

North Lake Tahoe lodging tax revenue jumps

Hotel taxes increased by 18 percent in Placer County in the fiscal year that ended June 30 compared to 2014-15.

Transient occupancy tax collections in the Tahoe area increased by more than \$3 million in the county's previous fiscal year, from July 2015 through June 2016, including more than \$900,000 in unpaid back TOT collected. Collections were especially high during the winter ski season, but up the rest of the year, too.

Nearly 4,000 lodging operators in Placer County are registered to collect TOT.

TOT revenues are spent at the discretion of the Placer County Board of Supervisors. Placer now spends \$2 million per year in TOT revenue to improve the TART bus system to better serve workers and visitors and keep cars off the road to improve air and water quality. The additional revenue collected this year will go right back into investment in new priority projects, such as completing missing links in the regional trail network along the north shore and between Truckee and lake shore communities of Tahoe City and Kings Beach.

Shearer: Wants to encourage progress in SLT

Publisher's note: *Lake Tahoe News* asked candidates for South Lake Tahoe City Council, Lake Tahoe Community College, Lake

Tahoe Unified School District, Douglas County School District, South Tahoe Public Utility District and Lake Valley Fire Protection District a series of questions. We are running the responses in the order received.



John Shearer is running for one of two seats open on the South Lake Tahoe City Council.

Name: John Shearer

Age: 49

Job/profession: Owner/operator of local businesses, boat captain

What boards, commissions, or other experience, including volunteering, do you have?: President of nonprofit, Marine Research and Education

Why are you running for City Council?: The number one reason I am running for City Council is to encourage progress in our city. I want to help preserve the community and ensure its future. I am not doing this for the money, the status, or the title. I am running for City Council to help make a difference in our community, which I have worked so hard to be a part of and that has given my family and I so much. I believe there is

no better place to live and raise your family than Lake Tahoe.

Why should voters vote for you over another candidate?: I am businessman, a family man, and invested in the roots of this community. Owning four separate businesses in different industries gives me a broad knowledge of management.

What distinct experience or competency makes you uniquely qualified to lead effectively as an elected official?: I understand how to run multiple types of successful businesses and the city is essentially one very large business with many separate entities. Being able to effectively run my businesses gives me an understanding of how to manage separate entities and be able to forecast the future and adapt to change at a quicker pace.

Public agencies have been under scrutiny the last few years for lack of transparency and accountability. What will you do to ensure both?: I would treat this position as I operate my businesses, with dignity and respect toward others. I am very straightforward and very honest. I believe in fulfilling obligations that I have committed to and seeing them through in the most honest way possible.

What stands out for you in the current budget that you support and that you would change?: I support the transient occupancy tax percentage increase, which will directly fund the recreational sport complex. I strongly believe that recreation is one of our primary focuses in this city and bringing in a complex will allow increased tourism throughout the year.

Do you support current legislation for \$15 minimum wage? Please explain: I think it is worthy of discussion, however I don't believe putting all the expenses for an individual's prosperity solely on the backs of the business owners. You have to work hard to earn more.

Do you support Proposition 55? Please explain: I oppose Proposition 55 because it is a premature forecast of change

with two years still left in the original Proposition 30, which was written to be temporary. Extending this will affect small businesses and without a defined plan of where the allocated money will actually go. I oppose the extension of Proposition 30.

Describe three attributes for a successful council: Honesty, integrity, transparency

What are your thoughts about public employee defined benefits?: I believe that if you do a duty to the city, you deserve compensation; however long-term extended benefits after a person has left their employment with the city should be up for discussion based on their time and effort invested.

Please explain your position regarding contracting out work normally done by staff: If workflow exceeds my team's abilities or time constraints, I think it is important to seek professional assistance (under specific guidance) from an outside contractor to ensure the achievement of the goal.

What is your 10-year vision for South Lake Tahoe?: I would like to see the recreational sports complex built and fully operational. I would like to see overall progress for current projects within the city such as Heavenly's plans, better parking, and better flow of traffic throughout the city. I would also like to see outdoor sign guidelines so the city is more aesthetically pleasing when driving through it.

