State budget may impact building courthouse in Tahoe City

By Bridget Jones, Auburn Journal

Plans for a new courthouse in Tahoe City by 2015 are “up in the air” after a state budget approved by the California Legislature Tuesday.

The new building is scheduled to be funded by Senate Bill 1407, which passed in 2008 and authorized the statewide increase in court use fees. The bill approved the issuance of up to $5 billion in lease revenue bonds for 41 courthouse projects throughout the state, including this one. The bonds are expected to be repaid by court fees, penalties and assessments, according to the California Administrative Office of the Courts, which is managing the project.

Teresa Ruano, spokeswoman for the Administrative Office of the Courts, said Wednesday the project’s original timeline to pick a site in the next month or so could be delayed until it is understood just how much SB 1407 funding will be impacted by the budget.

“This may delay projects,” Ruano said. “We don’t know how much delay will be involved.”

Ruano said the Judicial Council of California, which is the policymaking body for the California court system, will meet about the state judicial branch’s budget in mid-July, and after that the AOC might have a better idea of how the courthouse construction will move forward.

There is no plan at this point to completely cancel the project, Ruano said.

Read the whole story

Placerville mechanic enjoys dream job – NASCAR mechanic

By Debbie Arrington, Sacramento Bee

SONOMA – The travel is crazy, the pressure intense. Work consumes almost every weekend. But Rick Bray of Placerville has his dream job: NASCAR mechanic on a top Sprint Cup team.

Bray, 45, has been part of Denny Hamlin's crew on the No. 11 FedEx Freight Toyota since 2006. It's been a good run; Hamlin won eight races in 2010 and finished second overall for the championship.

Currently ninth in the points standings, the team rolled into Infineon Raceway for Sunday's Toyota/Save Mart 350 off a win at Michigan – its first of the season. They celebrated with some R&R in the Sierra.

"A bunch of us went up to Rubicon for three days; camped, fished, hiked," Bray said. "We got our heads clear."

Read the whole story

Rec board delays decision to

ask voters to revise Measure S

By Kathryn Reed

At the end of a 2½-hour meeting Thursday, the main thing decided by the recreation board overseeing Measure S was to have another meeting.

With it being nearly the eleventh-hour in terms of figuring out whether to put an initiative on the Nov. 8 ballot, the three-member panel has set July 13 as decision day.



The recreation JPA board of Norma Santiago, Hal Cole and Deborah Henderson listen June 30 to comments. Photo/Kathryn Reed

El Dorado County Supervisor Norma Santiago, South Lake Tahoe City Councilman Hal Cole and Tahoe Paradise Park board member Deborah Henderson are being asked whether a ballot measure is the correct course of action, what the wording of the measure would be, and what the ballot language would be.

Aug. 1 is the deadline to come up with the ballot language. That's the same deadline for people who would want to submit a rebuttal to what is being dubbed Measure R.

The board could also wait until 2012 when there are three elections – February, June and November – to ask voters to revise the initiative.

The JPA board on June 30 decided to allocate $35,000 for the November 2011 election if the board goes in that direction. This is the taxpayers' money via Measure S. Nearly $17,000 was spent on the failed Measure B rewrite two years ago.

The actual cost of the election is not known until all special districts having elections are accounted for.

At issue is whether the 2000 voter approved Measure S bond measure should be rewritten as Measure R so the $18 a year collected from homeowners could be spent in different ways than originally intended.

Nineteen people spoke (some twice) at the June 30 meeting of the joint powers recreation authority. About 40 people attended the meeting at the county library in South Lake Tahoe.

The ball field proponents brought in enough youth baseball players to field a team, though none of them spoke. Cycling advocates were the first to point out it would be a good idea for adequate trails to be in the ground so those players could get to their games.

While it is Little League advocates like John Cefalu, Carl Buchholz and Steve Noll who spoke in support of Measure R, no one was at the meeting talking about softball fields.

While baseball and softball may seem like the same sport in many ways, the dimensions of the fields are not. It is softball fields that are in most demand on the South Shore –

on both sides of the state line, though Measure S/R only encompasses the boundaries of Lake Tahoe Unified School District. Mostly it is adult leagues using the softball fields.

