Calif. races to have licenses that work at airports

By Jim Miller, Sacramento Bee

Facing the prospect of millions of Californians turned away at airport security checkpoints, the Brown administration is racing to bring the state's driver's licenses up to federal standards.

Gov. Jerry Brown's revised budget proposal includes $220.6 million over the next six years to hire more than 2,700 workers to process applications for licenses and state-issued identification cards that comply with the U.S. Real ID Act. Congress approved the law after the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks exposed security weaknesses in many states' driver's licenses.

About 25 states have licenses and ID cards that comply with the 2005 law, but California and other states were granted extensions. The Trump administration, though, has signaled there will be no more delays: Beginning Oct. 1, 2020, every air traveler will need to show a driver's license or state-issued ID card that complies with the federal law to board an airplane, or bring along a passport or other form of identification accepted by the U.S. Transportation Security Administration.

Read the whole story

Tahoe Tails – Adoptable Pets

in South Lake Tahoe

Gaston

Gaston is a young Skye terrier, an unusual breed for Tahoe; and is perhaps 8 months old.

As a puppy, Gaston is still figuring out what his teeth are used for and he needs basic training. An experienced dog family without young children who will commit to training would be best for him. Skye terriers come from Scotland and were bred to be hunting dogs. Gaston needs a daily short to moderate walk to stay in shape. Regular combing (about twice a week) is all that is needed to keep Gaston looking handsome.

Gaston is neutered, microchipped, tested for heart worm, and vaccinated. He is at the El Dorado County Animal Services shelter in Meyers, along with many other dogs and cats who are waiting for their new homes. Go to the Tahoe animal shelter's Facebook page to see photos and descriptions of all pets at the shelter.

Call 530.573.7925 for directions, hours, and other information on adopting a pet. For spay-neuter assistance for South Tahoe residents, go **online**.

Sportsbook regulations would target money launderers

By Richard N. Velotta, Las Vegas Review-Journal

When the Nevada Gaming Commission meets Thursday, members will consider tinkering with Regulation 22, the state's rules governing race and sportsbook wagers.

Under scrutiny will be a section that would require new record-keeping requirements on all wagers that pay out more than $10,000.

Most sportsbook players won't be affected by the changes proposed because there's already a mechanism in place for books that generate more than $1 million in annual gross gaming revenue to file paperwork with the Internal Revenue Service whenever someone wins more than $10,000 on a sports bet.

Read the whole story

Open government not a priority of Nev. Legislature

By Ben Botkin, Las Vegas Review-Journal

CARSON CITY — For the most part, the 2017 session of the Nevada Legislature has not been one to foster open government.

Bills have run the gamut and had mixed results, as the Legislature has considered proposals dealing with government transparency, accountability, lobbying, campaign finance and even an inspector general to investigate government agencies.

Some measures have fared better than others, but the session will do little to improve Nevada's poor standing as a transparent state for open government.

Read the whole story

Business workshop on motivation and morale

Lake Tahoe South Shore Chamber of Commerce is hosting a workshop about employee motivation and morale.

Attendees will be taught the importance of micro-recognition and how to implement this in the workplace.

The lecture will be June 1 from noon-1:30pm at the chamber's office in Stateline.

Cost is $10 for members and $20 for others.

Robin Smith – 1943-2017

Robin Smith

Longtime South Lake Tahoe resident and prolific *Lake Tahoe News* commenter Robin Smith has died. She was 73.

She died May 7, 2017. She was born to Robert and Trina Mattingly on Aug. 14, 1943.

Robin Mattingly made Tahoe her home in the early 1960s. She married John Cristando in 1971; they were married for eight years.

Robin worked for years at the Stateline casinos, starting as a cocktail server, then becoming a black jack dealer. She often talked about the entertainers and stars she would meet, including Elvis and NASA astronaut Walter Schirra.

Robin lived her life true to her convictions. She was a strong and resilient woman, who was known for her many stories of Nevada’s legends and history. Robin had extensive knowledge of Tahoe gaming and history.

Robin later moved to Las Vegas, where she met longtime companion Brandon Smith, whom she was with for 25 years. They later returned to Tahoe to help care for Robin’s four grandchildren.

Robin blessed her close friends and family with bio-rhythm charts, while being a self-proclaimed astrogist.

Robin is survived by son Robert Cristando; daughters Veronica Flaherty, Stephanie Demsar, and Johnna Cristando; brother Bill Mattingly; sister Trina Ann Threlkeld; grandchildren Alexandra, Daniella, Janez Jr. and Lucas.

There will be a private family service.

Downsizing in Truckee an expensive endeavor

By Sage Sauerbrey, Moonshine Ink

When the housing market crashed about a decade ago, one of the results was a trend toward downsizing. The phrase "tiny home" emerged, people scaled down to smaller homes, RVs became potential retirement properties, and an overall tendency toward living within or below one's means began to take shape. Here in Truckee/Tahoe this trend toward living small has been presented as one of many potential solutions to our housing issue, but it is up against a series of obstacles in the form of ordinances and fees that are still catching up.

More than one year ago, *Moonshine Ink* spoke with a couple who had moved to Tahoe with the dream of living small, tiny, that is. In February 2016, Sean and Tara Flanagan were exhausting all possible avenues to find a home for their 140 square foot tiny home on wheels. Now, after more than a year of moving from place to place, researching tiny home regulations, and speaking in public forums on the subject, their wheeled tiny home is gone, and Sean and Tara are living in a 450 square foot home in Carnelian Bay. Sean said they are in the process of drawing up plans for a tiny home of their own that is on a permanent foundation, and built A-frame style to help accommodate snow load requirements.

