South Tahoe finance director taking job in Douglas County

By Kathryn Reed

South Lake Tahoe Finance Director Christine Vuletich is leaving in two weeks to take a job in Douglas County.

She was hired in September 2004 by then City Manager Dave Jinkens to replace the retiring Bruce Budman. She is leaving to be assistant county manager/chief financial officer for Douglas County.

Vuletich, 52, told *Lake Tahoe News* she is looking forward to the challenges ahead of her with having more responsibility.

“It’s been a great experience working for the city of South Lake Tahoe. We’ve been through a lot of challenging times,” Vuletich said. “I’ve had wonderful people to work with. There are very talented people here, but I’m ready for new challenges.”



Christine Vuletich

Her last day in South Lake is Feb. 17. Her first day in Douglas County is Feb. 27. Normally people at this level give their boss at least 30 days notice. Not in this case.

Vuletich’s relationship with her bosses has been tenuous at times. This council and previous city councils have had

difficulty in getting straight answers from her regarding finances. The same has been true for *Lake Tahoe News*.

At the council meeting earlier this week regarding redevelopment she wasn't even the one to address the council regarding all of the financing involved in the decisions being made.

As assistant county manager, her job will be even greater and more diverse than it is in South Tahoe.

Vuletich started in South Lake Tahoe with a salary of $69,000 a year. She is leaving with the pay between $117,240.03 and $142,512.24. The 2011-12 budget is not on the city's website, so *Lake Tahoe News* could not find her actual salary. She will be making $109,000 in Douglas County. All staff there took a 5 percent cut in pay for this fiscal year which began July 1, so it's possible that could be reinstated in the summer. Negotiations with Douglas County bargaining units are just beginning and managers usually get the same increase or cut as the case may be.

Douglas County Manager Steve Mokrohisky told *Lake Tahoe News*, "(Vuletich) is dynamic. She will be a great fit for Douglas County."

Vuletich was one of five finalists for the job. Mokrohisky said everyone in South Tahoe spoke highly of her. However, he said no current or former councilmembers were interviewed.

Douglas County has been without an assistant county manager since July when Mokrohisky took over for Michael Brown who moved to Oregon. And it has not had a finance director in more than a year. With two unsuccessful national searches for a finance director, Mokrohisky decided a different approach was needed. Combining the positions into one also saves the county $120,000 a year.

Vuletich will be responsible for Douglas County's 2011-12 $120

million budget. South Lake Tahoe's budget this fiscal year is $94.7 million. Taking a job in Minden means Vuletich's commute will only be 10 minutes.

City Manager Tony O'Rourke is evaluating his options. Next week he expects to name an interim finance director. After 60 to 90 days a decision will be made as to whether that person is right for the job or if a search beyond the confines of city staff should be conducted. O'Rourke told *Lake Tahoe News* it's also possible the department could be reorganized.

TRPA leader to talk about agency's future

Tahoe Regional Planning Agency Executive Director Joanne Marchetta is hosting a "fireside chat" at Lake Tahoe Community College on Feb. 8 from 6-7:30pm on "21st Century Environmentalism and the Regional Plan Update."

This is the first of two evening talks on how Marchetta is transitioning the bi-state agency from its once-needed focus on stopping runaway growth and parcel-by-parcel regulation, to one focused on encouraging 21st century environmentalism.

A second talk will take place later this month on the North Shore, with date and time still being worked on.

GOP candidates rally faithful in Nevada

By Sean Whaley, Nevada News Bureau

RENO – From a cheering crowd of several hundred at a brief but energetic Mitt Romney rally to a more subdued event for Rick Santorum hosted by the Republican Jewish Coalition to another well-attended rally for Ron Paul, it was a trifecta of presidential candidates in Reno ahead of the Saturday GOP caucus.

Romney got the balling rolling at the Grove, with an estimated 800 supporters packed inside and standing outside the event center in south Reno. Romney spoke briefly to those standing outside before giving a short but enthusiastic speech to those crowded inside.

Santorum spoke to about 250 people attending an event at the Atlantis hosted by the Republican Jewish Coalition. He focused much of his time on the threat from Iran both to Israel and the world.