What one vote in the last four years that the current council made do you disagree with and why?: Vacation rental proposal; I would have liked to see the existing legislation in place actually being enforced versus creating new ones.

How many City Council meetings have you attended this year?: None this year.

What do you know about the strategic plan, finances, debt, and goals of the city?: Fiscal conservancy, pay attention to

current trends and be aware of what may come in the future. Debt is sometimes necessary to achieve goals and increase growth, and refinancing that debt when necessary.

Being on the council means working as a team. How will you work with the sitting members for the greater good of the community?: I will practice the same values that I do with my businesses. We all need each other's expertise in order to ensure the best end result possible.

What should be the three main priorities for the council?: Economic prosperity, transparency, and accountability.

What have you done to make yourself ready to be a council member?: I have worked every single day for the past 30 years in this community and I know what it takes to make things happen and how to make a living.

What role should government have in housing for residents?: Providing legislation to regulate aesthetics, sound ordinances, and hold homeowners responsible for overall property maintenances.

How can the city partner with the school district to improve high school graduation rates?: The city is always open to new partnerships and is addressing the current needs. Schools are our city's future, and I believe that we have a wonderful school system.

How can local government support and expand job creation and small local businesses?: Work in alliance with our community and the Tahoe Prosperity Center. Provide transportation for people to commute in and out of the basin. Provide an online forum or posting page for local businesses to have one location to post jobs, share jobs and employees, and that is accessible to anyone who is in need of a job.

If you believe in the one South Shore concept, what would you do to further make this a reality? If you don't believe in

blurring the state line, why don't you?: We are one community, where our services frequently cross both lines, if we incorporate the separate entities into one, we could prosper together. One high school. One community from Zephyr Cove to Meyers. I like to think outside of the box and feel that we can find a solution that works best for the community and the states.

What are your views on:

a: Vacation home rentals: I believe in vacation rentals and the rules that are currently in place need to be enforced. Three strikes rule, if you can't manage your property within the current legislation, you shouldn't have the privilege of operating a vacation rental property.

b: Loop road: I believe in it – to increase the synergy, traffic flow, and events so local families and tourists can enjoy the area in safety.

c: City streets: City streets are definitely the less glamorous side of government but nonetheless, extremely important. We need to have better maintained roadways with reasonable time-lines for repairs and improvements and not in our peak season of tourism. New street lights should be considered in the heavily traveled back streets for safety purposes.

d: Relationships with other public agencies: Collaboration is necessary, but so is accountability. We cannot move forward while everyone is finger pointing.

e: Recreation: Increasing recreation with the recreation center complex. Bring back the basics of our city and the history of Lake Tahoe to have a place to host outdoor family recreation.

f. TRPA defined commodities: I think it is very helpful to have an agency that is dedicated to preserving Lake Tahoe and

its environment, as long it is in collaboration with the best interests of the community.

g. Transient occupancy tax measure: I support the increase of 2 percent TOT if the funds are directly funding the new recreation center complex in town.

h. Sales tax measure: I support the sales tax increase by one-half percent if it directly addresses the city's "less glamorous" needs.

i. What do you want the additional sales tax money to go to?: I support that money be allocated toward road and street improvements, however I support our community and whatever the majority votes on.

Tell us something about yourself that people may not know: I own a fishing company, I am a fishing captain, and I don't enjoy eating fish. I would much rather have steak and potatoes.

As someone who owns multiple businesses on both sides of the state line involving fishing and snowmobiling, what are your priorities – the environment, fair wages, tourism, the consumer or something else? Why?: All the above. I believe all of these priorities are a recipe for success and they are defined within all of my businesses. We cannot have one without the other.

Opinion: Resources needed to battle Nev. opioid epidemic

By Tom Vilsack and Brian Sandoval

In Nevada and across the country, opioid addiction is a fast-growing problem that disproportionately affects rural communities. New data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention shows opioids were involved in 28,648 deaths in 2014, meaning more Americans are dying from drug overdoses than in motor vehicle crashes each year.

