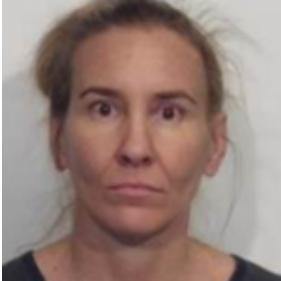


6-year sentence for SLT woman in fraud scheme



Karen Rae
Chapon

A South Lake Tahoe woman is on her way to prison for committing mortgage and insurance fraud.

Karen Rae Chapon, 47, was sentenced April 4 by Nevada's Ninth Judicial District Court Judge Thomas Gregory. She is the owner of Tahoe Weddings and Events at Zephyr Cove.

Last August she admitted to filing travel claims with two forged death certificates and fraudulent invoices.

Chapon was sentenced to six years in prison, but would be eligible for parole after two years.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

Calif. water conservation

increases in Feb.

It's easy to use less water when Mother Nature provides it. Such was the case for Californians in February.

The state Water Resources Control Board on April 4 said residential water use in February was down 25.1 percent compared to 2013. That is the base year the state uses.

In 2016, the savings rate was 11.9 percent.

Even though this has been one of the wettest winters on record, Gov. Jerry Brown has not lifted the drought-emergency declaration. However, that could change any day.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

SLT attempting to fix some dilapidated roads



Roads in South Lake Tahoe are crumbling at a rapid rate.
Photo/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

The obstacle course known as dodge the pothole will eventually go away – at least in the city limits of South Lake Tahoe.

An additional \$300,000 was allocated for roads at Tuesday's City Council meeting to deal with the nearly 400 potholes. And with water still covering some roads and more runoff coming, the damage is not done.

The money is coming from revenues being higher than what was projected when the 2016-17 budget was approved last fall.

Because everything is still wet and the water table high in many locations, the work can't start until things really dry out.

What will be different with this fix is that the road will be cut out and filled, as in a complete fix and not just a patch. A 4-foot-by-10-foot area will be dug out to a depth of 6 inches.

Jim Marino, assistant public works director, said it is imperative to get the pot holes done as soon as possible because it is going to be a busy construction season between what the city and Caltrans have planned.

The money was part of the April 4 midyear budget adjustment. Sierra Nevada Construction was already under contract to do \$1,602,947 worth of repairs last fall but the cold temperatures prevented that work from occurring. The amended contract is for the maximum amount allowed without having to rebid the project or have separate contracts.

Potholes on Sierra Boulevard will be fixed, but nothing substantive will be done to that road because it is slated for a massive overhaul in either 2018 or 2019. That will be a complete streets project, with it looking somewhat like Ski Run Boulevard.

“The city’s Public Works Department is adept at milling and repairing potholes and minor to moderate roadway surfacing, however, the magnitude of the impacts from this winter are above the production capability of in-house staff combined with all the ‘normal’ spring roadway tasks such as striping, sign work, curb and gutter repair, sweeping, etc.,” the staff report says.



With water still covering some roads and more weather coming this weekend, the full extent of road damage is not known. Photo/Kathryn Reed

Beyond the potholes, sections of town will see significant improvements to streets. Those projects include:

- The No. 2 lane of Lake Tahoe Boulevard from Glorene Avenue to Viking Way
- Glenwood Avenue from Woodland to North Rancho
- Fairway-Glenwood Avenue from Johnson Boulevard to Cloverdale
- South Avenue from Fourth Street to Melba
- Eloise Avenue from the cul de sac to Dunlap Drive
- Primrose-Chonokis from Glenn Road to Montreal Avenue
- Tahoe Island Drive from Third Street to Peter Avenue
- Aloha Drive from Venice Drive to the cul de sac.

“This winter showed what we are so susceptible to without a dedicated roadway program,” Marino told the council.

He has been an ardent advocate for annual spending of between \$2 million and \$3 million for roads. The council acknowledges the problem, but has yet to do anything substantive.

The city is hoping for emergency storm relief dollars that could be used to enhance or build drainage basins where needed.

Bike trails will also see upgrades this construction season. They include:

- El Dorado Beach to Alta Mira site – it will essentially be a whole new path
- Campground class 1 path
- 15th Street trail to bridge
- Trout Creek (Meek's) to Edgewood Circle.

Cyclists prepping for return to Lake Tahoe



The women cyclists will be in Lake Tahoe May 11-12 for the Amgen race. Photo Copyright 2016 Carolyn E. Wright

By Kathryn Reed

With the Tour of California a little more than a month away, the cyclists are expected to be in town later this month to start training.

