CPR for Business – a class for individuals, groups

Third Alarm – an organization comprised of retired firefighters turned public speakers – will present CPR for Business on May 17 from 7-8pm at the Lake Tahoe Visitors Authority office in Stateline.

The free event is put on by Tahoe Regional Young Professionals.

Third Alarm principles and solutions are designed to improve individual, team and organizational performance in the areas of accountability, best practices, customer service, morale, motivation, productivity, teamwork and work ethic.

Following the professional development, TRYP will mingle at Lakeside Inn and Casino and Latin Soul.

For more information, email TahoeTRYP@gmail.com.

STPUD board expected to increase sewer, water rates

By Kathryn Reed

With the percentage of protests to the proposed sewer and water hikes in single digits, the South Tahoe Public Utility District board can go forward with raising rates.

On the May 17 agenda is an item to raise sewer rates by 5 percent and water by 2 percent. At the May 10 budget hearing the board did not request staff to come up with another scenario. However, the board can vote for these rate increases, any lower percentage or for no increase.

About 15 people attended last week's budget session, with a handful of people speaking and others asking questions from their seats. Several people were concerned about the changes for metered water customers. The proposal is to increase the base rate and decrease the rate based on usage.

"It is still less than the flat rate. We have never argued at all that this law is equitable. It is not," South Tahoe PUD spokesman Dennis Cocking told *Lake Tahoe News*. "California is famous for the law of unintended consequences and this is one of them."

The state is mandating water districts have meters in by 2025, but did not provide a funding mechanism to purchase them or get them installed. That means districts throughout the state have people on meters and some who aren't. With this comes water rates that are not the same for all customers because the state mandates metered customers be billed with a usage component.

The entire 2012-13 STPUD budget, which takes effect July 1, is on Thursday's agenda. For now, employees are not getting a salary increase or having a change to health benefits. This is because negotiations are ongoing.

"Our goal is to have a new contract by July 1. I don't know at this time if we will be able to hit that deadline," CFO Paul Hughes told *Lake Tahoe News*.

The board will have to approve any contract. If monetary issues were part of the contract, an addendum to the budget

would have to be made.

The main reason staff wants the 5 percent sewer increase is to move forward with the Diamond Valley Ranch Irrigation Project.

The estimated cost of the project is $5.5 million. STPUD can secure a 2.7 percent loan through the state to pay for it. The rate increase would pay back the loan.

Treated wastewater in the Lake Tahoe Basin must be pumped off the hill per federal law. STPUD's goes to Alpine County where it irrigates hay and alfalfa fields.

With upgrades to Alpine County's electric grid in the past five years, it can now buy back power. South Tahoe PUD wants to create a hydroelectric facility that would be used to transport the water over Luther Pass and then be able to sell power to the grid.

Smaller sewer projects in the district's service area would also be funded by the rate increase.

The water rate increase – which is estimated to bring in an additional $180,000 per year – will also be used to pay back debt, as well as installation of water meters. Three projects in the next three years should amount to 1,000 meters being installed.

STPUD wants to borrow another $5 million for various water line projects.

Cocking said, while water meters are important, the district's emphasis is on replacing old, small water lines that are not optimum for fire suppression.

"Our biggest threat is catastrophic wildfire," Cocking said.

If any rate increase were approved, July 1 would be the start date for the new rate.

People will have an opportunity to comment at this week's meeting as well as the ability to make a formal protest via Proposition 218 even though the mandated 45-day protest period is over. If 50 percent plus one ratepayers were to file a protest to the proposed rate increases, the district could not go forward no matter what the board wanted to do.

As of May 14, about 1,400 protests had been filed – or just more than 8 percent of ratepayers.

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Note: South Tahoe Public Utility District board meeting May 17 2pm, Meadow Crest Drive, South Lake Tahoe.

Meeting set to discuss Truckee trail system

By Barbara Barte Osborn, Sacramento Bee

TRUCKEE – A public meeting is scheduled May 16 on a proposed trail that would link Truckee's trail system to the Village at Northstar and eventually to the ridge surrounding the Lake Tahoe Basin.

Public comments on a recently released draft environmental impact report for the Martis Valley Trail project are invited at the meeting, which will be at 5:30pm in the Truckee Town Council chambers.

Comments also may be written and mailed through June 11 to Mike Staudenmayer, general manager, Northstar Community Service District, 908 Northstar Drive, Northstar, CA 96161, or emailed to Staudenmayer at mikes@northstarcsd.org.