Nevada has been hit particularly hard by this epidemic. Tragically, 382 people in the Silver State died of drug overdoses in 2014. Chances are, readers of this column have been affected by a loved one's addiction, or know someone who has. In fact, a recent poll from the Kaiser Family Foundation found that 44 percent of Americans personally know someone who has been addicted to prescription pain medication.

This is a health crisis, and it is going to take serious action from all levels of government, the health care community, law enforcement and others to turn those numbers around.

Read the whole story

Adaptive sports: Making the impossible possible

By Allison Torres Burtka, Sierra

You might think outdoor adventure sports like skiing and kayaking are off limits to people with severe physical disabilities. But a range of adaptive gear and programs, designed to accommodate various physical challenges, can open up worlds of possibility.

People with disabilities are redefining what's possible. For example, Dani Burt surfs on a prosthetic leg and became the U.S. adaptive surfing champion in June. Stacey Kozel, who has lupus and lost the use of her legs, is hiking the Appalachian Trail this summer with the aid of highly sophisticated leg braces.

For some people, preparing for outdoor adventure sports might be as simple as learning the best way to use a prosthetic limb. For others, equipment made specifically to accommodate certain needs allows them to get out on the trail, water, or slopes.

Read the whole story

Calif. court upholds 'pension spiking' reforms

By Richard Halstead, Marin Independent Journal

A state appeals court has upheld the Marin pension board's interpretation of a 2013 state law aimed at eliminating "pension spiking."

Marin County Employees' Retirement Association, commonly known as the pension board, was sued by four labor organizations – the Marin Association of Public Employees, the Marin County Management Employees Association, Service Employees International Union 1021 and the Marin County Fire Department Firefighters' Association.

As the court noted in its decision, Marin County was one of the first pension organizations to implement the Pension

Reform Act. On Dec. 18, 2012, MCERA's board reacted to the legislation by announcing a new policy for the calculation of retirement benefits – a move aimed at so-called pension spiking. Pension spiking occurs when a governmental agency includes additional pay as part of a calculation in order to drive up an individual's pension benefits.

Read the whole story

Blueprint to combat opioid abuse in Nevada

By Pashtana Usufzy, Las Vegas Review-Journal

Gov. Brian Sandoval's Prescription Drug Abuse Prevention Summit concluded Thursday with a laundry list of recommendations to reduce opioid abuse in Nevada, at least some of which are expected to be included in a legislative package the governor will send to the Legislature next year.

Suggestions from about 400 health care professionals, politicians and others attending the two-day summit included identifying physicians and others who overprescribe opioids, ensuring that patients who abuse drugs are connected with rehabilitation services and increasing access to the overdose-reversing drug naloxone.

The summit also revealed some hopeful news: The number of reported opiate-related overdose deaths declined statewide in 2015, though state officials say they don't yet know why.

Read the whole story

Snippets about Lake Tahoe

- Clare Rudolph has joined the OB-GYN physician team at Barton Women's Health.
- Lew Dobbins, a long time North and West shore resident, has enjoyed boating on Lake Tahoe since driving his first boat at age 6. He will give a talk Sept. 5 at 5pm at the Tahoe Maritime Museum in Tahoe City.
- Tangled Roots Writing in Truckee is offering a creative writing workshop from Sept. 12-Oct. 17, 6-8pm. Cost is \$150. For more info or to register, call 530.386.3901.
- Barton Auxiliary is putting on a blood drive Oct. 28 from noon-5pm at the South Lake Tahoe Recreation Center. Bring a photo ID. Eat well and drink plenty of fluids.
- The Humane Society of Truckee Tahoe will host its first Balls in the Ruff Golf Tournament to benefit homeless pets. The scramble-style tournament is Sept. 16 at the Tahoe Donner Golf Course. Entry costs \$150, including 18 holes of golf with cart, a golfer goody bag and an awards dinner. To register, go **online**.

