South Tahoe pot club moving half block to Hwy. 50 location

By Kathryn Reed

Gino DiMatteo thrust his arms in the air after the South Lake Tahoe City Council granted him permission to move his medical marijuana dispensary less than a block from where it is currently located.

The city's ordinance mandates the three collectives get the council's blessing before being able to move.

Had the council gone along with City Attorney Patrick Enright's recommendation to deny the move, it would have meant another 28 people being unemployed and the city not reaping its share of taxes. It also would have meant the number of pot clubs would have decreased by 33 percent.

City of Angels II's 2010 tax documents show it had gross receipts of $463,028.

Enright made a lengthy presentation, going into a good deal of history about medical marijuana law, including court cases that are yet to be decided.

But the matter was about whether DiMatteo could move, not about the pros or cons of medical marijuana.



City of Angels II owner Gino DeMatteo is moving his business to this Highway 50 location. Photo/LTN

DiMatteo's landlord, Darcy DeTarr, had received a letter from the U.S. Attorney General's Office threatening to seize the property if pot continued to be sold on the premise. An agreement was reached between the landlord and tenant that he could keep the operation going until mid-July, but after that time he had to change what he was doing.

DiMatteo decided to forego the landlord-U.S. government headache and instead would shoulder the entire burden by owning the building he operated out of. He is in escrow on the old Lorraine Bakery building on Highway 50 that sits between Thran's and the Matterhorn motel.

He told the council no signs will say what the business is, patients will be directed to use the James Street driveway and that he won't be growing marijuana on the premise.

The council voted 4-1 to allow DiMatteo to move. Councilman Bruce Grego voted no. He has consistently been against the dispensaries.

In other action:

• Mike Keck asked the council to look into the parking issues involving some streets in the Heavenly area. The council agreed to look into it.

• Four people asked the council to make a decision on the loop road project and the potential use of eminent domain sooner rather than later. The council agreed to take up the matter in September.

• The council voted 3-2 (Claire Fortier and Angela Swanson were on the losing end of the vote) regarding the sign

ordinance and the appeals process.

N. Nevada starting to worry about possible drought

By Jeff Delong, Reno Gazette-Journal

Joe Ricci was worrying by January. Now he knows he’s in trouble.

With drought conditions worsening day by day and the Carson River dropping steadily, the Dayton-area rancher expects he may be out of water in a couple of weeks or so. He’s still hoping to harvest one good crop of hay, but once irrigation is halted and his cattle and sheep eat the last of the green grass, “it’s gone.”

Ricci’s family has ranched the land for 100 years and he’s seen wet and dry years come and go. This one stands out.

“I don’t remember having to worry about water this early in the year. It’s already tough to get water,” said Ricci, 42. “I can’t remember it ever drying up this soon.”

Stories like Ricci’s are now being sought out by experts trying to gauge the severity of a drought impacting each of Nevada’s 17 counties to some degree.

How severe this drought becomes over the summer and how this drought year stacks up in comparison to others remains to be seen. Experts, however, agree the situation appears serious.

Cities like Reno, Sparks and Carson City are expected to make it through the summer with sufficient water supplies for municipal uses, with the Truckee Meadows prepared to weather a drought lasting years in duration.

Read the whole story

Average age of national park visitors on the rise

By Gabe Gutierrez, NBC News

ESTES PARK, Colo. — At Rocky Mountain National Park in Colorado, rangers are seeing more than green this spring. They're also noticing a little more gray.

The average visitor to national parks is getting older.

Cyclist John O'Malley, 61, of Summit County, Colo., has enjoyed the trails for almost half a century.

"You do get close to nature," Malley said.

But apparently, not everyone shares that fondness anymore.

Back in 1996, at Death Valley National Park, almost a third of visitors were in their 20s. But in the last few years, that number has dropped to just 11 percent at Yosemite and six percent at Yellowstone, according to a University of Idaho analysis of Park Service attendance figures.

At Rocky Mountain National Park, the average age of visitors has risen to 46.

"Right now, we see a lot of youth not coming to the parks,"

said Larry Frederick, a park ranger for more than 15 years who has noticed the changing demographics. “I think there a lot of distractions right now for young people.”

