Placer County supes ready to finalize redistricting plan

Placer County Board of Supervisors' final public hearing prior to approving a final redistricting map for the county is Oct. 11.

Public comments on the proposed final map will be taken at 10am during the regularly scheduled board meeting which begins at 9am.

As required by state law, the board members are realigning district boundaries to reflect population changes reported in the 2010 census.

The current 5th Supervisorial District, which includes the mountainous sections of Placer County, North Lake Tahoe, and areas north of Bell Road in the Auburn area has grown more slowly than the other four districts and in some areas, had decreased population. To bring the District 5 population into parity, the Auburn is being moved to the 5th District from the 3rd District. Additionally, the cities of Lincoln, Roseville and Rocklin have experienced extensive growth in the last 10 years, while Loomis and Auburn have had limited growth, creating the need for other boundary line adjustments.

The Board of Supervisors meeting is at the County Administrative Center, 175 Fulweiler Ave., Auburn.

Maps and additional information about redistricting are available on the Placer County website or by calling (530) 889.4010.

Grant allows Truckee museum to expand science programs

Thanks to the $50,000 Museum for America grant from the federal Institute of Museum and Library Services, the KidZone Museum, nationally recognized as an exemplary children's museum, is moving forward to develop its science curriculum and programs for children under the age of 10.

The "SCIENTASTIC" project strengthens the KidZone Museum's ability to engage its growing diverse audience in the exploration of innovative science, including ecology and earth sciences; the museum's new Outdoor Nature Play Center offers children a place for hands-on natural science.

The initial SCIENTASTIC programs will be specifically hands-on science-based programming in ecology, chemistry and earth sciences, heavily influenced by the museum's natural surroundings in Truckee, which include thousands of acres of protected forest and watersheds. Programming will benefit from the expertise in professional development offered by the Lawrence Hall of Science, UNR scientists and the teachings by various museum collaborators.

A main goal of the SCIENTASTIC program is to help decrease the national gaps in science education for students from low-income and poorly educated families, offering them a place to learn and explore. The program plans to reach as many children and families as possible by also participating in community science events and programs. By participating in offsite science events, the SCIENTASTIC project will reach even those children who aren't able to visit the KidZone Museum.

For additional information about the KidZone Museum, contact Carol Meagher at director@kidzonemuseum.org or (530) 320.5613.

Proponents of potatoes in school lunches make a stand

By Phil Galewitz, NPR

When the potato lobby speaks, it always puts its best spuds forward. Tuesday at a National Press Club lunchtime briefing to promote the nutritional value of the vegetable, that meant a full bar of baked potatoes, french fries (baked, not fried), sour cream, cheddar cheese, chopped tomatoes, spinach and broccoli. Yes, according to sources close to the food, it was scrumptious.



The group, which has been fighting the U.S. Department of Agriculture's proposed school nutrition guidelines to limit white potatoes and other starchy vegetables to 1 cup a week, rolled out some big guns today, in the form of lunch ladies, to butter up the press.

The National Potato Council released a survey of 245 school food service directors showing how most think the new rules would lead to higher costs, more wasted food, and lower participation in the school lunch program.

Schools are looking for healthier ways to prepare food. "Today's school lunch is not your school lunch you remember," Dayle Hayes, a registered dietician, said at the briefing.

Read the whole story

TRPA looking for Best in Basin nominees

The nomination period is open for the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency's 2011 Best in the Basin awards program, which annually recognizes environmentally compatible projects in the Tahoe basin that stand out as the best designed, planned and implemented.

The Best in the Basin program calls attention to projects of all categories – from natural restoration to commercial or residential construction – that carry with them environmental net gains for Lake Tahoe and its communities.

For more than two decades, the Best in the Basin program has recognized those property owners, contractors, architects and planners whose work and investment should be held up as examples to follow.

The nomination period ends Oct. 21.

Categories are:

* new residential

* residential modification

* rebuild projects

* new commercial

* commercial modification

* commercial rebuild

* shorezone

* green building

* public service

* erosion control

* restoration

* BMP retrofit

* defensible space

* forest fuel reduction

* mixed-use project

* green remodel.

To qualify, projects must have been completed or near completion in the 2011 calendar year and before the close of the nomination period. For an entry form and information about last year’s winners, go online.

Those selected to receive awards will be publicly honored by the TRPA Governing Board in January.

Poet brings childhood to life in words

By Kathryn Reed

Where does the truth lie?

It’s an answer only the author knows. But insights into the hidden reality in the poetry shined through Friday night as Jason Schossler spoke to nearly 60 people at Lake Tahoe Community College. He was in town from Philadelphia to launch

his book “Mud Cakes” that was published this month by Bona Fide Books of Meyers.



Jason Schossler on Oct. 7 reads his poetry at LTCC. Photo/Kathryn Reed

“Mud Cakes” – so titled after one of the entries in the poetry collection – is Schossler’s first collection of poems to be published. He is the winner of the 2010 Melissa Lanitis Gregory Poetry Prize.

