

# Reno starting to look more like Silicon Valley

By Karen Weise, Bloomberg

“Are you with Tesla or Panasonic?” the waitress asks with a smile. It’s morning in Reno, and it’s natural to assume anyone eating breakfast among the rustic wood walls and Instagram-worthy succulents of the Whitney Peak Hotel would work at the mammoth Tesla Gigafactory, jointly run by the two tech companies. For transplants landing in Reno, the boutique hotel, formerly a casino, has become a common crash pad—albeit one wrapped by an outdoor rock-climbing wall.

Around 8:30am, the men arrive in waves. The Panasonic workers from Japan head for one buffet, with rice, pork, and miso soup; the Tesla crowd favors eggs. Soon they’re gone, traveling by carpools and shuttles 20 miles east into the desert to the factory, where they’ll make lithium ion batteries to power Tesla’s electric cars.

Not long ago, Reno was a home foreclosure capital and fading casino town. “There was only one place to go, and that was up,” says Mayor Hillary Schieve. Unemployment peaked at almost 14 percent in 2011, when Governor Brian Sandoval signed a law aiming to diversify the state’s economy, recognizing that gambling alone can’t sustain a workforce.

**Read the whole story**

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# Snippets about Lake Tahoe

- The El Dorado County Republican Central Committee meeting on July 10 will feature Ken Steers, former RCC chairman, to offer his perspective on a range of topics from local politics to the trials and tribulations of doing business in California and the U.S. The 6:30pm gathering will be at Park Community Church, 3901 Wild Chapparal Drive, Shingle Springs.
- The Magic of Rob Lake is at Harrah's South Shore Room through Sept. 4. Show time is 8pm and children under age 5 are not allowed.
- Starting July 9, nighttime single lane closures from approximately 8pm-6am, with delays of 20-30 minutes are planned between Hidden Beach to three miles south of Sand Harbor State Park for construction of water quality and traffic safety improvements on Highway 28.
- Chad Pfeifer, an Iraqi War veteran and amputee whose golf-centered rehabilitation has turned him into a top-tier tournament player, will join the field once again at the American Century Championship this month at Edgewood Tahoe.
- The 15th annual Tour de Tahoe – Bike Big Blue, a Ride to Cure Diabetes, is Sept. 10. For more info, go **online**.

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## Injured cub found near Emerald Bay now at LTWC

A 4-month-old bear was found July 4 near D.L. Bliss State

Park, with no signs of her mom.

She is now at Lake Tahoe Wildlife Care.

According to officials, the 15-pound cub was barely able to walk and had difficulty breathing. The lacerations on her legs have been stitched up. Because she did not have any broken bones it is not believed that she was hit by a car.

The goal is to rehab her so she could be released into the wild this coming winter.

*– Lake Tahoe News staff report*

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# Why are fire seasons longer? – People

**By Maya L. Kapoor, High Country News**

Over three months in 2016, the Soberanes fire burned 132,127 acres of Central California's coast, blazing through dry swaths of dense chaparral, mixed hardwood timber and redwoods. Costing \$260 million to suppress, it became the most expensive fire in the country's history.

And it wasn't caused by lightning, which is relatively scarce in that part of the country, but by an illegal campfire in Garrapata State Park.

Human-caused climate change has meant more, and bigger, wildfires throughout the country. But as astute pyrologist Bruce Springsteen once wrote, "You can't start a fire without a spark."

According to wildfire research, the source of that spark is, more often than not, a person. What's more, due to these human-caused ignitions, the country's conflagrations have grown significantly larger and more frequent, while the overall fire season has tripled in length.

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

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## **Details emerge on near drowning of soccer player**

**By Elliott Almond, Bay Area News Group**

Earthquakes midfielder Matheus Silva was swimming in Zephyr Cove early Tuesday when he cried out for help as the sun began peeking over the Sierra.

Then he went under the icy water. Friends thought the 6-foot-2 Brazilian was joking. But he didn't resurface during a 6am swim to start the summer holiday.

"His heart stopped and he wasn't breathing," Eric Guevin of Tahoe Douglas fire said Wednesday.

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

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## **Wildfires scorch thousands of**

# acres in Reno area

**By Sarah Litz , Benjamin Spillman and Dustin Quiroz , Reno Gazette-Journal**

Four major wildfires ignited in Northern Nevada this week and have burned thousands of acres in the Reno area.

Combined, the Winnemucca Ranch Fire, Earthstone Fire, Truckee Fire and Limerick Fire scorched nearly 108,000 acres – almost 169 square miles.

