Opinion: S. Tahoe officials stonewalling the truth

By Steve Kubby

Despite the official denials by the city manager and city attorney, criminal wrongdoing by the South Lake Tahoe City Council has already been documented by the grand jury. In its previous investigation into the conduct of the South Lake Tahoe City Council, the El Dorado Grand Jury concluded its report with a stern warning: “This Grand Jury is of the opinion that an accusation for malfeasance or nonfeasance by this City Council may be appropriate … The Grand Jury only touched the ‘tip of the iceberg’ in its investigation and recommends that the citizens of South Lake Tahoe get involved with their City government. It is up to the citizens to establish the kind of governance they desire, to exercise their democratic right to vote, and get a City government that works for the common good and in an efficient manner for its citizens.”



Steve Kubby

The grand jury was also quite clear about Councilman Bruce Grego. Here is what the grand jury had to say about Mr. Grego and the $935.50 that was paid to him: “A member of the City Council requested reimbursement for legal fees paid to an outside law firm. The legal advice consisted of a legal opinion and preparation of a letter to the Fair Political

Practices Commission. No contract had been signed and the City Council had not approved the expenditure in advance."

The grand jury then concluded that the payment to Mr. Grego was a violation of California state law, yet Mr. Grego continues to insist he did nothing wrong and refuses to return the money.

Unfortunately those warnings have gone ignored. In an editorial dated July 28, 2010, the *Tahoe Daily Tribune* said, "The City Council's response to the critical and scathing El Dorado Grand Jury report is embarrassing and disheartening."

The editorial then went on to point out that instead of accepting responsibility, the City Council adopted a response that was peppered with the phrases: "the city does not agree in part with the finding," "the city agrees and does not agree in part," and "the city does not completely agree with the statement," among others. That didn't fly with the *Tribune*, which reminded the City Council and the citizens of South Lake Tahoe, "The first step to solving a problem is admitting to having one."

More recently, Tony O'Rourke, the city manager, seems determined to continue this policy of stonewalling the past crimes and culpability of the South Lake Tahoe City Council. For example, Mr. O'Rourke assured the community in a recent column published in the *Lake Tahoe News* that, "In 2003, the city conducted an audit of the Redevelopment Agency's financial performance to complete the redevelopment projects in the Stateline area. Following this comprehensive audit, the City Council authorized a loan in the amount of $7 million to the Redevelopment Agency for costs and revenue shortages related to the redevelopment project."

If this audit was so "comprehensive," then why is there still no explanation of who raided the general fund for $7 million or who authorized the raid? Furthermore, no one can explain

how the city can create a loan to be repaid by funds already allocated to the general fund. This hardly seems like the “comprehensive audit” claimed by city officials.

Mr. O’Rourke, who until now has impressed me with his dedicated and professional performance, claims in the aforementioned column, “Neither Mayor Hal Cole, nor any city councilmembers, are responsible for the collapse of the (convention) project or the economy.” However, neither Mr. O’Rourke, or any other city official, can ignore the failure of Mayor Hal Cole to require a performance bond, which makes the entire City Council totally responsible for the nearly 12-acre crater of rotting concrete, rusting iron and graffiti they created.

It’s time for Mr. O’Rourke and other city officials to stop the stonewalling, end the coverups and heed the advice: “The first step to solving a problem is admitting to having one.”

Steve Kubby is a resident of South Lake Tahoe.

Child abuse panel seeks additional member

El Dorado County Child Abuse Prevention Council is accepting applications for board membership to fill one vacancy serving at the discretion of the Board of Supervisors.

The vacancy is for community representation-community volunteer-civic organization-religious communities.

The 15-member council is a legislatively mandated body advising the Board of Supervisors on issues related to

prevention intervention and treatment of child abuse and neglect.

Applicants must submit cover sheet and application to Elizabeth Blakemore, El Dorado County Child Abuse Prevention Council, 6767 Green Valley Road, Placerville, CA 95667. Prospective candidates may call (530) 295.2312 or email eblakemore@edcoe.org for an application packet and additional information. The deadline for applications is Aug. 19 at 5pm.