Frederick said the average age of visitors used to be late 20s and early 30s.

Read the whole story

Elder Options expands services to include handyman work

Recognizing that older people are increasingly remaining in their homes as they age, Elder Options has expanded services to the community by adding a handyman component to the Care Management and Home Care services already in place.

Sample handyman services include outside yard clean up including weed eating, pruning, burning and mowing. Minor repairs can include repairing a leaky faucet, replacing a garbage disposal, installing grab bars, handheld showers, installing additional safety lighting, changing furnace filters, and minor electrical repairs.

Additional services can include cleaning out the garage, taking unused-discarded materials to recycling or thrift stores, cleaning gutters, stacking wood, spraying for insects and other tasks that the older person needs help with.

The handyman can also take the family pet to the veterinarian for shots or grooming.

Other services may be available as requested.

As an employee of Elder Options, handymen will be covered for all payroll taxes, liability and workers' compensation as well as completing a background investigation and orientation.

For more information or to arrange for Handyman Services, call Elder Options at (530) 626.6939.

Prescribed burn in South Lake Tahoe

U.S. Forest Service fuels management crews are burning today near the corner of Al Tahoe Boulevard and Pioneer Trail in South Lake Tahoe.

Residents and visitors can expect to see smoke from this prescribed fire project area on June 6.

Forest Service staff will post road signs around areas affected by prescribed fire, and update the local fire information line at (530) 543-2600, No. 6.

Tahoe's water level about to

start declining

By Jeff Delong, Reno Gazette-Journal

Lake Tahoe likely reached its maximum level for the year Tuesday and will now start a steady drop in further evidence of a dry year.

Nudged up incrementally by Monday's rain and snow showers, Tahoe reached a level of 6,227.66 feet above sea level Tuesday. That's probably as high as it's going to get.

"This very well may be the peak," said Chad Blanchard, chief deputy water master.



Lake Tahoe is at its peak this week in regards to the amount of water. Photo/LTN

The lake likely will stay at its current level for a few days or so as inflow from melting snow roughly equals the amount of water evaporating from the lake.

Once evaporation rates exceed inflow – and that could happen quickly, particularly under hot and windy conditions – things will change.

“Then it will drop,” Blanchard said. “The lake will start its long descent through the summer.”

The lake reached its pivot point nearly two months earlier than last year. An epic winter of 2010-11 layered the Sierra in drifts of snow that stuck around under the influence of a cool spring.

Tahoe didn’t stop rising until Aug. 1, topping out at 6,228.42 feet in what was its sixth most impressive rise in over a century.

As stands to reason, the lake reaches its maximum level early during dry years such as 1992, when it topped out May 17 at 6,221.87 feet. During particularly wet years, rising doesn’t stop until much later. In 1965, it didn’t stop rising until Aug. 17 at 6,228.87 feet.

This year is definitely on the drier side. A sub-par winter ended with an April 1 snowpack at only a little more than half of where it should have been for that time of year. The snow’s been melting since, and “there’s very little left,” Blanchard said.

The contrast to last year is dramatic.

“Last year was close to the latest I’ve ever seen it,” Blanchard said. “Last year was about as late as it gets and this year was pretty darned early.”

How much the lake drops over the course of the summer will be determined by weather conditions, but the lake will probably go down 2 feet or so, still staying roughly 2 feet above its natural rim.

When full to the maximum legal limit, 6 feet of water above the rim are stored by the dam at Tahoe City for downstream use by Reno-Sparks and Nevada agriculture.

That means there is plenty of water for municipal use, said

Bill Hauck, water supply coordinator of the Truckee Meadows Water Authority. The area's primary water purveyor serves about 93,000 homes and businesses across the greater Reno-Sparks area.

"Our water supply is in really good shape," Hauck said. "We should have full river flows throughout the year and into next year."

Tahoe and Boca reservoirs, which combined store the bulk of water that flows down the Truckee River for local use, are still at roughly 75 percent of capacity because of the strong winter of a year ago, Hauck said.