The most recent fire – the Winnemucca Ranch Fire – was reported at about 6:30pm Tuesday and has burned 3,500 acres in the hills east of the intersection of Pyramid Highway and Winnemucca Ranch Road. As of Wednesday, the fire was 20 percent contained.

**Read the whole story**

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## McClintock's water storage bill progressing

A federal bill that would increase the ability to store water, especially in times of drought, has passed the House.

The bill was introduced by Rep. Tom McClintock, R-Garden Grove. It is called the Water Supply Permitting Coordination Act. The House approved it 233-180.

The congressman, who represents Lake Tahoe, on the House floor said, "It simply says the process needs to be more efficient, and that government agencies should coordinate and corroborate

with each other, rather than talking past each other as isolated, and often inscrutable, fiefdoms. Five years of drought in California brought entire cities within months of exhausting their water supplies. The epic drought has now been followed with the wettest year on record, and we have helplessly watched our dams spilling millions of acre ft. to the ocean, because we have no place to store the excess for the next drought.”

The bill now goes to the Senate.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

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# Tahoe ukulelians string together fun and harmony

By Susan Wood

Julliard, it's not. But the American Legion Hall on Wednesday nights has become the main stage for South Shore ukulelians seeking fun, friendship and a unified front for an activity that has struck a chord with many aspiring musicians.

It's almost as if the 60-plus people gathered in Tahoe may strum their cares away in perfect harmony.

It's a good sign when a guest walks upstairs at the hall and recognizes the song being played by so many people thrown together like a giant band.

“Blueberry Hill” made the song list one recent Wednesday night, and the room full of tenor, soprano, concert and baritone strummers didn't disappoint.



Steve and Linda Kurek at a jam session at the American Legion.  
Photo/Susan Wood

The songbook assembled by Bob and Diane Fannan, who co-founded the club with Jeff and Karen Miner four years ago, lists 306 songs.

"I've been playing for four years, and I can play everything in this book," Diane Fannan said, pointing to the fat book sitting on the table during the break while volunteers called out raffle winners. "Does anybody practice?" she asked.

A resounding "no" could be heard from some of the players walking by.

"It's a simple instrument. Every person who wouldn't believe in a million years they'd be playing an instrument can learn it," she said over the sound of the concert going on in the next room. Most players sit at long tables, with a handful of leaders taking the stage. In another room, 14 ukuleles line one table, with chips and snacks filling another.

“We have all levels of play here. And I’ve noticed my rhythm has gotten better (since playing ukulele),” Fannan told *Lake Tahoe News*.



Bob and Diane Fannan started the ukulele group in 2013.  
Photo/Susan Wood

The Fannans attend ukulele meetups and events when they’re on vacation – whether in France, England or across the United States. They’ve even gone on a ukulele cruise.

It’s the social setting that most told *Lake Tahoe News* is the reason for the regular attendance – especially people who’d like to do more outreach in their community.

“We have found people going through a divorce or another tragedy making this the highlight of their week,” Fannan said, further noting about two-thirds of the group consist of

retired people.

Between each song, some of the South Shore ukulelians clap, others sigh, many rock and sway. But most of the players have smiles on their faces. It's hard not to with an instrument that made Hawaiian musician Israel "Iz" Kamakawiwo'ole famous with his sentimental blend of "Somewhere Over the Rainbow"/ "What a Wonderful World" released in 1993. It's popular at weddings and other special occasions.



Ukulele playing is a ritual on Wednesdays in South Lake Tahoe.  
Photo/Susan Wood

Special is the ukulele – with four strings (G-C-E-A) caressed by four fingers playing three chords – C, F and G. The nuances in sound between the four types of ukuleles range in tone and with those who are drawn to them. The soprano is popular with children and those with smaller hands, while the concert version provides a classic tone. Tenor players seek a fuller

sound, while the deeper, richer baritones draw guitar players.

Typically, ukuleles resemble a small acoustic guitar and are generally made of wood, though variants have been composed of plastic. The most expensive ones are made of mahogany, but are traditionally constructed with acacia koa wood.

Steve Byrne of South Lake Tahoe, who showed up on his bicycle, plays guitar as well the ukulele. At times, he cradled his ukulele like a guitar, appearing quite serious while playing every song. He likes the unity and social setting of the ukulele group, which started at Mo's with nine people in the first few years before moving to Dart Liquor's loft, then Lake Tahoe Golf Course. The club mushroomed in attendance.

The club plays from 6-8pm, with some eager socialites strolling in at 5pm for drinks, chats or instruction during the happy hour – which turns out to be the whole time.