David Walley's – not the first hot springs in Nevada

By Guy Rocha

"David Walley built the place as a health resort, the first in Nevada and one of the first in the West," wrote Basil Woon in the Aug. 30, 1953, edition of Reno's *Nevada State Journal*.

A long-standing belief is that Walley's Hot Springs was Nevada's first geothermal health resort. According to Walley's obituary published in the Carson Valley News on March 13, 1875, the spa opened a couple of miles south of Genoa in 1862. A survey was made on Nov. 20 and filed with the Douglas County Recorder on Dec. 1.

With just a tent for shelter, baths sold for 50 cents each. Walley erected the first bathhouse the following year, and in 1864, Walley's wife, Harriet, arrived from the East to help run Genoa Hot Springs resort.

"From a mere rock pile has risen a magnificent hotel, bath-houses, stabling and ball room," the weekly News proclaimed

after Walley’s unexpected death at age 56.

A massive geothermal belt interspersed with hot springs, runs north and south along the eastern slope of the Carson Range.

The truth is that Abe Curry’s Warm Springs and Steamboat Hot Springs operated as health resorts before David Walley purchased the hot springs in Carson Valley.

Guy Rocha is the former Nevada state archivist.

Read the whole story

Taxable property values decline 3% in Placer County

By Loretta Kalb, Sacramento Bee

Placer County officials have finished calculating the 2011 value of taxable property in the county and found an average 3 percent decline in value compared with 2010.

The loss of $1.6 billion in the county’s assessment roll is a continuation of the downturn that started several years ago, the Placer County Assessor’s Office reported Tuesday.

Assessed values are based largely on computer analyses of how property sales in an area affect property values.

At the real estate market’s height in 2008, the county’s assessment roll reached $58 billion. By Jan. 1, however, it had fallen to $51.5 billion, the Assessor’s Office reported.

Read the whole story

USFS expands offerings at Lake Tahoe recreation sites

By Kathryn Reed

Hunger pangs in the outdoors are never a good thing, but especially when the cooler is empty or one was never packed.

Tahoe Treats, a division of California Land Management, is operating nine concessions throughout the Lake Tahoe Basin for the U.S. Forest Service.

“The limit is when you change the character of the National Forest,” Don Lane, UFSF recreation forester, said as to what will be offered. “We think there is so much demand in the basin for these kinds of little amenities.”



Tahoe Treats trailer at Pope Beach is steps from the sand. Photo/Kathryn Reed

Lane said it’s a careful balance between giving people what they want and not overdeveloping recreation sites, even if the

structures are temporary.

“We want to make sure when people go (to the beaches) with their families that they don’t have an overwhelming sense of commercialism,” Lane said.

Getting into the powerboat or personal watercraft business is not something Lane foresees happening; instead, letting the marinas around the lake handle that aspect of recreation.

Larry Chapman has his Tahoe Treats trailers at Pope Beach and Inspiration Point on the South Shore. He’s working on getting one in at Nevada Beach, but is having to muddle through red taped because the state doesn’t allow food trailers for extended periods of time. The plan is for it to be operating in mid-August.

Pizza is what people are ordering most often, though nachos are a big seller, too, Chapman said.

For people wanting to cool down, an array of drinks is available. So are ice cream bars and shaved ice.

One thing the Inspiration Point cart has that the other doesn’t is chili cheese dogs because it has warmers inside. And with no other food options between Camp Richardson and Tahoma, this cart can often have a line in the parking lot.

Because it took so long for summer to arrive in Lake Tahoe, workers were selling coffee, hot chocolate and tea at the start of the season.

While these are called carts, they are really trailers that hook up to the back of a vehicle.

Besides food offerings that have cropped up in the last couple years and that are expanding, kayak rentals are another convenience on Forest Service beaches.

Chapman is having Steve Lannoy with Kayak Tahoe operate the

water sport concessionaire. Rentals are available at Pope, Baldwin and Nevada beaches.

Lannoy pays Chapman a fee and Chapman pays the Forest Service a percentage of his sales.

Lane said it’s easier to hire a concessionaire to operate facilities because they have the expertise as well as the manpower.

