Pile burning in Crystal Bay region

The North Lake Tahoe Fire Protection District will be pile burning on U.S. Forest Service urban lots in the Saddlehorn and Crystal Bay areas through December.

Smoke resulting from the pile burns will affect the surrounding area intermittently. People who are smoke sensitive are advised to please stay inside and close their windows and doors as much as possible until the smoke dissipates.

For further information, call (775) 831.0351, ext. 0.

Inmate claims soy diet is cruel and unusual punishment

By Lizette Alvarez, New York Times

MIAMI – One too many bouts of flatulence and cramping has led a Florida inmate to sue the Department of Corrections, arguing that the prison's soy-based turkey dogs and sloppy Joes amount to cruel and unusual punishment.

Eric D. Harris, 34, who is serving a life sentence for sexual battery on a child, said the soy in his prison chow is threatening his health by endangering his thyroid and immune system. Florida prisons serve meals with 50 percent soy and 50 percent poultry three times a day, a mixture that costs half

as much as using beef and pork, the Department of Corrections says. The cost per meal: $1.70 a day for each inmate. Florida prisons first began serving soy-based meals in 2009.

As an inmate at the Lake Correctional Institution, near Orlando, Mr. Harris, a former paralegal, has few culinary choices. He can eat 100 grams of soy protein a day, use his own money to buy food at the commissary or eat a vegan diet, he said in the lawsuit, which was filed in state court in Tallahassee and which The Orlando Sentinel reported on this week.

Gretl Plessinger, a spokeswoman for the Florida Department of Corrections, said inmates can choose an alternative vegan meal if they do not want soy. “We have a constitutional obligation to feed them healthy, nutritious food, but we don’t have an obligation to feed them beef,” she said.

Read the whole story

Nevada in the market for education chief

By Sean Whaley, Nevada News Bureau

CARSON CITY – Nevada is looking for a state public schools chief to push forward with education reforms sought by Gov. Brian Sandoval and approved by lawmakers in the 2011 legislative session.

Keith Rheault, Nevada’s superintendent of public instruction since 2004, is retiring in early April and Sandoval wants to have a new schools chief to take over the Department of

Education by then.

Dale Erquiaga, senior adviser to Sandoval, said in a press briefing that the selection of a new leader of the state public school system is a critical initiative for the governor but that he is staying out of the search.

Sandoval has not asked Michelle Rhee, the founder and CEO of the education advocacy group StudentsFirst, to apply for the position, he said. Rhee, the former head of the Washington, D.C., school system, was invited and attended Sandoval's State of the State address in January.

"The governor is asking no one to apply, no one in our office will speak to applicants, the governor has no predetermined outcome," Erquiaga said. "I will say though the governor recognizes it is potentially the most important appointment he will make during his time in office.

"Superintendent searches around the country at the state level and district level sometimes fail because there are not enough applicants," he said. "So the better pool of applicants we have the better off all of our kids will be."

Florida had difficulty recruiting a state schools chief earlier this year because of a lack of qualified candidates. A new chief was finally selected and took over in July.

The Nevada position is posted and open to qualified applicants through Dec. 30. It pays about $121,785 a year plus benefits.

As a result of the education reform legislation, Sandoval now has the authority to appoint the schools chief. In the past the 10-member board of education, all of whom are elected in districts statewide, had the authority to select the superintendent.

Erquiaga said the governor would like to have at least six candidates to interview in a public process. Three candidates

would then be forwarded to Sandoval for his consideration for an appointment by March.

The new legislation also changes the way the state board is selected but Erquiaga said those changes won't come until January 2013, which is why the search process is being done now with the current board. Sandoval wants a new superintendent in place well in advance of the 2013 legislative session, he said.

The new board as established in Senate Bill 197 will have four elected members, one from each of the state's congressional districts, one member appointed by Sandoval and one member each selected by the Senate majority leader and Assembly speaker. There will also be four non-voting members appointed by the governor representing different public education interests.

