Dollar Creek trail subject of open house

Placer County, working in partnership with the California Tahoe Conservancy and North Tahoe Public Utility District, is hosting an informational open house regarding the proposed Dollar Creek Shared-Use Trail.

Residents and others interested are encouraged to attend, receive information, and share their thoughts regarding the trail. The open house is Oct. 18 from 4-6pm at the North Tahoe Event Center, 8318 North Lake Blvd. in Kings Beach.

Staff will be on hand to answer questions and show maps of the proposed route.

The proposed trail would be located in Placer County, primarily within the Conservancy and NTPUD-owned properties, between the intersection of Dollar Drive and Highway 28 and the end of Fulton Crescent Road.

The separated trail would extend the existing North Shore bicycle trail network, and would link residential uses to jobs, schools, shopping and recreation and community areas. It would extend the exiting Tahoe City to Dollar Point trail through public lands commonly known as the Dollar and Firestone properties. The project would enhance recreation and transportation opportunities by extending existing paved trail network in the Tahoe City area, including TCPUD’s 10-mile Class 1 trail from Tahoe City to Sugar Pine Point State Park and the trail along the Truckee River. A trailhead parking facility near Dollar Point and Highway 28 may also be included for trail users.

The project schedule proposes to complete preliminary engineering and environmental permitting by June 2012, followed by construction in 2013, pending funding

availability.

Calif. Assembly rejects requests for more info on spending

By Jim Sanders, Sacramento Bee

The Assembly has balked at releasing additional information about the office spending of its 80 members.

The decision comes in the wake of an analysis by The Bee that concluded member expenditures released Aug. 26 underreported the amount of money spent to run legislators' offices and overreported committee spending.

The gap was created partly by the use of committee funds to pay for legislators' personal staff. Numerous employees were switched from legislators' staff payrolls to committee, caucus or leadership payrolls this year, records showed.

The Bee requested documents identifying the employees transferred and specifying when those moves took effect. The Assembly declined this week, citing state law that permits it to withhold legislative medical, personnel, correspondence or draft documents.

More than two dozen Democratic aides were moved from office to committee or leadership ledgers, staff rosters showed. Transfer requests tended to be filed in the six weeks before the Assembly released its member expenditure records Aug. 26.

Read the whole story

CalFire puts Tahoe station on winter staffing levels

CalFire will be down staffing its two engines in the Lake Tahoe Basin (Station No. 5 in South Lake Tahoe and Station No. 55 in Carnelian Bay)starting Oct. 17 for winter.

Staffing levels are sufficient to respond to local emergencies and CalFire is prepared to call back additional resources if fire weather conditions change.

Grant to fight underage drinking, alcohol sales on North Shore

By Cathy Locke, Sacramento Bee

The Placer County Sheriff's Office has announced that it will use a $40,000 grant from the Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control to fight underage drinking and alcohol sales to minors.

The problem was apparent during a recent Sheriff's Office decoy operation in the Lake Tahoe area, where 40 percent of the businesses visited sold alcohol to the decoys, according to a Sheriff's Office news release.

The grant will assist in promoting awareness and providing

training in alcohol-related crimes and their effect on schools, parents and students countywide. Anyone who sells or furnishes alcohol to a minor faces a fine of $250 and up to 24 hours of community service. If a business sells alcohol to a minor, the Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control can take administrative action on the business' alcoholic beverage license, impose a fine, or both.

Read the whole story

Outdoor education sparks enthusiasm for learning

By Jill Oberly, Reno Gazette-Journal

It's a Tuesday morning, and for about 60 Sun Valley Elementary School fifth-graders, that typically means sitting in a classroom studying pictures of photosynthesis or some other scientific phenomenon in a textbook.

This day, however, is different. It is the start of a four-day, three-night excursion along the eastern shore of Lake Tahoe with the Great Basin Outdoor School.

It is the first time some have spent a night away from Sun Valley. And the wondrous looks on the faces of Stefanie Braun's students when they first see Lake Tahoe is quickly replaced by shouts of excitement and the release of pent-up energy from a long bus ride.

While part of the goal of the Great Basin Outdoor School during the next few days is fun, the children still are in school, learning in a real-world environment that demonstrates

practical ways to use life skills. Great Basin’s mission is to ignite children’s passion for learning in the outdoors.

The nonprofit organization is funded by grants and community contributions.

Teachers can contact the school if they are interested in enrolling their class in the program.

Read the whole story

Dollar Creek trail meeting

Placer County, working in partnership with the California Tahoe Conservancy and North Tahoe Public Utility District, is hosting an informational open house regarding the proposed Dollar Creek Shared-Use Trail.

Residents and others interested are encouraged to attend, receive information, and share their thoughts regarding the trail. The open house is Oct. 18 from 4-6pm at the North Tahoe Event Center, 8318 North Lake Blvd. in Kings Beach.

Staff will be on hand to answer questions and show maps of the proposed route.

The proposed trail would be located in Placer County, primarily within the Conservancy and NTPUD-owned properties, between the intersection of Dollar Drive and Highway 28 and the end of Fulton Crescent Road.

The separated trail would extend the existing North Shore bicycle trail network, and would link residential uses to jobs, schools, shopping and recreation and community areas. It would extend the exiting Tahoe City to Dollar Point trail

through public lands commonly known as the Dollar and Firestone properties. The project would enhance recreation and transportation opportunities by extending existing paved trail network in the Tahoe City area, including TCPUD's 10-mile Class 1 trail from Tahoe City to Sugar Pine Point State Park and the trail along the Truckee River. A trailhead parking facility near Dollar Point and Highway 28 may also be included for trail users.

