Opinion: O’Rourke is in breach of contract

To the community,

There is a lot of noise buzzing around the city manager’s search for a new employer. So, for the record, the vote to hire Mr. (Tony) O’Rourke as South Tahoe’s city manager was 4-1. I cast the lone no vote. But I should back up and explain why I did not take part in the interview process for selecting a city manager.

The process was tainted from the beginning because the field to be interview had been reduced to just two candidates, O’Rourke and another candidate. The City Council had selected four to be interviewed. Before the process started two dropped out. At that point, I phoned Mayor (Kathay) Lovell and told her that the list was too short and that the council should open the selection process again. The mayor said no to my request; there would only be two to be interviewed. Because of her response I bowed out. To me it was clear that O’Rourke had a lock on the job because when the council learned that O’Rourke was from Beaver Creak, the glow of Vail lit up the face of more than one councilmember.



Bill Crawford

As said, the above is by gone. History. Presently, after less than two years, O’Rourke is searching for a new job and it is reported that he has been offered a city manager’s job in

Washington state. If he doesn’t take that job, I believe he will be in breach of contract with the city of South Lake Tahoe. Clearly, he hasn’t any intention of fulfilling the contract with the city. I think the claim of breach is solid, that he can be fired without collecting a basket full of dough.

From the beginning, the selection process for hiring O’Rourke lacked integrity. It was incomplete. The bias was there and clear. And now the joke is on the city. Also, it is clear that O’Rourke falls short of having integrity. But in fairness to O’Rourke, the City Council majority got what it ordered.

Bill Crawford, South Lake Tahoe

PS: If according to the current mayor and council O’Rourke is the real deal – good as gold – why are they prepared to release him from his contract?

Snippets about Lake Tahoe



• The Beacon Bar & Grill’s outdoor music begins May 26 with the Rebecka Chase Band.

• North Lake Tahoe Fire Protection District will be celebrating National Emergency Medical Services Week (May 20-26) throughout May. Firefighters will be hosting ambulance tours at the schools in an effort to educate students about

emergency medical situations and what to do in the event of an emergency.

• Hannah Greenstreet in June will have full reigns of the management of Freshies restaurant in South Lake Tahoe when owners Erik and Melodie Ulman relocate to Hawaii.

• Mizuno is asking young volleyball players to submit video diaries, photographs and essays showcasing their personal journeys and elaborating on how competitive volleyball has affected their lives and made them better, stronger individuals. The grand prize is a volleyball clinic given to the winner's team in their hometown, conducted by a USA Volleyball team member. More information is online.

• These are the weekly Sierra and El Dorado-Tahoe roadwork reports from Caltrans.

Tahoe Tails – Adoptable Pets in South Lake Tahoe

Lani is a 3-year-old Lab mix who has had her ups and downs. She was adopted out of the shelter when she was a puppy, and now her owner, who loved her very much, has lost his job and his house and can no longer take care of her.



She is house trained and has been to training classes. She loves to play with other dogs and has lived with cats. She has had a good life so far – going on car rides and swimming in the lake, and now she is waiting for her next adventure.

Lani is spayed, microchipped, and vaccinated. She is at the El Dorado County Animal Services shelter in Meyers, along with many other dogs and cats who are waiting for their new homes.

Go online to see photos and description of all pets at the shelter.

Call (530) 573.7925 for directions, hours, and other information on adopting a pet.

For spay-neuter assistance for South Tahoe residents, go online.

– Karen Kuentz

Cost to travel by plane continues to soar

By Charisse Jones, USA Today

If you're flying this summer, you'll probably pay more than you did last year. And the price for a ticket to ride will likely keep rising for months to come.

Summer fares for trips in the USA are up 3 percent on average over last year and 18 percent compared with 2010, according to booking site Travelocity.



It is going to cost more this summer compared to a year ago. Photo/LTN

The increase is steeper for international trips, with the average ticket costing 20 percent more than it did two years ago.

Airlines will likely push prices as high as they can, fare watchers say. “I would expect about a hike attempt a month, with about half being successful,” says Rick Seaney of Farecompare.com, which tracks ticket prices.

Airlines already have tried to boost fares six times this year, and three have succeeded, Seaney says. The next attempt likely will come before Memorial Day, the start of the prime summer travel season.

Read the whole story

Concerts, kayaks, food – all

part of Lakeview Commons

By Kathryn Reed

It will neither be Julie Andrews making the hills come alive with the sound of music nor the bass of bands from SnowGlobe. Instead, a mix of jazz, reggae and blues are expected to resonate from Lakeview Commons this summer.

