

Old, new Nevada clash over economic future

By Jason Hidalgo, Reno Gazette-Journal

On a clear September day in 2014, Nevada's brain trust for economic development gathered in Carson City to celebrate the turning of a new chapter in Silver State history.

Tesla's \$5 billion Gigafactory was coming to the Reno area, a coup for a state considered an underdog against formidable competition such as Texas. It was the perfect symbol for a new Nevada, one that embraced emerging industries – nothing like the outdated images of divorce and prostitution lampooned by shows such as “Reno 911.”

As Gov. Brian Sandoval and Tesla Motors CEO Elon Musk celebrated the partnership in front of a throng of local and national media, two people who played key roles in wooing the electric car and battery company to Northern Nevada smiled in the audience. One was Economic Development Authority of Western Nevada President and CEO Mike Kazmierski, whose organization was tasked with showing potential sites to Tesla. The other was Lance Gilman, principal of the Tahoe Reno Industrial Center, which Tesla picked as the location for its Gigafactory.

The partnership seemed unlikely at first glance. On one hand, you had Kazmierski, a buttoned-down West Point graduate and former garrison commander who prefers not to call attention to himself. On the other hand was Gilman, a colorful personality who shows up at events in a Stetson hat and knows how to work a crowd. Despite differences in personality, both established a symbiotic relationship.

Behind the scenes, however, some cracks were starting to show in the otherwise rock-solid partnership between EDAWN and Tahoe Reno Industrial Center.

Read the whole story

Money Matters: Pros and cons of a gap year

By Rick Gross

A growing number of U.S. students are taking time after high school to expand their horizons before pursuing further studies. Most students who take a year off, also known as a “gap year,” use the time to gain real-world work experience, become more involved in volunteer work or learn more about other cultures through traveling.



Rick Gross

While a gap year can be rewarding, the prospect of taking a year off from academics may create some anxiety for you or your child. Asking your child some important questions can help you both get on the same page about whether a gap year makes sense.

What do you want to accomplish by taking a gap year?

First, help determine your child's motivations for wanting to take a gap year. Why is it important?

Then challenge your child to create a specific plan with a goal so his or her time isn't spent watching Netflix or sleeping in. Has your daughter wanted to start her own business? Encourage her to draft a business plan to execute. Does devoting time to charity peak your son's interest? Suggest that he design a project that will make a big difference for an organization.

The more specific your student can be with his or her intentions, the better you both will feel about the open months ahead. Look for websites and organizations dedicated to helping students embark on a meaningful and productive gap year. Or encourage your child to interview several people who have completed gap years to learn about their experiences. Have your student review their plans with a trusted teacher or guidance counselor to get an outside perspective.

Can you afford to take a gap year?

If your child was accepted to the college of his or her dreams, check to see whether the school has a gap year policy. Some colleges will accommodate requests for deferral and save any scholarships your student has earned for their return. Others may reduce the scholarship or require your child to reapply. Sit down together and discuss how to best finance his or her gap year.

Calculate the price tag of a gap year together to determine if it's within financial reach. To raise additional funds, suggest that your child save as much as possible, fundraise or secure a second job over the summer. In some cases, asking for financial support from a family member or applying for grants and scholarships may make sense.

Can you afford not to take a gap year?

The gap year can be invaluable if your student is uncertain about what school to attend or which major to pursue. Time away from academics can also allow him or her to refresh and recharge, so your student enters college ready to focus on the future. It can be expensive to attend college and pay for coursework that ultimately doesn't lead to a satisfying career path.

Students who take a year off to work or travel give themselves a chance to mature and also learn the value of a dollar. Adult responsibilities loom in the future, making a gap year after high school quite possibly a "now or never" proposition.

Taking a gap year isn't the right option for every student. If your child is excited for college or if it makes sense financially to continue with his or her studies right away, keep in mind that college will provide ample opportunities for new experiences.

Rick Gross is a financial advisor and private wealth advisor with Ameriprise Financial Services in South Lake Tahoe.

Stateline event center relying on higher bed tax

By Kathryn Reed

STATELINE – Hotel guests in Stateline are going to help fund the special events center that is going to be built on the front parking lot of MontBleu at Highway 50.

The Tahoe Douglas Visitors Authority board this week approved

raising the Douglas County lodging license fee. Now the county commissioners must OK the increase. That board is likely to hear the issue in December. This does not have to go to the voters.

The current fee is 3 percent. It would increase to 4 percent. Hotel guests also pay a 10 percent transient occupancy tax. The total 14 percent, if approved, would be the same rate guests would be paying in the redevelopment area of South Lake Tahoe if Measure P passes in November.

All of the money collected in Stateline would stay at the lake specifically for the planning, construction and operation of the facility.



