

SLT about to set moratorium on VHRs

By Kathryn Reed

Data. It's the four-letter word that could make the difference in the world of vacation home rentals in South Lake Tahoe.

Instead of making arbitrary rules based on emotion, at least three City Council members want facts to guide their decision-making.

Mayor Austin Sass with his pouting, fidgeting and lack of professionalism toward his colleagues on Tuesday showed why the gavel needs to change hands in December.

Sass has been lobbying for substantive change to the rules governing short-term rentals since he was elected three years ago. He was hoping in his one-year stint as mayor to have that change in place. He's not going to get what he wanted.

While he kept asking if the first reading of the new ordinance would take place Nov. 17, he was repeatedly told by the city attorney the substance of the changes would require a first reading to be down the road. That meant that no matter the outcome this week, there wasn't time for Sass to get in place everything he wanted while having the title of mayor.

He was beside himself that his peers were changing their minds and others never agreed with him.



City Councilman Austin Sass at the Oct. 17 meeting did not get his way about vacation rentals. Photo/Kathryn Reed

While two weeks ago it appeared there were three votes to implement a density rule where VHRs could not be closer than 150 feet to each other, Sass was the lone backer of that idea this week.

It's hard to know if what's on the books today works because data has been elusive. The council has had a habit of making changes to the ordinance based on the loud chorus of those who don't like VHRs. The problem is the city didn't have facts to corroborate those stories; or evidence to show they had even tried to address the complaints filed.

Nor were those tasked with enforcing the rules seeming to do their job because the same rental houses keep being the subject of public outcry.

Councilman Jason Collin has been harping on the need for data-driven decision making. Councilwoman Brooke Laine is echoing that sentiment. Her main soapbox has been all about enforcement and wanting to prove it is or isn't effective.

Collin repeatedly said it's time to "hit the pause button"

with VHRs in order to figure out what is working.

That could come next Tuesday at a special council meeting. The four will meet at 5pm Oct. 24 to vote on an urgency ordinance. (Councilman Tom Davis recuses himself from VHR discussions because of his interest in Tahoe Keys Resort.) It's expected that the number of VHRs on the books as of that night will be the limit for a 45-day period. For the emergency law to take effect, all four must vote for it.

City Attorney Nira Doherty said she will come back with evidence as to why the urgency ordinance is lawful. It's possible the bear box mandate could be wrapped into that ordinance because health and safety issues could be cited.

The council could vote to extend that moratorium for a year or enact something else at the 45-day mark.

At the Nov. 7 regular meeting other aspects of the VHR ordinance will be discussed. This includes the three strikes and the permit is revoked rule, higher fines, increased fees for more enforcement, rules regulating owners using their dwelling and more.

Occupancy was a sticking point. This gets back to Collin wanting data to show the type of residences and the number of people in a unit causing X infraction. He broached the idea of square-footage possibly being a better gauge for the number of people allowed than bedroom counts. That issue will warrant further discussion next month.

Eliminated from the ordinance on Tuesday were all regulations pertaining to those who rent a room while staying on the premise. Those shared rentals will be the subject of a future ordinance unto themselves.

Opinion: Don't trust government with new tax money

By Joel Fox

Reassurances to taxpayers about proper management of new revenue on the state and local level is too often ignored by politicians once the money is secured. Recent examples of attempts to spend money differently than promised are common—but it's an old story, as well.

The Legislature passed the gas tax and vehicle license fee increase amid promises that the money would go to the much-needed repair of transportation infrastructure. Before the governor had a chance to sign the bill, Democratic politicians were proposing ways to spend the money that were far afield from the transportation goals such as repairing restrooms in state parks.

Part of the promises made on the use of the new gas tax money is that voters will have a chance to pass a constitutional amendment in an election next year to assure that the money will be spent for transportation purposes. However, the new taxes will start coming in this year and many dollars will be spent before any guarantee is put in place. How much revenue will the constitutional guarantee protect and what might be spent of the new revenue before that guarantee is in place?