This will be the third consecutive year the women will race in Tahoe, with Heavenly Mountain Resort being the start and finish line again.

Carol Chaplin, executive director of Lake Tahoe Visitors Authority, gave a brief update about the event to the City Council on Tuesday. She went over the tremendous international exposure this elite bike race brings to the region via the media.

She said Day 2's route that goes from Heavenly, over Luther Pass, has two laps around Diamond Valley, goes up Kingsbury

Grade, to Pioneer Trail and then up Ski Run Boulevard will be the most difficult leg for any Amgen race – women or men.

Day 1 will be replay of the past couple years, with the women riding clockwise around the lake.

Councilwoman Brooke Laine asked about the condition of roads and safety. Chaplin said race organizers do defer road conditions to the host entities – so LTVA is working hard with Caltrans and NDOT to ensure roads are ready for the riders. This includes the condition and being able to get around construction that might be in progress.

With that said, Chaplin added, “In Europe they often race on cobblestones.”

Kristin Armstrong, a three-time Olympic gold medalist and the 2016 second place finisher of the Tour of California, has retired. She will be in town as an ambassador, giving a talk at Sierra House Elementary School and possibly South Tahoe Middle School.

Woman missing from South Lake Tahoe motel

A woman staying at Motel 6 has not been seen since the afternoon of April 3.



Pamela
Suwinsky

Pamela Suwinsky left the South Lake Tahoe motel on Monday between 1 and 3:30pm on foot. She left behind her dog, purse, cell phone and car. She did take her ID and credit cards.

Suwinsky is 62, white, about 5-feet-2, 130 pounds, and has blonde hair and green eyes. She lives in Sacramento.

The night before she went missing she fell in the parking lot and cut her lip and chipped her tooth, according to officers. She was last seen wearing a dark jacket and pants.

Anyone with information is asked to call 530.542.6100.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

California faces \$860-million repair bill for roads

By Joseph Serna, Los Angeles Times

There were many dramatic images from California's extreme winter: interstates flooded, bridged buckled, highways covered in mud, snowbanks blocking key highways.

In Topanga Canyon, the lasting memory for many locals was the

massive boulder that blocked Topanga Canyon Boulevard in January after one fierce rainstorm. The huge rock became a popular spot for selfies and social media posts.

The boulder has been removed, but the storm has left a costly legacy in the canyon and on roads across California.

Officials estimate it will cost more than \$860 million to repair the state's roads, bridges and highways damaged from this winter's storms.

Read the whole story

Put your money on these baseball teams in April

By Case Keefer, Las Vegas Sun

With the NFL and NHL on the way, many have wondered whether Major League Baseball would be the next major professional sports league to bring a team to Las Vegas.

It's not blind speculation, either. MLB Commissioner Rob Manfred gave the possibility credence during a spring training press conference in Phoenix. For now, legalized gambling is the only game in town when it comes to Major League Baseball – and it's booming.

The state's casinos have set a record for total amount wagered on baseball three years in a row. That's partly because of the popularity and preponderance of preseason proposition wagering, with hundreds of options available at sports books.

Read the whole story

Snippets about Lake Tahoe

- Gary Romano, author of “July & Winter: Growing Food in the Sierra,” will share his hard-earned tips and advice on April 11, 6:30pm, Incline Village Library, 845 Alder Ave. and April 26, 6:30pm, Word After Word Bookshop, 10118 Donner Pass Road, No. 2, Truckee. Books will be available for purchase.
- Douglas County Public Library in Minden is having a children’s book swap April 10 from 3-6pm. Children may bring a book from home and trade it for another book in the swap.
- Tahoe Fund in partnership with the U.S. Forest Service recently installed a “sled corral” at Spooner Summit to give people a place to leave their broken sleds because people thought leaving them on the hillside was an appropriate way to discard trash in the mountains.
- Steve Robison will be teaching an introduction to letterpress class at Bona Fide Books in Meyers on May 13 at 10am. Cost is \$50. Go **online** to sign up.
- America’s Most Beautiful Bike Ride is June 4. For more info, go **online**.

Nevada forester abruptly resigns

By Jason Hidalgo, Reno Gazette-Journal

Nevada State Forester and Firewarden Joe Freeland resigned on Monday, nearly six months after an escaped burn by the state triggered a large wildfire just south of Reno.

Freeland's resignation was accepted by Bradley Crowell, director of the Nevada Department of Conservation and Natural Resources. The resignation is effective immediately.

The *Reno Gazette-Journal* has reached out to NDF to confirm the reason for Freeland's resignation. The state announcement did not mention the Little Valley Fire or any potential role it might have played in Freeland's resignation.

