Opinion: Business as usual is robbing the homeowner

To the community,

On July 22, 2011, I sent a letter to the publisher. This is a follow up to this situation.

At the time we were waiting for permission from the power company to remove some trees using a crane over there power lines. The contractor had told us there would be a charge for the power company to shut down power and stand by but he was not sure how much it would be.

Well, we found out that the charge would be $1,200, later reduced to $900 because the contractor told them it would not take very long.

This is a new policy by the power company and my contractor said that he had never been charged before. As you can imagine I had to think this one over as the contract to remove the trees was only $2,400. This added 50 percent to the contract.

After a while I decided to go along with this project as there was no alternative.

My contractor is Cook Tree Service; a local respected business which I have used before with great results. It looks like every time I need a job done the local utility or the city has put a road block in the way and then they are always crying about no jobs in the area.

If there is a policy that needs to be changed, this should be first one.

Well, the trees are down and it took Cook Tree Service about two hours to do the crane work.

I will complete this project despite the problems, but there has to better way.

David DeWitt, South Lake Tahoe

Amazon dispute puts California tax board in spotlight

By Dale Kasler, Sacramento Bee

George Runner thinks California's new Internet sales tax law is a terrible idea – and he's one of the people in charge of enforcing it.

The former state senator sits on the State Board of Equalization, the agency that oversees the collection of sales tax in California.

The board, which normally labors in obscurity, has been thrust into one of the hottest political dramas of the year: the fight between California and Amazon.com over Internet taxes. And the five people who govern the agency can't agree on the tax, either.

Runner, a Republican from Lancaster, is rooting for a ballot referendum Amazon is pushing to overturn the tax. He says the tax hurts the business climate, and legislators who pushed it "should be ashamed to appear in public."

Democratic board Chairman Jerome Horton calls Amazon "morally wrong" and predicts the online retailer from Seattle will get clobbered at the ballot box. Other board members have weighed

in on both sides of the issue.

Board officials say the philosophical split won't undermine the board's ability to administer the new tax. But the schism does create something of a spectacle: dueling press releases from board members and tart exchanges at board meetings.

Read the whole story

Luring tourists to area with off-season events

By Rob Sabo, Northern Nevada Business Weekly

The Reno Championship Air Races were created in 1964 in part to boost tourism during slow September days. Now, 46 years later, the annual event at Reno-Stead Airport draws close to 200,000 people to northern Nevada, helping make September one of the busiest tourism months in the region.

Though attendance at the 2010 Reno Championship Air Races dipped slightly from 2009 figures, advance ticket sales and pre-orders are encouraging for a slight uptick at this year's event scheduled for Sept. 14-18. Full-week attendance at last year's event was 197,000 fans, down slightly from just over 200,000 in 2009.

Mike Houghton, president and chief executive officer of the Reno Air Racing Association for the past 14 years, says about 40 percent of visitors to the event hail from the West Coast, with the balance spread out from larger cities around country.

Although popular with locals, about 70 percent of attendees come from outside of the area – including 4 to 5 percent

international visitors. “It is a huge event for this community,” Houghton says. “It contributes in excess of $70 million in economic impact in a week’s time.”

Read the whole story

SLTPD explorers score at statewide competition

South Lake Tahoe Police Department’s explorers earned eight awards in the 12 events they competed in.

The Central Valley Explorer Challenge Competition in Manteca in July had 19 other explorer posts and approximately 170 explorers from all over California.



Under the direction of SLTPD Officer Rebecca Inman, Explorers Joey Acker, Jose Silva, Chelsea Tate and Hector Vasquez won:

First places for Building Search and Hostage Rescue;

Second places for Domestic Violence Investigation and Burglary in Progress Investigation

Third places for Hostage Negotiations, Traffic Stop Investigation, Crime Scene Investigation and Honor Guard Drill and March.

The police explorers are a branch of the Learning for Life Program, supervised by the South Lake Tahoe Police Department.

The program is open to young men and women between the ages of 14 and 21.

Fuels project may land South Lake Tahoe in court; forces changes in fire department

By Kathryn Reed

MEYERS – South Lake Tahoe has someone new heading up fuels reduction projects – and it wasn't by choice.

Marty Scheuerman is now the division chief in charge of that aspect of the fire department, with Division Chief Ray Zachau being relieved of that responsibility.

The billing quagmire surrounding the Lake Christopher fuels reduction project that could be settled in court led to the change.



Dave Mercer and Ray Zachau at the Lake Christopher project in April.

Photo/LTN file

“It’s not necessarily a decision made exclusively by South Lake Tahoe,” Police-Fire Chief Brian Uhler told *Lake Tahoe News*.

He added, “The change in assignment was necessary to move things forward.”

Uhler and Scheuerman were attending their first MAC – Multi-Agency Coordinating Committee – on Thursday. The half-day session at Lake Valley Fire Department was about all things fire.

This group of mostly fire chiefs from the basin as well as state and federal land owners came together shortly before the 2007 Angora Fire, but solidified their roles after that destructive wildfire.

Working collectively is a key component of what MAC is about. That is why others influenced what transpired within South Lake Tahoe Fire Department.

(Zachau did not return a phone call.)