California Land Management has been working in the basin since 1985. The company has been running the Forest Service owned campsite at Fallen Leaf Lake for years. They also run the William Kent Campground in Tahoe City and Meeks Bay on the West Shore for the Forest Service.

El Dorado supes to have one more meeting about redistricting

By Carlos Alcalá, Sacramento Bee

Seemingly moved by complaints from El Dorado Hills and Cameron Park residents, El Dorado County supervisors unanimously decided Tuesday to postpone a decision on a redistricting map under discussion.

However, they also limited further discussion in a way that will thwart the desires of the activists in the western part of the county.

“They may as well have just adopted the map,” said Rachel Michelin, who spoke representing a new organization, the El

Dorado Citizens for Responsible Government, formed in response to the redistricting issue.

El Dorado Hills and Cameron Park residents – with about a third of the county's total population – have lobbied to have redistricting give them two representatives who would be directly beholden to the suburban communities.

The current proposed map, however, has one supervisor representing most of El Dorado Hills, while other parts of El Dorado Hills and Cameron Park are split between districts dominated by rural populations.

Read the whole story

Open mic night at Valhalla Boathouse

Join Tahoe Writers Works on July 26 for Bare Bones Open Mic at 7pm at the Valhalla Boathouse Theatre.

Bring your guitar, poem, or bag of tricks, or just enjoy performances by local and visiting writers, comedians and performing artists at the Tallac Historic Site on the South Shore.

Bare Bones is free and open to the public.

Drinks are available for purchase to benefit the Tahoe Tallac Association.

Mountain bike trail design work in South Lake

Hilride will be back in South Lake Tahoe on July 24 to present their preliminary design drawings for lower Corral Trail.

They have taken the ideas generated during last month's all-day session and put them down on paper.

The day starts at 9am at the U.S. Forest Service office on College Drive to review the plans and view photos and video from the June site visit. Following that, the group will convene at Corral Trail to discuss how the plans will look on the ground and start to flag out features and alignments.

This is an opportunity for mountain bikers to have a say on the design of trails in Tahoe.

Fuel leak contaminates soil at Zephyr Cove Resort

By Kathryn Reed

The exact amount of unleaded gasoline leached into the soil at Zephyr Cove Resort may never be known, but officials say there is no threat to drinking water, Lake Tahoe or human health.

"The leak is in an underground storage tank," explained Vinson Guthreau with the Nevada Division of Environmental Protection. His agency is responsible for overseeing the clean up. "We don't focus on the amount (leaked), we focus on environmental clean up."



But he could not say what was being done in terms up clean up, only that the report expected next week will dictate what his agency will do. This, despite that the fact the leak was reported nearly a month ago.

Aramark let NDEP know about the leak June 27. According the Forest Service, soil samples were obtained July 18, with the results expected next week. The public had not been notified of the situation until today.

No on with NDEP, the U.S. Forest Service (which owns the land) or Aramark (which is the concessionaire running the resort) would quantify how small or large of an area was impacted by the leak because they say the tests will determine that. Guthreau said it was "not extensive" but would not elaborate further.

Drinking water at the resort has been tested and is not contaminated, officials said.

"We visibly observed an intermittent drip while replacing the fuel pumps," David Freireich with Aramark told *Lake Tahoe News*. "The fuel pump transfers fuel from the underground tank to the dispenser. We suspect the source of the release was where two pipes connect to one another. This connection has been repaired."

When asked if he could estimate how much fuel leaked out and for long it had been leaking, Freireich said, "We hope to learn more when we receive the results from the sample analysis."

But the reality is soil samples will not be able tell how much fuel leaked out of the pipes or for how long. Aramark would at least be able to get a good idea of the amount leaked by knowing how much the tanks hold and what has been used – the difference being the amount of leaked fuel.

The fuel in question is what rental boats and the M.S. Dixie II use.

Caltrans responsible for blasts in Meyers area

Reports this afternoon of explosives in Meyers followed by a cadre of sirens was not anything illegal or terrorist driven.

The blasts are from Caltrans. Workers blew up two duds left from winter avalanche control work.

They were detonated at 12:10pm and 12:20pm near the Flagpole area, according to Caltrans spokeswoman Deanna Shoopman.