With his mother and fiancé in the audience, Schossler admitted it was mom who unflinchingly encouraged him to write at an early age and his girlfriend who lovingly accepts the non-traditional love poems.

Much of what Schossler expressed in the six poems he read was his life as a child – with some admitted literary license. From Skylab falling to Star Wars to his father leaving when he was 10 – there is something in his words that enables Schossler to resonate with his audience.

Expressive in his delivery, his words danced in the air.

The Temple University instructor took questions after the reading. He expressed a desire to give back to youth as a mentor, hoping to do more of that when he goes home. He

reached out to local youth while in town – working with South Tahoe and Wooster (Reno) high school students.

Schossler spoke of the need to find the small nugget in an idea and develop it into poetic prose. He also said there is no such thing as writer's block – it's something that needs to be plowed through, perhaps by taking a new approach to what the writer is trying to convey.

While Schossler has written fiction, he believes poetry is where his future lies.

"Mud Cakes" is available through Bona Fide Books.

S. Tahoe may pay to maintain private property improvements

By Kathryn Reed

Maintaining improvements made to private properties that were paid for with public money is creating a conundrum for the South Lake Tahoe City Council.

While the work has yet to be done in the Bijou area along Highway 50, the wheels are in motion for the erosion control project to be a reality. At issue is who pays for the maintenance.



A stormwater drain near the Bijou Center in April 2011. Photo/LTN

Right now the annual cost estimate is $115,000 a year to maintain the future improvements. The city would like the property owners to share those costs. But there is little way to ensure that happens.

At the Oct. 4 council meeting the five had a workshop about the stormwater maintenance funding.

The work will be paid for by a variety of sources. The sticking point is the U.S. Forest Service grant requires acceptance of the money now and for the project to go forward before the maintenance issue is resolved.

Worst-case scenario is the city picks up the entire maintenance cost. What pot of money that comes from was not discussed Tuesday. Nor was it discussed why the private property owners were not brought into the discussion sooner.

As outlined this week, the project will go forward to reduce a significant amount of runoff that now goes directly into Lake Tahoe. To accomplish this goal improvements will be made at the Bijou Center and other entities along Highway 50 owned by private individuals.

These property owners are under no obligation to pay for this or the maintenance. What the council discussed was holding hostage the best management practice certificate from the

Tahoe Regional Planning Agency if they don’t pay at least half the maintenance costs.

Whether this is legal was not addressed.

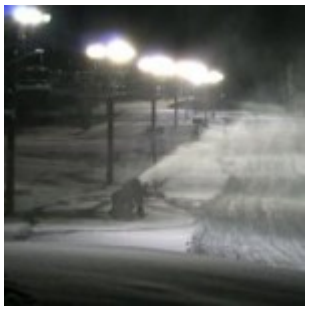
Remodels are not allowed without doing BMPs. But the council discussion was about who paid for the BMPs, not that they are completed. But the BMP certificate is a TRPA issue and no one from that agency was at the meeting. The council, though, believes it can get TRPA to go along with this scenario.

Pablo Perez, the consult from NBS in Southern California working for the city on the issue, said creating this community facilities district would be a voluntary opt-in, but once in, the property owners could not opt out. Plus, the maintenance fee would be in perpetuity and adjusted for inflation.

Another option as the city tries to fix the decades-old problem of gunk going into the lake is to create similar assessment districts throughout the city or have one overall stormwater tax to deal with the problem.

Because this was a work session no action was taken. It will be brought back to the council at a later date for a vote as to how to proceed.

Snippets about Lake Tahoe



• Boreal is aiming to be the first Tahoe area ski resort to open for the 2011-12 season with a projected date of Oct. 31. Snowmaking has begun.

• Bread & Broth received a check for more than $4,000 from Hard Rock Cafe Lake Tahoe staff from the 40 Days that Rock fundraiser. Food collected was distributed between Bread & Broth, Backdoor Pantry, and Christmas Cheer.

• Barton Foundation's Philanthropy Day lunch is Nov. 4 from noon-2pm at Riva Grill. Barton Health grants will be distributed. Cost of lunch is $25. RSVP by Oct. 31 to Natalie at (530) 543.5909 or nstetson@bartonhealth.org.

• Lake Tahoe Chocolate Factory and Cakes by Grace is having a grand opening Oct. 11 from 4-7pm at 152 Highway 50 in Stateline between Lakeside Inn and Dart Liquor.

• Kitchen Collection is open at Factory Stores at the Y in South Lake Tahoe.

$2 mil. grant awarded UC Merced to study Sierra snowpack

By Mark Grossi, Fresno Bee

Researchers from UC Merced were awarded a $2 million federal grant to develop a revolutionary network for tracking the

Sierra snowpack as the climate warms.

The National Science Foundation money will support a four-year project to install a massive web of wireless sensors in the 2,000-square-mile American River Basin in the Sierra northeast of Sacramento.

The network will give water managers precise information to predict snowmelt, a main source of water for millions of residents and the $35 billion farming industry. The data will become more important as the snowpack retreats to higher ground in a warming climate.

