

# Second lawsuit filed against Squaw project

By Kathryn Reed

Did Placer County violate California's open meeting law, the Brown Act?

A lawsuit filed by Sierra Watch says that is exactly what happened last year at the meeting where Placer County approved KSL Capital Partners' development plans at Squaw Valley.

The development was approved on a 4-1 vote Nov. 15.

The conservation group contends the county added things to the agenda at the late minute. Per state law the public is supposed to have access to agenda documents at least 72 hours before the meeting.

The lawsuit also contends that Placer County failed to give notice in the agenda that the Board of Supervisors would be considering a different version of the proposed project's development agreement.

"People can't participate if they don't know what's on the agenda, and they can't express an informed opinion if the background materials aren't available," Sierra Watch attorney Isaac Silverman said in a statement. "When our government acts like this, it's more than just a really bad way to run a meeting—it's illegal."

Placer County could not comment on the lawsuit because according to DeDe Cordell, director of communications and public affairs, the county has not been served yet.

Squaw, though, has strong opinions about the latest lawsuit.

"The fact is there was no Brown Act violation. The development

agreement was on the agenda, and the DA was publicly available to anyone who wanted to review it. What is rather striking is that Sierra Watch would attack a voluntary commitment to pay an air quality fee of \$441,000 to the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency,” Whit Manley, environmental attorney at Remy Moose Manley LLP on behalf of Squaw Valley Ski Holdings, told Lake Tahoe News. “If Sierra Watch’s latest claim is designed to intimidate the county, we doubt it will work. The county has very able planning and legal staff, and we are sure they will provide a thoughtful response to this misinformed claim.”

Andy Wirth, president and CEO of Squaw Valley Ski Holdings, told Lake Tahoe News, “There was a vigorous public debate about the project. We had our say. So did Sierra Watch. So did everyone else. Then the board made a decision. This claim by Sierra Watch is unfounded, and is simply another attempt by that organization to mislead the community.”

This is the second lawsuit Sierra Watch has filed pertaining to the Squaw’s plans. The Dec. 14 lawsuit centers on California Environmental Quality Act, specifically issues with the environmental impact report.

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## **Opinion: The slaves of ‘La La Land’—and South L.A.**

**By Joe Mathews**

The new film musical “La La Land” is being celebrated as a love letter to L.A. But the darker heart of the movie lies in a brief and devastating critique of Southern California, delivered by the jazz pianist played by Ryan Gosling.

“That’s L.A.,” he tells his lover, an aspiring actress played by Emma Stone. “They worship everything and they value nothing.”



Joe Mathews

There has been no better recent summary of the California struggle—with the very notable exception of the 2015 novel, “The Sellout”, whose author Paul Beatty recently became the first American to win the prestigious Man Booker Prize for Fiction.

“La La Land” and “The Sellout” seem very different. The film, an Oscar favorite, can be seen as a glossy escapist romance about white artists who live around Griffith Park. The novel is a taboo-trashing racial satire about an African-American urban farmer of watermelons and artisanal weed who reintroduces segregation to his South L.A. neighborhood, in hopes of putting it back on the map.

But the film and the novel are two of the most thought-provoking and entertaining documents of today’s California. And both are about the same big problem: that for all our celebration of game changers in this state, we offer precious little space or support to those who dare upset our status quo.

The film and the movie also make the same provocative argument about how to break through the Golden State’s stacked deck: Don’t be afraid to do things that are totally nuts. Both works specifically champion a self-sacrificing craziness, a willingness to surrender yourself and the people you love to

focus on making your mark.

"La La Land" makes a straightforward case for crazy. Gosling's musician is the film's romantic hero, because of his uncompromising commitment to restoring traditional jazz even though he can't pay his bills since the world is abandoning the form. Stone's frustrated actress only inches closer to the red carpet when she devotes herself to producing a one-woman play in a theater she can't afford to rent. In the audition scene in which she finally breaks through, she embraces the virtues of craziness in song: "A bit of madness is key to give us new colors to see. Who knows where it will lead us?"

Beatty's novel similarly suggests that, to smash through the California looking-glass world, the sanest course is to go over the edge. After the city of L.A. removes his minority neighborhood from the map, the farmer fights this fire of systemic discrimination by violating legal and cultural norms. Most outlandishly, he takes a slave, who helps him segregate the local school, hospital, bus line, and businesses with signs reading "Colored Only" and "No Whites Allowed."

