

Government shutdown moderately impacts Tahoe

Note: *While the shutdown came to end late Monday, it could start all over again in three weeks.*

By Kathryn Reed

One of the casualties of the federal government shutdown is the impact on the meteorological conference taking place on the South Shore.

"We lost two speakers who were going to discuss fire safety issues and updates—a meaningful topic in light of Napa/Sonoma and SoCal fires. We adjusted and had another speaker talk about potential effects of shut down on weather issues," Phil Weidinger with Weidinger Public Relations told *Lake Tahoe News*.

The shutdown that started last week is fluid in that lawmakers are continuing to negotiate a deal that could resolve the situation at any time. Tied to the funding measure and complicating matters is the issue of immigration.

The U.S. Forest Service is the major government agency in the Lake Tahoe Basin. All employees were told to report to work on Monday. However, most employees will be told to go home, with law enforcement staying on. For others there are protocols to adhere to before they can turn off the office lights.

As with past shutdowns, federal government workers are not guaranteed a paycheck while not working. It is essentially forced time off without pay and without knowing when they'll be ordered back to work.

Congress members, though, continue to get paid even though they are the ones who caused the shutdown.

One agency still open is the U.S. Coast Guard in Tahoe City. "We're always open," is what they told *Lake Tahoe News*.

South Lake Tahoe has a local FBI office.

"All FBI agents and support personnel in field offices are excepted from furlough. Select personnel at FBI headquarters will be designated as excepted to provide direction and investigative support to all field operations and select headquarters functions," FBI officials said in a statement.

Carl Hasty with the Tahoe Transportation District said of the shutdown, "It affects us, but at this time it does not directly affect our bus service." There can be delays in processing requests and other administrative steps.

The shutdown is not affecting the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency's day-to-day work.

If a project involved a federal partner, communication has stopped. That's the case, though, for all entities dealing with the feds.

Douglas County will "monitor the situation as it unfolds," according to County Manager Larry Werner. He told *Lake Tahoe News* at this point there are no known impacts locally.

In the early stages the shutdown should not be problematic for any local jurisdiction.

Letter: Suggestions for VHRs

and SnowGlobe

Publisher's note: *This is a letter to the South Lake Tahoe City Council and is reprinted with permission.*

Dear Council Members:

My name is Scott Ramirez, I am a longtime resident of South Lake Tahoe. Some of you know me and my family and are familiar with our activities to support our town. We are advocates for our community and volunteer where we can.

Today I am writing you to ask that you consider the needs of the residents in your deliberations and actions. Recent changes in our community demand that we all speak to recurring issues that are either not being addressed or are seemingly being glossed over. Specifically, I wish to address two issues: vacation home rentals (VHRs) and SnowGlobe.

Vacation home rentals (VHRs):

I live in the Gardner Mountain area of South Lake Tahoe. I purchased my home in 1996 when I returned after having been away for 10 years for school and work. I grew up in the Bijou area and attended both our local schools and Lake Tahoe Community College before leaving to build my career. I was lucky to be able to return and work in our local schools these past many years. When I purchased my home I purchased what I could afford in a quiet neighborhood with an eye to raising a family. I looked to purchase as much home as I could afford away from the hustle and bustle that tourists bring to our town.

My neighborhood has seen many changes. The formerly empty lot across from my house has since been purchased. The immense house that sits there now was built specifically to house as many people as possible. The builder lived in the home briefly before selling it as a second home and vacation home rental

(VHR). On any given weekend we see four to six cars and six or more people staying there. This weekend we were surprised to see a chartered bus arrive and deliver 11 college kids. The bus arrived at roughly 10:15pm on a Friday night and stopped in the street to deliver our new guests and unload their luggage. A similar bus returned the following Sunday to pick this same group.

