TRPA giving out awards, having an open house

Tahoe Regional Planning Agency is having an open house Sept. 29 from 4-7pm at 128 Market St. on Lower Kingsbury Grade in Stateline.

The event will include live music, free food, activities for kids, and info-tours of TRPA programs and initiatives.

TRPA will also be announcing the winners of the Lake Spirit Award honoring people making progress maintaining the clarity, splendor, and beauty of Lake Tahoe.

To nominate someone, complete the nomination form by Sept. 19.

Tahoe Sierra Century

Tahoe Sierra Century Ride is Sept. 24.

The three routes of varying distances start and finish in the Village at Squaw Valley.

The ride benefits the music students at North Tahoe middle and high schools.

To register or for information, go online.

Douglas commissioners to vote on Stateline-to-Stateline bike trail

Douglas County commissioners on Sept. 15 are expected to approve environmental documents, the feasibility report and allocate money for the Stateline-to-Stateline Bikeway.

The meeting starts at 1:30pm at the Stateline offices.

It was hoped the South Demonstration Project from Stateline to Roundhill Pines Beach would have broken ground this year. However, the environmental assessment by the U.S. Forest Service took longer than expected. With that document completed, the bike path should start to materialize in 2012.

Eventually the 30-mile trail will end in Crystal Bay.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

El Dorado County judge admonished by judicial commission

By Carlos Alcala, Sacramento Bee

El Dorado County Superior Court Judge James R. Wagoner has received public admonishment from the California Commission on Judicial Performance.

The admonishment is the lowest of three levels of public

discipline administered by the Commission and has neither further sanctions nor appeals.

The commission’s investigation showed that Wagoner, currently assistant presiding judge in El Dorado County, acted outside his authority in having Penny Arnold jailed on July 16, 2010.

Wagoner left his second floor courtroom in the Main Street Courthouse in Placerville and ordered Arnold to his courtroom.

When she would not comply, he had bailiffs arrest her for contempt.

Read the whole story

Human trafficking subject of FBI talk on South Shore

CASA El Dorado is hosting two FBI agents to talk about human trafficking.

The talk by Special Agent Minerva Shelton and Victim Specialist Janice Dean is Sept. 22 from noon to 1:30pm at Department 3 of the El Dorado County Superior Court in South Lake Tahoe.

RSVP by Sept. 20 to Amanda@casaeldorado.org or call (530) 573.3072.

Fall officially arrives next week. What does autumn in Lake Tahoe mean to you?

Opinion: Costly wars should lead deficit-cutting panel's list

By Joel Brinkley

As the congressional debt-reduction "super committee" begins work this month, it had better take into account trillions of dollars in anticipated war costs that no one in Washington seems willing to acknowledge.

For decades now (and probably much longer), government estimates of war costs strove not to count numerous secondary expenses that result from combat, like veterans' health care – or the $20 billion wasted in Pakistan. Officials find the real numbers embarrassing. A recent Congressional Budget Office report, for example, placed the total costs of the Iraq and Afghan wars at $1.415 trillion, based solely on congressional appropriations specifically dedicated to those wars.

But a new academic study counts everything and puts the wars' full price at about $4 trillion – almost all of it deficit spending. That's nearly 30 percent of the nation's $14 trillion debt. Even that, the study's authors say, doesn't include some costs that cannot be tallied, like those in the

intelligence agencies' black budgets, or the hundreds of millions in impromptu "death gratuities" paid to families of Americans and some foreigners killed in war.

The more disturbing finding, however, is that in the coming years the wars threaten to cost the nation another $2 trillion – in interest payments on war debt as well as continuing medical expenses for 150,000 wounded veterans.

Joel Brinkley, a Pulitzer Prize-winning former foreign correspondent for the New York Times, is the author of "Cambodia's Curse: The Modern History of a Troubled Land." E-mail him at brinkley@foreign-matters.com.

Read the whole story

S. Tahoe council still unable to agree on sign regulation

By Kathryn Reed

South Lake Tahoe Councilman Tom Davis said, "I don't want to be the taste police" when it comes to what kind of decorative lights people use on their businesses.