The research team is led by UC Merced professor Roger Bales, director of the Sierra Nevada Research Institute, and UC Berkeley professor Steven Glaser. For several years, the team has been experimenting with the technology around Shaver Lake in Fresno County and the American River.

Read the whole story

Opinion: Safety essential to a state that depends so much on tourism

By Richard N. Velotta, Las Vegas Sun

In a state like Nevada, there’s almost nothing worse than a tragedy colliding with tourism.

Whether it’s a train derailment, a car accident or something as horrific as the deadly crash at this month’s Reno Air Races, it’s important to remember that we often push against

the boundaries of our comfort zones when we engage in such a unique experience. Sometimes watching danger up close is what makes an event a never-forgotten experience.

The Reno Air Races is one of many late summer events in Northern Nevada that annually attracts thousands during the ideal time of year to be outdoors.

There’s a nonstop parade of activity, beginning with the Hot August Nights car rallies, continuing through the well-attended Sparks rib cook-off, the bizarre Burning Man event in the Black Rock Desert, a hot-air balloon festival, the Street Vibrations motorcycle experience, camel races in Virginia City and the Reno Air Races, staged north of town at an airport in Stead.

I’ve been invited many times to the air races, but have never been in Reno when it’s been staged.

After the crash of stunt pilot Jimmy Leeward’s souped-up, World War II-vintage, single-engine P-51 Mustang near a spectator grandstand, the question that hangs over the event now is whether it will ever be staged again.

Certainly, the financial considerations of insuring future events after the Sept. 16 tragedy will play into the decision. But the more crucial issue will be how sponsors will guarantee the safety of participants and spectators in the future.

Read the whole story

South Tahoe remembers a

fallen soldier – Garrett Fant

By Linda Fine Conaboy

U.S. Army Spc. Garrett Anthony Fant died Sept. 26 from injuries when he stepped on an improvised explosive device while on duty in the Helmand Province, Afghanistan. He was born May 11, 1990, and was 21. In March 2009 he enlisted in the Army, assigned to the 4th Squadron, 4th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division out of Fort Riley, Kansas. He was on his first deployment. On Oct. 7 he was buried.

How many times throughout history have words like these been written or spoken of those in the military and how many families like Fant's have had to receive his body, make burial arrangements and finally, lay him to rest?



Garrett Fant

Most of the 85 plus people gathered in the Sierra Community Church on Friday had a close relationship with Fant. There were grandparents, there was his mom Julia Farrell and his dad John Fant. His brother James Keough and sister Shanna Askins were there as well as his uncle and several friends. All speaking eloquently of the young man so recently dead, who they say, would not be deterred from the siren call of the Army.

Outside, a cadre of men, most belonging to various motorcycle groups, stood in a two-row formation as if to guard this young

man. All of them standing tall and holding large American flags as his casket was wheeled into the church and again as it was wheeled out and placed carefully into a waiting hearse. The respect they felt for him and his service was palpable as they stood there in the cold morning sun, silently honoring him.

There were police, firefighters and many in uniform representing various branches of the military. All came to say goodbye to U.S Army Spc. Fant.

Judging by the stories told – some humorous, many heartbreaking – Fant was a rough and tumble boy who had no other career goal than to enlist. He had no doubt what his life's calling was – Army all the way. He told his best friend that after about 40 years in the Army he wanted to become a teacher.

Now in death it will be lessons of bravery he will teach.

His sister and brother said he went into the service a young boy and when he came back to celebrate his 21st birthday he had become a man. Now, they said, he's a hero. His sister said of Fant that he had the ability to make people laugh; what she called belly aching laughter. Askins once asked him if he was scared, and he replied simply, "Sis, I've got a job to do."



Garrett Fant was laid to rest Oct. 7 at Happy Homestead

Cemetery in South Lake Tahoe. Photos/Linda Fine Conaboy

Many shared that Fant was a humble man, non-judgmental and proud of what he was doing. According to his brother, he stood tall, literally (he was well over 6 feet) and always looked up to his older brother. In truth, Keough said, “I always looked up to him.”

His best friend said he and Fant played army everyday when they were kids growing up together in South Lake Tahoe. “We were a couple of hellions,” he said.

Brig. Gen. Randy Dragon presented many medals and commendations to Fant’s parents. Among them were a purple heart, the good conduct medal, the Afghanistan campaign medal with one campaign star, the Global War on Terrorism service medal, NATO medal and several others. As the brigadier general draped special dog tags around each parent’s neck, his eloquent thanks were deep sobs and grieving hugs.

Dragon said Fant was the best marksman in his unit of more than 1,000.

“He lived with duty as his watchword,” he said.

He too alluded to Fant’s sense of humor as he told of his recent Facebook post: “You can’t spell infantry without Fant.”

It’s hard to believe that this young man was so recently a dynamic force in the armed forces, doing what he needed to do in Afghanistan. Now he’s come home to South Lake Tahoe, as his siblings said, a hero.

A burial service followed at Happy Homestead Cemetery.

Donations may be sent to the Fisher House Foundation.