The softball fields are in worse shape than the Little League diamonds.

The language of R in its latest form does not specify baseball over softball, but the backroom maneuvering and plans are for the Little League fields to get the money.

All of the fields are on LTUSD property except for the one built with Measure S money at Lake Tahoe Community College. No one from the district is on the JPA, nor does anyone from LTUSD ever speak at these meetings. All facilities built on school district property are supposed to meet state education construction standards.

The other discussion not being had in the open is talking about a comprehensive recreation plan for the city, county or entire South Shore. Without that big picture approach, it's hard to analyze where best taxpayer money should go.

The Tahoe Regional Planning Agency has a master bike-pedestrian plan, but no entity has a plan for other sports (except at individual ski resorts) or a vision for recreation in Tahoe.

The room Thursday was split fairly evenly between those who support how Measure R is written and those who don't.

As proposed, Measure R would give a maximum of $500,000 to ball fields for various improvements starting in 2013 and continuing until the full amount has been received. That date is estimated to be August 2016.

The language used regarding ball fields says, "… 50% of JPA funding available in July 2012 will be directed to this

project.”

When the board was asked whether bikes or ball fields would get funding first, the board said that had not been decided. But clearly that is a lie because the language gives a time line.

In regards to bike paths, it says 50 percent of JPA funds available in July 2012 will go toward maintenance of trails built prior to the passage of Measure S. Then, after the ball fields receive their full half million dollars, “the JPA is authorized to direct up to 100 percent of available JPA funding to pre-September 19, 2000 separated bicycle trails rehabilitation.” It goes on to say, “To the extent funding is available, El Dorado County will have the flexibility to use funds received from this source to maintain and/or rehabilitate both pre and post September 19, 2000 Class 1 and Class 2 bicycle trails.”

Paying attention to the words is more important than the intent because that is how lawyers will argue it if people don’t get what they thought they were getting. Words like “will” are definitive actions.

The July 13 meeting will be at 1pm in the Creekside Room (by the cafeteria) at Lake Tahoe Community College in South Lake Tahoe. Meetings are also planned for July 29 and Aug. 10, with times and locations to be determined.

California food handlers must

have appropriate paperwork

A food handler card will be required for all non-exempt food handlers starting July 1. A food handler is an individual involved in the preparation, storage or service of food in a food facility.

There are some exemptions: temporary food facilities, certified farmers' markets, commissaries, grocery and convenience stores, licensed health care facilities, schools, and a few others.

It is the responsibility of each employee to get the card. It is not the responsibility of the restaurant owner to obtain the card for employees. The restaurant owners are required to track and ensure all their employees have the card. The cards are valid for three years and will be required throughout the state within 30 days of hiring.

All food handlers will be required to obtain a food handler card after taking a food safety training course and passing an exam. This can be completed online. The cost of the online course is not more than $15. The exams can be done in English or Spanish.

More information regarding the California Food Handler Law is available online. The link is on the right side of the page under "hot topics."

NOAA report shows warmer

weather in U.S.

By Ashlie Rodriguez, Los Angeles Times

The new normal is warmer.

“The climate of the 2000s is about 1.5 degree Fahrenheit warmer than the 1970s, so we would expect the updated 30-year normals to be warmer,” said Thomas R. Karl, director of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration’s National Climatic Data Center.

That recent temperature trend was enough to drag the three-decade moving average, from 1981 to 2010, up by half a degree Fahrenheit from the 1971 to 2000 period, according to the report by NOAA.

The 30-year baseline is used by scientists to understand climate conditions and trends, including climate change. Besides providing a perspective for daily weather records, the data are widely used by utilities to project energy use, by farmers to make decisions on crop selection and planting times, and by others whose livelihoods are dependent on weather.

Read the whole story

Chamber mixer

North Lake Tahoe Chamber of Commerce Business Mixer at the Incline Village Center is July 7 from 5-7pm, 760 Mays Blvd.

The theme of the mixer is “Celebrate Old Town America” and is coordinated and hosted by the Dead Sea Warehouse and the Mark

Twain Cultural Center. Attendees will mix and mingle and enjoy free hot dogs, apple pie and ice cream and American beer, plus old-fashioned hand poured soap making. No RSVP is required.