Two provocative parts of the plot stand out—how long it takes for anyone to notice the farmer's segregation edicts, and how, through the farmer's unconstitutional acts, seeds of tolerance (and lower crime, higher test scores, more polite behavior) take root.

"The racism takes them back," the farmer explains. "Makes them humble. Makes them realize how far we've come and, more important, how far we have to go."

Both the film and the book, for all their high ambition, fall back on some wondrous magical realism as an escape hatch from the difficult political juggling acts they perform. The "La La" lovers literally float into the stars through the ceiling of the Griffith Park Observatory, while "The Sellout" Metro bus becomes a rolling party that ends with the vehicle being

driven into the Malibu surf.

Both works wrestle with the conflict between loyalty to one's dreams and selling out—and in the process point out just how hard it has become to tell the difference between the two. And both get at a painful paradox. We know we must hold onto real people and real things, to be truly human. But in L.A., we learn we must loosen our grip on reality to get ahead.

In this way, both masterpieces ultimately raise the question of whether making your mark here is worth the cost. No character in the book or the movie is happier than the farmer's slave in Beatty's satirized world, an aging actor from the 1950's TV show "Little Rascals" who refuses all efforts to free him. Trying to be a star in L.A. is so confounding that he comes to prefer the simplicity of quiet servitude.

"I'm a slave. That's who I am," he insists to the farmer. "It's the role I was born to play."

After all, if you're going to live in a place that values nothing, why fight so hard to be something?

*Joe Mathews writes the Connecting California column for Zócalo Public Square.*

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## No home Internet = barrier to school progress

By Aaron Sankin, Reveal

It was only a few days into the school year when Stacy Fox realized that the iPads were going to be a problem.

In 2014, public schools in Faribault, Minn., kicked off a pilot program giving an iPad to every student in the district. Funded by a tax levy passed the previous year, the iPads were meant to be instrumental in the learning process. Students would be required to bring the iPads to school every day and use the tablets to do their homework in the evenings. English teachers could load e-books onto the devices. Music instructors could have students record themselves rehearsing and provide feedback online.

For Fox in particular, the iPad program was a potential panacea. A special education teacher, Fox works with students with mild to moderate disabilities – primarily ninth- through 12th-graders with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder or conditions on the autism spectrum. Fox knew the immediate feedback these devices provide would be a special boon for the kids in her classes.

“I have noticed in my own lessons that they are tremendous tools holding tremendous power to really open things up for students who may struggle with traditional learning,” she told Reveal. “This opens up a new world of tactile and visual education – to utilize it to its fullest would be amazing.”

Even so, Fox saw one of her students struggling with his iPad almost immediately. He was supposed to complete homework assignments on his device and upload them to the school’s learning management system for grading, but the completed work wasn’t showing up.

Fox quickly realized the problem was with the technology itself. Her student was falling behind because doing homework on the iPad required access to the Internet, which the student didn’t have at home.

“It’s really difficult to turn in an assignment, take a class quiz or post on the class discussion board without the internet,” Fox said. “The devil’s advocate may argue that a

student could do this before or after school using the school's WiFi. That's reasonable if a student only has assignments in one class, but students have six to eight periods in a day, and that can be a real time crunch."

About an hour's drive south of Minneapolis, Faribault has a population of just more than 23,000 people. During the 2015-16 school year, 58 percent of students in the school district had family incomes low enough to qualify for free or reduced-cost lunches. The town has a growing population of Somali immigrants, and schools are increasingly full of students with families from Mexico and Central America. Lack of home internet access, Fox observed, is a common problem.

She said the geography of Faribault, which lacks comprehensive public transportation, is such that much of the city's poverty is clustered in trailer parks scattered across town.

Places with Internet access, such as a public library or McDonald's, are often too great a distance for a student to walk if he or she can't get a ride – especially in the frozen heart of a Minnesota winter. Special education students are disproportionately likely to be living below the poverty line, and Fox saw firsthand how efforts to bring education into the 21st century were inadvertently creating a new digital divide just as they bridged an old one.

She said that some of her students "don't have the ability to do their homework anymore. ... They're failing the classes because it looks like they're not doing the assignments as they should. ... This just isn't fair. You're taking kids who are already at a disadvantage one step back further away from their more affluent peers."