Not all ukuleles are the same.

Photo/Susan Wood

“What’s nice is to have a little instruction when you’ve

reached a threshold. There's no intimidation. Everybody here wants to have a good time," Byrne said.

Wannabes and beginners may receive lessons before the start time from the experienced players in the group, and the Fannans provide extra ukuleles for anyone who happens to show up. The club has seen 100 players appear in one night.

"This is a life changer for a lot of people," Bob Fannan said.

He further admitted to no marriages resulting yet from the club's outings, but some couples have met there. Other spouses use the evening to do something fun together that's a bit different from their regular routine.

Take Linda and Steve Kurek. She taught music for 38 years and said she enjoys the relaxing setting. The couple shared a songbook propped up near the wine glasses. He plays on occasion for the residents at the Barton Skilled Nursing Facility.

Julie Threewit teaches ukulele at Sierra House Elementary School and admits to having "the bug" of buying different ukuleles, a condition Bob Fannan refers to as "UAS" meaning ukulele acquisition syndrome.

Between 2010 and 2012, ukulele sales nationwide jumped from 581,000 to more than 1 million, according to the National Association of Music Merchants. Sales have climbed to \$89.8 million in 2015.

Ukulele enthusiasm has taken off in popularity in clubs all over. And this one's no different.

Aaron Lujano, who has worked for the Guitar Center in Reno for five years, told *Lake Tahoe News* over the phone that he's noticed a surge in ukulele sales at his store.

"I sell about five or six a day," Lujano said. "There are even high school classes here."

Even visiting relatives have gotten in on the act as a planned activity.

Mandy Kendall, who claims ukulele playing builds confidence, brought along her brother-in-law Paul Melia from England to the South Shore outing.

The duo raised the level of concentration and probably the callouses of their hands when the leaders threw in a contemporary number – Bruno Mars’ “Count On Me.”



Paul Melia and Mandy Kendall are regulars at ukulele night.  
Photo/Susan Wood

The ukulele made its debut on the Arthur Godfrey Show of the 1960s, and Tiny Tim featured it with his 1968 hit “Tiptoe Through the Tulips.”

The instrument declined in popularity in the 1980s until a new

generation of musicians took it up in the next decade.

Marge Bornino, who at age 90, started playing the ukulele at 14 in her days hanging out at Venice Beach in Southern California.

“We went surfing and played ukulele. That’s what we did,” said Bornino, who plays despite suffering from a carpal tunnel injury.

To this day, Bornino also still strums the bass. Playing a ukulele takes her back to her younger days more than any other activity – back to the days of Bob Marley and the Beatles.

Rather fitting, Bornino was right at home with the last song of the night “Lady Madonna.”

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## **Opinion: When will EDC learn it needs to do background checks?**

**By Larry Weitzman**

El Dorado County recently hired Shannon Lowery, an outside consultant, for \$190,000 without not only a background check, but not even checking references. It happens when you have a government policy that goes by the motto: “Share the wealth, hire your friends.”

It appears that was the situation with Lowery. Even former CAO Larry Combs wasn’t properly vetted by the Board of Supervisors and look what he hath wrought. That policy gave us the likes of the inept ACAO Kim Kerr and put Kelly Webb in charge of the

IT Department for which she wasn't qualified.



Larry Weitzman

That policy goes for appointments to county commissions and committees. There has been a reformation of the Charter Review Committee, a county body with the charge to review the county Charter (our constitution so to speak) for “necessary” changes (usually quite political). It had its first meeting on June 26. The new five-member committee has three new members and two holdovers from the last committee from 2014. I doubt any background checks were performed with respect to the new members and that goes for all the prior charter review committees as the members are appointed by their respective district supervisor. But perhaps that should be a requirement as this position can recommend changes to our county governing documents and many appointees to the committee have political agendas.

My research demonstrates why background checks are necessary. A person who calls himself Christopher (Chris) Alarcon was appointed to the Charter Review Committee back in 2010 and became chair of that committee. He was later hired as an election inspector for the November 2011 elections. But what would a background check have revealed about Alarcon? First, we are unsure of his real name as in high school according to official witness reports his name was Christopher Price.

But there is a lot more to this story about Alarcon/Price. It seems A/P doesn't like to pay for vehicle registrations and has been cited three times since March 2009 for driving

without his vehicles being properly registered in California. In all three citations issued to A/P in 2009, 2011 and 2012, the vehicles of which he was the driver were out of registration for several years. In fact, according to police reports, Alarcon doesn't even have a valid California driver's license and has not had one since 1999, although the police reports say he lives basically full time in California. He uses an Arizona license.

