Outdoor concerts at Squaw

The Village at Squaw Valley’s inaugural KT Concert Series begins in July.

The KT Concert Series features Stung, a tribute to The Police; Hollywood Stones, a tribute to The Rolling Stones; and Zoo Station, a tribute to U2.

The KT Sundeck is nestled at the mountain’s base just feet from the chairlifts.

The schedule:

July 1: Stung – A Tribute to The Police, 6-8:30pm

Aug. 5: Hollywood Stones – A Tribute to The Rolling Stones, 6-8:30pm

Sept. 2: Zoo Station – A Tribute to U2, 6-8:30pm.

The outdoor concerts are free.

Opinion: City-TRPA rules hurt prosperity, art community

By Robert J. Schimmel

City policies and regulations are often beyond my logic. We need government, of course, especially the kind that enables quick decisions and the ability to take on unique and timely projects that embellish South Lake Tahoe’s atmosphere. Common sense and productivity are wellsprings of a healthy economy and engendering new life to this endangered community.

And it is the arts that transcend seasons and economic levels, and attract people to Tahoe consistently year-round.

So why should it be seemingly impossible to simply paint and beautify an eyesore or create an atmosphere of excitement and innovation that attracts people? Current cases are the convention center fence-mural and Matthew Welter of Timeless Sculptures – chain saw and finished wood carver, mentor, full-time artist and promoter of Tahoe. I've been involved with both and don't understand why the city didn't resolve the fence painting and now can't find a way to help install Welter's performance art venue that will benefit South Lake Tahoe's artistic, arts-friendly image and, therefore, its economic base.

Mr. (Tony) O'Rourke appears to be a city manager who wants to pump life into South Lake Tahoe and must know that a real opportunity exists here for new excitement and noise that will energize others. The late Dennis Oliver demonstrated wisdom and determination when he pushed relentlessly on the TRPA and others to allow Welter's "Hand of Order" (30-foot-tall, abstract, cedar sculpture of Liberty) to reign over the meadow and precedent-setting sculpture garden at Ski Run Marina beginning last summer. That 4th of July celebration began the "Liberty (R)evolution Convergence" event signaling a hopeful new direction this city needs to set itself apart, thereby attracting more people and an affluent clientele to our area.

Welter now seeks to carve a huge, futuristic Minuteman with old-fashioned musket at the intersection of Highway 50 and Ski Run Boulevard on city-owned property. The proposal has great support from surrounding businesses since the summer-long "performance" will attract people to it and the shops, restaurants and galleries in the area.

Currently, regulations that encumber many are grinding the approval process to a halt with a classification of "small scale manufacturing" for Welter due to his set-up request of

longer than 14 days for his interactive, entertaining, and educational art form. Art production and display for the purposes set forth deserve their own classification or to be considered individually. No doubt there is valid reasoning for the 14-day limit (four times a year), but why not set up regulations that allow permission on a case-by-case basis, make them flexible, not limit the number of times per year, and allow the 14-day periods to be linked?

Yes, change takes time, but the will of the people can speak succinctly to our leaders. So any and all reading this who believe as I do, please call or email immediately your input to the city planning office at (530) 542.6020 or torourke@cityofslt.us. This is urgent regarding the project proposed by Welter that needs to be initiated by this July 4th Independence Day weekend.

Robert J. Schimmel is a professional artist, art teacher and consultant.

S. Tahoe wants to divide lobbying work between 2 firms

By Kathryn Reed

As important as Lake Tahoe is, when it comes to power in the Legislature, South Lake Tahoe is rather inconsequential.

Hiring two lobbyists is what the South Lake Tahoe City Council believes will bring the city more clout, money and a seat at the table with people in Sacramento.

Three lobbying firms on Tuesday were interviewed in public by the council. The Houston Group, which has been the city's firm of choice for the past several years, is essentially being fired.

California Strategies and Suter, Wallauch, Corbett & Associates are the two firms left standing. With each having different strengths and weaknesses, it was the council's belief the combo would do better than flying solo with one.

Staff is going to talk to both firms to see if they would reduce their monthly rates based on the scope of work being scaled back. The council also wants to know specifics about work they would do instead of the more broad, generalities that were presented Tuesday.

South Tahoe High grad Tony Brunello gave the bulk of California Strategies' presentation, while Lynn Suter touted her firm's abilities.

Brunello spoke of his company's breadth, including the seven offices encompassing 26 partners. Their proposed rate is $8,500 a month. The city is going to ask for it to be reduced to $6,000.

Suter is the Senate's appointee to the California Tahoe Conservancy board. She said to avoid a conflict she would not vote on CTC grants involving the city. Considering South Tahoe is a major component of the CTC, a lot of recusing could be in Suter's future.

Her firm's client list is predominately other cities in

California. South Tahoe Public Utility District is also a client and Suter came highly recommended from the district.

Suter came in with a monthly rate of $4,500. The city is going to ask that be reduced to $2,000.