The draft report and more information on the proposed trail are available online.

According to the report, motorized wheelchairs would be the only motorized vehicle with access to the 10-foot-wide paved trail. It would be available to all pedestrian and non-motorized uses, with the exception of equestrians.

Two alignments are being considered, with one positioned closer to Highway 267 and the other following an existing dirt road farther south through the valley.

John Muir heir to give talk

Robert Hanna, great-great-grandson of John Muir, will give a presentation May 19 from 7-9pm at Unity at the Lake, 1195 Rufus Allen Blvd., South Lake Tahoe.

Lake of the Sky Outfitters and Range of Light are sponsoring the event.

Free tickets are available at Lake of the Sky Outfitters at the Y in South Lake Tahoe. A ticket is required for entry.

Lake Tahoe Historical Society garden tour

Lake Tahoe Historical Society’s annual garden tour will feature four gardens in the Angora burn area.

The event is July 29 from 10am-4pm.

The other three gardens are off Pioneer Trail.

Music and refreshments will be in town on Springwood in a garden.

Tickets are $20 and will be available for sale on July 1 at the museum and at local garden centers.

For more information, call (530) 541.5458.

Nevada lawmakers pulling in money from PACs

By Sean Whaley, Nevada News Bureau

CARSON CITY – They have names like “A Better Nevada PAC”, “A Bolder Nevada” and “The Nevada Hispanic Legislative Caucus”.

They are all political action committees formed or renewed by state lawmakers this year to help promote their parties, push their candidates and protect their ranks in an effort to maintain and/or win control of the Assembly and Senate.

In all there are more than 20 PACs representing two dozen incumbent state senators and members of the Assembly filed

with the Secretary of State's office for the 2012 election season. There are more than 260 PACs in total filed with the office this year.

The Better Nevada PAC was formed by former state Sen. Sheila Leslie, a Democrat who resigned her seat to run for the Senate 15 seat in Reno now held by Sen. Greg Brower, a Republican. The purpose of the PAC is "to support candidates working to better the quality of life indicators in the state of Nevada."

The Bolder Nevada PAC was formed by state Sen. Joe Hardy, R-Boulder City, "to promote good government at all levels." Hardy, in the middle of a four-year term in the state Senate, is not up for election this year. He is affiliated with several other PACs as well.

The Nevada Hispanic Legislative Caucus, newly formed in April to support the election of Hispanic candidates to state and local offices, has as its officers three Southern Nevada Democratic Assemblywomen: Irene Bustamante Adams, Lucy Flores and Olivia Diaz. All three are running for re-election this year.

The traditional process for candidates to win election is to receive contributions directly from donors, but there are limits on the amounts that can be accepted. The other standard process is for the Senate and Assembly GOP and Democratic caucuses to form PACs to accept funds for distribution to their candidates. Many of the PACs registered with the Secretary of State's office are these leadership groups.

But other PACs are being formed by individual lawmakers or groups of lawmakers such as the Battle Born Leadership Group formed by Assemblyman John Hambrick, R-Las Vegas, and the Lighthouse Leadership PAC formed by Assemblywoman Debbie Smith, D-Sparks, who is running for a seat in the state Senate.

The JOBS FIRST PAC was established by GOP Sens. Michael

Roberson, Greg Brower and Ben Kieckhefer to "promote pro-business public policies in Nevada." It has $10,000 so far, donated in turn by the Nevadans First PAC, which was run by former Assemblywoman Heidi Gansert, who is now Gov. Brian Sandoval's chief of staff.

These PACs serve an important purpose for financing campaigns. They give state lawmakers the ability to bring in large donations than candidates cannot accept individually due to contribution limits. The money can then be distributed to party candidates in critical races. They also allow the individual officers of the PACS to wield more political influence by doling out the dough.

Another advantage is that PACs allow donors who may not want to be reported as having contributed to a specific candidate or candidates to do so through a third party.

The growing trend of such PACs was recently noted by *Las Vegas Sun* columnist Jon Ralston.

Republican political consultant Ryan Erwin said legislative leaders and caucuses from both parties have used PACs for a long time to help fund targeted races.

"As term limits and now redistricting create shorter term leaders we will continue to see more leadership PACs evolve," he said. "In Nevada, which has lenient campaign finance and reporting laws, the emergence of additional vehicles to raise and spend money will continue to have a more prominent role in the process."