I wish I could make this simple and say the current owners were bad and every visitor was rude but that is not the true story. The owners are nice people who are trying to fund their second home by using it as a VHR. Most of our visitors mind their manners. Whether the visitors are good or not or if the home owners are nice is not the point. The point is that our community is rapidly changing and not necessarily for the better. The front of my house is now a bus stop. The house across the street has signs on it declaring the rules for visitation. My neighbors and I are now left wondering will this be a good visit or will this be a bad one. Will there be more cars than the driveway can hold, will they manage the trash and will they quiet down before we need to sleep or will we need to be the bad guys call and complain. Do we need to worry about our kids playing outside?

The new measures to mitigate some of these problems have helped to provide locals tools to respond. The problem is that it remains up to the residents surrounding vacation rentals to report issues when they arrive. We have to be both the inspector and the reporter of activities that should not be going on in our neighborhoods. It is not our job to police other people's businesses. It should be the job of the management agent or the owner if there is no local agent.

I have no illusion that these new businesses are going away. Our community needs flexibility in where our visitors stay and some home owners are paying for their part of Tahoe by renting their homes out. I also do not wish to complain without offering solutions so here is what I suggest:

- All costs associated with responding to VHR issues should be covered by VHR fees.
- A portion of those fees should go to the Clean Tahoe program, which should be provided a list of participating VHRs and asked to help mitigate excess garbage.
- A dedicated enforcement position (police?) should be created to randomly visit VHRs and ensure they are meeting their parking and occupancy requirements.
- The management agent or owner should be held accountable to inspect their VHRs and ensure they are meeting the current guidelines, it should not be necessary for the surrounding residents to enforce these rules.
- A process for residents to contest an existing VHR license needs to be established beyond the existing reporting process for special circumstances not currently defined.

SnowGlobe:

I will keep this simple. There is no reason an entire neighborhood should be subjected to three days of noise and having access to their homes blocked on an annual basis for a private event. The Al Tahoe, Bijou and Sierra Tract neighborhoods are blasted with sound from SnowGlobe every year. SnowGlobe is exempted from the same rules that apply to the Harveys Outdoor Theater which is required to end their concerts by 10pm. The Harveys event is held in an area zoned for such activities and SnowGlobe is in the middle of three large neighborhoods. I sincerely doubt this would even be a question if the same event was held adjacent to the Tahoe Keys or other wealthy areas. My parents live in the Bijou area near Pioneer Trail adjacent to two current sitting council members. They text us when the music starts because they can feel it inside their home. A friend in the Al Tahoe area tries to leave town because they cannot sleep in their own home due to the sound from these concerts. A community owned and

maintained field is not the appropriate place for this event.

- Find an appropriate venue.
- Enforce existing regulations without exemptions.
- Move this away from residential neighborhoods.

These issues are all seemingly related. zoning laws have been overridden in favor of private entities. The council has been consistent in favoring private party interests and their needs in a hunt to generate questionable revenue gains at the cost to our local residents. Our city incurs expenses related to both these concerns that are not fully covered or funded by those activities. Residents pay in both lost tax revenue to cover those expenses and in terms of having their homes invaded. This is not acceptable and needs to stop.

Please act on behalf of the people who vote for you and for whom you represent. Yes, we need to pursue revenue but not at the cost of our homes and neighborhoods.

Sincerely,

Scott Ramirez, South Lake Tahoe

Tahoe Tails – Adoptable Pets in South Lake Tahoe



Nadine

Nadine is a 2-year-old husky-cattle dog mix who has two different colored eyes.

This girl loves to play with other dogs, but she also likes to chase cats. Good with kids, housebroken, basic commands and good on leash. She is very quiet in the shelter and weighs about 60 pounds.

Nadine pulls on her leash like she's on a mission and might be a good dog for skijoring.

Nadine is spayed, microchipped, tested for heart worm, and vaccinated. She is 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 warm room proving to be a good neighbor

By Kathryn Reed

All the angst about the warm room in South Lake Tahoe opening on Rufus Allen Boulevard was for naught.

The seasonal overnight shelter, now in its third year, is just another business in the neighborhood. Even though some **residents last month balked** at the idea of having “these people” be so close, the fears have not come to fruition.

