

# Letter: Kings Beach event center deal a bad idea

To the community,

After 1.5 years of negotiations with the developer Laulima, the North Tahoe Public Utility District (NTPUD) board has voted to pursue a 70-year lease – really a sale – of our community's free and clear lakefront venue, North Tahoe Event Center.

The lease states that Laulima can sublet or assign to any of their other managers or members without NTPUD approval. In January 2017 Laulima Northstar LLC was formed. Wow, you know where this is going.

After the lease is signed and the community is contractually on the hook, the NTPUD will finally find out what Laulima's plans are and if they have adequate financing. A little late there. I thought that was what they were doing for 18 months.

When asked what would happen if Laulima defaulted, NTPUD answered, "We'd get it back." I bet the lenders on the CalNeva had the same hopes, but that isn't how it works litigation and bankruptcy-wise.

We just got the 37 page lease Friday evening and the first public meeting is Aug. 23 at 5:30pm at the North Tahoe Event Center.

The NTPUD is fast tracking this awful scheme. Please come and voice your concerns. The final board vote to approve hasn't happened yet.

See the lease **online**.

**Ann Nichols, North Tahoe Preservation Alliance**

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# Rangers recover body of Heavenly patroller

By Mike Carter, Seattle Times



Dmitri  
Pajitnov

The body of Heavenly Mountain Resort ski patroller Dmitri Pajitnov, who went missing on Mount Rainier last month after he fell through a snow bridge, has been found at the bottom of a waterfall, the park said.

Mount Rainier National Park initially published a news release right after the 30-year-old Washington man went missing on July 3. He had fallen into a hole above Pebble Creek while descending on skis from Camp Muir, the park said.

Since then, the park has conducted over 22 ground and air searches of the area.

**Read the whole story**

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# Squaw's parent company buys Deer Valley

By Jason Blevins, Denver Post

A looming season-pass showdown among Colorado's ski-industry heavyweights moved closer to reality Monday as the new Aspen Skiing-KSL Capital Partners venture bought Utah's posh Deer Valley resort.

The purchase adds a key Utah destination to the partnership's growing portfolio that already included resorts in Colorado, California and elsewhere, and makes a direct challenge to Vail Resorts, the world's largest resort operator.

The newly formed – and yet unnamed – Denver-based partnership already ranks as North America's second-largest player in the ski resort world after its formation in April. With the Deer Valley deal, it picked off one of the highest-end ski areas in the world, which sits adjacent to Vail's sprawling Park City resort complex.

**[Read the whole story](#)**

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## Boarded up Meyers gas station on track to reopen



A Shell station is slated to open in Meyers at this site.  
Photo/Kathryn Reed

### **By Kathryn Reed**

The dilapidated, graffiti-ridden, eye-sore of what once was a gas station in Meyers could be history this time next year.

The building isn't going anywhere – but it will undergo a major remodel. The former use is staying the same; only instead of a Beacon gas station it will be a Shell. The owners are the same ones who have let the site sit in disrepair for years.

It's not a done deal, but all of this has been in the works for a while.

County staff has been working with the applicant since last fall. Sutton and Associates out of Sacramento is representing the owners, Meyers Holding Co. based in Concord. Azad Amiri is the face of Meyers Holding Co.