"It's not anything like last year," Hauck said of current conditions. "The snowpack and runoff are pretty meager compared to last year, but those reservoirs really save our bacon."

22.4% decline in skier visits at Vail Resorts' Tahoe properties

By Denver Business Journal

Skier visits to Vail Resorts' Colorado mountains were down 9 percent in the three months ended April 30 as the industry struggled with historically low snowfalls.

Broomfield-based Vail Resorts reported the results for the third quarter of its fiscal year Wednesday.



Lack of natural snow kept people away from Tahoe in 2011-12. Photo/LTN file

Skier visits were off by 12.4 percent for the company's resorts in the Lake Tahoe area of California and Nevada. The company said cumulative snowfall at its six resorts was down more than 50 percent from last year's ski season.

For the full 2011-2012 ski season, visits at Vail Resorts' properties in Lake Tahoe were down 22.4 percent and off 8.9 percent at its Colorado resorts from last year.

Read the whole story

Raley's employees OK strike, but don't set date to walk

By Dale Kasler, Sacramento Bee

Raley's union workers have voted to authorize a strike, the union and the company said today.

With the company's contract with the United and Food and

Commercial Workers scheduled to expire tonight, the vote brings the two sides closer than ever to a walkout, which would be the first in the company's history.

Still, a strike doesn't appear to be imminent. Both sides said contract negotiations are set to resume Friday.

The outcome wasn't a surprise, but both sides quickly tried to put their own spin on the results.

Jacques Loveall, president of UFCW Local 8 in Roseville, said 80 percent of the workers voted to authorize the strike "in an overwhelming turnout."

But Raley's spokesman John Segale said store managers believe the "yes" vote was around 70 percent. – which he called a sign of tepid support for a walkout.

Read the whole story

Missing parolee behind bars in Douglas County

The California parolee who was believed to have been in Douglas County is in jail.

Randy Nourse turned himself into Douglas County deputies on June 6 at 6:45am at the Minden office.

Nourse was previously reported as a fugitive from justice by California's Department of Parole and Probation.

Nourse will remain in the Douglas County Jail pending his extradition to California.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Pot arrest in Eldorado Forest may be wiped clean from suspect's record

By Denny Walsh, Sacramento Bee

Kelly J. Michael was an enemy of the United States in the war on marijuana for more than two years.

He was found in April 2010 by a U.S. Forest Service sleuth in the Eldorado National Forest with less than one-eighth of an ounce of pot in a jar. Nearby was a grinder to make it suitable for rolling a joint.

He and a friend were charged, although charges were dropped for the friend because of a doctor's recommendation.

But Michael had no such recommendation.

The ensuing battle royal over about a joint's worth of marijuana began and ended in a Sacramento courtroom, but not before it found its way to the highest court in the West, the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals.

Prosecutors' relentless efforts to hang a federal drug conviction on Michael were finally squashed last week when U.S. Magistrate Judge Kendall J. Newman dismissed the case.

An Arden Park resident, now 29, Michael didn't contest the charges, pleading guilty to misdemeanor possession of a controlled substance and ready to face sentencing in November

2010. First Assistant Federal Defender Linda Harter asked for a fine and unsupervised probation.

She pointed out that her client had undergone extensive treatment, including psychological counseling, for hyperhidrosis, a medical condition that causes excessive sweating, stress and depression. Michael found that marijuana eases his anxiety and, after the arrest, he got a recommendation to use pot from one of his doctors, as California requires.

Harter noted that Michael had recently completed a nine-month educational program on substance abuse as a result of a 2009 drunken driving violation, the only thing on his rap sheet.

But the judge handed down a sentence of a year's supervised probation, including frequent drug and alcohol testing and mental health treatment, plus a $1,000 fine.

That sentence "is a little bit much considering what happens down the street," Harter told Newman, referring to a bill just signed by then-Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger that made possession of less than 28.5 grams of marijuana – Michael had 2.4 grams – a civil infraction in California, punishable by a $100 fine.

Newman, however, said "I am not going to turn a blind eye and say please go forward and smoke marijuana, just don't do it on federal property." He also said "there may very well yet be ways to help this gentleman cope with his issues" other than pot.

Read the whole story