In the third citation issued on Feb. 12, 2012, according to the district attorney investigator, A/P had his California driver's license "suspended or revoked as of 1985 and 1997 with a notation of fraud." But that is just the tip of this massive iceberg with respect to Alarcon's criminal activities regarding the vehicle code. In fact, the arrest report reflects that A/P's offenses were so serious the officer arrested A/P for violating Vehicle Code Section 4463, a felony, which is falsification of a vehicle registration among several other charges. At the time of this report, the officer knew of two priors where the registrations were falsified and the Arizona driver's license was used to "avoid" being in violation of driving without a license.

But let's go back to the first run-in with the law brought on by a bad license and/or tag. Alarcon was driving a green 1990 Saab which had a 2009 registration tag. The patrolling sheriff's deputy ran the plate and found that it was expired since 2005. The officer made a stop because of the discrepancy. You should know that officers on patrol routinely spend some of their day running plates at random. A/P told the deputy "there were several years it (the Saab) was not paid, but that he just mailed the stuff in to register it." The officer asked both A/P and his wife, Sherilyn Lumalarcon, a passenger in the car, why the Saab had a 2009 registration tab. Both said they didn't know how that could be. Remember A/P admitted it wasn't registered but now didn't know how the current 2009 tag appeared on the license plate. He was cited

for several violations of the Vehicle Code, including displaying a fraudulent license tag, lack of proof of insurance and expired registration. The deputy removed the expired tag for evidence.

But having registration tags on your vehicles that belonged to other vehicles seemed to be a pattern for A/P. On Jan. 4th, 2011, A/P was stopped driving a Mercury Grand Marquis by the CHP and issued a citation of violating CVC 4000 (a) for not having a valid registration.

We have a pattern developing here as A/P was again stopped driving the same Grand Marquis on Feb. 6, 2012. A sheriff's deputy noticed that the registration sticker was not attached as it normally would be. After running the rear plate, the officer found that it belonged to a 1990 green Saab. A traffic stop was made and then things got real unusual. The officer found that the front plate belonged to the Grand Marquis, but the rear plate showed a current registration sticker not from the Saab which registration had expired in 2009, but to another car owned by a woman who lived at Eskaton Elderly Living.

Turns out that sticker and plate were stolen from the elderly woman's car according to a theft report on Nov. 25, 2011, about two months before this stop of A/P. When interviewed, the woman said the theft caused her extensive hardship getting the matter straightened out (another reason for the county senior legal program) and requested that the perpetrator be prosecuted to the full extent of the law. A/P was arrested for violating CVC 4463, a felony among several other charges.

The plates and registration from the first stop when A/P was driving the green Saab, were taken from a Toyota on or about Dec. 19, 2008, as the owner went to the DMV and was issued new plates on that date. The Toyota belonged to a person who was related to A/P's wife and lived for several years on the property which A/P lived with his wife. But the owner of the

Toyota never gave permission to A/P to use the plates and registration. There is only one plausible way those registrations migrated from the Toyota to the Saab.

There is only one way the plates and registration tag made it from the older woman's automobile to A/P's car. According to several witness statements, A/P doesn't live in Arizona but has an Arizona driver's license. A/P in one of the reports told the officer that he did live in Arizona. Perhaps he thinks it's a game to acquire other people's license tags so he doesn't have to pay California license fees. For cars that old, it isn't very expensive, probably much less than \$100 per vehicle per year.

How did this guy (A/P) get to be chairman of the Charter review committee with this kind of activity and pursuant to his claims in the various police reports, he isn't even a California resident, never mind a resident of El Dorado County? California residency would be a requirement for such activities. I wonder if he votes in California and if he has, has that activity broken any laws? Is that evidence of lying to a police officer considering what A/P said in the police report?

Anybody who serves in any official capacity in El Dorado County needs to have a background check or it will be more of the same. This is certainly not good governance which the county claims they are striving to reach.

*Larry Weitzman is a resident of Rescue.*

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# Tahoe drowning victim from Citrus Heights

The man who drowned near the Tahoe Keys on July 4 has been identified as William Weaver of Citrus Heights.

The 41-year-old was in a double kayak with his wife when the vessel over turned. Weaver was not wearing a life jacket.

He was pronounced dead at Barton Memorial Hospital just after being pulled from the water at 3:30pm.

The lake at the time was extremely rough, with white caps. It is also super cold.

*– Lake Tahoe News staff report*