The Swiss Chalet sign

could be grandfathered in.

The irony is the overall discussion was about signs – which is subjective and a matter of taste.

With more discussion Tuesday about the decades-old sign problem in the city, the council still is working through what rules it wants to dictate private businesses follow – all in the name of taste.

This type of regulation is something most cities have. The local problem is what is on the books is not enforced because this and previous councils have not agreed with it nor has there been the manpower to enforce the rules.

Too many changes were proposed Sept. 13 for a vote to be taken on the first reading of the ordinance. The soonest the next revision will come back to the council is Oct. 4.

The five councilmembers took votes on individual sections of the ordinance, but most of those were split – meaning the issue is as divisive as it ever has been.

How any ordinance that might get approved will be enforced was the subject of much discussion.

Owners of non-conforming signs will be sent a letter giving them 10 days to bring it up to code. If they don't, then they'll be fined each day they are out of compliance.

The five could not agree whether the Planning Commission should be the last stop for some appeals or if the council should be the body making that decision.

Nor could they all decide on when sandwich boards should be used. Though the majority sided with Development Services Director Hilary Hodges' proposal to allow them only during

holiday periods and city sanctioned community events.

What's being called "locally unique signs" will be allowed to stay if the owners apply for that designation. Sno-Flake, Swiss Chalet and Stardust were the examples used.

No longer will private businesses be able to hire someone to hold a sign pointing to their business. But people having car washes and the like will be able to lure people to their fund-raising event in this manner.

Businesses wanting to string up energy efficient blue or white lights year-round can do so. No permit needed to do so for 90 days between Nov. 1 and March 1, though a design review is needed and a building permit may be required to keep them up longer. This is primarily to look at fire safety issues.

While progress was made on the sign issue, until a final vote is taken, each council member can change their mind. After all, that is what happened with the medical marijuana vote.

In other action:

• The council approved the ordinance affecting how medical marijuana dispensaries are regulated. Councilman Bruce Grego was the lone vote against the law. At the first reading Councilwoman Angela Swanson had voted no. Tuesday she voted yes.

Opinion: Tips for how to behave around lightning

Due to thunderstorm activity in recent days and the current weather forecasts for this storm pattern to continue in the

Amador-El Dorado Unit of CalFire, Unit Chief Kelly Keenan wanted to remind everyone of some basic lightning safety tips:

– Lightning bolts can strike 10-15 miles from a thunderstorm,



– If you hear thunder, then lightning is close enough to be a real threat, seek shelter indoors,

– Lightning does strike the same place twice,

– If you are caught outside during a thunderstorm, move toward a safe shelter,

– The safest shelter is a building with wiring and plumbing. Sheds, picnic shelters, tents or covered porches do not necessarily protect you from lightning,

– Do not use corded telephones unless absolutely necessary,

– Wait for 30 minutes after the last rumble of thunder is heard to resume outside activities,

– This year to date 23 people have died after being struck by lightning. Annually 400 people are struck by lightning in the United States and about 60 people die from their injuries, the rest can face a lifetime of disabilities including pain and neurological disabilities.

No contest for Amodei; NV seat in the House still GOP

By Kyle Trygstad, Roll Call

Republican Mark Amodei ran away with a victory Tuesday night in the special election for Nevada's 2nd district.

Amodei, a former state legislator and ex-state GOP chairman, took 57 percent of the vote to Democratic state Treasurer Kate Marshall's 37 percent with 66 percent of precincts reporting.



Mark Amodei

Amodei keeps the seat in GOP hands following the Senate appointment of Republican Dean Heller in May. The rural district, which includes all of Nevada outside metro Las Vegas, has never elected a Democrat to the House since it was created in 1981.

That fact, along with President Barack Obama's 33 percent approval rating and the Marshall campaign's inability to find a message that moved voters in her direction, led to this race becoming even less competitive than the other Tuesday special election in New York's heavily Democratic 9th district.

Nevada added a fourth district through reapportionment, so this district will change when Amodei seeks a full term in November 2012. It's the most likely of the four districts to be a safe Republican seat, but nothing is certain with the state's redistricting process now in the courts.

Read the whole story