017.

Letter: Ex-mayor, journalist critical of SLT council

Publisher's note: *This letter was sent to the South Lake Tahoe City Council and Lake Tahoe News.*

Mayor David and members of council,

I am outraged at the seemingly underhanded manner in which council is handling the termination of a highly valued city manager. Nancy Kerry has been an exemplary city leader who has put the greater good of the city as her sole priority. I am not sure I can say the same about council, whom seem hell bent on needlessly destroying her excellent reputation.



Claire Fortier

As the former managing and opinion page editor of the *Tahoe Daily Tribune*, I often worked with Nancy when she was the communications officer for the city. She was readily accessible and always forthcoming with information, even as she protected the reputation of the city and its employees.

As I approached my first year on council, Nancy was thrust into the very difficult position of assistant city manger during the tenure of a contentious city manager and a budget crisis that resulted in mass layoffs. I watched her navigate

angry unions reps, disgruntled city workers, egotistical politicians and a myriad of citizen complaints, all with unflappable calm and kindness. She drafted a strategic plan, held council workshops to focus on priorities and helped draft a budget that eventually resulted in a positive cash flow for the debt-ridden city.

I was mayor when Nancy was given the role as city manager, and I still feel it was one of the best decisions we made as a council. During that year, Nancy managed to accomplish more than I could have imagined possible. From working with a devastated and greatly reduced city staff, she found compromise and commitment to move forward. She was instrumental in lobbying efforts that resulted in the passage of the Tahoe Regional Plan through two deeply divided states. She oversaw a pathway to revitalizing the city through such efforts as special events, infrastructure rebuild and incentives for small businesses. She worked with El Dorado County to find common ground on issues like the campground and the senior center. She often organized local agency leaders to focus on common goals and priorities. She redid the city's communication plan, organizational chart and capital improvement projects. She ended a decade-old deadlock on Harrison Avenue, which now enjoys an economic revitalization. She was successful in gaining the last low-income housing project to be built on the South Shore. She did all of this while graciously giving credit to everyone but herself.

Nancy Kerry has been the glue that has held the city together during some of its darkest days. For that, she deserves respect and support. It is certainly City Council's prerogative to determine the best person to manage the city. But don't, in the process, besmirch the reputation of a city manager who has been unfailingly faithful to her job and who has always sought the best outcome for the city and its future.

Sincerely,

Being an Olympian does not mean being wealthy

By Edward Etzel, *The Conversation*

Recently, while sitting in traffic, I noticed a weathered bumper sticker with a little acoustic guitar on it that said: "Real musicians have day jobs."

I presume most of us do have real day jobs, but as the Pyeongchang Winter Olympics begin, for some reason – maybe because I'm an ex-Olympic shooter – I wondered about the hundreds of young women and men who have tried (with many failing) to represent the United States in the Olympics.

Real musicians and Olympians seem to have a lot in common. They have ambition and enthusiasm for their craft. But like musicians, these talented young people have to pay their electric bills too. How do they support themselves and their families, all while having to diligently train, often several hours a day over the course of years? How did I pull it off?

The haves and have nots

Many might assume that since athletes are at the pinnacles of their respective sports, they're all able to live comfortably, either from endorsements or competing professionally. After all, Olympic swimmer Michael Phelps' estimated net worth is about \$55,000,000.

But most who do make it to PyeongChang receive very little funding, and most don't make a lot of money off their sport

outside of the Olympics, either. For example, two-time Olympic javelin thrower Cyrus Hostetler recently told the *Washington Post* that the most he's ever earned in a year is \$3,000.

Sure, there are many celebrity athletes who are professionals, have corporate endorsements and have their airbrushed faces on a Wheaties box. Snowboarder Shaun White and skier Lindsey Vonn compete in the Olympic Games and then return to a life of material comfort. But these folks are few and far between.

The average U.S. Olympian simply does not live in the highest level of the financial stratosphere. According to the Track and Field Athletic Association, there's a "steep pyramid of income opportunities" for track and field athletes, with only a "select few" able to earn a very good living. Fifty percent of track athletes who rank in the top 10 in the U.S. in their event earn less than \$15,000 annually from the sport.

Unlike many other countries, the United States federal government doesn't fund Olympic programs, though some athletes get special funding from their national governing bodies. For example, USA Swimming reportedly provides approximately \$3,000 to national team members of its top 16 ranked athletes. But other aspiring athletes are actually unemployed and need to be supported by their families – and some families have even gone bankrupt trying to support their son's or daughter's Olympic dreams. Leading up to the 2012 Games in London, *US News* reported that gymnast Gabby Douglas' mother had filed for bankruptcy, in part due to "the high cost of her daughter's training, which involved living away from home for two years."

Scraping by to chase a dream

In reality, countless hopefuls and current Olympians hold down real jobs working all shifts. You name it, they do it: waiter, teacher, coach, construction worker, public speaker, janitor and many other jobs. For example, swimmer Amanda Beard has worked as a model and as a public speaker to earn a living.

Many are undergraduate and graduate students who train at their universities. Some serve in the military. Several fortunate athletes live and train at regional Olympic training centers like those at Colorado Springs, Chula Vista and Lake Placid.

The U.S. Olympic Committee has created athlete employment programs that offer some support and employment opportunities. For example, the Team USA Athlete Career and Education Program (ACE) exists to link aspiring athletes with organizations like Coca-Cola and Dick's Sporting Goods, among others, that provide full- and part-time employment.

In my case, I recall preparing over two Olympic quadrennials to get ready for the boycotted 1980 Moscow Games (a team I did not make) and the 1984 Los Angeles Games (which I did make and medal) as a shooter. It was not a financially comfortable time in my life.

I supported myself with a mix of funding from the G.I. Bill, a graduate assistantship teaching physical education classes and work as a shooting coach. I also served part-time as a member of the U.S. Army Reserves. All told, from working three jobs, I earned \$500 a month (around \$1,500 today), plus the cost of tuition.

In fact, I just received a Social Security statement of earned income during those eight years. It doesn't reflect the wages of a rich man during my Olympic quest – and even so I was probably one of the lucky ones. Many more fail in the dream to make an Olympic team than those who actually get to walk behind the flag in the opening ceremonies.

Chasing the Olympic dream can be exhausting. It's not a straight path. There are skilled athletes who had to drop out of their chase for a medal because of finances.

So when you watch the Olympics, consider the personal stories of the 2016 U.S. Olympians who might be making less than

\$12,000 a year.

I can tell you from personal experience it's not easy. But I can also tell you it can be quite rewarding.

Edward Etzel is a professor of sport and exercise psychology at West Virginia University.