There is a lot at stake in the 2012 election, with Senate Democrats trying to hold on to or even expand their razor-thin 11-10 majority while Republicans are seeking to regain control, and where Assembly Republicans are trying to make a dent in the 26-16 Democrat advantage in the 42-member house.

Hambrick, who has the luxury of not facing an opponent in his

re-election bid this year, said a PAC provides more options to support party candidates than direct contributions can do. PACs are limited in the amount they can donate to a candidate, but there is no restriction on the use of the funds spent by a PAC directly for polling or other campaign related activities.

“It’s another avenue for particularly candidates that may not attract some of the deep pocket donors to at least get something to help pay for a mailer or to get some signs out,” Hambrick said. “If you look at my PAC compared to Joe Hardy’s you’ll see a significant difference. But I get a little bit of money that can help out.”

PACs are required to report donations and expenditures just like candidates, he said.

“Every dime has to be accounted for,” Hambrick said.

Hambrick reported just over $9,000 in donations to his PAC in 2011.

Leslie said she has not been actively seeking contributions to her PAC because she is focused on her own campaign.

“It is a way to collect additional funding outside the campaign limits in a legal way,” Leslie said in an email response. “It is also useful for some corporations who don’t want to be identified as supporting a particular candidate for various reasons. It also allows those in leadership to collect funds for other candidates and earn their loyalty and support.”

Martin Hollay to give talks

Lake Tahoe Historical Society will present two talks May 31 by Martin Hollay.

The Hungarian native will talk about his deep ski roots in Lake Tahoe.

Times are 2pm and 6pm. The talk is free at the museum in South Lake Tahoe

Call the museum for more information and to reserve a spot – (530) 541.5458.

California high school grads bypassing CSU, UC systems

By Matt Krupnick, Contra Costa Times

An alarming number of California high school graduates are deciding not to attend the state's once-vaunted public universities, researchers have found.

From 2007 to 2010, the percentage of graduates attending University of California or California State University campuses fell by 20 percent, according to figures released Wednesday by the Public Policy Institute of California. The trend developed amid deepening budget problems that dramatically lifted university tuitions and forced schools to turn away qualified students.

"UC and CSU are increasingly unable to accommodate the demand by students," said Hans Johnson, the report's author.

Fewer than 18 percent of California high school graduates ended up at a Cal State or UC campus in 2010, down from 22 percent in 2007. And 55 percent of the most highly prepared students enroll there, down from 67 percent.

The figures underscore a recent migration by students who once would have attended California's public universities, which once were higher-education models admired by other states and countries. Private and public universities in California and throughout the country have seen a significant uptick in the number of California applicants since UC and Cal State tuition started ballooning in the past few years.

About one in 10 who reject admissions offers from the state universities choose not to go to college at all, Johnson found. California's economic woes are likely to deepen if students continue to pursue college degrees elsewhere or not at all, he said.

Read the whole story

Senior center spending lunch hour celebrating older Americans

There wills be an Older Americans Celebration at the South Lake Tahoe Senior Center on May 16.

The theme is Never Too Old to Play. The day celebrates the important role older adults play in sharing their unique experiences, wisdom, and understanding to other generations through spirited participation in social group and service

organizations.

The celebration is at noon. Lunch is $3 for seniors, $5 for others.

For more information, call (530) 542.6094.

Tahoe City Field Station open house

Join UC Davis Tahoe Environmental Research Center researchers for an open house at the Tahoe City Field Station at 2400 Lake Forest Road from 10am-2pm June 2.

Tour the historic building, talk to scientists about their work, and learn something about Lake Tahoe.

The UC Davis Tahoe City Field Station has evolved from its origins as a state fish hatchery to a field station for UC Davis researchers at Lake Tahoe. The Field Station houses the Eriksson Education Center, native plant demonstration garden, a small laboratory facility, and the equipment necessary for researchers to boat on, dive in, and scientifically examine Lake Tahoe.

The living laboratory and demonstration garden of native plants surrounding the Field Station provide visitors an opportunity to learn about truly “green” gardening.

Between Memorial Day and Labor Day, the Eriksson Education Center offers visitors an opportunity to explore the facility at their pace with self-guided tours between 8am and 6pm daily. Volunteer docents are available on Saturdays from 10am-2pm for guided tours and hands-on science activities.