The parking lot at MontBleu could become an events center. Photo/LTN

In January the county created a **redevelopment area** that basically encompasses the casino area to Kahle Drive. With Edgewood Lodge and Tahoe Beach Club being built, this will bring added revenues to the county to help raise money for the entertainment venue.

Originally the event center had been envisioned for the other side of the street and was going to be a 6,000- to 7,500-seat indoor-outdoor venue. After further study the MontBleu site

was deemed best. It will be totally indoors, seating between 4,000 and 5,000 people.

The actual land is owned by Edgewood Companies.

Douglas County, Edgewood Companies and the casino properties have been talking about a performing arts center at Stateline for years. The casino showrooms cannot hold that many people and the Harveys outdoor facility is seasonal.

“The community recognized that group activities benefit tourism. And it is consistent with the transition of the economy from a gaming based model to a resort destination, recreation based model,” Lew Feldman, attorney for TDVA, told *Lake Tahoe News*.

As of today, TDVA would own and operate the facility. The goal is to drive more people to Tahoe, especially in the off-season.

Also at the Oct. 12 board meeting \$12,060 was allocated for a parking analysis.

Board members Mike Bradford (representing Lakeside Inn) and Nancy McDermid (Douglas County) were appointed to the subcommittee to deal with the entertainment venue issues. They have the authority to spend up to \$100,000, though that could be multiple \$100,000 expenditures. Allocating money for a design fee will likely be an immediate need after the parking study is done.

Opinion: EDC's hollow road

maintenance promises

By Larry Weitzman

El Dorado County is still suffering from a multitude of management issues from the legality of funding road maintenance from the Missouri Flat Master Circulation and Funding Plan (CFD for the Missouri Flat Corridor), which is evidently waiting for a legal opinion from county counsel, to awaiting new numbers from CalPERS of the county's unfunded liabilities regarding the its pensions and the new \$60 plus million non-voter approved obligation for the sheriff's headquarters



Larry Weitzman

In a Sept. 30, press release about the new EDC budget from the Board of Supervisors there was a bullet point that said the BOS is putting "\$2 million additional funds for road maintenance and improvements, increasing the road maintenance and operations budget" It was only a year ago that this very same BOS, including both Mike Ranalli and Sue Novasel voted to end General Fund road maintenance. And when the issue of using General Fund road maintenance money was agendized a few months later by Supervisor Shiva Frentzen, it was voted down by the rest of the BOS again.

More important is that the voters by a margin of 65 percent to 35 percent mandated a portion of General Fund money for road maintenance with the passage of Measure H 16 years ago. How the BOS forgets and ignores.

The reality is that EDC is not adding any General Fund money from General Fund revenues to road maintenance, but that EDC hopes to raid the Missouri Flat Master Circulation and Funding Plan or legally known as Community Facilities District No. 2002-01 which is essentially a Mello-Roos District. Connected to this CFD are a series of at least a half a dozen development agreements with the large landowners. This is a very complex deal and therein lies an insurmountable problem.

The other reality is a political one. EDC's largest asset is its nearly 1,100 miles of roads. After public safety the largest priority for the county is the maintenance of this asset. And that is a huge job considering the heavy truck traffic, and hot and cold weather. So the press release was for the purpose of making the BOS look good to the public and hopefully the re-election of two county supervisors, Ranalli and Novasel. Politics is all about perception and has nothing to do with what really happens. This CFD was formed in about March 2002 by Resolution No. 074-2002 which established CFD No. 2002-01. It was created by a special tax allocation giving 85 percent of the increase in sales and property tax within the district to fund the district. That money now amounts to about \$6 million in the bank and growing.

At a recent BOS budget meeting, head of the CDA, Steve Pedretti, said that essentially there was more than enough money in the CFD for the balance of needed road improvements, the purpose being that the BOS could make a finding that they could use the money for general fund road maintenance as stated in the aforementioned press release. The idea is to dissolve the CFD and grab the money at the detriment of every county resident who uses the road, never mind the businesses in the CFD who paid into the fund on the promise of a much improved traffic circulation plan for the Missouri Flat Corridor. If the BOS can't get to the money for road maintenance, no problem, they will blame Pedretti whose last day at the county is in two weeks.

It must be assumed that no one has read the 22 pages of Resolution No. 074-2002 (the CFD formation document) except for probably former BOS member Jack Sweeney (he seems to read everything) who was not even on the BOS at the time of passing this resolution. Considering the amount of typographical errors and slipshod paperwork on the document that was executed by the chair of the BOS and clerk of the board, I doubt anyone other than the typist read the document when it was passed in 2002, otherwise the more than a dozen typos and other errors would have been at least corrected.