Paul's rally at the Grand Sierra Resort attracted more than 1,000 enthusiastic supporters. Paul touched on a number of concerns, including his desire to see the repeal of the Patriot Act, saying American civil liberties have been eroded since 9-11.

All three candidates are vying for support in the first in the West caucus, a binding vote that will ultimately produce delegates to the Republican National Convention. The fourth contender, Newt Gingrich, spoke in Reno on Wednesday.

Hearing all three candidates speak displayed distinct differences on such issues as foreign policy. Romney called for a stronger military, one so strong that it would neutralize the country's enemies. Santorum focused on the need to deal with Iran and its development of nuclear weapons. Paul said the U.S. foreign policy of intervention around the world has been a failure.

Romney focuses on Obama

Romney spent the first few minutes of his 18-minute speech criticizing President Obama's failure to restore the economy, acting like the front-runner he is in Nevada's First in the West caucus. He did not mention any of the other GOP contenders in his remarks.

The rest of the speech was more to rally the troops to turn out at the caucus to lock in a victory and ensure continued momentum in his quest to win the Republican nomination.

Romney, expected to win the Nevada caucus based on poll results, went on the attack on Obama for the high unemployment rate, reduced median income and high rate of foreclosures.

"And the people in this country are really suffering, in part because of the extraordinary failures of this president," he said. "This presidency has not worked. And these are not just numbers and statistics. These are real people."

Romney also focused on his leadership abilities, saying Obama has not been a leader.

"And this president we elected to lead, he chose to follow, and now it is time for him to get out of the way," he said.

Romney cited his successful business experience, his work in bringing the Olympics to Salt Lake City, and his successes as governor of Massachusetts even while having to deal with a majority of Democrats.

“This election is not just about replacing a president,” he said. “This is also an election about setting a course for America. Because this president and the people with him have a very different view about where America should go than I have, and I believe that you have.

“First of all, he would take us towards a greater and greater level of debt,” Romney said. “He is willing to spend a trillion dollars more a year than we take in, every year.”

Obama is taking the country down the same path to economic disaster as Greece, Italy and Spain, he said.

Romney said he will cut the federal budget’s share of the economy from 25 percent to 20 percent and restore fiscal sanity.

He also criticized Obama for his energy policy’s reliance on alternative energy, and his foreign policy, calling his actions regarding Afghanistan naive.

Santorum talks about the threat from Iran

Santorum earned a lot of applause for his comments regarding the relationship between the U.S. and Israel. He too focused on the need to defeat Obama, citing the president’s reluctance to impose sanctions against Iran for its development of a nuclear weapon.

“This is the quintessential threat not just to Israel, but is the quintessential threat to the world,” he said. “We need a president who will step forward and define the enemy as to who they are.”

Obama’s approach has been one of appeasement, Santorum said.

“We need to stand firm, define the enemy, and do what we did with the Soviet Union,” he said. “Stand up and define evil as the evil they are.”

Paul talks about civil liberties and personal responsibility

Paul took his message of less government and more personal responsibility to an enthusiastic crowd of supporters.

He said of Nevada: “This is a great state because guess what, there are a lot of people here who really like freedom.

“In the last hundred years I would say we’ve gone in the wrong directions, we’ve gradually have had our freedoms eroded,” Paul said. “We’ve adopted a foreign policy, really, more recently in the last several decades, of a policy that has given us nothing but grief.

“And that is a policy of military intervention in other countries for not very many good reasons at all,” he said. “And I think we need to change our foreign policy and bring our troops home.”

Paul said the country would be stronger with less intervention around the world.

“This idea that the more money you spend in militarism the safer we’ll be is a failed policy; it is a myth,” he said.

Paul also said Congress should abolish the Transportation Safety Administration, created after the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks.

The effect of this intense round of Nevada appearances by the four remaining GOP candidates should become clear late Saturday.

Brown negotiating tribal gaming deals as they fill his campaign fund

By David Siders, Sacramento Bee

Gov. Jerry Brown is raising hundreds of thousands of dollars for his tax campaign from California Indian tribes at the same time many tribes are seeking to renegotiate lucrative gambling compacts with him.

The Democratic governor, who proposes increasing the state sales tax and income taxes on California's highest earners, is considered more accommodating of tribal interests than his predecessor, Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger, and his administration is in compact talks "on various levels" with 15 to 20 tribes, Brown's tribal negotiator, Jacob Appelsmith, said Tuesday.