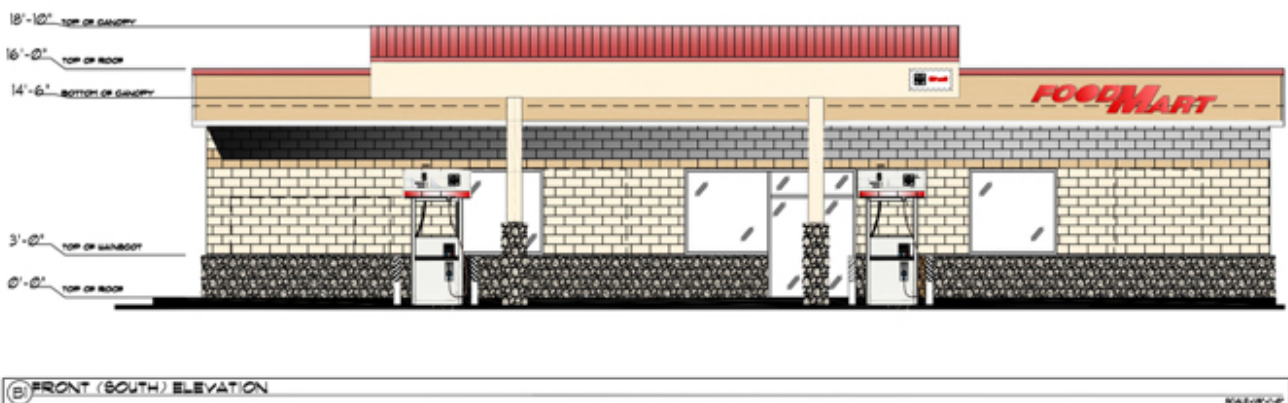
The **state in 2005** sued Amiri and Sarbjit Singh Kang, who own several gas stations, for allegedly mishandling underground storage tanks.

Regarding the Meyers location, the state Water Board spent \$1.1 million to clean up the site.

"We worked with the attorney general to request reimbursement and we received a fraction of that amount back. The state is no longer pursuing reimbursement of funds," Lauri Kemper with the Lahontan Water Quality Control Board told *Lake Tahoe News*.

The old tanks are still in the ground and will have to be unearthed prior to the station reopening. The new ones will be installed closer to the fueling islands for better delivery access.

"Because we have to remove the tanks we cannot break ground this year. It will be next spring," Steve Sutton with Sutton and Associates told *Lake Tahoe News*. "It won't take long to get it done. Everything is pretty much preordered at this time, but we want issuance for the use permit, so it will be sometime next year, midsummer when we'll be open for sales of fuel."



A visual of what the gas station is projected to look like. Rendering/Sutton and Associates

To open, the county must issue a special use permit, which is

something the Planning Commission would vote on. Their decision can be appealed to the Board of Supervisors.

"I think the best thing we can do is get the community involved. They should be writing, they should be participating," Supervisor Sue Novasel told *Lake Tahoe News*. "The Planning Commission has allowed and not allowed things that the community has needed and wanted. The community may feel like it has its hands tied, they don't. They need to voice their opinion one way or not."

Because the county has never approved the Meyers Area Plan, this application comes under the outdated community plan. However, both planning documents would allow for a gas station at this location (3208 Highway 50) and both would require a special use permit.

Meyers has had three gas stations in the past; and the Shell station would make it so this enclave at the base of Echo Summit has three again.

Several residents who worked on the new area plan had hoped the location would be something more than a gas station and mini mart; something outdoorsy, and certainly a conduit to the trails in the area.

Free market, zoning and private property rights, though, are factors here.

(Novasel said the area plan's environmental documents should be released this fall.)

The county on Aug. 16 sent a letter to area agencies and government bodies notifying them about the gas station application. Comments and concerns are due at the end of the month. The county's technical advisory committee is then set to meet Sept. 18 "to take one or more of the following actions; 1) make an environmental determination, 2) determine final project conditions and/or, 3) confirm the public hearing

date.” That meeting is not open to the public.

In an email county planning chief Roger Trout sent to Novasel and CAO Don Ashton, he said it will be three to six months before the Planning Commission takes up the special use permit.

The email further said, “Often the public will be interested in the early steps of processing this special use permit, but it is a little early in the process for public comment. However, we would welcome members of the public informing planning of their interest in the project. They should contact the staff planner, ask questions, and ask to be added to the mailing list for the future public hearing.”

The plan is to remodel the 1,900-square-foot building, have eight pumps on two islands, add interior bathrooms, a new sign, new asphalt, and removal of the old diesel pump in the back.

“It won’t look like the same building when we are done with it,” Sutton said.

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## **Opinion: EDC thwarting media’s access**

**By Kathryn Reed**

El Dorado County is getting petty and personal – and *Lake Tahoe News* isn’t going to take it anymore. We are done being silent.

El Dorado County has an image problem. El Dorado County says one thing (that it wants to be transparent) and does another

(cuts off access). El Dorado County is void of effective leadership.

