Court ruling may hit Incline school district's coffers

By Brian Duggan, Reno Gazette-Journal

Washoe County officials are starting to gauge the fallout of a Nevada Supreme Court decision from last week that ordered the county to issue property tax refunds to Incline Village and Crystal Bay property owners and opened a budget hole that could exceed $40 million by early estimates.

The refunds are for the owners of 8,700 parcels in the two north Lake Tahoe communities who overpaid in property taxes in 2006-07. The decision is the result of a nine-year legal battle over improper property assessment methods, such as basing property values on views of Lake Tahoe, that were ultimately deemed unconstitutional.

For now, county officials are still trying to calculate the total cost of the refund and finding the people who are owed money, which could take months. County commissioners are expected to address the matter at their July 26 meeting.

While county officials in 2009 said the refund would amount to $13 million, County Manager Katy Simon said a more accurate, albeit very rough, estimate is closer to $40 million, of which approximately $4 million is about five years of accrued interest for the unpaid refunds .

In an email sent to employees last week, Simon called the high court decision a "game-changer," but had little detail regarding the potential effect on entities such as the Washoe County School District.

Regardless, county commissioners must now figure out how to close the potential $40 million deficit on top of a $33.8 million budget gap the county was already facing, which the

county seeks to fix by $20 million in employee concessions and program cuts.

Read the whole story

Placer GOP committee's finances again under scrutiny

By Torey Van Oot, Sacramento Bee

For the second time in two years, the Placer County Republican Central Committee is facing investigators' questions about its financial practices.

The state Fair Political Practices Commission is examining a complaint that key committee members used donors' money to benefit themselves.

A critic of the committee's actions says she's been questioned by the FBI.

Lawmakers have gotten involved, pressing for more information about the committee's ties to Headquarters Partnership, a financial entity used to pay the committee's rent. They say the financial concerns have clouded the party's local operations for more than a year and created deep divisions within the GOP.

"I know many people on that committee who are good servants to the cause, but there are some there that are not really playing above board," said Republican Sen. Doug LaMalfa of Richvale. "A lot of funny stuff (is) going on with where the money's going or how many hands it's going through before a check actually gets cut."

The Placer County arm of the state Republican Party is an elected board that can raise and spend funds to mobilize voters and elect GOP candidates.

The controversy began with the committee's decision in 2007 to pay rent on Roseville office space through a private entity called Headquarters Partnership.

Its partners were Tom Hudson, then committee chairman, and George Park, then first vice chair of the committee, according to minutes of a March meeting that year.

Read the whole story

South Shore rec measure headed for Nov. ballot

By Kathryn Reed

Righteous, ridiculous, right-on, responsible. Plenty of people have a special way of defining the R in Measure R. The board that on Wednesday voted to put it on the November ballot believes R stands for recreation.

The R is replacing Measure S – which stood for sports when South Shore voters approved it in 2000.



Youths play on the soccer field built with Measure S money. Photo/Kathryn Reed

The problem with Measure S is that the money collected – $18 from single-family residences until 2030 – was never going be enough to build all the things outlined in it. It calls for an ice rink, three ball fields and maintenance of bike trails built after 2000.

The ice rink is in, a soccer field by Lake Tahoe Community College is done and the few miles of bike trails that have been built have money for future maintenance.

The other issue with Measure S is a land's capability assessment was not done. Even if there were money to build fields, the land doesn't exist to do so.

Proponents say Measure S is being tweaked to better address today's needs. That means using money to upgrade established ball fields, and improving bike trails developed pre-2000.

Opponents say the measure is taking the growing pot of money for bike trail maintenance and diverting it to ball fields. Some of these people would like the measure written so all bike trails could use the money – with no money for ball field maintenance per the original language of Measure S.

Fifteen people gave heartfelt, emotional and factual testimony – some twice – during the 2½-hour meeting July 13 of the joint powers authority board at Lake Tahoe Community College.

The board had spent 150 minutes meeting July 1 as well.

Apparently, that's how long it takes for these three to

essentially vote on one item. While most boards don't spend the public's time tirelessly going over typos in a document, this one does.