State Sen. Ted Gaines asked in a release: "Why would anyone believe that this new tax isn't a bait and switch sham where the funds won't be diverted to pay for pet projects like the High Speed Rail boondoggle?"

In Los Angeles, voters recently backed two measures to assist

in helping the homeless. A city bond is dedicated to building housing for the homeless while a county tax will be used for services for the homeless.

But in both instances, voters were promised that current budgets for the homeless would not be shifted for other purposes to be replaced by the new revenues. Yet, as Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce President Gary Toebben recently communicated to his membership, a shell game of moving dollars around may be in the works. As Toebben wrote, "Voters were promised a "maintenance of effort" to effectively deploy new resources for new housing and new services. The Chamber is very concerned by initial signs that this commitment is not being met."

Toebben points out the city budget currently under discussion shows a drop of funding for homeless services of over \$28 million, a reduction of about 43 percent of last year's homeless funding. Likewise, the draft budget for the County of Los Angeles indicates some new money would be used to backfill commitments to homeless services instead of expanding efforts on behalf of the homeless.

Yes, it's an old story. One I'm quite familiar with.

Twenty years ago, as head of the state's largest taxpayer's association, I took the extraordinary step to support a Los Angeles Unified school bond on the condition that our organization had a seat on the newly organized Bond Oversight Committee to make sure the money was spent properly. No sooner had the bond passed, that the school district ignored the oversight committee and went its merry way in spending the bond money—that is until we sued and a superior court judge put a stop to the school district ignoring the oversight committee with an admonition that the committee was to fulfill it's oversight obligation, it was not there simply to count nails once they were pounded in.

A few years later the school district again attempted to ignore the oversight committee. This time, holding the seat once occupied by the taxpayer group, civil rights lawyer, Connie Rice, blasted the district for bait and switch practices (there's that phrase again) on the use of the money.

Will politicians and bureaucrats ever learn to live up to their promises or will taxpayers ever learn not to believe what they are told during campaigns for more money?

*Joel Fox is editor and co-publisher of **Fox and Hounds Daily**.*

SLT needs roads commission members

Two of the five people who applied to be on the South Lake Tahoe Roads Management Authority Commission were appointed Tuesday – MaryAnne Brand and Brent Goligoski.

They are the two who attended the Oct. 17 council meeting.

The council is hoping more people will apply, though the remaining three will remain in the pool. The commission will have five to seven members.

The commission will take effect if Measure C, the roads sales tax, is approved Nov. 7.

Annually the commission would be tasked with approving the expenditure plan for the road construction, maintenance and road repair.

Participants must be a resident of the city and be eligible to vote.

Applications are available at the City Clerk's Office at 1901 Airport Road.

Women: 'Pervasive' harassment in Calif. Capitol

By Melanie Mason, Los Angeles Times

A state legislator who was groped by a male lobbyist weeks after she was sworn into office. A legislative staffer-turned-lobbyist who for years would only wear pantsuits in order to project a "business-only" air. A government affairs director who faced inappropriate advances from an associate in full view of male colleagues who seemed oblivious as it happened.

As Hollywood takes a hard look at itself in the wake of the spiraling Harvey Weinstein sexual misconduct scandal, the women of California politics are publicly declaring: Us too.

More than 140 women – including legislators, Capitol staff, political consultants and lobbyists – are signing a letter calling out the "pervasive" culture of sexual harassment and mistreatment that plagues their industry.

Read the whole story

Letter: Bread & Broth service dedicated to parents

To the community,

Bread & Broth's Monday meal on Oct. 9 was sponsored by Janet McDougall in memory of her parents, Mac and Jackie McDougall.

"Mac and Jackie were very hospitable and loved to feed people," said McDougall. "They would love the Bread & Broth program for feeding people's stomachs and souls."