The citizenry needs to start paying attention. What is going on in Placerville – or not as the case may be – does affect Lake Tahoe. It may seem like a world away, but decisions being made by staff and electeds roll down Echo Summit to the basin.

It was only three years ago the **grand jury said**, “Early in its term, the grand jury began to see a thread of dysfunction running through El Dorado County government.”

It seems to be a systemic problem.

The county came up with a strategic plan that appears to have been an exercise in futility, or a gesture to look good. The residents are the losers in this game.

The county of late has become more insular. Transparency has been replaced by a guard dog.

El Dorado County CAO Don Ashton doesn't want the media talking directly to county employees, which might be why planning chief Roger Trout didn't return a call about the Meyers gas station project. However, Trout is who Supervisor Sue Novasel and Tahoe Regional Planning Agency directed *LTN* to. The media is supposed to go to the recently hired flack. When asked about the gas station, public information officer Carla Hass in an email on Aug. 18 said, “The county hasn't received any application or notification for an intent to reopen the gas station.”

Clearly, that is wrong based on **today's lead story**.

Ashton told *Lake Tahoe News* that Hass is new and isn't expected to know everything. No one knows everything, but a competent PIO knows where to get the answers. It isn't like she is right out of college, and she's worked in government before. Maybe the blame shouldn't be on Hass, but on her boss.

That would be Ashton.

Ashton in a conversation with *Lake Tahoe News* on Aug. 21 essentially vomited all over the publication and various people who write for it. We have thick skin, and are used to scrutiny, rude comments and angry diatribes. What isn't called for is nasty, unwarranted attacks, especially from someone of Ashton's stature.

Whatever happened to civil discourse?

He thinks headlines should not reflect the tenor of a column if he disagrees with the column. He doesn't understand that a column is that one person's opinion. This isn't something unique to *Lake Tahoe News*.

He thinks a reporter should not expect questions to immediately be answered that were generated from a press release that his PIO sent out. (The point of a press release is to get media to write a story; and there is a contact name-number on it for questions.)

He said staff doesn't like working with a certain *LTN* reporter because she asks too many questions. I laughed. Asking questions is the media's job. He said staff is too busy to answer them. This last round happened to be questions related to that press released the flack sent.

He thinks the county should be able to vet stories before they see the light of day. I told him no reputable publication would do that. He said the *LA Times* let him read stories before publication. I told him I didn't believe him. He said it's true because he had a relationship with that reporter. I still don't believe him.

He thinks press releases should be published verbatim. He is wrong.

The Society of Professional Journalists, which I belong to,

has a code of ethics. It includes:

- The highest and primary obligation of ethical journalism is to serve the public.
- Be vigilant and courageous about holding those with power accountable. Give voice to the voiceless.
- Recognize a special obligation to serve as watchdogs over public affairs and government. Seek to ensure that the public's business is conducted in the open, and that public records are open to all.
- Recognize that legal access to information differs from an ethical justification to publish or broadcast.
- Deny favored treatment to advertisers, donors or any other special interests, and resist internal and external pressure to influence coverage.

I live by these standards and expect those who work for *Lake Tahoe News* to do the same. It would be great if El Dorado County came up with a code of conduct or ethics and actually lived by them.

I think a good PIO can do wonders for an agency. On a regular basis I work with ones who are outstanding. We respect each other and the jobs we each have.

This isn't about PIOs.

This is about a county that is sinking further into an abyss.

A PIO can do many things. One is to help get the truth to the people. The media is that conduit between an agency and the public. Another thing a PIO can do is put his/her agency's spin on that truth. It's up to the media to discard the spin and keep the facts.

Ashton seems to think the media works for the county. He's

mistaken. *Lake Tahoe News* does not work for any public agency or even any paid advertiser (sometimes those are one in the same).

We will continue to seek the truth and report our findings. El Dorado County can put up roadblocks, but we intend to plow through them.