Sandoval and lawmakers agreed to a number of education reforms in the 2011 session, including a new teacher evaluation process to ensure the best educators remain in the classroom.

Tahoe Snowcial announces preliminary lineup for January event

The worlds of digital storytelling, snowsports and technology will converge at Heavenly Mountain Resort Jan. 18-21 for the fourth annual Tahoe Snowcial, a one-of-a-kind winter festival that celebrates the global community who live their passion on the snow and tell their stories online.

Joe Fernandez, CEO and co-founder of Klout, the social media analytics site that measures a user's influence across their social network, will headline the conference portion of the event as the keynote speaker.

Fernandez will be joined by Vail Resorts CEO Rob Katz on the conference's first day. Day Two will consist of panels that cover topics such as technology tools and techniques, the science of social, measurement, storytelling and social media's influence on action sports.

And, in true Snowcial tradition, the event includes skiing, snowboarding, concerts, entertainment and networking.

Athletic supporters eager to improve South Shore fields

By Linda Conaboy

With voters deciding Measure R is a worthwhile piece of legislation, local playing fields will now have more discretionary dollars needed for field maintenance and renovation.

Although the fields are on public land, including the Lake Tahoe Unified School District, Lake Tahoe Community College and Tahoe Paradise Park, a private group incorporated since 1989 as a 501(c)3 nonprofit in California is responsible for coordinating field usage among various organizations within the South Shore area. That group is the Community Athletic Coordinating Council.

Steve Morales, director of facilities for the LTUSD, was a

founding member of the CACC and has served on the council since then.



Upgrades to South Shore ball fields will happen sooner with the passage of Measure R. Photo/Linda Conaboy

“It was formed by a core of city and school district staff and several individuals involved in community youth athletics,” Morales said. “Reductions at the city and district affecting the field maintenance budgets and growing youth sports programs resulted in a lack of fields and funds to maintain those available. The efforts of the CACC helped reduce those effects.”

At its formation, the first major objective of the CACC was to design an annual facility use schedule. Now, with a board consisting of the president, vice president, secretary/treasurer and the at-large members – two representatives from the member organizations (see list below) – the group’s role has changed to include fundraising duties as well.

“All proceeds generated by the CACC are designated for the improvement and expansion of the athletic fields in the

community," Morales said. He added that LTUSD currently pays for nearly all of the district's infrastructure costs, although the construction of the two softball fields at South Tahoe High School were primarily funded through the efforts of the CACC through fee collection, the original community Food Fest events and community donations of labor and materials.

Because of the growing interest in field sports among not only boys and girls, but also adults, play on these fields has the potential to become big business, bringing many dollars to South Lake Tahoe. And in the middle of this burgeoning activity is CACC.

With this in mind and because of the importance of their function in the community, *Lake Tahoe News* decided to examine the CACC's role and how the group interacts with the city and the school district.

Because of the recent lay-off of Dede Lehnhardt, a city parks and recreation employee and former CACC treasurer/secretary, *Lake Tahoe News* was unable to obtain specific financial data.

CACC background

According to Chuck Leonard, the group's president, CACC came into existence specifically to build the Field of Dreams fields at South Tahoe High School – it raised funds to build fields and now is an entity where all different sports negotiate field use.

"The school district gets games on the calendar first, and then youth sports such as Pop Warner, soccer and Lake Tahoe Babe Ruth are scheduled. They are followed by adult recreation leagues like adult soccer and softball," Leonard said. "Then come club sports like club soccer. After everything else is scheduled, then you can start renting fields for tournaments."

Leonard said several tournaments including the Come Up for Air soccer tournament brings hundreds of players to the area, many

hailing from neighboring states. He also said there were semi-pro football teams here last year playing at the middle school.

“We take in around $30,000 annually,” he said. “The money comes from youth groups – boys and girls – all who pay for field usage. In fact, the only money that comes to CACC is from what each player pays each year to play.”