Andrew List, executive director of Nevada Fire Safe Council, told the more than two-dozen people at the meeting that contracts are between NFSC and the contractor. Jurisdictions have no authority to authorize expenditures.

“We think he may have a legal issue with the city of South Lake Tahoe,” List said of contractor Dave Mercer.

Mercer cleared the area via helicopter in the spring when everything was so wet. The timber was soaked, weighing more than anticipated. It was so heavy the contractor had to get a larger helicopter to do the work.

All of this led to additional costs to the tune of $170,000 in order to complete the fuels reduction project.

“The problem with this is its 75 percent over and the bid was already 15 percent higher than the low bidder,” List said. It was also a do-not-exceed contract.

Instead of Mercer going back to the nonprofit Fire Safe Council to explain the situation and ask for a change order, he received a verbal OK from Zachau to go forward.

List told the fire management contingency in the room that this should “serve as a warning” to them to follow procedures.

Because potential litigation is involved with Mercer wanting to be paid Uhler would not comment further.

Zachau, though, in a July 21 *Lake Tahoe News* story expressed concerned the NFSC is moving beyond what he sees as its charter to act as a financial agent for the fire districts into more of a technical role managing the projects.

“They’ve hijacked the process,” Zachau told *Lake Tahoe News* for that story.

Powderhorn Ski Resort changes hands

By Nancy Lofholm, Denver Post

A big name in the Colorado ski industry bought a small, relatively unknown ski area Thursday for a bargain price.

Former Vail Resorts executive Andy Daly’s high bid of $1.4 million earned him not only the Powderhorn Ski Resort along with a neighboring inn and restaurant and acres for ski area expansion, but also a more than 700-acre parcel of nearby land

that could be developed into a golf course and home sites.

“We really believe Powderhorn is a wonderful gem that has been undercapitalized for a number of years. We want to bring back skiing expertise and capital,” Daly said as he was swarmed by well-wishers following his successful bid on a ski resort he admitted is one of the few in the state he has never skied before.

The “we” Daly is referring to include Tom and John Gart of the Gart Companies. They accompanied Daly to the auction and took part in fevered corner-of-the-room negotiations with sellers during the first and second rounds of bidding before jumping in on the third round and buying up all but some lots around the resort that went to individual bidders.

The Garts would not comment on what part they will play in the ski area. Daly called them “real estate partners.”

Read the whole story

S. Tahoe sex offender on probation for latest infraction

Joseph Scanio, 69, has made his last legal visit to the South Lake Tahoe Ice Arena.

Part of the deal Scanio agreed to when he pleaded no contest Thursday to not complying with the city’s sex offender law was to not visit the entire city recreation complex or nearby library.

In an unsolicited guest column Scanio sent to *Lake Tahoe News* in May he took no responsibility for the actions that led to him being sentenced Aug. 4 to three years probation.



Joseph Scanio

Scanio's disregard for the law goes well beyond the recent infractions. He spent time in prison after pleading guilty in October 2006 to possession of child pornography.

The federal investigation into whether he violated parole is ongoing.

– Kathryn Reed

Couponing saves N. Nevadans big bucks

By Juan Lopez, Reno Gazette-Journal

Cassie Angus used to spend about $500 monthly on groceries and personal care products.

And even then, the stay-at-home-mom's cupboards were stocked with the same type of foods.

"I used to shop at mass-merchandise stores," said the 25-year-

old mother of three. “I would get 10 pounds of ground beef, and my family and I would have to eat the same thing for two weeks. I had no snack items or variations in meals.”

And now?

Her pantry is “overflowing” with a variety of items and the Reno resident’s monthly bill, which includes personal care products, is 70 percent lower – or about $350 less.

How does she do it? By couponing. And she’s not alone.

Consumers across the U.S. saved $3.7 billion by using coupons in 2010, up from just $200 million in savings in 2009, according to data released by NCH marketing. A total of 332 billion coupons were distributed by advertisers in the U.S. last year.

Read the whole story

Placer County offers low-cost vaccinations to students

By Barbara Barte Osborn, Sacramento Bee

Placer County health officials have scheduled low-cost clinics during August to immunize students against pertussis, more commonly known as whooping cough.

Seventh- through 12th-grade students in both public and private schools are now required to present documentation that they have received the vaccine since their seventh birthday.

“The best way to get the pertussis vaccine, called ‘Tdap,’ is

through your family’s health provider, since they can also provide any other needed vaccines and care,” Dr. Richard Burton, Placer health officer, said in a news release.

The county vaccinations, which will cost $9 each, are being offered to students who would otherwise be unable to obtain the vaccine before school starts, he said, adding that others may also be able to get the vaccine if supplies last.

Read the whole story

AAUW get-together

On Aug. 10, the South Lake Tahoe AAUW will host a summer get-together between 4:30 and 6pm at the Rotary

Gazebo at Bijou Community Park, 1201 Al Tahoe Blvd., South Lake Tahoe.

AAUW is a national organization which supports equity for women and girls through advocacy, education, and research. Potential members are welcome and information about the local branch, including monthly speakers, interest groups and sponsorship of scholarships and camperships will be available.

Refreshments will be served. For more information, contact kmhende@charter.net or (530) 544.5150.