Letter: UNR speaks out on Kaepernick

To the community,

The Reno-Tahoe International Airport and Wolf Pack Athletics have been in discussion regarding an announcement to update the Wolf Pack wall at the airport. Three years ago, the wall was designed to allow for updates and the new display materials will support an exciting announcement coming within a few months.

Until then, the display at the airport and anything else on campus will remain intact as it is currently.

The University of Nevada, Reno will not abandon the many contributions that one of our graduates, Colin Kaepernick, made during his time at the university, based on his expression of the constitutional right afforded to citizens of the United States to express their views, whether in a controversial manner or not.

The university is a place where we encourage open and meaningful dialogue, free speech and differences of opinion.

Marc Johnson, UNR president

Paper making class in Meyers

Bona Fide Books will offer Introduction to Handmade Paper on Sept. 8, 5:30-8:30pm with artist Carol Brown.

This workshop is for those who want to learn to make handmade paper at home. Students will prepare a vat of pulp, pull sheets of paper with a mould and deckle, "couch" the sheets of paper and press it to dry. Students will work with different fibers and make a stack of paper using a variety of techniques.

Come prepared to get wet; closed-toe shoes are suggested.

Brown studied paper making at the Glassell School of Art, the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, where she received a certificate in printmaking. She has taken a papermaking workshop at Magnolia Editions in Oakland with David Kimbell and also with Rhiannon Alpers at Sierra Nevada College. She has made handmade papers for six summers in her home studio.

The class fee is \$35, plus \$5 material fee.

The class will be at Bona Fide Books in Meyers, 1069 Magua St., No. 4. Space is limited. To sign up, go **online** or call 530.545.1373.

Obama says Reid is 1 of Senate's greatest leaders



Sen. Harry Reid, D-Nev., has been working on Lake Tahoe issues for decades. Photo Copyright 2016 Carolyn E. Wright

By Scott Sonner, AP

STATELINE — Sentimental? No. Tough? Yes.

A credit to Nevada and his country? Absolutely.

That's how President Obama describes Sen. Harry Reid as the Nevada Democrat's 30-year career in Congress winds down.

"I'll miss Harry, even though he's not a sentimental guy," Obama told a crowd of about 7,000 this week at the Lake Tahoe

Summit at Harveys.

The president shared a story about Reid's telephone habits familiar to most who've known the son of a hard-rock miner over the years.

"Anybody who's ever gotten on the phone with Harry Reid, you'll be making conversation, and once he's kind of finished with the whole point of the conversation, you'll still be talking and you realize he's hung up," Obama said to laughter.

"And he does that to the president of the United States," he said. "It takes you, like, three or four of these conversations to realize he's not mad at you, but he doesn't have much patience for small talk. "

Reid, who is retiring at the end of this year, is a "tough" character whom Obama believes will "go down as one of the best leaders the Senate ever had."

"I could not have accomplished what I accomplished without him being at my side," the president said. "So I want to say publicly, to the people of Nevada, to the people of Lake Tahoe, to the people of America: I could not be prouder to have worked alongside the Democratic leader of the Senate, Harry Reid. "

Obama made his first ever visit to Tahoe for Wednesday's summit at the request of Reid, who also persuaded President Bill Clinton to attend the first such summit in 1997.

Obama said Reid has been an environmental champion not only for Nevada, but the entire nation.

"Right after I took office, the very first act Harry's Senate passed was one of the most important conservation efforts in a generation. We protected more than 2 million acres of wilderness and thousands of miles of trails and rivers. That was because of Harry Reid," Obama said.

Reid was the driving force behind the creation of the only national park in Nevada, Great Basin National Park near Ely on the Nevada-Utah line, he said, as well as the protection of more than 700,000 acres in the Basin and Range National Monument Obama designated last summer.

But his environmental legacy may prove to be the efforts he put into bringing together dispirit interests to begin to reverse a dramatic loss of Lake Tahoe's famed clarity.

"Two decades ago, the senator from Searchlight trained a national spotlight right here, on Lake Tahoe," Obama said. "And as he prepares to ride off into the sunset ... this 20th anniversary summit proves that the light Harry lit shines as bright as ever."