Any compacts Brown signs could significantly affect a gambling industry that generates more than $7 billion annually and millions of dollars in payments to the state.

More than nine months ahead of the November tax election, a handful of tribes have contributed more than $300,000 to Brown's tax campaign, a quarter of the $1.2 million Brown on Tuesday reported raising in 2011.

Tribes donated $925,000 to Brown's gubernatorial effort in 2010, and they contributed more than $200,000 last year to two charter schools he started in Oakland.

Brown spokeswoman Elizabeth Ashford said there is "no

connection between any sort of donations and decision-making on this issue or others.”

Read the whole story

Boy dangling from chairlift caught by skiers

By Green Bay Press Gazette

GIBSON, Wisc. — A boy hanging from a ski lift 25 feet above the ground was safely caught by a group of people below him, a witness said Monday.

The boy was seen about 2:45pm Sunday hanging from a chair on the lift at Hidden Valley Ski & Snowboard Area in Manitowoc County, according to witness Matt Roeser of Green Bay.

Roeser, who was inside a ski lodge, heard the commotion. A group had formed under the boy as he dangled from the lift. The ski lift was shut down during the rescue.

Read the whole story

Blood drive

Barton Memorial Hospital Auxiliary’s blood drives are Feb. 6, April 2, June 11, Aug. 6, Oct. 1 and Dec. 3 from noon-6pm at Embassy Suites, 4130 Lake Tahoe Blvd., South Lake Tahoe.

For more information, contact Dan Kerr at (775) 588.2376 or (775) 781.5345.

Meeting about Tahoe City Golf Course

Tahoe City Golf Course's future is the subject of a noon Feb. 7 meeting at Tahoe City Public Utility District's board room (221 Fairway Drive, Tahoe City).

The district is still finalizing the $5 million agreement to buy the property from the Bechdolt family.

Still to be decided is if the property would remain a golf course.

For information, call (530) 583.3796, ext. 21.

Lake Tahoe Winter Film Series

Join world-renown big wall rock climber Mike Libecki for a journey to some of the most remote corners of the climbing world. Libecki's search for massive, unclimbed rock formations has taken him to Afghanistan, Antarctica, Yemen, Venezuela, China, and Baffin Island.

Libecki will tell climbing tales at Alpenglow Sports' fourth and final installment of the annual Lake Tahoe Winter Film Series on Feb. 16.

The event is free and is designed to motivate, inspire, and educate. It is at Sawtooth Ridge Café in Tahoe City at 7pm.

Call Alpenglow Sports at (530) 583.6917 with questions.

Alpine Touring and Telemark Demo Event

Alpenglow Sports has partnered with Alpine Meadows Ski Resort for the 5th annual Alpine Touring and Telemark Demo Event on Feb. 11 from 9am-3pm.

The event will provide a forum to perpetuate the enthusiasm for all aspects of in-area and backcountry skiing.

Free to all, the event will showcase the latest and greatest in both telemark and alpine touring equipment. Participating vendors will include Black Diamond, Dynafit, G3, Scarpa, Garmont, Marker, Volkl, DPS, Moment and SkiLogic.

Participants must possess a valid lift ticket or season pass purchased from Alpine Meadows or Squaw Valley, along with a driver’s license and credit card for deposit.

For more information, call (530) 583.6917.

Miller barely misses victory in downhill; 2 Squaw skiers not close

By USSA

CHAMONIX, France – Bode Miller of Franconia, N.H., came within 0.01 of victory in the first of two Audi FIS Alpine World Cup downhills in Chamonix on Friday, as Klaus Kroell snagged the first Austrian speed win of the season.

Swiss Didier Cuche finished third to snap a two-race win streak, but retained the World Cup downhill points lead as Erik Fisher of Middleton, Idaho, and Travis Ganong of Squaw Valley stormed into the top 15.

It was Miller's fourth World Cup podium this season.

Fisher was 12th and Ganong 13th.

Marco Sullivan of Squaw Valley was 27th.

The race was a make-up from the wind canceled downhill in Val Gardena, Italy.

A second downhill is scheduled for Saturday in Chamonix.