The CACC is charged with organizing a long list of activities, including field maintenance, collection of funds, playing schedules and coordinating various tournaments. Besides his duties within the CACC, Leonard is also president of South Tahoe Pop Warner Football Association Inc. and was co-chair of the Committee for Community Recreation – Measure R.

Leonard explained the playing fields are located in an area that encompasses Lake Tahoe Environmental Science Magnet School on the west and the Kingsbury Grade area on the east.

“(The CACC) maintain a central calendar in conjunction with the South Tahoe Parks and Recreation and the Douglas County Parks and Recreation departments and the Lake Tahoe Unified School District,” Leonard said. “Organizations that are members of the CACC have the first rights to the fields for their sports organizations.”

Although the number of CACC members varies as sports organizations are created or disbanded, the group currently consists of:

- South Lake Tahoe Parks and Recreation
- Lake Tahoe Unified School District
- Douglas County Parks and Recreation
- Lake Tahoe Community College
- South Tahoe Pop Warner Football Association Inc.

• South Tahoe National Little League

• South Tahoe Soccer Association

• South Tahoe AYSO

• Bijou Youth Soccer

• Bijou Adult Soccer

• ASA Girls Softball

• South Tahoe Babe Ruth

“Each of these groups pays $10 per player per season for field usage,” Leonard said. “These funds are then utilized to maintain and repair the various fields within the service area. In addition to the main group, there is also a subsidiary group named TR4CK that raises funds for the middle school track and helps to pay for repairs for that complex.”

Money raised to play is deposited into the general CACC fund Leonard said. The money is then utilized by the CACC to maintain or repair fields. “Annually, the CACC puts anywhere from $5,000 to $50,000 into field repairs and maintenance depending on the need.”

With the passage of Measure R, additional money, more than $200,000 initially, will be plowed back into fields as well from money collected from the original Measure S. (The recreation measure is paid by property owner on the California side of the South Shore.) The question of who will decide when and where that additional money will be spent is yet to be determined.

Leonard says he would like his group to have a seat on the yet-to-be-formed steering committee, which will oversee dispersal of the funds; however, the CACC is not guaranteed a seat.

(The three-member board overseeing Measure R has not set a date for the next meeting. They will determine who is on the committee and how it will be structured.)

What about the future?

Leonard is not the only one who would like to see more outside tournaments come to South Lake Tahoe.

Jim Tarwater, superintendent of LTUSD, envisions lots and lots of tournaments.

“Although we have a shortage of active field space, my dream is to have a tournament each week in the summer,” he said. “Now is the time to take a look at the long and short term needs. Eventually, I’d like to raise enough money to offset costs. It costs a lot of money to get a field back into shape after winter.”

Stan Sherer, who oversees South Tahoe parks and rec division, also wants more tournaments in town.

“Yes, we’re hoping outside groups will come from other areas to compete,” he said. “For example, the big soccer tournament that comes here annually. We hope to continue that with other sports to enhance our tourism economy. Any way we can improve our facilities or add to them will make us more competitive and attract more athletic tournaments.”

He added all money that comes because of outside tournaments would pay tournament costs. If the city produces the event, the money comes to the city for facility rental and other costs involved in the production of the tournament.

Increased tournament activity underscores the need for such things as permanent toilets and concession stands. Although Babe Ruth, Little League (and the high school’s Viking Stadium) run their own concession stands and take in the profits from them, there is always a need for concession

stands and the necessity for permanent toilets goes without question.

Morales said new concession stands are under construction at the Viking Stadium and the Field of Dreams softball fields. He added the district intends to construct a concession and restroom facility for the track/soccer complex at South Tahoe Middle School in the near future.

Permanent restrooms will be built at Viking Stadium in the spring, while the current construction of the student union at STHS will provide permanent restroom facilities for the softball fields.

According to Tarwater, the district has been working to get these improvements beyond the talking stages for years.