South Tahoe wants to have a voice in Sacramento to better procure funding for roads, be on the inside when legislation is being talked about that would affect the area, and to have easy access to lawmakers who are making decisions that affect the basin.

Getting South Tahoe's designation of being a rural community changed to metropolitan is another objective the city wants a lobbyist to work on. This would put the city in a better position to obtain more transportation dollars. Based on the number of tourists accessing the roads – especially with a highway going through the center of town – the wear and tear is not that of a town with a steady population of 25,000 people.

The council is expected to revisit the lobbyist issue at the July 12 meeting.

In other action:

• The council allocated $65,000 from the asset forfeiture fund to upgrade the dispatch radio system for the police department.

• The Sustainability Commission's request to have all city sponsored events use South Tahoe Refuse's special event recycling program, with the goal to have zero waste events, was granted.

• All agreed with Councilman Bruce Grego that communication with Nevada lawmakers needs to continue to ensure what they deem as progress regarding the revamping of TRPA through SB271 does not lose steam.

• An ad hoc committee of Councilwomen Claire Fortier and Angela Swanson was created to deal with California legislative issues. A working plan and name for the committee is expected at the July 12 meeting.

• The June 30 meeting with Douglas County will be rescheduled – possibly in September.

S. Tahoe council too tired to work; sign discussion delayed

By Kathryn Reed

It's 3:30 in the afternoon and the South Lake Tahoe City Council is too tired to finish what's on the agenda. It's the second meeting in a row the five have said they just don't have the stamina to keep going.

They've pulled the stamina card more than these two times. The five only meet twice a month – usually – to do the city's business the people have elected them to do, but they don't always work a full eight-hour day. They seldom take less than an hour for lunch.



This sign is out of compliance

with South Lake Tahoe's ordinance. Photo/LTN

In July, they only have one meeting scheduled.

Yes, they still had closed session to deal with Tuesday after canceling the workshop on signs. But the only item to be discussed was City Attorney Patrick Enright's review. This was the second meeting in a row for that topic. And earlier on June 21 he got his 5 percent raise without any discussion. It was on the consent agenda – which is where non-controversial items tend to wind up because they don't need vetting.

Figuring out what to do about signs has been an issue most of the council members have wanted to tackle. But they keep deferring the issue.

Now the topic is slated for a special meeting on June 28 at 7pm at Lake Tahoe Airport. This means staff has to work late. Of course they already have been paid to sit through two meetings to not say a word about signs.

(The meeting will start at 6pm in closed session to discuss the complaint, which the city was served Tuesday afternoon, by the League to Save Lake Tahoe over the city's General Plan.)

The issue with signs is that most in the city limits don't comply with the ordinance. The previous council told the police department not to enforce the rules because it would mean another financial burden to businesses. Signs are not cheap.

Enforcement of temporary signs, like sandwich boards and banners, was never supposed to be lax.

Hilary Hodges, director of Development Services, is looking for direction from these five to see if as improvements are

made to Highway 50 they want to enforce the sign ordinance.

As sidewalks and bike paths are put in at different places, it will mean some signs will have to be moved. The setback is supposed to be a minimum of 5 feet.

The questions are: Move the old sign out of the way? Or, put in a new sign out of the way that complies with the ordinance?

Next week’s meeting will be a discussion, with no action taken.

Any business putting up a sign is supposed to have it go through a review process by the city’s planning staff. The application fee for a sign permit is $130.

When a damaged sign, like at Lily’s Tires, is replaced with what was there – that’s fine to do without a permit. (That particular sign is not in compliance, but is grandfathered in for the time being.) When a sign is replaced with something new, like what Barton did for its offices on Highway 50, they were supposed to have received a permit – and didn’t, according to Hodges.

What are described as lollipop signs are non-conforming. The same goes for signs that list a ton of businesses like Kings Trading Post.

Group signs that follow the rules are at Ski Run Center and at the center anchored by Ross.

The Tahoe Regional Planning Agency in its Regional Plan also talks about signs. The city and five counties in the basin are allowed to have stricter regulations.

Kingsbury Grade controlled burn to be reignited

U.S. Forest Service fuels management crews will resume prescribed fire operations today on Kingsbury Grade near South Benjamin. Operations will be conducted on small units and are expected to continue through the end of the week.

All prescribed fire operations are dependent on weather and available staffing.

Residents and visitors can expect to see smoke from this prescribed fire project area. Smoke management is part of every prescribed fire burn plan, and efforts will be taken to reduce actual or potential smoke impacts on community areas.

How is the League to Save Lake Tahoe helping the basin or hampering progress?

4-wheelers tear up USFS land in Tahoe City, South Lake

By Kathryn Reed

Ruts from illegal 4-wheel drive activity are marring U.S. Forest Service land throughout the Lake Tahoe Basin. In Tahoe City, what was a meadow with strands of green grass covering it now looks like a crime scene. And it is.

