Efforts to control Calif. housing costs go to guv

By Alexei Koseff and Taryn Luna, Sacramento Bee

A multi-bill package aimed at addressing California's housing affordability crisis headed to Gov. Jerry Brown Friday as lawmakers prepared to draw the curtain on the 2017 legislative year.

Legislative leaders had previously reached agreement with Gov. Jerry Brown over measures to generate money for low-income housing development, fund housing programs and streamline the approval process for new projects, and he is expected to sign them.

"It's a crisis and we want to act like it," Sen. Toni Atkins, D-San Diego, said of her measure to impose a real estate transaction fee.

Read the whole story

Boat inspectors nab 30 contaminated vessels

During the 2017 boating season, Tahoe RCD watercraft inspectors performed more than 7,600 inspections. In total, more than 15,000 vessels launched at Lake Tahoe, including newly inspected vessels and those with intact Tahoe-issued inspection seals.

This year more than 30 of the inspected watercraft were

harboring aquatic invasive plants, mussels or snails. With our efficient roadside inspection stations, Tahoe RCD decontaminated approximately 4,300 watercraft with hot water, preventing invasive species from entering Tahoe’s waters.

Boat inspections will move to select launch ramps and winter hours starting Oct. 1.

Inspectors will be at Cave Rock and Lake Forest boat ramps from 6am-4pm seven days a week, weather permitting. All boats without an intact Tahoe inspection seal are required to get an inspection during daylight hours.

Decontaminations are available at Cave Rock and Lake Forest throughout October as weather permits. Decontamination fees will apply for watercraft that are not clean, drained and dry. Watercraft that has been in a known infested waterbody will require a precautionary decontamination at no cost regardless of whether it has been cleaned, drained, and dry. Boats with intact inspection seals are permitted to launch at all open launch facilities; however, inspections are only available at Cave Rock and Lake Forest boat launch ramps.

Boaters are encouraged to confirm hours and inspection locations by calling 888.824.6267.

Night of ski movies at Homewood resort

Homewood Mountain Resort will host a night of ski movie premieres on Oct. 5 at the North Lodge, with doors opening at

6pm.

The opening film will be “Room for Improvement” by local film company Janky Films. Featuring local skiers and snowboarders riding resort and backcountry in California. The film also includes a segment from South America with footage from Cerro Catedral in Argentina that was filmed this summer.

The evening’s feature film will be Kye Petersen’s “Numinous.” A movie two years in the making, Petersen and friends travel the world in search of steep lines and epic terrain, capturing footage of nature’s raw landscapes.

Tickets are available **in advance**: $10 adults, $5 kids under 15. At the door: $15 adults, $8 kids under 15. Homewood passholders will receive a $5 discount off any ticket price.

Lawsuit aims to end commercial fur trapping in Calif.

By Louis Sahagun, Los Angeles Times

Conservation groups, aiming to end California’s dwindling fur trade, filed a lawsuit Wednesday that would force state wildlife authorities to raise license fees to levels required by law to cover the full costs of regulating the trapping, killing and skinning of wild animals.

That would drive the fees so high it would effectively kill off the trade introduced centuries ago by California’s first explorers and settlers, said Camilla Fox, executive director

of Project Coyote, one of the plaintiffs.

The lawsuit, filed against the California Department of Fish and Wildlife and the state Fish and Game Commission, alleges that revenue generated from the 200 commercial trapping licenses purchased in 2016 for about $117 covered only a fraction of the state trapping program’s total costs.

Read the whole story

Incline golf course recertified as Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary

The Incline Village Championship Golf Course has retained its designation as a certified Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary through the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program for Golf Courses, an Audubon International program.

Participation is designed to help course personnel plan, organize, implement, and document a comprehensive environmental management program and receive recognition for their efforts.

To reach certification, a course must demonstrate it is maintaining a high degree of environmental quality in a number of areas including: environmental planning, wildlife and habitat management, outreach and education, chemical use reduction and safety, water conservation, and water quality management.

The Championship Golf Course at Incline Village is one of seven courses in Nevada and 911 courses in the world to have this distinction.

Snow possible next week in higher elevations

Lake Tahoe is going from cool to cold.

While the calendar says fall will arrive next week, the forecast is more like winter.

“Most of next week will be on the cool side, and there is a chance for showers and some mountain snow during the second half of the week,” the National Weather Service in Reno said.

Frost was already reported in some locations of South Lake Tahoe this week. People with outdoor plants might want to protect them.

Overnight lows this week have been in the 30s, and that’s just going to continue into next week.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

‘Drop Everything’ – a ski

movie with humor

By Kayla Anderson, Tahoe Weekly

Matchstick Productions new film “Drop Everything” to be released today is set to be one of the most action-packed and funny ski flicks of the year – not to mention full of incredible skiing.

“Drop Everything” has many layers of meaning to its name.

Written, directed and edited by Tahoe local Scott Gaffney, “Drop Everything” features local athletes such as Cody Townsend, Michelle Parker, Elyse Saugstad and other favorites hucking themselves off of snow-capped cliffs and rocks or getting the first lines from Tahoe to Vancouver, B.C.

Read the whole story

Students at the core of LTCC’s improvement plan

By Kathryn Reed

Every decision made at Lake Tahoe Community College is done so with the same common denominator – students.