In recent years, schools around the country have made a major push to put internet-connected devices into the hands of every student. A 2014 report by the education nonprofit Project Tomorrow found that one-third of all high school students were

using wireless devices provided by their school districts.

While Fox expects these programs to become the norm within the next decade, she has found that shockingly little research has been done about the mismatch between students' internet access at school versus at home. So she decided to do her own.

In addition to teaching, Fox is getting a degree in curriculum and instruction at Texas Tech University, primarily through the school's online program. Earlier this year, she published "An Equitable Education in the Digital Age: Providing Internet Access to Students of Poverty" in the Journal of Education & Social Policy. The article calls on lawmakers, regulators and school administrators to effectively "extend" the school day by expanding home internet access to low-income students.

"At home, students can use educational technology to supplement their learning with virtual classrooms," she writes. "They can communicate with teachers to answer questions, watch tutorial videos, and interact with material and experiment with hands on problem solving tasks. ... However, in pushing students forward into this world of technology, schools may inadvertently be pulling half of its students back."

In her research, Fox looked at the possibility of having schools issue students tablets with the ability to connect to cellular networks. Her conclusion was that, given the current state of the market, 4G tablets are far more expensive than their Wi-Fi-only counterparts and likely are not only not worth the upfront cost, but they also end up saddling either schools or low-income families with recurring monthly charges.

"However," she said, "if that's what would work for a district in order to give a student digital access who may not otherwise have it, I would definitely advocate for the use of 4G tablets."

A 2015 analysis by the Pew Research Center found that 82.5

percent of households with school-age children had broadband access. It's a number that's about 9 percentage points higher than the rate for all American households, but it still means there are at least 5 million households with school-age children lacking high-speed Internet access. Broadband subscription rates were tied closely to income.

"Low-income homes with children are four times more likely to be without broadband than their middle or upper-income counterparts," the report states.

This digital divide also comes with a racial component. Minority households, the Pew study notes, make up a large share of that 5 million, with low-income black and Hispanic families with children lagging about 10 percentage points behind white households of similar socioeconomic status when it comes to home broadband service.

In recent decades, the federal government has made a significant push to expand internet access for low-income children, but the results of those efforts have been mixed. The Telecommunications Act of 1996 established the E-rate program to connect schools and libraries to the internet. Today, almost every school in the country has the infrastructure to get students online. However, those programs largely end at the edge of school property.

Under the Obama administration, the Federal Communications Commission expanded the Lifeline program from something originally intended to subsidize telephone service for poor people into a mechanism for subsidizing home broadband internet connections.

However, many of the nation's largest telecom firms are opting out of participation in the subsidy program. AT&T, Verizon Communications, CenturyLink and Frontier Communications have informed the FCC that they will not accept the Lifeline subsidy in some or all of their coverage areas – though they

did leave the door open for future participation.

As *Fortune* reports, the telecom firms have been reluctant to sign up for the program because of long-standing concerns about Lifeline users scamming the system with fraudulent claims. The government is in the process of creating an independent entity to vet Lifeline requests coming into the system, but that body isn't scheduled to be up and running until 2019. In the meantime, participating telecom firms are forced to shoulder the responsibility of ferreting out fraud on their own.

If the federal government isn't able to effectively close the home broadband gap, local school districts with infinitely smaller budgets face an even steeper challenge.

One Southern California school district, however, appears to have hit upon an innovative solution.

In the desert about 130 miles east of Los Angeles, the Coachella Valley Unified School District serves one of the poorest populations in the Golden State. Some 95 percent of the district's 18,000 students live below the poverty line.

In 2012, voters in the valley overwhelmingly approved a \$41 million bond measure that went toward paying for iPads to be provided to every student in the district, making it the first public school in the country to guarantee a tablet for everyone who enrolls in classes. But administrators in Coachella, where 40 percent of students lacked Internet access at home, ran into the same problem Fox would encounter when her Minnesota school district followed suit.

Coachella's response was to outfit its fleet of school buses with WiFi and park them around the area in the evenings and on weekends, providing mobile hot spots extending 100 yards outside of the buses. Many were strategically placed so they could cover local clubhouses where students could congregate.

When the district discovered the WiFi routers were draining the buses' batteries, school officials attached solar panels to the vehicles. The pilot program, which started with a handful of buses, proved so successful that it soon expanded to include nearly 100 buses and a host of other vehicles similarly retrofitted with wireless technology.