*Kathryn Reed is the publisher of Lake Tahoe News.*

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# Millions consumed potentially unsafe water in the past 10 years

**By Agnel Philip, Elizabeth Sims, Jordan Houston and Rachel Konieczny, News21**

WOLFFORTH, Texas – As many as 63 million people – nearly a fifth of the country – from rural Central California to the boroughs of New York City, were exposed to potentially unsafe water more than once during the past decade, according to a News21 investigation of 680,000 water quality and monitoring violations from the Environmental Protection Agency.

The findings highlight how six decades of industrial dumping, farming pollution, and water plant and distribution pipe deterioration have taken a toll on local water systems. Those found to have problems cleaning their water typically took more than two years to fix these issues, with some only recently resolving decades-old violations of EPA standards and others still delivering tainted water, according to data from the agency's Safe Drinking Water Information System.

Many local water treatment plants, especially those in small, poor and minority communities, can't afford the equipment necessary to filter out contaminants. Those can include arsenic found naturally in rock, chemicals from factories and nitrates and fecal matter from farming. In addition, much of the country's aging distribution pipes delivering the water to millions of people are susceptible to lead contamination, leaks, breaks and bacterial growth.

Experts warn contamination in water can lead to cancer, gastrointestinal diseases and developmental delays in children.

**[Read the whole story](#)**

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## **Officials: Nevada ready for self driving cars**

**By Bailey Schulz, Las Vegas Review-Journal**

Experts disagree on exactly when Nevada will see self-driving cars, but state officials say policies are ready for their commercial debut.

The Nevada Legislature passed a bill June 16 that allows for the testing and operations of fully autonomous vehicles, whenever they come onto the market.

The bill also clarifies the legal authority for those testing and operating the self-driving vehicles and authorizes the commercial use of fully-autonomous vehicles.

**[Read the whole story](#)**

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# Calif. Legislature grapples with affordable housing

By Angela Hart, Sacramento Bee

Democratic state lawmakers aiming to ease California's housing shortage say they are focused on three bills they estimate would generate \$20 billion for affordable housing development over the next five years and lead to 70,000 new low-income apartments.

They acknowledge it won't be enough to solve the state's unprecedented housing problems. But Assembly Speaker Anthony Rendon calls the package he and other lawmakers are working on "an important first step." The Legislature begins the final month of the 2017 session today with housing atop its agenda.

"We know we're not going to address it entirely this year," Rendon said in an interview. "Doing streamlining and getting some funding for affordable housing would be a tremendous victory ... our efforts are going to carry into the future regardless."

**[Read the whole story](#)**

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## LTWC to reveal progress at

# **new rehab center**

Lake Tahoe Wildlife Care will open the gate to the **new wildlife center** that is under construction on Al Tahoe Boulevard on Aug. 27 from 11am until 2pm to show people what has been done on the property.

Most of the work has been underground, however, all perimeter foundations are complete. The next step is framing of the buildings and cages.

LTWC volunteers and staff will be on hand to answer questions and show renditions of what each each cage will look like.

Food will be available to purchase and this is also a time to donate to the cause so the project can be completed.

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# **Free flights in S. Lake Tahoe for youth**

The Truckee Experimental Aircraft Association (EAA) chapter is returning to the Lake Tahoe Airport this year for a Young Eagles rally, offering free airplane rides for youngsters 8-17. The rally will be Sept. 23 starting at 8am.

The free rides are part of the Experimental Aircraft Association's Young Eagles program, in which volunteer pilots introduce kids to aviation by giving them airplane rides.

The EAA started the Young Eagles program in 1992 with the goal of flying 1 million kids by Dec. 17, 2003, the centennial of the Wright brothers' flights. They easily surpassed that goal and to date more than 2 million kids in more than 90 countries

have joined the ranks of Young Eagles. The Truckee chapter has flown over 3,500 Young Eagles in that time.

Following the flight, each young person receives a certificate making them an official Young Eagle. Their name will then be entered into the world's largest logbook, which is on permanent display at the EAA AirVenture Museum in Oshkosh, Wis. In addition to the certificate, the new Young Eagle will be given their own logbook with an access code for a free EAA student membership and free access to the online flight training course offered by Sporty's Pilot Shop, as well as several other programs.

For more info, contact Tom Meadows at [yecoord1073@outlook.com](mailto:yecoord1073@outlook.com) or 530.587.7281.