A price tag has not been put on the damage. The most serious incident this month occurred in Tahoe City, with the other in South Lake Tahoe.



A Tahoe City meadow has been ruined by illegal 4-wheel activity. Photos/USFS

Law enforcement is looking for the suspects in the North Shore case, while the three male 17-year-olds from Stateline who were caught on the South Shore were given a lecture. If they are caught doing it again, such leniency is not likely to be granted.

None of the violators was in a place that allows 4 wheeling even when it’s dry.

“Cross country is not allowed at all. They were in places that vehicles are never allowed,” USFS spokeswoman Cheva Heck said of the violators.

The meadow in Tahoe City has ruts at least 6 inches deep and several inches wide from some big tires. Tire marks show the

violators were spinning doughnuts.

With the designated off-road trails super wet this year, some won't open for a while. The Forest Service's website lists projected opening dates for the trails. But with the National Weather Service issuing a flood advisory through 9pm June 24 for creeks, streams and rivers near South Lake Tahoe, Tahoe City, Squaw Valley and Alpine Meadows, the dirt roads in the basin are going to be wet for quite a while.



Tire ruts will become hard and "permanent" as the water recedes.

"We are concerned for people's safety and protection of resources of soil and plant habitat," Heck told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Massive ruts, especially like the ones left in Tahoe City, stay that way until crews restore the land. This degradation leads to erosion problems.

The culprits on the North Shore accessed the area from road No. 73 off Fairway Avenue. Witnesses told authorities they saw a newer, blue pickup out there.

Penalties could be a maximum of six months in jail and/or a $5,000 fine. If caught and found guilty, the suspects would likely have to pay the Forest Service to restore the meadow to

the pre-damage condition. This is never an inexpensive task. If they aren't found, it's taxpayer dollars that will restore the meadow.

On top of the damage to the meadow, the suspects left a smoldering campfire behind. The fire was reported June 13 and was most likely started the weekend of June 11-12, Heck said.

Anyone with information is asked to call (775) 831.0911. Anonymity will be granted and a reward may be offered.

The Forest Service was alerted to the South Lake Tahoe incident when someone reported the 4-wheeling to police, who then called the USFS.



Damage just outside Van Sickle Bi-State Park in South Lake Tahoe.

This area behind the now demolished Colony Inn Hotel is loosely called Chonokis Meadow. It requires crossing California Tahoe Conservancy land to get to the USFS owned meadow. CTC doesn't allow motorized vehicles on its land – and the Forest Service doesn't allow driving through meadows.

"(There was) no gate or signage there that says 'road closed' or anything of that sort. Since the damage, the USFS has put in Carsonite posts indicating that vehicles are prohibited," Heck said.

The boys who were caught in the act had a Jeep and 4-wheel truck.

“They were very cooperative when officers spoke with them. Their impression was (the boys) didn’t realize what they were doing. They were really compliant and concerned,” Heck said.

The soil there was spongy and the damage is nowhere near as horrendous as how the culprits violated the meadow on the North Shore.

Thursday night track meets beginning

Thursday Night All-Comer’s Track & Field Meet runs June 23-July 28, 5-8:30pm.

It is for ages 2-90. The cost is $5 – free for ages under 9.

Races are at South Tahoe Middle School.

For more information, go online.

Flood threat remains in Tahoe; trails covered in

water

By Kathryn Reed

It’s hard to know if more should be read into the National Weather Service in Nevada declaring this Hazardous Weather Awareness Week.

The reality is creeks, rivers and streams in and around the Lake Tahoe Basin are rising. Even Lake Tahoe is rising.

The threat is so real the Weather Service in Reno has issued a small stream flood advisory until 9pm June 24 from Alpine County, along the West Shore, to Squaw Valley. Most of the problems will be west of Highway 89 in the basin, according to weather officials.



The bike trail near Gardner Mountain and above the Camp Richardson stables on June 19. Photo/Kathryn Reed

Campgrounds, hiking-biking trails, and back roads are subject to flooding.

“Peak flow in area streams will occur each evening into the

overnight hours from tonight through early Friday evening," the Weather Service said. "Slightly cooler temperatures by this weekend will mitigate the flood potential."

The threat to recreationists is so real the U.S. Forest Service on Tuesday issued a warning, too.

"Water that you may have crossed easily at one point in the day may not be crossable when you're ready to return," Lisa Heron, spokeswoman for the USFS, said.

Besides water flowing in places it usually doesn't flow – like covering the bike trail by several inches behind Meeks Lumber in South Lake Tahoe – snow is found on trails not far from trailheads.

The Forest Service advises people to take cross country skis or snowshoes into the backcountry.

Big band dance in South Tahoe

South Lake Tahoe Senior Center is featuring the 17-piece Tahoe Dance Band on June 24 from 7:30–10pm.

All ages are encouraged to attend.

Appetizers, wine and dessert are available, with admission $10.

Call Francine Garcia at (530) 541.8380 for more information.