Darryl Adams, the superintendent who initiated both the iPad and bus WiFi efforts but recently stepped down citing health issues, told THE Journal that the initiative was about ensuring the most vulnerable young people in his community didn't get left behind.

"I went in and talked to the school board about this and about how we really needed a way to get everyone connected," he said. "In the 21st century, if you don't have access to information, you're going to be at a disadvantage. Access denied is education denied."

President Obama hailed Coachella's program in a 2014 speech, calling it, "really smart. ... You've got underutilized resources – buses in the evening – you put the routers on, disperse them, and suddenly everybody is connected."

Fox has brought up the idea with tech specialists in her own district as a possibility, but it never came to fruition. Instead, she said, teachers who have run into the same connectivity roadblocks have found individual methods of attempting to adapt to the problem. When one colleague realized one a student couldn't participate on an online forum to discuss a reading assignment with his classmates, the teacher had the student come in outside of class to discuss the assignment with him. Another converted videos intended to be streamed over the web into downloadable versions, which students could watch without internet access.

Despite these challenges, Fox asserts that finding systematic solutions is essential because technological change is driving

an evolution in education, and students need to evolve along with it.

She recalled how, as a young teacher, she would show students how to use a physical encyclopedia to look up information. She eventually abandoned the lesson because it seemed like an anachronism in an age when people are more likely to do a web search than take an actual book off the shelf.

“I realized there is an assumption among most people, in and out of education, that young people have an innate ability to use technology,” she said. “Unfortunately, as I saw firsthand, this just isn’t true.”

She has noticed in her classroom that students will go to great lengths not to seem like they’re different from their classmates.

“It’s hard enough to get high schoolers to ask questions because they don’t want to seem dumb,” she said. “But then to say something like, ‘I don’t know how to do a Google search’ – that’s not something they’re going to ask. So they’re just going to sit in the back and passively learn if they can. If they can’t, then they’re just going to blow through it and guess. If they get it right, game on. If they don’t, they don’t. They never really learn to use and apply those skills.”

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## **Nevada one of worst states to raise a family**

**By Jesse Granger, Las Vegas Sun**

Nevada is the fifth worst state in the U.S. to raise a family,

according to a study by the personal-finance website WalletHub.

The analysis included data on median family salary, housing prices, unemployment rate, violent crime and divorce rates. States were given a score in five areas: family fun, health and safety, education and child care, affordability and socioeconomics.

The website ranked all 50 states and the District of Columbia, and only four came in with lower overall scores than Nevada (Louisiana, District of Columbia, Mississippi and New Mexico).

**Read the whole story**

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# **Diversity is lacking in the ski industry**

**By Julie Brown, Powder**

Of the 9.4 million skiers in the United States, 72 percent are white. More than half earn a salary higher than \$100,000. For some context, only 20 percent of American households have a combined income of \$100K, and 63 percent of the country is white.

Skiing is a homogenous, insular experience. For the sport to be healthy and robust, it should represent the country as a whole, which includes socioeconomic and racial diversity. To ensure future generations are able to enjoy it, we must reach new participants by lowering the barrier to entry and making the sport more affordable and accessible.

Born between 1982 and 2002, Millennials came of age when

technology boomed and the economy tanked. To engage with this group, some resorts have merged skiing with other popular interests, such as technology and music, hosting festivals like SnowGlobe in South Lake Tahoe and MusicFest in Steamboat. The Millennial-powered sharing economy has arrived in ski towns to make access more convenient for an ownership-shy generation.

**Read the whole story**

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## **Shelter in place for Crystal Bay; LTUSD-DCSD closed Monday**

**Update 9:53pm:**

The Tahoe Transportation District, which operates the bus service in South Lake Tahoe, expects limited operations on Monday.

TTD will add back routes throughout the day with full service expected on Jan. 24.

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Crystal Bay-Third Creek area residents have been told to shelter in place.

North Lake Tahoe Fire District the evening of Jan. 22 issued this statement, "With the forecasted snow depth over the next 24 hours, we are raising the avalanche danger to high for the Crystal Bay/Third Creek area to match the Sierra Avalanche Center advisory of 'high' in the backcountry."

The department will work with people who are not comfortable

remaining in their home. Call 775.831.0351, ext. 0.