How do I know about the typos and other mistakes? I printed and read Resolution 2002-01. The work required under the CFD has been barely started as two of the biggest projects haven't even begun construction and another is in need of a redo. The three large projects were the "fixing" of the 1) Missouri Flat/Highway 50 interchange which while ostensibly completed is still in need of a retrofit as the two shopping center exits on the north side are clearly inadequate, 2) Missouri Flat Road Widening-Phase B: Forni Road to Future Pleasant Valley Connector, and 3) the Pleasant Valley Connector Roadway: Missouri Flat Road to Hwy 49/Fowler Lane Intersection.

These two major improvements have yet to break ground and the merchants in the corridor want them built to increase the ease of access to their stores. It is mandatory that these improvements be finished before any disbandment of the CFD take place and any left over money is available to the general fund for road maintenance or any other purpose. On top of that this CFD has a 40-year lifespan, until June 30, 2042.

The county counsel said he would write a legal opinion saying that the BOS could get \$2 million from the CFD bank account. County counsel has also not read the formation documents either or he would not have made such a promise. Most of his recent "legal opinions" are replete with misstatements of the law, poor legal construction and general balderdash. But there

is a real reason for this charade and it is political and that is the BOS wanted to tell the public they were going to do lots of road maintenance and fix our decaying infrastructure which is destroying our vehicles every day. They are not going to do that. This road maintenance promise is very important to the reelection campaign of Mike Ranalli and Sue Novasel. They wanted to tell their constituents, "look, I am fixing the roads. See what a good guy (gal) I am." Politicians love to brag about their promises, not their real accomplishments.

The only way this No. 2 county priority was going to get handled was "cut spending" but instead the county continues with more of the same as spending continues to grow. And if that doesn't get you aggravated, our new total of unfunded CalPERS pension liability and unfunded county employee health costs will probably more than triple the new sheriff's facility obligation while the county continues to spend like a drunken sailor with the rank of admiral (they make good money and is meant as no derogation to any of our dedicated Naval Personnel.)

As another example of wasteful spending, the BOS approved the job description and salary of a new hire at the Oct. 11, the new public information officer at between a cost of about \$130K to about \$160K annually. The sole purpose of this new spin doctor is to make the BOS and higher county officials look good even though they continue to make bad decisions, especially with your money. What do they care, it's not their personal money and they know how to get more of your money. I wonder what kind of press release the new PIO will write when the BOS can't take the \$2 million from the Missouri Flat CSD? I doubt you will ever see that press release.

If EDC hires anyone it should be a butcher from Archer's, Raley's or Safeway to trim the fat from our budget spending. He would do a much better job than what EDC BOS has done.

Larry Weitzman is a resident of Rescue.

'Ferguson Effect' making officers fearful

By Derek Hawkins, Washington Post

A Chicago police officer who was savagely beaten at a car accident scene did not draw her gun on her attacker – even though she feared for her life – because she was afraid of the media attention that would come if she shot him, the city's police chief said.

Chicago Police Department Superintendent Eddie Johnson said the officer, a 17-year veteran of the force, knew she should shoot the attacker but hesitated because “she didn't want her family or the department to go through the scrutiny the next day on the national news,” the *Chicago Tribune* reported.

Johnson's remarks, which came at an awards ceremony for police and firefighters, underscore a point law enforcement officers and some political leaders have pressed repeatedly as crime has risen in Chicago and other major cities: that police are reluctant to use force or act aggressively because they worry about negative media attention that will follow.

The issue has become known as the Ferguson effect, named after the St. Louis suburb where a police officer shot and killed an unarmed black teenager in August 2014. The shooting set off protests and riots that summer and eventually gave way to a fevered national debate over race and policing. Many law enforcement officers have said that the intense focus on policing in the time since has put them on the defensive and hindered their work.

Read the whole story

AT&T working on restoring service in SLT

AT&T reportedly lost at least one tower in the Emerald Fire, which caused Meyers and a large swath of South Lake Tahoe to be without phone and Internet service on Friday.

AT&T could not be reached to find out when service might be restored.

In addition to landlines being out, cell phone service was spotty at best for AT&T customers on Oct. 14.

The fire burning near Cascade Lake on the South Shore started about 1:30am Oct. 14 and is at 80 percent contained.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Meyers Creek to be restored

El Dorado County is in the process of restoring the Meyers Creek in an effort to improve the ecosystem and watershed management.

A \$1.1 million grant from the California Tahoe Conservancy was the last piece of financing needed to go forward. Another nearly \$1.4 million has been secured from the Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit and from stream environmental mitigation funds via Tahoe Regional Planning Agency.

The site has the Upper Truckee River to the west, Lake Tahoe Golf Course to the northwest, Highway 50 to the south and Pioneer Trail to the east.