The project schedule proposes to complete preliminary engineering and environmental permitting by June 2012, followed by construction in 2013, pending funding availability.

East Shore real estate market outperforms rest of basin

By Jason Hidalgo, Reno Gazette-Journal

The East Shore continued to outperform the rest of the Lake Tahoe real estate market, which saw home values fall overall during the third quarter.

The median price for a single-family home in Lake Tahoe fell 10 percent to $370,500 from July to September, according to Chase International's latest housing report. Average price also fell to $630,984 –an 11 percent drop. Unit sales fell by 4 percent to 712 units.

One bright spot was the East Shore, which continued its positive pace from the second quarter. The median price for an East Shore home in the third quarter was $575,000, up 7 percent from the previous quarter. East Shore also posted a 51

percent jump in average price to $1.4 million.

Read the whole story

A year later – Lahontan, El Dorado County still at odds

By Kathryn Reed

El Dorado County Board of Supervisors say there is no way the county has the money to pay for the unfunded mandate to reduce sediment from entering Lake Tahoe. It's the same message they delivered in 2010.

The supes met Oct. 11 in South Lake Tahoe for their once-a-year venture outside the West Slope. Just like last year Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board Executive Director Harold Singer addressed the five electeds.



Harold Singer

And just like 2010, it was a sparring match between he who makes the rules and those who must carry them out.

The big picture is the total maximum daily load – the EPA policy funneled to the state that regional water boards pass on to local jurisdictions. It's about reducing fine sediment

from reaching any major body of water. It’s not just a Lake Tahoe thing.

Singer, though, also brought up how the county’s stormwater permit with Lahontan expired a year ago. They are usually good for five years. It’s possible the water board will grant a new permit at its December meeting in South Lake Tahoe.

Supervisor Ray Nutting is perplexed Lahontan can have a policy when it does not know what the effects of the runoff from U.S. Forest Service owned land is. The Forest Service owns about 80 percent of the acreage in the Lake Tahoe Basin.

Nutting was visibly shocked and dismayed to learn Lahontan’s baseline year for sediment is 2003 when the state agency has been in existence since the 1960s.

Supervisor Jack Sweeney said, “I find the TMDL rather subjective. I think we are wishing for something. I’m not sure it is scientifically achievable or economically achievable. I feel bullied into this.”

Singer kept emphasizing it is the urban areas that are making Lake Tahoe less clear than years gone by, that is why the counties and city in the basin are being tasked with reducing what runs off from the land in their jurisdictions.

He said his agency would like to monitor the various types of best management practices being used in various locations to see what works so the ones with the most gains in terms of reducing sediment can be used elsewhere in the basin.

Singer also acknowledged that if significant changes made to the landscape to reduce fine sediment from reaching Lake Tahoe do no equate to substantial improvements in lake clarity, Lahontan will have to reassess what it is asking jurisdictions to do.

Economy prompts clients to quit longstanding service relationships

By Laura Petrecca, USA Today

Joanne Paholak agonized for months.

This decision would save time and money. But it could also hurt the feelings – as well as affect the income – of someone she cared about.

Finally last spring, she did it. Paholak broke ties with the hairstylist she'd seen for about 25 years.

She now visits the Great Clips chain near her Southfield, Mich., home to get her close-cropped hair cut. The price is about 80 percent less. And since no appointment is required, she can stop in whenever she has a free moment.

Parting ways "was very, very hard to do," she said. "It had become quite a close relationship as a hairdresser and client."

But as her stylist upgraded to increasingly chic salons, her prices kept rising. And Paholak, who is 68 and retired, realized she was spending way too much on the trims she received about every five weeks.

Faced with a volatile stock market, reduced home values and shrinking incomes, many folks are making the often-awkward decision to leave long-standing hairdressers, fitness trainers, housekeepers and other personal service providers.

A quarter of respondents have left one or more service providers to save money, according to a September BIGinsight poll conducted for *USA Today*.

Slightly more than half now do the tasks themselves; 26 percent found a less-expensive provider; 23 percent decided they no longer needed the service.

Read the whole story

Opinion: S. Tahoe's budget is not the whole truth

To the community,

I have read City Manager Tony O'Rourke's letter to the community on the budget. He projects a deficit of $5.2 million and average deficits of $3.4 million "between fiscal years 2012 and 2016." The problem with the numbers is they can't be verified. And there are lies, damned lies, and statistics.

The city manager said the numbers "showed the need to reduce city expenses to live within our means." To do so, he proposes a number of moves. He would eliminate 26 city employees. He would bid out city services.



Bill Crawford

But who knows other than the city manager which 26 city employees will be cut. Will he on a whim swing his ax? On bidding out city services, will the city go bid shopping? If so, the end result will be bad news. And who will have oversight on the contracts? Who will see that the contracts aren't one-sided in favor of the contractor, or that the contracts aren't breached? The city attorney?

And presently, the contract on the ice area is in a muddle because the city wants to turn Measure S non-taxable bonds into taxable bonds. It can't be done without voter approval because in 2000 voters approved non-taxable bonds.

Part of projected deficits is a line item of $1.8 million that will go to the state to keep "city development activities" alive. What activities? The $1.8million needn't be in the budget. It's padding to inflate the deficit. It's there to "justify" swinging the ax and bidding out more city services. It is dishonest.

Finally, if the projected savings don't eliminate the projected deficits, what will the city do? The city manager hasn't a clue because he's flying by the seat of his pants upside down. He is a stunt pilot. The five years this and the five that is smoke and mirrors, pure poppycock.

Bill Crawford, South Lake Tahoe