EDC pays $375,000 for flawed salary study

By Kathryn Reed

El Dorado County spent more than a quarter of a million dollars to do a salary study that it doesn't want to use during current negotiations with workers.

The 900 or so employees represented by Local 1 are working without a contract. The last full contract expired June 30, 2016, but had a one-year extension to June 30, 2017.

"The county and labor have both identified some errors identified in the data which is common for compensation studies of this size, and those were easily corrected," Carla Hass, spokeswoman for the county, told *Lake Tahoe News.*

But the county is not saying what the errors are or why it isn't using the study or why it paid the contractor for something that is flawed.

Hass went on to say, "Labor has also expressed concern regarding what level of benefit should be used to serve as the baseline, such as the PPO health plan versus the HMO health plan, or the various tiers of retirement plans depending on when an employee was hired. These are normal discussion points in any classification/compensation study and the county is committed to working with labor to discuss those issues and using the Koff report as a tool and resource as we implement improvements to the county's overall classification and compensation system."

The union has a little different take on what is going on.

"It is a flawed study and they would be better off putting it on the shelf. It's held up negotiations for a year and now the

county is saying it will take 12 to 18 months to review the study before any implementation; meanwhile we go without a contract," Jere Copeland, union rep, told *Lake Tahoe News.*

The contract with Berkeley-based Koff & Associates was for $377,545, of which they were paid $376,855. Hass said this is the going rate for this type of study.

The whole point was to provide a comprehensive classification and compensation study. There were 209 job classifications studied. El Dorado County was compared to the counties of Butte, Merced, Napa, Nevada, Placer, Sacramento, Shasta, Solano, Sutter, Tuolumne and Yolo, as well as to the state.

Public agencies are known for doing these types of studies because employees want to be making what their peers earn and the jurisdiction wants to stay competitive to be attractive to potential hires. With unions, everyone gets the same raise and it has nothing to do with merit/job performance.

It was Pamela Knorr, then director of Human Resources, who signed the contract in May 2016.

A separate consulting firm had been hired the prior year to help the county with getting the study started. That contract, also signed by Knorr, was for $64,000. Municipal Resource Group only received half of that amount.

Snippets about Lake Tahoe

· Tahoe Rim Trail Association will be raffling one of its vistas at the annual celebration and fundraiser on Oct. 3 at North Tahoe Event Center in Kings Beach. The winner will name the view of Lake Tahoe from mile 15 of the Tahoe Rim Trail

north of Tahoe City. Vistas are normally available for a $5,000 tax-deductible donation. Raffle tickets are $50, with only 100 being sold. Tickets are available online.

· Nicole Cartwright is now executive directors of Tahoe Resource Conservation District.

· Tahoe City's annual Oktoberfest is Sept. 30 from noon-6pm on the lakefront grounds of William B. Layton Park /Gatekeepers Museum. No entrance fee; $10 for first beer, includes stein.

· South Lake Tahoe and the Regan family will be hosting a re-dedication ceremony of the Thomas F. Regan Memorial Beach on Oct. 1 at noon.

· Patricia Smith, 2014 Guggenheim fellow, and long-time collaborator and instructor for the Sierra Nevada College's MFA-creative writing program is one of nine finalists for the 2018 Neustadt Prize. The Neustadt Prize recognizes significant contributions to the world of literature and has a history as a forerunner to the Nobel Prize in Literature.

More talk than action on Tahoe workforce housing

Publisher's note: ***This is one in a series of stories about affordable housing in the Lake Tahoe-Truckee region. All articles may be accessed via the home page under Special Projects, 2017 Affordable Housing.***

By Kathryn Reed

Nearly two years after Vail Resorts announced it would spend

$30 million on workforce housing, the financial commitment is beginning to pay off in Colorado, though not so much in Tahoe.

The ski resort behemoth has been doing more at its Colorado properties than in California. Keystone is getting a $6 million workforce housing project, while 23 acres near East Vail have been identified for housing. It is spending $440,000 to convert a commercial building it owns in Silverthorne (Summit County, Colo.) into housing.



Vail Resorts says it owns or leases approximately 3,000 beds in Eagle and Summit counties, which is where its Vail, Beaver Creek, Keystone, and Breckenridge resorts are located.

“Employee housing is a priority for us at both Heavenly and Kirkwood mountain resorts, and we continuously work with our community partners and stakeholders to provide housing options and opportunities for our resorts’ teams. For instance, we have employee housing at both of our mountains; and recently, we added an additional 32 beds to our housing at Kirkwood,” Kevin Cooper, spokesman for the resorts, told *Lake Tahoe News.*

However, what he wouldn’t say is how many employees can be housed at the company-owned facilities, what the amenities are (laundry? food provided?), if they are more like apartments or dorms, if they are seasonal or year-round, and the cost to workers.