While the CACC remains an all-volunteer organization, Leonard said there has been talk of hiring a paid staff member.

“There’s not enough money now, but that could change,” he said.

Farmers can learn how to better connect with consumers

Subscription services are not limited to magazines and newspapers. Farmers have discovered the popularity of offering weekly subscriptions to consumers for local, seasonal produce.

Area growers can learn more about this trend at a Western Nevada College Specialty Crop Institute workshop. “Subscription Farming for the Small Farm” meets Dec. 17 from 9am-3:30pm at WNC Fallon campus, 160 Campus Way. Cost is $35 for registrations by Dec. 9 and $45 afterward. Lunch is included.

The workshop is directed to small-acreage farmers to teach them how to make a profit in this alternative direct marketing enterprise. Participants will learn about recruiting and retaining customers, planting schedules, recordkeeping, benefits and challenges of working with other farms, and more. The workshop will include a roundtable discussion on farm successes and challenges.

Subscription farming, also known as Community Supported Agriculture or CSA, employs a system of weekly delivery or pick-up of farm-fresh, seasonal produce, and sometimes includes dairy products and meat. Customers pre-pay during planting season for a set number of weekly shares of produce to be delivered during harvest season. Customers enjoy the benefits of fresh produce delivered directly from the farm and often receive varieties that cannot be found in retail outlets or farmers markets.

For information/registration, contact Ann Louhela at (775) 351.2551 or louhelaa@wnc.edu.

Nevada scrutinizing renewable energy options

By Sean Whaley, Nevada News Bureau

CARSON CITY – Gov. Brian Sandoval this week issued an executive order directing a state agency and task force to assess the regional market for Nevada's renewable energy resources.

In a briefing with Sandoval senior adviser Dale Erquiaga and Nevada State Office of Energy Director Stacey Crowley, it was explained that the assessment is intended to help determine if alternative energy resources can be developed in the state for transmission to California to meet its ambitious alternative energy goals.

The order directs the New Energy Industry Task Force to facilitate "the timely development of transmission facilities and renewable energy resources in this state …."

Crowley said she expects to name the 11 members of the task force by Dec. 1, with the goal of having a first meeting before the end of the year. A technical advisory committee will also be appointed, with representatives from the Public Utilities Commission, among others, to assist in the charge given the panel by Sandoval.

Erquiaga said clean energy is one of the sectors identified in the report released last week by the Brookings Institution and SRI International offering guidance to Sandoval and policy makers on economic diversification and new job creation. The report identifies seven economic sectors, some already in existence such as gaming and tourism, and some emerging such

as clean energy, where Nevada should focus its efforts.

“How do we get a market for clean energy generated in this state?” Erquiaga asked. “We have to be able to put it on the grid and transmit it, really, to the hungry market over the hill in California.”

Erquiaga said the transmission line discussion has been going on for some time, particularly by NV Energy.

“Part of this conversation is about the ‘where’ the stuff goes, part of this conversation is about the business case; if we generate it, will they buy it,” he said.

The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission has also issued an order mandating that areas of the U.S. look at the regional development of transmission lines, Crowley said.

Crowley’s office will oversee the work of the task force, which is an existing statutory committee. The panel has until Aug. 1, 2012, to report to Sandoval on the business case for the production and transmission of renewable energy for both native and regional requirements.

The deadline is to ensure enough time for the drafting of any legislation that may be needed to implement the task force recommendations, and to allow for any budgetary considerations.

“We need to understand the costs associated with that transmission, and the benefits to Nevadans, whether it be new tax base, job creation, etc.,” Crowley said. “So those numbers need to be determined in order for us to make a business case to say, California we think we can give you our renewable energy. We may have to build some transmission lines to get there, but it will still be worth it for you, there is still value in it for both states.”

Crowley said California has a goal of obtaining 33 percent of

its energy needs through alternative sources by 2020.

