Opinion: Embracing change in South Lake Tahoe

By Jim Wire

Change is inevitable and necessary to build a better future for the growth of Lake Tahoe. Lake Tahoe is in the backyard of several growing population centers. Its proximity means that more people are seeking a temporary escape to the lakes and the mountains. With success comes the challenges. How do you better manage tourism to make it a better experience for both the tourists and locals?

The South Lake Tahoe community is divided about multiple issues such as vacation home rentals (VHRs), housing shortage/affordable housing, redevelopment and the new pilot program of LimeBikes. Having now been a Tahoe resident for over 34 years I've seen the town change and grow. I'd like to share some of my view points on these issues.

I'm sure many of you remember what it was like to survive the recession. There was loss of jobs, income, homes, etc. Tourism is now booming and we are all benefiting from the trickle-down economics. Vacation home rentals have become a large influence with the boost of tourism. It has created more jobs which are putting more dollars in the pockets of every local. Just ask all the people that service VHRs such as landscapers, maids, window cleaners, handymen, contractors, plumbers, snow removal, etc. Then ask all the people that serve them such as insurance brokers, accountants, doctors, dentists, etc. The list goes on.

With change comes adjustments. We were used to the quiet neighborhoods filled with empty homes, but now we see them being used on a more frequent basis. Our roads are more congested. To the disappointment of some, we now find

ourselves sharing space with more people. Those that do live here, should consider themselves lucky and privileged. It seems fair that we should be able to share our space with those from out of the area who do not enjoy the beauty of Lake Tahoe daily.

I’m not suggesting that we should tolerate bad behavior from a vacationer next door. Rather I believe that with the existing VHR regulations, better practices can and will develop. As law enforcement improves and rental management companies incorporate better practices for both tourists and residents there is ample opportunity for better experiences and prosperity.

Both law enforcement and rental management companies may not have been prepared to handle the increasing noise nuisance as tourism came booming back after the recession. In a panic, the South Lake Tahoe City Council had beefed up the existing laws and added more regulations on top of it. My initial reaction was that overregulation was not the answer. I’ll be the first to admit that there were some good things that came out of it. Law enforcement had been given a specific directive for handling many of the nuisances and rental management companies became more responsive as well.

The City Council has already spent an enormous amount of time, money and energy on VHR regulation but apparently, they aren’t done yet. On Sept. 5, they had considered more regulations that will ultimately reduce the number of VHR permits substantially. What they aren’t considering are all the unforeseeable impacts to now existing jobs who service those VHR’s.

What the City Council isn’t telling you is that between the attrition rate of VHR permits and the slower VHR permit approval time, the number of homes with VHR permits are already declining. I believe that the City Council’s time would be better spent on looking for ways to diversify and

grow the local economy rather than extinguishing the one that is currently sustaining us. If they kill a bunch of jobs, they better be prepared to replace them.

My next topic touches on both the housing shortage and affordable housing issues. In the 34 years that I've lived here, there's always been a housing shortage. Like most locals, I worked a couple of jobs to make a living. It was 20 years before I purchased my first home. If you want to increase the percentage of primary home ownership, then wages must increase. In a tourist economy, businesses will never be able offer high enough wages to compete with the second home buyers. Without a more diversified economy, it's just not possible. The city could be more successful at increasing primary home ownership through attracting new industries and those able to work remotely from home or within a business center here.

It's true that local businesses are finding it difficult to find employees because of the lack of affordable housing. It has more to do with a static supply and a growing demand. Then who is responsible for creating housing for the work force? Maybe it makes sense to dedicate housing that is deed restricted to low income individuals and families. In my opinion, the weekly motel rentals are a good candidate for work-force housing redevelopment. Businesses that benefit from workforce housing should also contribute to fund it. A new creation or reinstatement of a redevelopment agency (or similar group) could possibly bring new life and organization to this issue. It will take a combination of private funds, government subsidies and government cooperation. Working together, the private and public sector should be able to cut the red tape and make work-force housing happen within a reasonable amount of time.

Lastly, I'm surprised by the recent controversy over the LimeBikes. This is the thing that will give both visitors and locals better accessibility to enjoy our communities and

business areas even more. These bikes are for general easy riding and fill the niche for anyone who wishes to get out and about without the addition of another traffic inducing vehicle. With more people cycling locally our bike shops will benefit with a boost in cycling Tahoe.