Crowell, however, says that the agency is still in the midst of a comprehensive review of NDF policies and procedures, which was requested on Feb. 15. Additional details about the review will be made available but no specific time frame has been set, according to Crowell.

Read the whole story

Driving while stoned – not a party for anyone



Goggles simulate what it's like to driver under the influence of marijuana. Photo/Michael Rohm

By Michael Rohm

RENO – I could see the sharp S-curve approaching, but my vision was blurred and I hit the wall on the first corner. My body recoiled with the shock and I overcorrected, striking the opposite wall. With my peripherals reduced and the walls seemingly amorphous, I continued to bump my front fender, jolting my car and body during the final hairpin turn. On a straightaway at last, and on the verge of vomiting, I stopped the car and sat quietly, willing the world to stop spinning. I waited with my eyes closed as two uniformed officers approached the vehicle.

“That was some bad driving,” Lt. Kevin Honea with the Nevada Highway Patrol said. Still reeling, I unbuckled the harness straps and stepped from the go-kart, then pulled off the green-tinted goggles and padded helmet.

“Did you notice the difference?” asked NPH Trooper Dan Gordon.

He was referring to the goggles I had just removed; large, snowboard-style ones with the words “Marijuana: Fatal Vision” emblazoned on a green sticker dead center of the forehead.



A padded helmet protects those trying out the pot goggles while driving.
Photo/Michael Rohm

To put it mildly: yes, I noticed the difference. The first lap around the go-kart course I completed unimpaired. For round two I was very, very impaired.

This zero fatalities event coordinated by the NHP gave people a chance to see and feel what it is like to drive under the influence of marijuana without lighting up or ingesting anything.

This difference between unimpaired and impaired driving is exactly why the NHP partnered with Need 2 Speed, an indoor go-kart track – to get the message out that pot affects one’s ability to drive. Now that the use of recreational marijuana is legal in Nevada, and in preparation for the dispensaries that are planning to open for business as soon as July 1, officers want to remind people that impaired driving is and always will be unsafe and unlawful.

“It doesn’t matter what you’re on if you’re driving,” Gordon said. “Anything that impairs your ability to drive a car will get you arrested.”

Unlike alcohol, where the legal limit is clearly stated and easily defined, marijuana impairment is more misunderstood. According Gordon, many people think eating edibles, food items cooked with THC, does not count as using marijuana. Others think marijuana doesn’t impair one’s ability to drive. Some don’t even know there is an age restriction for the use of marijuana.

“It’s very clear,” Gordon said. “You must be 21 years old to use marijuana, including edibles. And if you are 21 or older and you decide to legally use marijuana, please don’t get behind the wheel.”

Despite the information campaign, Gordon knows there will be an increase in marijuana impaired driving.

“When the use of marijuana was legalized in Nevada, we began to look at states that had legalized marijuana prior to us. We saw a clear pattern in the increase of impaired driving and we knew we were going to see a rise in marijuana impaired drivers here in Nevada. That’s just a given.”

To meet the increase in marijuana impaired drivers, officers are trained to identify drivers who are under the influence. Unlike alcohol, where breathalyzers can pinpoint the exact level of intoxication, marijuana intake is harder to measure. Instead, officers learn techniques in field sobriety tests aimed specifically at marijuana impairment.

When an officer pulls over a driver suspected of marijuana impairment—usually one who fails to stay in his lane at consistent speeds—the officer will request a field sobriety test to determine signs of marijuana inebriation. The Rhomberg Balance Test is one component, in which the driver is asked to hold his hands at his side, tilt his head back, close his eyes

and silently count to 30. Because marijuana is a depressant, impaired drivers will often count much longer than 30 seconds.

Another test unique to marijuana inebriation is Lack of Convergence. An officer will hold an object—his finger or pen—in front of the driver, moving it back and forth before moving it closer to the bridge of the driver's nose, forcing the eyes to cross or "converge." If the eyes do not converge, it is an additional component in building probable cause for the arrest of the suspected impaired driver.

"These tests are very accurate," Honea said. "If we pull you over and you show signs of impairment, we will request a field sobriety test."

As I drove home after the event, I found myself looking at the cars around me and wondering if any of the drivers were impaired by marijuana. With weed legal, it seemed plausible that I was sharing the road with a high driver. Wasn't that blue Subaru in front of me driving a little too slow? Hadn't the black Charger beside me switched lanes a time too many?

But then I thought of Gordon's parting words.

"We're prepared, we're getting the word out," he told *Lake Tahoe News*. "We will continue to do our best to curtail negative decisions about impaired driving."

And in the words of Honea: "Individual responsibility is imperative. Don't drive high."