At the Sept. 21 California Tahoe Conservancy meeting, staff noted they are in talks with Vail Resorts – the Colorado-based parent company of Heavenly and Kirkwood – about developing workforce housing on a parcel the state owns near the Crossings at the Y in South Lake Tahoe. CTC is doing the prep

work to get that land ready to be sold, with the desire for it to be used for worker housing.

It’s estimated 40 residential units could go there.

CTC staff said Vail is interested in year-round housing for employees as it expands its summer attractions.

The board will see this parcel and idea on the agenda when the environmental documents are completed and more details are solidified. Staff had no time line for when that might be.

Northstar, the Vail Resorts property in Truckee, is part of the Truckee North Tahoe Regional Housing Council, and has pledged $30,000 to the Housing Solutions Fund.

K’s Kitchen: Tomato, corn, basil salad

By Kathryn Reed

With farmers’ markets getting ready to call it a season in the Lake Tahoe area and summer produce soon to be thing of the past, this recipe needs to be made soon.

While the ingredients can be found year-round, I try not to buy tomatoes out of season. They don’t have any flavor.

This is a great salad to serve with a variety of main courses. It would also be a good one to take to a pot luck.



Corn, Tomato, Basil Salad

2 large heirloom tomatoes, diced

½ tsp kosher salt

1/3 C extra virgin olive oil

1 T flat leaf parsley, chopped

3 T red wine vinegar

1 T grainy mustard

1 T sodium soy sauce

1 T white miso

1 medium shallot, minced

2 C corn kernels

¼ C shaved Parmigiano-Reggiano

2 T flat leaf parsley, chopped

12 fresh basil leaves, torn into small pieces

Put tomatoes in a large bowl. Sprinkle with salt; let stand.

Combine oil and next six ingredients (through shallot) in a pint jar. Shake until blended.

Add the remaining ingredients to tomatoes. Pour vinaigrette over mixture. Toss and serve.

‘California Field Atlas’ creator coming to Tahoe

Based on decades of exploring California’s backcountry, the “California Field Atlas” is Obi Kaufmann’s compilation of hundreds of hand-painted maps detailing the striking topography of the Golden State.



Obi Kaufmann

Kaufmann will be at Alpenglow Sports in Tahoe City on Oct. 2 at 6:30pm to talk about the book. There will be a Q&A following the presentation. He will also be signing books.

The “Field Atlas” creates an elemental narrative of the shaping forces of earth, air, fire, and water. Kaufmann’s watercolor paintings bring soul and color to the overly computerized world of mapping.

Kaufmann will arrive at Alpenglow Sports at 3pm to create a Lake Tahoe-centric painting. This painting will then be raffled off at the show with the proceeds to benefit the Tahoe Institute for Natural Science.

Entry is $7 at the door.

‘The Woman in Black’ will open in October

Kick off this Halloween season with what it is said to be a spine-tingling tale of mystery, suspense, and maybe a ghost or two.

Opening night of “The Woman in Black” is Oct. 6 at Valhalla.

The South Shore performance of this play is Oct. 6-8 and Oct. 12-15, 7:30pm. Tickets range from $15 to $30 and are available **online**.

Arthur Kipps, a junior solicitor, travels to the countryside to attend the funeral of his client, Mrs. Alice Drablow, and to settle her estate. At the funeral, he catches an unsettling glimpse of a mysterious woman in black. Arthur soon finds that the locals are terrified at the mere mention of her, for it is said that anyone who sees the woman in black will suffer a terrible fate.

Secrets from the past slowly unravel as Kipps explores the Eel Marsh House estate, but he soon finds that the dead won’t be left behind.

In production since 1989, this thriller was adapted by Stephen Mallatratt from the book by Susan Hill.

No immediate solution to toxic plume in SLT

By Susan Wood

Water agencies are pressing forward on a proposed work plan designed to outline how to eliminate the contaminant PCE from groundwater near the Y in South Lake Tahoe.

Richard Solbrig, South Tahoe Public Utility District general manager, gave his board an update Sept. 21 on treatment of a toxic plume known for decades to leach into the groundwater in the highly industrial area at the Y. Officials have narrowed at least one scope of the plume to property owners and operators of the Lake Tahoe Laundry Works, which once existed at the shopping center anchored by Raley's. But the extent of the plume may not end there, and the plume could be co-mingled with others.



The circle represents the known area of the PCE plume in South Lake Tahoe. Image/LRWQCB

Delineating that represents part of what the work plan is intended to do.

The Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board has put into place a conditional work plan to further investigate the magnitude of the situation in order to define where and when to fix the problem, and who's responsible. Responsible parties known so far, who were sent a letter by the regional water agency on Sept. 15, would be tagged to hire contractors to conduct the cleanup. First, water agencies need to figure out where the plume begins and ends.

"The plume is quite extensive," Solbrig told his board. "We may have more contamination. We have a lot at stake."

With at least a handful of wells known to have been contaminated in the Tahoe Keys and Lukins Brothers water districts that were shut down and capped off, STPUD has provided water from its system. However, the hope is STPUD's backup supply won't be too taxed.

All eyes from three water purveyors and the state are on those area wells – which all meet in one highly used zone drawing from the same aquifer.

The drought prompted California to regulate groundwater, ordering water jurisdictions to develop management plans. STPUD has taken the lead on the mandate and about a month ago, counted more than 600 private wells within its boundaries.

Contamination remains the biggest threat to the water supply.

An initial study was approved to investigate this latest PCE contamination. Monitoring the wells represents Job 1 while Lahontan's proposed work plan is out for public comment.

Winter's impact will have no bearing on changing the work plan – but within reason, Lahontan Executive Officer Patty Kouyoumdjian said a day after snow ushered out summer in South Lake Tahoe.

"If it snows 6 inches, at least it would be harder to drill,"

she said.

But Lahontan needs a clear view of what is going on.

“This work plan will yield a lot of information,” she added.

Much is at stake for the water agency and the affected water districts. They’re asking for more money from the state water board.

Tetrachloroethylene, or PCE, is a manmade chemical largely used commercially as an industrial degreaser or spot remover. When improperly disposed of, the chlorinated solvent seeps into groundwater supplies.

In worst case scenarios, chronic exposure can cause damage to the liver, kidneys and central nervous system. It may also increase the risk of cancer.

Kouyoumdjian commended STPUD for stepping in to provide clean drinking water.

“It’s unfortunate for these water districts. They didn’t cause this, and in the meantime, they’re concerned about getting clean water to their clientele,” she told *Lake Tahoe News.*

Lahontan plans to host community meetings on the subject.

This isn’t the first time STPUD has been forced to deal with a contaminant issue. In 1997, the gas additive MTBE – methyl tertiary butyl ether – was found in a dozen wells. The wells, among gas stations were consequently shut down. The district sued big oil in 2001 and won a $69 million lawsuit from 33 oil companies.

Like MTBE, the latest toxin – PCE – is a water solvent that represents a challenge corralling. It can move fast and wide.

The Y in particular is characterized as a commercial zone with the types of businesses deemed with disposing of chemical

waste.

“There are lots of industrial businesses in that area,” said Jennifer Lukins, who runs the Lukins water district.

The profile of the area makes it susceptible to this type of groundwater contamination.

Opinion: Would Nevadans pay higher taxes to cover Medicaid expansion?

By Victor Joecks, Las Vegas Review-Journal

Nevada’s Medicaid expansion has been getting a lot of love from Gov. Brian Sandoval, Sen. Dean Heller and others who want Washington to continue paying the bulk of the program’s tab.

But if Nevada taxpayers had to pay the full cost of the expansion, it’d have less support than Harry Reid running for president of a Republican women’s club.

Under Obamacare, the federal government paid the full cost of that expansion from 2014 to 2016. Nevada pays 5 percent of the costs in 2017 and by 2020 will pay 10 percent of the bill.

Read the whole story

Electric bikes steal the show at Interbike

By Todd Prince, Las Vegas Review-Journal

The son of a champion motorcycle racer, Zeno Panarari grew up in a region of Italy so well known for its gasoline-fueled bikes that it’s sometimes called Motor Valley.

Thus, when the mechanical engineer took to building a bicycle, it turned out more like his father’s motorcycle than a Schwinn pedal bicycle.

Panarari’s model was just one of the many eye-grabbing electric bikes on display at Interbike, the cycling industry’s largest North American show, with roughly 25,000 attendees and hundreds of exhibitors. The three-day show ended Friday.

While the U.S. cycling industry is in stagnation as younger people pursue new forms of sport and recreation, the electric bike industry is speeding ahead, according to industry professionals.

Read the whole story

Suspect sought in Stateline burglaries



Peter Quillian

Douglas County sheriff’s investigators are looking for a man they believe to be responsible for a rash of burglaries in the Lower Kingsbury Grade area.

The man’s name is Peter Quillian. No precise description was provided.

Anyone with information about Quillian’s whereabouts is asked to call 775.782.5126.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report