About 9 acres of meadow habitat and stream environmental zone along Santa Fe Road and Highway 50 will be restored.

The amount of stormwater reaching the river and lake will be reduced, and the clarity of that water will be improved. This will be done by stabilizing channels and installing infiltration basins.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

LT Boys & Girls Club in search of new home

By Kathryn Reed

Proposition 51 could turn out to be a mixed blessing for entities in South Lake Tahoe.

If it passes, Lake Tahoe Unified School District intends to reopen Al Tahoe Elementary School next fall. If that happens, the Lake Tahoe Boys & Girls Club will be on the street.

This is why the nonprofit is in the hunt for a permanent home.

The statewide proposition is a \$9 billion school facilities bond. LTUSD is expecting to receive \$1.4 million.

With enrollment increasing in LTUSD, the district needs more space. Al Tahoe closed after the 2003-04 school year because of declining enrollment and budget deficits.

“It will start as a K-2 school and build from there. It will be a STEM school. However, if Prop. 51 does not pass, we will likely not open the school,” Shannon Chandler, spokeswoman for LTUSD, told *Lake Tahoe News*. “The funds are necessary to do significant upgrades at the site, including a boiler system which could cost upward of \$400,000.”

The Boys & Girls Club, which has more than 500 members and averages 300 kids a day, had hoped to be able to be part of the new South Lake Tahoe recreation center if Measure P passes in November. But the building of that structure would be a few years off.

The organization this month received a check for \$50,000 from Rob Katz, CEO of Vail Resorts, to help with finding a permanent location.

“The club is backing Measure P on the city ballot to fund recreation as that is currently our best bet of a new home. But for the integrity of both the rec center and the club we would still like to have dedicated space of our own paid for by the club and in close proximity to the rec center – and utilize the rec center for daily sports, recreation, large group activities, etc.,” Jude Wood, executive director of the Boys & Girls Club, told *Lake Tahoe News*.

The club keeps growing. In 2015, it grew by 125 percent. Last summer there was a waiting list. So, even if Al Tahoe were to continue to be an option, the reality is the club could use a bigger space.

The nonprofit is the only afterschool program on the South Shore for youth 5 and older. Two-thirds of the families fall below the California poverty line.

It costs \$100 a year per child to attend for a year, though many qualify for a discount based on their income.

Besides needing space for activities, the club wants room for

school related activities such as being able to conduct science experiments as well as a kitchen because meals are part of the offerings. More than 27,000 free meals are served a year, plus an additional 54,000 free evening snacks.

Hard Rock entities under one umbrella

For the first time in more than 35 years Hard Rock hotels, casinos and cafes are being operated by the same company.

Hard Rock International this month completed the acquisition of casino and hotel-casino rights in the Western United States, including Lake Tahoe, from BREF.

It is not expected that there will be any changes to the hotel-casino or café in Stateline. However, hotel-casino owners Jon and David Park chose not to talk to *Lake Tahoe News*. It means the local owners now have the licensing agreement with a different company.

Originally separated from the Hard Rock International's portfolio more than three decades ago, the rights acquired in this deal reunite Hard Rock International's global territory for casinos and hotel-casinos.

Jim Allen, Hard Rock International's chairman, did not respond to multiple inquiries from Lake Tahoe News.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

Letter: Davidson is best choice for LTUSD board

To the community,

Annie Davidson should be the next LTUSD school board member from trustee Area 1.

My name is Brooke Martone- Ballachey. I was born and raised in Christmas Valley and attended elementary school through high school in the Lake Tahoe Unified School District. I am now raising two children in our community and am the owner of a small business.

Before I knew of Annie's long impressive resume and dedicated career as an educator; I met Annie as a fellow parent at Tahoe Parents Nursey School (TPNS). Over the past three years I have gotten to know Annie through both various school activities and community events. Having served on the TPNS board with Annie I was always impressed with her fairness and ability to listen and communicate with a varied group of people all having different opinions.

Both Annie and her husband, Matt Lucksinger, are always one of the first people to offer a helping hand and dedicate themselves to our community needs.

Annie would be an invaluable asset on the School Board. Both her background and career in education and what I have seen of her ability to critically think; work with many people that may not agree on all issues and come up with a creative solution make her the ideal candidate.

I believe it is in those simple interactions with Annie on a

day to day basis that you see her brilliance and passion for our children. Annie being the Mother of two elementary school kids also adds another level of depth to her understanding of our school district's needs. She is always approachable and puts 100% into whatever task she takes on.

It is for these reasons I think Annie Davidson being a member of the school board would help to influence our community in a positive direction and I urge you to vote Annie Davidson for school board member trustee area #1.

Brooke Martone-Ballachey, South Lake Tahoe