As commuter and recreational cycling grows, infrastructure must be developed to make it safer and more convenient. Already tourists are braving Highway 50 and risking their lives. Tahoe has been the recipient of more federal and state dollars because we are the gem of the nation. It's embarrassing that as locals, we show our appreciation by getting in our cars to go up and down the Lake Tahoe Boulevard corridor (Highway 50). Are we incapable of coming up with a better alternative? Our bus system has a lot of inefficiencies. We should applaud the efforts of the LimeBikes.

Redevelopment is the answer to environmental protection and it has become the mantra of the TRPA for a good reason. There is still a need to redevelop much of the old and obsolescent commercial structures. Redevelopment cannot be accomplished without a public and private partnership. To build environmentally responsible structures you need developers. The process for redevelopment may not be perfect but it can be made better! By improving infrastructure for cycling and walkability, it should be possible to reduce Highway 50 traffic congestion.

South Lake Tahoe has been changing since I arrived 34 years ago and it will continue to do so. Much of it is positive but it doesn't come without some growing pains. What if there were affordable condos instead of run down motels? What if we had more locals working remotely from home which could bring higher wages to Lake Tahoe? With higher wages, maybe it is possible for more locals to afford a home. With better bike lanes along Highway 50 and throughout the neighborhoods, maybe it is possible to rely on bicycles as a better mode of

transportation. Let’s work together in a more positive and productive manner. With vision and focus, we can find a solution to make Lake Tahoe a better experience for tourists and locals. That’s a Tahoe I want to live and thrive in.

Jim Wire is a real estate agent with Chase International.

Economic enigma: Why the pain persists, even as incomes rise

By Patricia Cohen, New York Times

Incomes are up. Poverty is down. And job openings have hit a record high. But if the economy is so wonderful, why are so many Americans still feeling left behind?

The disconnect between positive statistics and people’s day-to-day lives is one of the great economic and social puzzles of recent years. It helped fuel President Donald Trump’s political rise and underpins the frustrations that played out in calls to build a Mexican border wall, reopen trade agreements and bring back well-paid work in coal mines and factories.

When the U.S. Census Bureau released its annual report on the country’s economic well-being recently, it showed unmistakable progress: For the second year in a row, household incomes — clobbered by the 2007-09 recession — had grown. More Americans were working, and more had health insurance, in 2016 than the year before.

Read the whole story

Opioid deaths in Nev. decline, hospitalizations rise

By Jessie Bekker, Las Vegas Review-Journal

Opioid-related deaths dropped in Nevada in 2016 from a year earlier, but hospitalizations and prescription rates rose, Nevada Department of Health and Human Services data presented this week show.

At the Opioid State Action Accountability Meeting in Carson City, convened by Gov. Brian Sandoval, state agencies said access to reliable, unlimited data remains a hindrance in fighting opioid problems.

Presenters at the meeting said data from hospitals, emergency medical services and law enforcement are limited, lacking information that could be used to better illustrate the opioid problem. Less complete data can hamper researchers' analyses and make devising solutions harder.

Read the whole story

Sporting events good for

casinos’ bottom line

Sports books are being credited with the double-digit increase in revenues at Nevada casinos in August.

In particular, the Floyd Mayweather-Conor McGregor fight and the return of NFL are being touted for the $989.5 million win, an increase of 14.9 percent from 2016.

Stateline casinos were up 7.02 percent at $25.576 million, while North Shore casinos posted gains of 10.39 percent at nearly $3.2 million.

Statewide, the sports gaming win hit a record at $19.8 million. Baseball helped with that figure as well.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Motorcycle crash closes Hwy. 50 at Twin Bridges



Traffic is moving as of 3:30pm at Twin

Bridges following a motorcycle accident.
Photo Copyright 2017 Carolyn E. Wright

Highway 50 was closed in both directions at Twin Bridges because a motorcycle went over the embankment.

Both people on the bike were down an embankment about 30 feet, according to the California Highway Patrol. A rescue helicopter arrived on scene about 2:50pm Sept. 29. The extent of their injuries was not immediately know.

The accident occurred about 2:15pm just east of Twin Bridges.

This was the second accident in two days involving a motorcycle.