There was a time when the philosophy in higher education was that students had the right to fail. After all, they are adults and can make decisions that may not allow them to succeed.

LTCC President Jeff DeFranco wants none of that. He believes

in a student-first scenario where the mantra is students have the right to succeed and that it is those working at the college who must ensure the resources are in place for that to happen.

“We are doing everything we can to make sure they succeed,” DeFranco said. Success means getting them to move onto a four-year university, or graduating with an associate’s degree, or having the skills to find gainful employment.

DeFranco was speaking Sept. 14 to a full house at the Duke Theatre. This was his inaugural convocation where he gave the state of college address. With fall quarter slated to start Monday, this was an opportunity for faculty, staff and the community to hear where the college has been and is going in the short and long term.

DeFranco took over the presidency earlier this year. And while the groundwork was already laid for some of what he spoke about, he is also eager to break new ground and set goals that will define his time in office.

“Public education is a great equalizer,” he said. He spoke of his roots; his great-grandparents moving to the United States from Italy. A great-uncle was the first in his family to attend higher education – which was at a community college. This paved the path for his mom to go to UC Davis.



The university center at LTCC will help to redefine the South Lake Tahoe college. Photo/LTN

While higher education may be the norm for many families, it is still a novelty for others, while some think it is out of reach.

In 2012-13, 29.1 percent of LTCC's student population was comprised of first generation college students. Last school year that percentage was 34.9 percent. Many are Hispanic; a reflection of the community at large.

LTCC supports Deferred Arrival for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) and has students who are threatened by potential changes to the federal law.

While getting more students is always on the agenda, ensuring the ones who are enrolled complete their studies and on time are major goals.

Community college enrollment is dropping across the country, and LTCC is not immune to this trend.

One focus is to get more local high school students to attend LTCC. Right now about 35 percent of South Tahoe High grads go to LTCC. The goal is to capture 50 percent. The college also is making a concerted effort to lure Whittell, North Tahoe and Incline high school students, too.

DeFranco talked about “promise grants” – something that was brought up **in March** at a board meeting. Local students would receive one year free at LTCC. Funding for it, though, is still not in place. However, the president wants to launch it in fall 2019.

“If we don’t do this, we will not be serving our community and we will be left behind,” DeFranco said.

Physically, the college is going through a bit of a renaissance thanks to Measure F, the $55 million bond approved by voters in November 2014. The university center, where students will be able obtain four-year degrees via partnerships with other institutions, is going up rapidly next to where DeFranco was speaking. The plaza outside the library is a new gathering spot – and one with heated walkways. The parking lot is no longer dilapidated; plus, it conforms to ADA regulations.

Upgrades to classrooms are coming.

WiFi throughout campus is much improved, with cellphone boosters in the budget.

Transportation is seen as a barrier to college, and was made more pronounced by last winter’s epic snowfall. Starting in October, LTCC students will be provided free passes for the local bus. This is a product of ADVANCE, a collaborative network of local organizations, government offices, and employers that work together to support adults in meeting education, career, and other personal goals. Tahoe Transportation District wants to make the college a hub. A bus shelter on campus is on the drawing board.

By 2022, LTCC intends to have **housing on campus** available for students.

LTCC wants to be a partner with other entities in town. Revamping how the theater is used in one way. TedX South Lake Tahoe will be at the college at the end of the month and Valhalla is putting on the play “Joint Chiefs” this year at the theater.

Besides starting a new school year, the most immediate concern of the college’s is to retain its accreditation. The review committee from the Western Association of Schools and Colleges will be on campus Oct. 9-12.

While there are plenty of plans in place for LTCC, the last major **strategic planning** session was in 2011. DeFranco plans to have a fresh look at the college’s goals in January.

Opinion: Most popular outdoors program is in danger

By Elizabeth Miller, Backpacker

Jonathan Asher didn’t know much about the Land and Water Conservation Fund when he started working for the Wilderness Society, where he’s a senior representative for government relations. But when he scrolled through the list of projects that it had paid for, he found that it touched his life from end to end.

“I couldn’t throw a stone and not see a place that I knew of or grew up around or had had some interaction with, whether it was Evergreen Lake and growing up skating there, or the

Evergreen rec center, or my fondest or most epic trips, like Kenai and Denali," he says. Even visiting his father in Buena Vista, Colo., he passes a sign touting the fund's support of the town's river park.

But the fund, to which Congress can allocate up to $900 million, saw many of its components zeroed out by the president's proposed budget. All in all, the fund is looking at a whopping 85 percent cut, one of a series of reductions to the Department of Interior that saw millions dropping from the budgets for the National Park Service, Fish and Wildlife Service, and Bureau of Land Management. Conservation groups called it "reckless" and "a shameless attack on America's parks and public lands."

No taxpayer dollars go to the Land and Water Conservation Fund, which was created in 1964 to direct royalties paid by energy companies drilling on the outer continental shelf toward efforts to safeguard national parks, cultural and recreation sites, forests, rivers, and lakes.

Read the whole story

Wind energy has hit a lull in California

By Rob Nikolewski, Los Angeles Times

Which way is the wind blowing in California?

In some respects, wind energy in the state has never been better, but by other measurements growth has hit a lull for the past four years.

The U.S. Department of Energy released its annual report analyzing technologies and markets for the wind industry, showing that California has installed 5,656 megawatts of utility-scale wind, the fourth highest in the nation.

Read the whole story