Looking at the forecast and the fact that South Lake Tahoe snow removal crews are not hitting all the streets where buses go, Lake Tahoe Unified School District and Douglas County School District have already canceled classes for Jan. 23.

Roads are so bad that the public bus service on the South Shore has also temporarily suspended service. This includes ski shuttles, demand response services, express and local routes. Conditions will dictate if BlueGo is running on Monday.

Heavenly Mountain Resort closed early Sunday because of high winds.

"Today we were unable to open Alpine Meadows due to blizzard conditions and Squaw Valley opened with very limited terrain. Because we've had little access to the mountain, it's going to take us some time to dig out our lifts and complete snow safety (Monday) morning, so expect delayed opening times for our scheduled lifts," the resorts said in a statement.

Squaw, like many resorts, has received 5 feet of snow since Thursday.

A winter storm warning remains in effect until 4am Monday. The Tahoe basin is also under an avalanche warning.

Significant shoveling may be required when people in the Tahoe-Truckee area wake up Monday morning.

For current highway conditions, click on the state icons on the home page of *Lake Tahoe News*.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

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# Storm shuts down buses, schools in Tahoe

Crystal Bay-Third Creek area residents have been told to shelter in place.

North Lake Tahoe Fire District at 4:30pm Jan. 22 issued this statement, "With the forecasted snow depth over the next 24 hours, we are raising the avalanche danger to high for the Crystal Bay/Third Creek area to match the Sierra Avalanche Center advisory of 'high' in the backcountry."

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– Lake Tahoe News staff report

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## Telephone scam targets SLT residents

The South Lake Tahoe Police Department has recently received calls from residents receiving calls from people pretending to be from Microsoft. The scammers are attempting to have victims send them money.

One recent case targeted a senior South Lake Tahoe couple. The scammers called from an unknown number and claimed to be from Microsoft. The scammer told the victim that the couple had overpaid Microsoft in the past and Microsoft wanted to refund them the money. The scammer had the victim turn on their computer and had the victim give the scammer remote access. As a result, the scammer was able to access the victim's bank account and deposited a sum of money well in excess of the alleged refund. The scammer then asked the victim to send them the excess amount. The victim did not send the money and was able to work with their bank and stopped all access by the

scammer.

Officers urge people to not give access their computers or to give out any personal information to anyone they don't know.

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## Calif. announces voluntary lead testing in schools

**Publisher's note:** *Lake Tahoe Unified School District did not respond to an inquiry by LTN if it will be testing for lead.*

**By Barrett Newkirk, Desert Sun**

California schools can receive free lead testing for their drinking water under a new short-term initiative meant to address safety concerns.

Most schools are not required to test for lead, creating uncertainty about whether the water children consume during the school day is safe, but some schools in California have dealt with high levels of lead and in some cases shut off access to water coming through pipes and taps.

The initiative announced by the State Water Resources Control Board keeps lead testing at schools voluntary. However, if a K-12 school requests testing by its public water system, the utility is obligated to collect samples within three months and report findings to the school within two business days. The state said the program will stay in effect until Nov. 1, 2019.

**Read the whole story**

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# STPUD to take Douglas wastewater in emergencies

By Kathryn Reed

If Douglas County Sewer Improvement District has an emergency in the future, it now has a plan to deal with it that should prevent effluent from reaching Lake Tahoe.

The South Tahoe Public Utility District board on Jan. 19 approved an interconnection system and mutual aid-assistance agreement with DCSID. STPUD had agreed to the interconnect in concept in April 2014. Last week's vote made it official.

"They will pay five times our average treatment cost for every gallon they send us," Shannon Cotulla, STPUD assistant general manager, told the board. "We would make the decision if we would accept the flow."

The interconnect will be a gravity fed 1,200-foot line that is 15-inches wide. The project will start in about 500 feet west of Lake Parkway in Stateline on Edgewood Companies property and tie in with a manhole on Stateline Avenue in South Lake Tahoe.

Under dry, normal conditions capacity at the Bijou pump station would not be an issue. If it's during storm conditions, South Tahoe PUD might not be able to help.

Before this is a done deal, the environmental process has to take place. STPUD has issued a negative declaration, with comments being taken until Feb. 20. The draft negative declaration will be before the STPUD board on March 2.

Douglas ships its treated wastewater from Stateline to ag land

in the Carson Valley. Federal law mandates all wastewater be treated and shipped out of the Lake Tahoe Basin.