For more information about the mixer, call Kym Fabel at (530) 581.8764 or email kym@puretahoenorth.com.

Snippets about Lake Tahoe



• South Tahoe High Principal Ivone Larson is up for the California Governor's Council on Fitness and Sports Principal of the Year Spotlight Award. Voting is online.

• Washoe County sheriff's Lt. Heidi Howe has received the national designation of Certified Jail Manager through the Jail Manager Certification Commission. Howe is one of 357 jail professionals nationwide to have achieved this designation and the first in Northern Nevada.

• Tahoe Valley Elementary is one of 12 finalists in the Gold Country Region and 116 schools statewide in the 2011 Governor's Challenge Competition. Winners will be announced in September.

• Yahoo lists South Lake Tahoe as the No. 8 destination for Fourth of July – saying it's all about the fireworks.

• Traci Des Jardins is executive chef at Manzanita at the Ritz Carlton at Northstar. Read about what a day in her life is like.

Brown signs budget day before fiscal year begins

By Kevin Yamamura, Sacramento Bee

After a veto fight with his own party and unresolved differences with Republicans, Gov. Jerry Brown signed an on-time $85.9 billion spending plan Thursday that slashes higher education and the safety net while relying on a windfall of tax revenues.

Besides a February 2009 budget that was $24 billion out of whack that same May, the plan Brown signed Thursday was the state's earliest since 2006. Democratic lawmakers relied on new voter-approved powers that enabled them to pass a budget with majority support rather than two-thirds.

Since talks with Republicans died over the weekend, GOP leaders have declared victory by blocking tax extensions and allowing taxes on vehicles and sales to fall Friday as 2009 rates expire. They celebrated Thursday by holding a press conference at Downtown Ford.

Democrats were measured in their response, bemoaning the program cuts but saying it was the best package they could construct without Republican support. Brown chose not to have a public signing ceremony Thursday, signing the budget bills behind closed doors.

Brown and Democratic leaders have vowed to pursue a 2012 ballot initiative asking voters to reinstate those tax hikes. One of the budget bills, Assembly Bill 114, lays the groundwork for such a measure, setting terms for a retroactive $2 billion school repayment should voters reject taxes or the

ballot proposal never materialize.

Read the whole story

Bear claws tent at Camp Rich, leaves camper with scratches

By Bill Lindelof, Sacramento Bee

State fish and game officials warned the public to take precautions to avoid encounters with bears in the Lake Tahoe Basin.

The warning comes in the wake of a black bear tearing at a tent at Camp Richardson over the weekend.

The camper suffered shallow scratches on his back in the late-night attack on Sunday. The camper said that he had no food in the tent, leaving it unclear why the bear was so intent on getting inside.

The bear had been seen around Camp Richardson prior to the incident. After the camper suffered his injury, state department of fish and game officials said the bear had to be killed because it was a threat to public safety.

Officials warn that bears are constantly searching for food. Access to food or garbage at a campground or in residential neighborhood Dumpsters attract bears.

Bears that get used to scavenging garbage or camp food grow bold and lose their fear of humans.

Read the whole story

Officers to be out in force for long weekend

July 4th celebrations often include cook-outs, picnics, boating, time spent with family and friends and, of course, fireworks. But for too many Americans, the nation’s annual celebration is filled with tragedy, as it is one of the deadliest holidays of the year when it comes to alcohol-impaired traffic fatalities.

The Avoid the 6 El Dorado County DUI Task Force will be out in full force during the 4th of July holiday weekend cracking down on impaired drivers with an aggressive DUI enforcement blitz to include a sobriety-driver’s license checkpoint and DUI saturation patrols.

Extra DUI roving patrols will be conducted July 1-4 in South Lake Tahoe. CHP will assign all available officers to the region’s freeways, state highways and unincorporated roads beginning 6pm Friday through midnight Monday.

Statistics gathered from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration over the past 25 years show that, on average, nearly half of all deadly traffic crashes over each year’s July 4th holiday involved some level of alcohol.