Lake Tahoe Unified School District’s board received an update about the facility at its meeting last week. Bus stops and facilities are nearby. Plus, the local Boys & Girls Club chapter is at the old Al Tahoe school site, still owned by the district.

Jude Wood, who runs the after school program, told the board there have been no issues with warm room guests. In fact, she expressed how she would rather explain to her children and those she cares for that the person walking down the street is someone the community is trying to help, instead of seeing someone sleeping on the lawn at St. Theresa’s and telling the child the community had turned its back on that person.

This year the warm room is operating in a building owned by the city of South Lake Tahoe that most recently housed Unity at the Lake church.

The district has been part of the solution by putting in better security at the Al Tahoe building so warm room clientele can’t just wonder in.

Rachel Yaker and Annie Davidson with Tahoe Homeless Coalition made a formal presentation to the board, outlining the proactive measures undertaken to make sure everyone feels secure. In large part it has to do with the hours – when people can arrive and leave. Security has been hired as well.

This week Tahoe Homeless Coalition volunteers will be training employees at the recreation center and ice rink about how to handle this clientele.

These people were already in the area. The library is a common place for people to hang out during the day if they don't have a home to go to.

The fact that Bread & Broth has been in operation for 29 years down at the street at the Catholic Church without a problem for the neighborhood says a lot. It's not unusual for those diners to queue up an hour before the doors open.

The fact that no one spoke against the warm room at the Jan. 16 meeting, or simply brought up a concern speaks volumes for how well the facility has addressed the apprehension of the naysayers from just a month ago.

While the warm room advocates would like to find a permanent facility, funds have not allowed that happen. Plus, it's a seasonal operation, so that can be an issue with securing the same rental year-in and year-out.

**Opinion: Plan would turn
Yosemite into refuge for**

wealthy

By Alfonso Orozco, East Bay Times

Growing up in the Bay Area, wilderness didn't play a big role in my family life. We got outside in local and regional parks. There is no better feeling than hanging out with the whole familia on a hot summer day grilling carne asada, eating juicy watermelon with lime and playing soccer until it gets too dark to see the ball anymore.

But, while those experiences will be forever cherished, there was something missing. After working in national parks across the country, the word that comes to mind is grandeur.

If Donald Trump and his secretary of interior, Ryan Zinke, get their way, millions of people will be shut out from that experience of wonder and awe, as fees to visit our national parks skyrocket from \$30 to \$70.

Read the whole story

California Realtors plot statewide database

By Jeff Collins, San Jose Mercury News

Is the Realtor-run property listing service in California obsolete?

Several brokers, agents and "multiple listing service" operators expressed concern during a panel discussion this month that commercial websites like Zillow, Redfin and

Realtor.com have overtaken the patchwork of industry databases agents use to find homes for clients.

“The world of big data doesn’t seem to have come to the MLS in any meaningful way,” said David Silver-Westrick, a partner at San Clemente-based Keller Williams OC Coastal Realty. “We’re missing the boat on lots of big data opportunities. To the extent that consumers have better tools than we do, we just become irrelevant.”

Read the whole story

Changing of the guard in Olympic halfpipe

By Eddie Pells, AP

The first time they met, Chloe Kim was in awe. And why not? Kelly Clark was, after all, an Olympic gold medalist and one of best snowboarders in the world.

“My parents were, like, ‘Oh my gosh, you touched Kelly Clark’s jacket,’” Kim said of that day, nearly 10 years ago, in the lift line at Mammoth Mountain.

Kim said she felt like the luckiest girl in the world to get to ride up the chairlift with Clark.

These days, the friendship remains strong, and those rides to the top lead to much grander pursuits.

Read the whole story

Tax overhaul a blow to affordable housing efforts

By Conor Dougherty, New York Times

The last time that Congress approved a sweeping overhaul of the federal tax code, in 1986, it created a tax credit meant to encourage the private sector to invest in affordable housing. It has grown into a \$9 billion-a-year social program that has funded the construction of some three million apartments for low-income residents.

But the Republican tax plan approved last month amounts to a vast cutback, making it much less likely that such construction will continue apace. Because the tax rate for corporations has been lowered, the value of the credits – which corporations get in return for their investments – is also lower.