OnCourse Events has been granted a permit to bring music to the South Lake Tahoe venue. Every Thursday starting June 28 through Sept. 6 from 4-8:30pm a different band will perform on a temporary stage that will be built in the sand. Spectators can sit – for free – on the terraced area or up top where there are picnic tables.

“I want to introduce locals to different music,” Rob Giustina, with OnCourse Events, told *Lake Tahoe News*. He expects most acts will be from out of the area. However, the first band is likely to be Jump Start, though local, they don’t often play in the basin.



Free concerts on Thursdays are coming to Lakeview Commons starting in late June. Photos/Kathryn Reed

Giustina is more often associated with competition event

productions. But as someone who was born and raised here, he wants to help the town resurrect itself in terms of fun and economics.

“I wanted to be proactive in saving our community,” Giustina said.

He expects to make money on the summer concert series selling booth space at $75 a pop for a 10-foot-by-10-foot spot. Artists, nonprofits — he will consider them all. Vendors will be at the top of the commons area.

Until the city votes on who will be operating the food part of the Lakeview Commons, Giustina is holding off on deciding what type of food will be sold. He doesn’t want to compete with the concessionaire, but instead complement or have his vendors be completely different. But he also hopes to have a beer garden.

Bids for the food concessionaire closed April 27. It’s possible the City Council could make a decision at its May 17 meeting.

For people wanting to be part of Giustina’s Live at Lakeview Commons Concert Series, email him at rob@oncourseevents.com.

Giustina is encouraging people arrive by bike. A valet will be operating for storage purposes during the concert.

As for what the city plans to do at Lakeview Commons, the rest rooms and drinking fountain should be in operation any day. Bathrooms will always be a seasonal operation based on demand, and the water will operate when the threat of frozen pipes is eliminated.

On the May 1 council agenda is an item to award the nonmotorized concessionaire to Standup Paddle, which has a shop on Harrison Avenue.

“Whoever gets the contract will have to do their own tenant improvements,” Stan Sherer, community services director, told

Lake Tahoe News. The city will take a percentage of the gross profits, with it topping out at 12 percent.

In addition to the rental of paddleboards, kayaks and canoes will also be available.

Per the original plans when the $6.5 million Lakeview Commons project was conceived, people will also be able to store their nonmotorized craft at the boathouse for a fee.

Right now garbage cans without lids are scattered about Lakeview Commons. Sherer said those will be converted to bear-proof containers soon. A bid on the project is on Tuesday's council agenda.

Landscapers will be back out there this week to finish the plantings.

Sherer told *Lake Tahoe News* his intent is to make the area accessible to dogs – legally. Plenty of people take their dogs to the commons and El Dorado Beach, but that is violating the current law.

Something that perplexes Sherer is why in the original plans there was no place to dump ashes from the barbecues.

"It's not just having a facility to empty the briquettes, it's will they use them or will they try to dispose of them someplace else," Sherer said people who are barbecuing. The fear of someplace is it could cause a fire or contaminate Lake Tahoe.

A solution as of last week had not been found. And they are being used. Smoke has been seen wafting from the grounds on the unseasonably warm days.

While the area has been transformed and looks nothing like it once did, all the boulders on the north end mean beachgoers can no longer walk very far. It used to be people could walk to Ski Run Marina and beyond.

A pipe on El Dorado Beach that used to be ghastly, especially as water drained directly into Lake Tahoe, is still there. Only now sand covers part of the upper part of the metal, and boulders and branches cover the lower section. Gunk, well, it still flows into the lake from Highway 50.

On June 20 at 2pm there will be a grand opening – again – of Lakeview Commons. This time Secretary of Natural Resources John Laird is supposed to attend the dedication, as will members of the California Tahoe Conservancy and its board. It was CTC money that funded the project.

What name it will be dedicated as, well, that remains to be seen.

A beach party will follow at 3pm.

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AAUW home tour

The American Association of University Women South Lake Tahoe Branch is hostings its home tour – At Home in Al Tahoe: Historic Retreats at The Lake – on June 23 from noon-4pm.

The historic South Lake Tahoe neighborhood was the site of the first pioneer settlement on the Lake Tahoe shoreline.

Attendees will drive, walk or bike along a self-guided route to visit eight restored cabins, cottages and homes.

Volunteers will be on hand at each home to answer questions and highlight points of interest. Refreshments will be available at the nearby Pichetti Winery on Highway 50.

Tickets are $20 in advance or $25 the day of the event. Proceeds will provide educational scholarships to local women and girls. For more information and to purchase tickets, go online, call (775) 309.3911 or email to sparrow208@gmail.com.

Tahoe wildlife photographer to give talk

Wildlife photographer Jim Stamates will share some of his images set to music to tell the story of the Rhythm of the Sierra.