Although most people know that B&B provides nutritious dinners for the guests who come to St. Theresa Hall every Monday, the meals also are an important social outlet for those who attend the meals. The dinners bring people together and their casual exchanges over time develop into concern and support for each other and many friendships have evolved.

This social support and healthy food is made possible by the generosity of B&B's Adopt A Day of Nourishment sponsors and volunteers who so willingly give of their time and energy to help and care for the disadvantaged in our community. At McDougall's memorial AAD, her sponsor crew included her brother John McDougall and good friends Flori Curran, Kathy Maston and Donarae Reynolds. This group would certainly make Mac and Jackie proud because they were an outstanding crew who worked really hard and were so kind and warm to the guests.

According to McDougall, "B&B is an exceptional program and it's a privilege to be a part of it."

B&B is so fortunate to have sponsors who are as supportive as McDougall.

Carol Gerard, Bread & Broth

1 in 30 wells in the West failed in recent years

By Emily Benson, High Country News

When their taps began spitting out air instead of water a few years ago, one family in Paso Robles was forced to snake a hose from a neighbor's property into their home for drinking water. They ate from paper plates instead of dishes, could no longer wash their laundry at home and watched their vegetable garden dry up. For households that rely on well water – a common situation across the rural West – the impacts can be severe when a well runs dry.

Stories like that one streamed out of California during the drought that officially ended earlier this year, but the extent of the problem – exactly how many wells were affected – was unclear. Now, new research suggests that one in 30 groundwater wells in the West, wells that supply farms in addition to homes, went dry between 2013 and 2015.

To arrive at that number, California-based researchers Debra Perrone and Scott Jasechko compiled location and depth records for wells constructed between 1950 and 2015 across Western states.

[Read the whole story](#)

Ex-FBI agent to deal with Nevada's opioid crisis

By Ben Botkin, Las Vegas Review-Journal

CARSON CITY — A retired FBI agent will be Nevada's first statewide opioid coordinator.

Attorney General Aam Laxalt announced on Monday the appointment of Terry Kerns, whose job will be to bridge the gap between law enforcement agencies and victims' service providers as Nevada responds to the opioid epidemic.

"As a former federal law enforcement officer and registered nurse, Kerns is a perfect fit to assist law enforcement and victim services coordinate responses to the opioid crisis," Laxalt said in a statement. "As the chair of Nevada's Substance Abuse Working Group, I understand that prevention goes hand-in-hand with law enforcement efforts."

Read the whole story

Threat targeting EDC school traced to Texas

By Sacramento Bee

An online post threatening the safety of an El Dorado County high school campus has been traced to a 19-year-old Texas man.

Over the weekend, the Union Mine High School Yearbook's Instagram page received a threatening post, according to an El

Dorado County Sheriff's Office news release.

Read the whole story

Unspoken truth about radon in Tahoe

By Stephen Saturno, Moonshine Ink

How can it be that one of the biggest health concerns in our area goes mostly unnoticed? While most people have barely heard of radon, testing in our area is nearly nonexistent. Even when you buy a home, there's a one-page disclosures section that's buried in a 200-page document somewhere after your final closing cost summary.

Local and federal governments spend little money on education and outreach while radon continues to be one of the leading causes of lung cancer.

Radon is a colorless, odorless, and tasteless gas that comes from the natural breakdown of uranium in rocks and soil. Inhaling radon can lead to DNA damage, which can cause cancer. In fact, the EPA states that it is the No. 2 cause of lung cancer in the United States after cigarette smoking.

Read the whole story

Gardnerville man dies in accident near Hope Valley

A 38-year-old Gardnerville man died in a two-car accident on Highway 88 on Monday.

The driver, whose name has not been released, was going east on the highway near Red Lake Road when he drifted into oncoming traffic.

The impact of the Oct. 16, 9:25am collision inflicted fatal injuries.

The other driver was in a Freightliner truck. The 55-year-old driver from Mokelumne Hill was not injured.

The cause of the accident is under investigation.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*