“It’s the greatest shock to the affordable-housing system since the Great Recession,” said Michael Novogradac, managing partner of Novogradac & Company, a national accounting firm based in San Francisco.

Read the whole story

Safely manage insects on

indoor plants

By Melinda Myers

Winter can be hard on gardeners and our indoor plants. Low light, shorter days and dry air stress our houseplants while helping insects thrive. Don't despair if insects have moved in and your plants are struggling with yellow or speckled leaves. Instead, invest a bit of time and effort managing these pests and keeping your plants looking their best.

Start by making sure your plants receive the proper amount of light and water. A healthy plant is better able to resist and recover from insect infestations. Check the plant tag, internet or plant book for the recommended growing conditions.

Make needed adjustments in your plant's care. Then take a closer look at the upper and lower leaf surfaces and stems of the plants for clues to the cause of the problem. Here are some of the more common indoor plant pests and organic options, safe for children and pets, for managing them.



Aphids, a common pest of indoor and outdoor plants, suck plant juices, causing leaves to yellow, brown, wilt or become distorted.

Photo/Melinda Myers

Fungus gnats are those small fruit fly-like insects that flit around your house. They feed on plant roots and organic matter in the soil. They usually don't harm the plants, but certainly are annoying.

Just sprinkle an organic insecticide like Summit Mosquito Bits, that contain the active ingredient *Bacillus thuringiensis israelensis* on the soil surface. This naturally occurring bacterium only kills the larvae of fungus gnats, black flies and mosquitoes.

Aphids are common pests of indoor and outdoor plants. These small teardrop shaped insects suck plant juices, causing the leaves to yellow, brown, wilt or become distorted. They secrete a clear sticky substance known as honeydew.

Mites cause similar damage, but are too small to see without a hand lens. If you suspect mites, shake a leaf over a white piece of paper and watch for specks, the mites, moving across the paper. Don't wait until you see webbing to control these pests. At that point there are thousands of mites making it difficult to control.

Both these types of pests can be managed in the same way. Start by placing plants in the sink or tub and knock the insects off the plant with a strong blast of water. Follow with several applications of insecticidal soap to kill the adults. Repeat as needed. Or suffocate all stages of the insects with a lightweight horticulture oil like Summit Year-Round Spray Oil.

Bumps on the stems and leaves of plants that can be easily scraped off with a thumbnail are scales. Their shells protect the adults and eggs from predators, weather and most insecticides. A similar pest, mealybug, has white waxy strands on its body for protection. Mealybugs can be found on stems,

leaves and area where leaves and stems meet.

Both types of insects suck the plant juices, causing leaves to yellow and plants to decline. And just like aphids and mites, they secrete honeydew. Both are difficult to control and require persistence on your part.

For mealybugs, remove the hard scale covering with your thumbnail or old toothbrush. Use a cotton swap dipped in alcohol to dissolve its waxy covering and kill the insect. Then spray with insecticidal soap to kill the immature insects. This takes time and persistence to control these pests.

Or apply a lightweight horticulture oil, like that used for mites and aphids, to suffocate both the adult and immature stages of these pests. Continue to watch for outbreaks and treat as needed.

No matter what products you choose, natural or synthetic, make sure they are labeled for the plant and pest you are treating. And always read and follow label directions carefully.

Investing time in managing pests as soon as they appear means healthy and more attractive plants to brighten your indoor décor now and for years to come.

Melinda Myers has written more than 20 gardening books, including "Small Space Gardening." She hosts The Great Courses "How to Grow Anything" DVD series and the nationally syndicated "Melinda's Garden Moment" TV and radio segments.

5 measures will be on 2018 ballot in Nevada

By Las Vegas Review-Journal

From bolstering protections for crime victims to eliminating taxes on tampons and medical supplies, Nevadans this year will vote on a slew of new measures.

Secretary of State Barbara Cegavske on Thursday released five questions facing voters in the November election.

[Read the whole story](#)