El Dorado County Supervisor Norma Santiago, South Lake Tahoe City Councilman Hal Cole and Tahoe Paradise Park board member Deborah Henderson make up the JPA board.

The substantive changes made to the resolution that had been in circulation include:

• Eliminating specific dates regarding when the ball field or bike entities get money via R.

• Having the ball field and bike advisory committees that will be appointed by the JPA board, if R passes, be made up of three to seven individuals.

This is the Measure R resolution the board adopted. This is what will appear in ballot documents. Eleven years ago the full resolution of S was not in the ballot document, though it did exist and is known as Resolution 06.

The JPA board will meet July 29 at 9am at Lake Tahoe Airport to work out language for the ballot argument. This is the board's annual meeting as well. Criteria for the advisory commissions will be discussed, too.

Pro and con statements for the ballot must be submitted to the county election's department by Aug. 1. This is why the board has a meeting set for Aug. 10 in case it wants to submit a rebuttal by the Aug. 11 deadline if anyone opposes the measure.

To be on the email list regarding Measure R, send an email to rkupton@aol.com asking to be added.

The board also at one of the next two meetings could decide to not go forward with Measure R. The overriding reason not to go forward would be the cost of the election. While the board has

allocated $35,000 for the election, that amount could go up depending on what other entities are on the ballot. People can start pulling papers July 18 for offices in El Dorado County.

Opinion: Democrats are the real party of ‘no’

By Tom Del Beccaro

New York, New Jersey and California have a lot in common. They’re populous states with Democratic legislative majorities, high taxes and big deficits. The difference, however, is that the New York and New Jersey Democrats have enacted reforms while California Democrats remain the Party of No.

Earlier this year, New Jersey’s bond rating was downgraded by the S&P. New Jersey’s debt level and poorly funded pension system was the reason. According to Moody’s, New Jersey’s combined pension and long-term debt liabilities are more than 222 percent of its yearly revenue. New Jersey also has the nation’s highest tax rates. New York’s combined pension and long-term debt liabilities are more than 101 percent of existing revenue. It had a $10 billion deficit in 2011 and the second highest tax rates in the country. California’s combined pension and long-term debt liabilities are more than 166 percent of its revenue. We face annual budget deficits in excess of $15 billion and the highest tax rates in the West excluding Hawaii. One more thing in common: All three states have been dominated by Democrats for years.

Faced with dire balance sheets, Democrats in New York and New Jersey said yes to reform. New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo

declared, “The old way of solving the problem was continuing to raise taxes on people. And we just can’t do that anymore.” The new way included reductions in state spending, salary freezes, cuts to education, reductions in state workers and, yes, even income and property tax relief with the help of Democrat votes in the New York Legislature.

The story line from New Jersey was similar. New Jersey’s Democrat-led Legislature required public workers to pay more for benefits. According to Democrat Louis Greenwald, a sponsor of the legislation, the bill brought “property tax relief,” made “benefits sustainable for the working families who rely on them and preserve collective bargaining rights for future negotiations. This protects both taxpayers and worker rights.”

Tom Del Beccaro is chairman of the California Republican Party.

Read the whole story

Trails and Vistas wants to train volunteer leaders

Trails and Vistas’ annual nature art hike is Sept. 17-18 at Spooner Lake at the Lake Tahoe Nevada State Park.

Volunteers make Trails and Vistas possible. This year is no exception, as more than 50 volunteers are needed to ensure a successful event.

This month Trails and Vistas will offer a volunteer workshop titled “Finding Your Voice” on July 24 from 9-11:30am for volunteer trail leader development. This workshop will focus

on storytelling skills, teaching how to create small group trust and support, and build confidence for public speaking.

No experience is needed to become a trail leader.

RSVP to Nancy Lopez at nancy@trailsandvistas.org no later than July 20.

Go online to learn more about Trails and Vistas art hike volunteer and sponsorship opportunities.

