

S. Lake Tahoe city manager taking time off

By Kathryn Reed

After a marathon closed session Tuesday, it was decided South Lake Tahoe City Manager Nancy Kerry would take some time off.

Kerry told *LTN* she was planning to take a couple weeks off.



South Lake Tahoe Mayor Wendy David and City Manager Nancy Kerry Photo/LTN

Mayor Wendy David would not say whose choice it was for the time off – the council's or Kerry's. This means it is not known if the entire council is in favor of this or a select few who have been gunning for her to leave. None of the other council members would speak with *Lake Tahoe News*.

"They did their evaluation and there was no reportable action," Kerry said.

David also said there was no reportable action regarding the evaluation. This, though, contradicts saying Kerry is on paid leave. David said she did not know how long the leave would be.

The irony about the time off is that at **Kerry's June review** the council said one of Kerry's biggest downfalls was that she

did not take enough time off. It was at that review that Kerry received a glowing review and salary increase.

The biggest change since then is Councilman Austin Sass and interim City Attorney Nira Doherty targeting Kerry for reasons that have not been publicly disclosed.

David would not speak to the mystery closed session item that was listed as "pending litigation." Nor would she speak to the mystery woman who was in closed session at the Jan. 23 meeting.

David said the council decided Fire Chief Jeff Meston would be the acting city manager. At this point he will not be receiving any extra pay for the added responsibilities.

"I was called by the mayor and asked on behalf of the City Council to fill the roll," Meston told *Lake Tahoe News*.

In the past Meston and Police Chief Brian Uhler have filled in for Kerry when she has been out of town.

"I've been told it's indefinite. I don't know the definition of indefinite yet. I'm still trying to wrap my head around it," Meston said.

Feb. 6 marked the second meeting in a row that Kerry's performance evaluation was on the agenda.

Until now, every council Kerry has worked with has been ebullient about her performance in the more than five years she's been city manager. This has been during reviews and at council meetings.

Kerry is responsible for saving the city more than \$60 million in her short tenure. Forty million of that came in retiree health benefits, \$10 million in refinancing debt, about \$7 million through redevelopment and then money in other areas.

She has also been asked by cities inside and outside the state

to speak about health care reform, having become an expert of sorts. More than once she has been a speaker at the League of Cities conference.

When Kerry took over from Tony O'Rourke, who was known at the hatchet man, she turned the morale around to where people actually like working for the city, services have been restored and the city is in good shape financially.

Opinion: Have your funeral before you die

By Mary Elizabeth Williams, Salon

A few months ago, I attended one of the best memorials I've ever been to. It was a glorious, sunlit afternoon full of friends and music. It was just weeks after my friend Jessica's birthday. And a month before she died.

Life doesn't often give us the luxury of being able to ballpark our date of departure. When a male friend died suddenly last winter, I grieved not just for him but for all the things I hadn't said in our final conversation, a conversation that presumed there would be others to follow. But when a person is facing a certain fate, I wonder why more people don't throw a party like Jessica's.

We had met in a cancer support group when we were both in treatment. Last spring, six years after being diagnosed with ovarian cancer, her doctor said she presented no evidence of disease. We went out for a celebratory brunch, toasting the good fortune we shared. Six months later, she was gone.

Read the whole story

Pay is lagging in a tight job market

By Ben Casselman, New York Times

Over all, average hourly earnings were only 2.5 percent higher in December than a year earlier, barely outpacing inflation. It's part of a stubborn pattern that is one of the mysteries of a recovery now in its ninth year. These are a few factors that may be playing a part.

A collapse in the rate of union membership for private-sector employees – to 6.5 percent last year from the upper teens in the early 1980s – appears to have played a key role in holding down wages. This is partly because unions benefit workers directly: Average pay for workers represented by unions tends to be higher than for those who aren't, even after controlling for education and other characteristics.

But unions also benefit workers indirectly. In industries and regions where unions have a larger presence, pay tends to be higher for all low- and medium-wage workers, not just those represented by unions.

Read the whole story

Cannabis tourism will take root in 2018 – slowly

By David Downs, San Francisco Chronicle

Cannabis is legal in our great state, and maybe you're ready to scope out the new landscape of cannabis-related tourism. The floodgates have opened, you think, and there's now a wellspring of pro-marijuana activities, events and venues to frolic through and explore, right?

Well, not exactly.

While cannabis promises to be a \$10 billion economy here, the Golden State is still years away from fielding a well-oiled canna-tourism industry that's on par with main attractions like wine tasting or outdoor recreation. Heck, it's tough to find a legal place to even smoke the stuff.

Read the whole story

Coyote rescued with a jar stuck over its head



A coyote with a jar on its head was found in El Dorado County. Photo/Sierra Wildlife Rescue

By Benjy Egel, Sacramento Bee

A young female coyote has been freed after spending at least a week-and-a-half wandering Placer and El Dorado counties with a plastic jar stuck over its head.

The coyote's unfortunate situation was first reported to Gold Country Wildlife Rescue on Jan. 26, prompting several search parties to trek into the woods over the next few days.

The jar appeared to prevent the coyote from eating and possibly drinking, though people reported seeing the animal stick its entire head – jar and all – underwater on at least one occasion.

Read the whole story

Global warming makes Winter Olympics risky bet

By Benjamin Spillman, Reno Gazette-Journal

Human-induced climate change could make future winter Olympics risky business for some of the world's likeliest host venues.