On Thursday a motorcyclist lost consciousness before crashing on Highway 88 just west of Carson Pass. While it's not definitive, early indication is the rider suffered a medical episode before the crash, according to CHP. He was transported with non-life threatening injuries.

More motorcyclists are on the highways in the greater Lake Tahoe area because of the annual Street Vibrations event based out of Reno.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Early Truckee entrepreneur protected Chinese to no avail



Joseph Gray and his family built their cabin on land that would become downtown Truckee. Photo/Truckee-Donner Historical Society

By Abby Stevens, Moonshine Ink

The fact that Joseph Gray grew restless with his life in Pennsylvania and decided to head west is something all Truckee residents can be glad about, as he is arguably the town's founder. Gray, who ended up in the Sierra Nevada in the 1850s, established a firm foundation for Truckee that was rooted in his own savvy, empathy, and generosity.

The story of Gray is well documented through articles and snip-its written in the early pages of the local newspaper the Truckee Republican. More recently, pieces of his life have been re-told in articles written by Guy Coates and books including Chinese in the Woods; Logging and Lumbering in the American West written by Sue Fawn Chung and published in 2015, and Driven Out: The Forgotten War against Chinese Americans, written by Jean Pfaelzer and published in 2008.

Time and time again, Gray proved himself to be a fiercely smart entrepreneur and businessman, and a compassionate citizen. Some of his quandaries, including the debate about illegal immigrants, are still in dispute today.

Read the whole story

Gear swap in Meyers for sellers-buyers

On Oct. 15 the Meyers Community Foundation will host the fourth annual Meyers Outdoor Gear Swap in the Westgate Center parking lot adjacent the Divided Sky from 11am-3pm.

Looking for some sweet gear? Shop for skis, snowboards, bikes, paddle gear, climbing gear, camping equipment, and other outdoor toys. Cash or credit cards will be accepted.

If you've got quality summer or winter gear to sell, come on down. Merchandise registration will take place in the parking lot between 8:30-10:30am; there is a $1 cash per item fee to register it for the swap. No equipment over 5 years old allowed. Unsold merchandise may be picked up between 3-5pm; unclaimed items will be donated. Twenty percent of the proceeds will go to the MCF.

To make a bigger contribution, gear donations to the MCF are accepted The MCF is a 501(c)(3) dedicated to improving life in Meyers.

For more information about the swap, contact Brian Levy at 530.545.9941 or René Brejc at 530. 545.0340.

Push Physical Theater coming

to Stateline

Push Physical Theater will be at Harrah’s South Shore Room on Oct. 6 at 7pm.

The performers use athleticism, gravity-defying acrobatics, and artistry. The strength of the human soul is expressed by the power of the human body.

Admission will be at the door beginning at 6:15pm. Adults tickets are $15 and children (through high school) accompanied by an adult are free.

Two members of Push Physical Theater will be performing in the South Shore schools the week of Oct. 3.

For more information, call Tahoe Arts Project at 530.542.3632.

Calif. Realtors want to change tax laws

By Jim Miller, Sacramento Bee

California homeowners looking to move up would get a major financial break under a possible 2018 ballot measure to change a key provision of the state’s landmark tax law.

Proposition 13, the 1978 ballot measure, has discouraged homeowners from moving to pricier homes because a property’s assessed value is based on its most recent sales price.

Any of the three proposals crafted by the California Association of Realtors would be a significant change to

Proposition 13, which caps property taxes at 1 percent of assessed value.

Read the whole story

‘Secret Artists’ exhibit coming to Truckee

The Truckee Public Arts Commission will host “Hidden in Plain Sight, Uncovering the Work of Truckee’s Secret Artists” with an opening reception on Oct. 13 from 5 to 7pm

The event will be at the Truckee Community Recreation Center.

It kicks off an exhibit that features artists who haven’t otherwise shown their work – whether they consider themselves hobbyists or are working in a new medium, including two local student artists.

Music from select members of the Truckee High Jazz Ensemble and refreshments will be part of the evening’s festivities.

A variety of artists and styles will be on display including Bob Hicks, who works with colored pencil and paper, Mary Kenny, a multi-media artist using graphite and gouache, and Matthew Osgood who paints with acrylic on canvas.

The event is free.