The Tahoe Area Sierra Club is sponsoring the May 9 7pm event at the Unity at the Lake Spiritual Center.

An added feature will be “In The Rhythm of Kokanee” filmed at Taylor Creek during the annual spawning and egg harvest.

Unity at the Lake Spiritual Center is located across from the South Lake Tahoe Recreation Center at 1195 Rufus Allen Blvd.

Nevada businesses say Amazon deal levels playing field

By Bill O'Driscoll, Reno Gazette-Journal

An even playing field, that's all book-seller Christine Kelly wants.

Kelly has operated Sundance Bookstore and Music in Reno for 26 years, and she and has watched online retailing's rise in part from not charging sales tax while she and other brick-and-mortar business owners must do so under the law. In Washoe County, that means 7.725 percent more on her customers' bills.

Now it appears that competitive bump will be leveled off. Starting in January 2014, online retail giant Amazon.com Inc., which has 20 U.S. distribution centers including sites in Fernley and North Las Vegas, will collect sales tax on purchases originating in Nevada.

"I believe in competition, different forms of commerce," Kelly said in hailing Amazon's plan announced last week. "But it's gotta be balanced and fair. I've no problem paying taxes, it just needs to be applied fairly. This elephant has been in our living room for a long time."

The issue of taxing Internet-based sales, especially collecting from out-of-state retailers, has long been difficult for states to resolve – as well as to enforce.

In Nevada, "We have had voluntary collection where a number of companies have agreed to collect tax on merchandise they ship to the state," said Carole Vilardo, president of the Nevada Taxpayers Association.

Read the whole story

McDonald’s French fries can be made at home

By Sarah B. Weir, Yahoo

Even food snobs who shun McDonald’s have to admit that they serve the mother of all French fries. Ray Kroc, one of the chain’s founders wrote in his autobiography that the fry was “almost sacrosanct for me. Its preparation a ritual to be followed religiously.” The end result is a crispy golden-brown baton showered with just the right amount of salt. The exterior’s initial crunch yields to a tender and steaming white center. More, please?

“They are consistent,” says David Myers, chef/owner of Comme Ca in Los Angeles and Las Vegas. “I can’t imagine how many millions of dollars in research and development they have spent in order to achieve a perfect fry around the world.” Myers is no stranger to fried potatoes. His restaurants, which serve classic French brasserie fare, cook hundreds of orders of “pommes frites” (French-fried potatoes) a week.

McDonald’s French fries are shipped to outlets frozen. “We do all of ours fresh everyday,” says Myers who uses the same recipe at his restaurants and at home. Myers also uses the best Idaho russet potatoes, French sea salt, and super fresh cooking oil.

He says the key to making a perfect, consistent, McDonald’s-style fry is in the advance preparation. The cut potatoes need to be soaked for at least two hours before cooking which pulls out excess starch and ensures the crispiest product. Also, Myers recommends that, “you have plenty of paper towels, a lined sheet pan, and have your oil ready to go.”

The beauty of Myers’ two-step cooking method is that you can cook your fries ahead of a dinner party and keep them in the fridge until you are ready to finish in hot oil just before serving. This way you get the most delicious, sizzling, salty, golden-brown fries every time.

Read the whole story

Nevada analyzing runaway truck ramps

By Jeff Delong, Reno Gazette-Journal

No one yet knows what course of events forced Eric Holton to steer his speeding truck onto a gravel escape ramp on the Mount Rose Highway on Monday.

What is clear is that things had already gone terribly wrong. It’s the last thing any trucker wants to do.

“You talk to most truck drivers and they tell you they are going to do anything possible to avoid using one of those ramps,” said Thor Dyson, district engineer for the Nevada Department of Transportation.

“They know bad things are going to happen,” Dyson said. “They may or may not make it through it.”

Holton didn’t. While the runaway truck ramp near the junction of Nevada 28 apparently did its job – halting the big rig in a spray of dust and gravel – the truck’s load of building material smashed forward into the driver’s cab, killing him instantly.

The Nevada Highway Patrol continues its investigation into Monday’s accident that killed the 31-year-old Gardnerville resident, including what forced the driver to use the ramp in the first place.

But the accident focused new attention on the Mount Rose ramp – the site of a horrific fatal truck crash nearly two years ago – and on the state’s three other ramps installed to give drivers a last option during a worst-case scenario.

The Nevada Department of Transportation is currently conducting a study into the state’s four highway escape ramps, an effort initiated in the wake of the June 2010 accident. Trucker Frederick Douglas Matthews died when his speeding lumber truck launched off the end of the ramp and smashed into an Incline Village home nearby, exploding into flames. Investigators later determined the truck had faulty brakes.

Read the whole story