That's according to published research by scientists who studied 21 former and potential future winter Olympics venues.

They found that by mid-century, as many as 10 former venues, including Lake Tahoe and Vancouver, B.C., in North America, would be considered risky or unreliable bets for delivering the cold and snow necessary for winter sports.

Read the whole story

Snippets about Lake Tahoe

- El Dorado County CAO Don Ashton will be hosting a community round table on Feb. 8, 5:30-7pm at the Cameron Park Library.
- Douglas County Public Library in Minden will be closed Feb. 19.
- The Humane Society of Truckee-Tahoe recently brought pets to local high schools to act as therapy dogs and help ease the tension and stress of midterm exams. Students at Truckee High School and North Tahoe High School had the opportunity to take a break from studying and test taking to pet and play with the shelter dogs.
- The Tahoe Arts Alliance and South Lake Tahoe have partnered in showcasing local artists at City Hall. Installations rotate on a quarterly basis and gallery space consists of several walls in the lobby of City Hall. Submit proposals by Feb. 16 to info@tahoeartsalliance.org.

. There will be a comedy show Feb. 18 at MontBleu featuring comedian-impersonator Reggie Brown as Barack Obama and comedian-impersonator Bob DiBuono at Donald Trump. Show is at 8pm, doors open at 7pm. **Tickets are \$30**, plus taxes and fees.

Letter: Suggestions for VHR problem

To the community,

I recently heard about a fire in a VHR on the North Shore. The eight adults, eight children and two dogs were able to escape. The cause of the fire at the vacation rental is under investigation. Here is a prime example of the complaints fielded by officials about crowded VHRs.

The vacation home rental issue is not just a local issue. People in tourist areas nationwide are dealing with the same problems. The subject has been looked at from many angles, without a solid acceptable solution.

At the core of the issue is zoning. Zoning, in its basic form, attempts to separate residential property use from commercial property use. We are experiencing incompatible uses. Houses are generally built for families and not typically built to be used as a business. It would seem these are in violation of county zoning ordinance at the very least.

Everywhere folks are complaining about the intrusions to their privacy and quiet enjoyment of their property. This is a main principle in real estate ownership. Enforcement has fallen on

our city resources, taxing the citizens to respond to these intrusions. Cities may recover some costs via the permit fees, but those recurring costs often exceed the fees paid upon application.

I have heard from VHR owners that enforcing rules large and small on the vacationers often results in bad reviews on social media and online reservations. This type of retaliation needs to be addressed by the online platforms publishing them. If it's on the internet, it must be true! We don't want to penalize owners that are trying to be compliant and good neighbors, but have the vacationers' cavalier behavior put them in a no-win spot.

I think the VHRs should be self-policing through a vacation homeowners association. Generally, any person who owns or wants to buy a VHR must be a member of a VHOA and therefore must obey the governing documents including articles of incorporation, CC&Rs (covenants, conditions and restrictions) and bylaws. Most homeowner associations are incorporated and are subject to state statutes that govern non-profit corporations and homeowner associations. California has a large body of HOA law.

The community benefits of establishing this method because the local police are not having to answer to every small problem, and the city does not have to hire additional personnel and bear the expenses of salary, benefits and retirement.

VHRs are an industry and we do not want to suppress commerce, but we must also protect the rights and liberties of our residents. These VHRs are commercial enterprises and should have their own zoning designation, being zoned in a separate area, close to the destinations and tourist attractions to reduce traffic congestion and pollution as it is such a commonly cited goal in the Tahoe basin.

Jeffrey Spencer, Meyers

Chance of normal snow-rain year grim

By Paul Rogers, Bay Area News Group

Hoping for a March Miracle to bail out California's dry winter? It's not likely.

A review of more than 100 years of rainfall records of major cities in California – including San Jose, Los Angeles, San Diego, Santa Rosa, Redding and Fresno – shows that none have ever finished the rainy season with normal rainfall totals after ending January with the amount of rain they've had so far this winter.

In Eureka, it's happened three times since 1885. In the rest of the cities, not once, even though their weather records also date back to the late 1800s.

In other words, California winters are like Olympic ski racers. Stumble at the beginning of the race, and it's very difficult to catch up by the end.

[Read the whole story](#)

Microgrid could bring

reliable power to Olympic Valley

A new energy storage system to serve Liberty Utilities' Olympic Valley residential and commercial customers in the event of an electric outage is proposed for the North Tahoe region.

The Olympic Valley Microgrid Project would leverage state-of-the-art battery storage technology to create a new way to store surplus energy and deliver that stored energy to the utility's grid. Liberty Utilities has had initial discussions with Squaw Valley Alpine Meadows to explore a potential site on their property, as well as with Tesla, a manufacturer of the type of energy storage system needed to provide more electric reliability in Olympic Valley.

The proposal includes installation of a battery energy storage system of up to 8 megawatts near Gold Coast at mid-mountain.

The system would be owned, operated and maintained by Liberty Utilities, while Squaw Valley Ski Holdings would provide the land to house the battery storage system.

The California Public Utilities Commission and Placer County need to approve the plans.

When demand is high or the upstream energy source is interrupted, the batteries will discharge to provide power to the grid, offsetting purchases from other sources and thereby reducing costs.