“The main constraint that we’ve encountered, or at least the public has seen as a constraint, is that we require any home on a single-family lot to be on a permanent foundation,” said Yumie Dahn, associate planner for Truckee. “Tiny homes, generally we just see them as – if they’re stick built and on a foundation – they’re just like any other home. If they’re on wheels, then they’re considered RVs or mobile homes and would need to be in a mobile home park right now.”

Read the whole story

Gardening workshops at South Tahoe Library

Gardening is theme this month for Friends of the Library in South Lake Tahoe.

On May 20 at 10am there will be an asparagus growing workshop. This hardy perennial vegetable can become part of an edible landscape, and a mainstay even in a Tahoe garden.

Tomatoes will be the topic on May 30 at 6pm.

UCCE master gardeners of Lake Tahoe will be spearheading both free workshops.

The library is located at 1000 Rufus Allen Boulevard.

Snippets about Lake Tahoe

· On May 20 from 8-11am there will be a pancake breakfast and rummage sale at the South Lake Tahoe Senior Center. For more information, call 530.545.1277.

· Between Horses and Humans is having a garden party benefit at the former Wild Rose Inn in Genoa on June 4 at 4pm. Tickets are available **online**.

· The Tahoe Brewfest will be in the Swiss Chalet center in South Lake Tahoe on June 10 from noon-5pm. Tickets are $20 in advance, $25 that day. Proceeds benefit the Lake Tahoe Boys & Girls Club. For more info, go **online**.

· Louie Anderson will be at Harrah's Lake Tahoe on June 10.

· Great video about Lake Tahoe's water level and the release of water into the Truckee River:

Explained-High water on the Truckee River from Placer County Video Portal on Vimeo.

Retiree obligations sucking SLT coffers dry

By Kathryn Reed

In five years, nearly one-quarter of South Lake Tahoe's General Fund is expected to be allocated for retiree pensions. This doesn't even include what goes out for health benefits, let alone current salaries.

It’s normal for employees to be the No. 1 expense for public agencies. The amount though, is getting to be astronomical.

The California Public Employees’ Retirement System, or CalPERS, has warned jurisdictions that what they must contribute is going up. Today the city of South Lake Tahoe pays $4.7 million a year to CalPERS. By 2022 that figure is expected to more than double to $9.7 million. That’s for current employees and those who have retired.

The spike has to do with bad investment choices by CalPERS, believing at one-time the agency was superfunded and therefore didn’t need members to contribute, the change in retirement age (making it lower), and pay increases to workers when everyone thought CalPERS was flush with cash.

It was bad math and illogical. The superfunded status was really a blip in time in about 1997. By 2000 funding levels had already started to drop. When the dot-com bubble burst thus began the freefall for CalPERS. While the evidence was there to prove the meteoric rise of the fund could not be sustained, the powers that be chose to be enraptured by these larger numbers.

The largest public pension fund in the country in 14 years went from superfunded to having a $241 billion deficit by 2014. Superfunded is defined as being 120 percent over the amount needed to pay retirees at that given point and time.

And while retirees like to say they are on a fixed income, those drawing on CalPERS and CalSTRS (the education equivalent) all get an annual cost of living increase that averages 2 percent each year. This annual raise is paid for by the taxpayer with no benefit to the taxpayer.

All of this will be explained by South Lake Tahoe City Manager Nancy Kerry on May 16 at the City Council meeting. This is part of the five-year business plan review.

While the presentation is not expected to be all doom and gloom, it is a bit of a punch in the gut – especially for taxpayers who are the ones footing this bill.

In the narrative of Kerry’s presentation she goes over the history of the city’s finances, and what has been done to make it solvent. It includes conservative budgets, not spending money until it is in hand, realistic revenue and expense projections, refinancing bonds to lower debt, and overhauling the health plan.

She will also explain that the city is handcuffed to CalPERS.

The problem with being a CalPERS member agency is that it’s impossible to get out. And what’s worse is that jurisdictions per state law are not allowed to negotiate a different payout with employees.

But it is possible, through talks with bargaining units, not to offer CalPERS to future employees. While no one is saying that is on the current negotiating table, it’s not out of the realm of possibilities in future years.

What is likely to happen first is for the city management team of about a dozen people to have a drastically different compensation package.

“The executive team is working on a wages and benefits package to present to the City Council that offers defined contributions to 457 retirement plans based on years of service, encourages employee contributions to 457 retirement plans by offering additional 457 matching amounts, offering contribution to health reimbursement arrangements, elimination of city-sponsored medical insurance,” the staff report says. A 457 is similar to a 401(k) in the private sector.

The goal is to reduce the pensionable compensation, which means lowering the city’s obligation to individuals post-employment.

Because the city is obligated to pay whatever bill CalPERS sends, staff and the electeds must come up with the cash. The five-year forecast shows a structural deficit by 2020. A possible solution is to use the reserves and/or restructure the maximum amount in that pot of cash.

Today the city puts aside 25 percent of the General Fund into reserves. It has not been tapped – not during the Angora Fire, not during the Great Recession. Kerry will talk about having a set amount in the pot or a lower percentage that would still protect the city in an emergency. It would take a four-fifths vote of the council to alter the reserve allocation.

The staff report goes on to say, “If CalPERS projections hold, reduction in staff and services may become necessary by 2020.”