Nevada's goal is 25 percent of its energy consumption coming from alternative energy by 2025.

Erquiaga said Nevada officials are working closely with California Gov. Jerry Brown's staff on the potential of supplying alternative energy to the state. Brown and Sandoval discussed the issue at an energy summit in Las Vegas in August, he said.

Opinion: Redevelopment borrowing binge is reckless folly

Publisher's note: ***This editorial is from the No. 17, 2011, Sacramento Bee.***

Leaders at California's redevelopment agencies may sincerely believe they are helping local residents. Some of their projects may actually be worth protecting.

Still, the agencies' borrowing binge while on the chopping block is financially risky at best, downright irresponsible at worst.

The survival instinct kicked in this year after Gov. Jerry Brown targeted them for elimination to claw back $1.7 billion a year in revenue.

The agencies took on an unprecedented $1.2 billion in new debt this year – all backed by local property taxes. In part because so many bond issues went to market, redevelopment

agencies had to promise unusually high rates of return to investors.

Two-thirds of the record 80 bond issues this year carried interest rates of more than 7 percent, the highest in two decades, according to a Bee analysis of records kept by the state treasurer. The more costly debt repayments will end up on local residents' tab, as The Bee's Loretta Kalb and Phillip Reese reported Sunday.

These bond issues may be the final ones for the redevelopment agencies. Under a deal approved by the Legislature, they had until Oct. 1 to either share their property tax proceeds with the state or shut down. The California Redevelopment Association and League of California Cities are suing to block that plan so agencies can stay in business. The state Supreme Court is set to rule in mid-January.

Read the whole story

K's Kitchen: A warm drink on a cold day

By Kathryn Reed

When Sue was in Oregon early this month visiting her sister they got to talking about hot cider. Out came the Betty Crocker cookbook to see if it suggested anything special be done to the beverage.



Last weekend Sue made her version of the wintry drink – spiked. She said it's very similar to Betty's recipe.

Something about the smell of hot cider is wonderful. The aroma fills the house. It makes me think of my childhood.

I did a little research on the Internet trying to find out the difference between cider and juice. My conclusion is there is no difference.

"Martinelli's apple juice and cider are the same; the only difference is the label. Both are 100 percent pure juice from U.S. grown fresh apples. We continue to offer the cider label since some consumers simply prefer the traditional name for apple juice." That from Martinell's website.

What I would do is make sure you buy a good juice or cider. The cloudy, not from concentrate, unpasteurized stuff is my favorite.

Sue's Spiked Apple Juice

1 gallon apple juice

Orange juice

1 T whole cloves

½ dozen cinnamon sticks

1 whole orange, cut into slices

Dash brown sugar

Brandy

Put all of the ingredients into a crock pot and let simmer for

half a day. Pour a quarter shot of brandy (or whatever you like) into a small mug, then fill with hot juice.

Chamber honors businesses, individuals

Eight awards were given out at the 4th annual Blue Ribbon Awards dinner at Embassy Suites this month.

Lake Tahoe South Shore Chamber of Commerce spearheads the annual awards event.

Winners were:

• Geotourism award: Tahoe Rim Trail Association; honorable mention: Sorensen’s Resort

• Tourism award: Lake Tahoe Visitors Authority; honorable mention: Edgewood Tahoe

• Experience award: Escobar Training grounds; honorable mention: Lake Tahoe Boat Rides

• Entrepreneur award: Carl Ribaudo with Strategic Marketing Group; honorable mention: Phil Blowney and LaDonna Faedi of Sessions Salon

• Small green business: Winters Electric; honorable mention: Tahoe Resource Conservation District

• Large green business: South Tahoe Express/Amador Stage Lines; honorable mention: Harrah’s & Harveys

• Customer service: Brian Cohen with Overland Meat; honorable mention: Tommy Walker of Ciera Steak + Chophouse

• Public agency: Gary Weigel with TRPA; honorable mention: Tom Pandola with CalStar.