CSU hikes tuition, boost president's salary

Publisher's note: ***Find out who the 100 highest paid employees in the CSU system are.***

By Laurel Rosenhall, Sacramento Bee

Minutes after voting to raise student tuition by 12 percent for the fall, California State University trustees on Tuesday decided the salary for a new campus president should be $100,000 greater than his predecessor's.

Lt. Gov. Gavin Newsom, a board member who voted against both the tuition increase and the compensation package, told his colleagues that the university would damage its public image by raising salary and tuition on the same day.

"I caution us today with these two decisions and I feel compelled to make this point," Newsom said. "There are plenty of people watching, and people we need as supporters."

The tuition increase adds an additional 12 percent on top of a

10 percent increase approved last year. Combined, the two increases bring undergraduate tuition at CSU's 23 campuses to $5,472 a year.

That's an increase of about 23 percent compared with last year, and does not include campus-based fees that average $950 a year.

Read the whole story

Disaster drill in Truckee

Numerous North Shore agencies will participate in a disaster exercise July 20 starting at 9am that will simulate a significant hazardous materials spill after a semi-tanker strikes a train in the downtown Truckee area.

This will be the first time the full decontamination system will have been tested with a large number of casualties.

The scenario will be staged at the rail yard adjacent to Tahoe Truckee Lumber.

Two new decontamination tents acquired through Hospital Preparedness Program grants will be set up – one at Tahoe Forest Hospital and the other at Incline Village Community Hospital.

Participating local agencies include: Truckee Fire; Truckee Police; the Placer County Eastern HazMat Team; Tahoe Forest Hospital; Incline Village Community Hospital; the Town of Truckee; California Department of Public Health; Nevada County OES; Environmental Health; REMSA; Careflight; Red Cross; Truckee Dial-A-Ride and Truckee Donner Parks and Recreation District.

For more information, call Tami Prior (530) 582.6662.

TAMBA trail building day with USFS

TAMBA trail work day is July 16.

The mountain bike group has a Volunteer Service Agreement with the U.S. Forest Service and this will be our first official trail building day.

Help build armored berms, strengthen the sandy loose areas of trail, and identify where to build additional features on the top portions of Armstrong connector. Depending on the number of volunteers we have showing up, a crew may also be sent up Armstrong trail to fix what winter destroyed.

Show up at the main bottom parking lot of Corral (just past Saxon Creek bridge) at 9am and then be shuttled to the top to start the trail work.

This trail day is the first of our monthly build days under the VSA with the Forest Service. Even a few hours of volunteer time will go a long way.

Email questions to info@mountainbiketahoe.org. RSVP to the event on TAMBA's Facebook page.

Remember to bring long sleeves, pants, sturdy shoes, gloves and drinking water.

Sprouts is donating 25 lunches to the trail work. Make sure to RSVP early to get a lunch.

Food-world population lecture

Jon Foley, director of the Institute on the Environment at the University of Minnesota, will present “Solutions for a Cultivated Planet: Learning to Feed 9 Billion People While Sustaining the Global Environment” on July 28 from 6:30-8pm at the North Tahoe Event Center in Kings Beach.

The world population is growing by 75 million people each year. That’s almost the size of Germany. Today it’s close to 7 billion people.

The lecture costs $10.

For more information, email info@squawvalleyinstitute.org or call (530) 581.4138.

Disc golf tournament

The Professional Disc Golf Association and the Tahoe Disc Golf Association are hosting the 2011 King of the Lake event July 15-17 at Tahoe Vista Regional Park, Zephyr Cove Park, Turtle Rock Park and Bijou Community Park.

The tournament is sanctioned by the Professional Disc Golf Association as one of nine premier events in the 2011 PDGA National Tour Elite Series, presented by Vibram Golf Discs.

The tournament format will have competitors playing four rounds, with a final round of nine holes on Sunday. The Pro lead group will begin final round play on July 17 between

1-2pm at Bijou Community Park in South Lake Tahoe. Admission is free and the first 100 spectators will receive a golf disc courtesy of Vibram.

For additional information, contact tournament director Russ Wey at (530) 542.3432.