Survey: Voters open to LTCC bond measure

By Kathryn Reed

Voters would approve a $55 million bond for Lake Tahoe Community College, according to a phone survey.

Shakari Byerly, vice president of Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin, Metz & Associates, on Tuesday went over the survey results with the board of trustees. The survey was taken by 350 randomly selected voters between March 20 and March 30. Landlines and cell phones were called.

The college is looking at asking voters in November to approve a facilities bond. This would be the first bond the college has issued in its 40-year existence. The board is likely to vote on bond language at the end of May.

“The primary objective was to assess the community’s attitude toward the bond issue,” Byerly told the board April 8. “Many of the voters have a direct connection to the college. Eight in 10 households have taken a course.”

Sixty-eight percent of respondents say LTCC has a great or some need for additional funding.

Asked if they would vote for a $55 million bond – 36 percent said definitely yes, 23 percent said probably yes, and 5 percent said they lean that way. On the flip side, the total no votes were at 28 percent. Eight percent are not sure.

“We asked about lower bond level amounts and we didn’t see much change,” Byerly said.

The college has a slew of projects it would like to come to fruition.

Ideas include:

• The three capital outlay projects have been submitted to the state. The first priority is a remodel for efficiency that would include an overhaul of the science labs, student services and technology. This will include a university center. This is needed as the college looks at offering four-year baccalaureate degrees. The next project is for a regional public safety training facility. This could include having a city fire station on campus. The third idea is either an adaptive physical education or a sustainability center to go with environmental studies.

• Safety improvements would be made throughout the campus.

• Technology upgrades.

• Improving the trails people use so they are clearly marked and in good condition.

• Dorms.

Woman fatally hit by train in Truckee

A Union Pacific cargo strain struck and killed a woman in Truckee on Wednesday.

The victim’s name has not been released pending notification of family.

Truckee police officers said the April 9 accident occurred underneath and east of the Highway 267 overpass.

Witnesses are asked to call the Truckee Police Department at 530.550.2320.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Sandoval slams BLM for 'First Amendment Area'

By Laura Myers, Las Vegas Review-Journal

Gov. Brian Sandoval on Tuesday accused the Bureau of Land Management of violating Nevadans' constitutional rights to protest a BLM roundup of cattle on federal land and slammed the agency for creating an "atmosphere of intimidation."

Sandoval called on the BLM to dismantle a so-called "First Amendment Area" the agency designated to allow demonstrators to protest the gathering of rancher Cliven Bundy's 500 head of cattle. The federal government is rounding up the cattle around Bunkerville because Bundy has refused for 20 years to pay grazing fees.

"Due to the roundup by the BLM, my office has received numerous complaints of BLM conduct, road closures and other disturbances," Sandoval said in a statement. "I have recently met with state legislators, county officials and concerned citizens to listen to their concerns."

"I have expressed those concerns directly to the BLM," he added. "Most disturbing to me is the BLM's establishment of a 'First Amendment Area' that tramples upon Nevadans' fundamental rights under the U.S. Constitution."

Read the whole story

U.S. gas exports not a quick fix

By Clifford Krauss, News York Times

HOUSTON — As congressional pressure builds on the Obama administration to quicken gas exports to Europe to reduce its dependence on Russia, it may be tempting to gaze upon a marshy, alligator-infested Louisiana inlet of the Gulf of Mexico.

There 3,000 workers are installing a huge set of turbines, pipelines and refrigeration units, building a terminal that will send American natural gas around the world by the end of next year. By 2017, the facility built by Houston-based Cheniere Energy could handle roughly a sixth the amount of gas that flows from Russia to Europe every day.

The Cheniere plant will be part of a new surge of liquefied natural gas supplies coming from not only the United States but also Australia, Africa and the Middle East. That surge, perhaps along with increased production in Europe itself, promises to keep the Continent flush with non-Russian natural gas at the end of the decade.

But for the short term, the United States can offer little hope for Europeans eager to diversify their gas sources as Russia occupies Crimea and may threaten other parts of eastern Ukraine.

Read the whole story

North Shore getting into Easter spirit

North Lake Tahoe is offering Easter fun from the slopes to the shores.

The Underwater Egg Hunt at Incline Village Recreation Center kicks off Easter celebrations on April 12 from noon-1:30pm. The pool at the recreation center will be filled with weighted and floating eggs. The big bunny will make an appearance for pictures. Cost is $2 for members, $4 for others. For more information, call 775.832.1310.

Tahoe City's Spring Eggstravaganza & Egg hunt is April 19 starting at 10am. Events include an egg hunt for the kids, a golden egg hunt for parents, face painting, games and more. The free event is at Commons Beach in Tahoe City.

The community Egg Hunt at Incline Beach is April 19 at 11am. The hunt is open to children up to 11.

On Easter Sunday, the Hyatt Regency will have two egg hunts – 11:30am and 1:30pm by the Lone Eagle Grille fire pit.

Gar Woods in Carnelian Bay will have a hunt for a golden egg at 11am with four age categories: 0-3 years, 4-7 years and 8-12 years. Gar Woods will offer a bottle hunt for those 21 and older.

Northstar will celebrate with daylong festivities for all ages, starting with an egg hunt across the village at 10:30am.

Squaw Valley's annual on-mountain Easter egg hunt begins the moment the lifts open Easter Sunday.

9-year-old credited with saving dad in snowmobile accident

By John Fowler, KTVU-TV

The quick-thinking of a 9-year-old Marin County boy may have helped save his father’s life after a recent snowmobile accident.

Bode Bierdneau is in the fourth grade and had an extra pep in his step Tuesday.

“Because I saved my Dad, a lot of people were like ‘Wow! You saved your dad’,” Bierdneau told KTVU.

His dad, JT Bierdneau was severely injured two days ago after riding his snowmobile near Blue Lakes off Highway 88. The sled hit a tree and then the snowmobile trapped his leg.

Read the whole story

Tahoe climber survives harrowing fall in New Zealand

By John Lewis, Otago Daily Times

The moment Matt Stewart clicked his safety harness on to the line, he realized his mistake.

The 33-year-old Lake Tahoe resident had on Jan. 5 climbed to the top of a 20m-high crag (about the height of a five-story building) at Hospital Flat, near Wanaka in New Zealand and was preparing to abseil down.

He hooked on to the wrong line, and fell to the ground. By all accounts, he should have died. He still marvels at his extraordinary survival.

He broke his back and both legs in the fall, and there had been a time when he thought he would be confined to a wheelchair for the rest of his life.

Read the whole story

Virginia City to get hot with chili contest

Virginia City's 31st annual Chili on the Comstock returns to the historic town on May 10-11.

The two-day event has about 30 chili cookers who are competing for a spot in the International Chili Society World Finals later this year. Competitors start from scratch on Saturday morning and a winner is picked each day.

A people's choice award is up to the tasters with winners receiving cash and "Virginia City-style" prizes.

Tasting kits are on sale now. New this year is the "VIP Tester," where for $50 guests receive catered chili including all the toppings, drinks and shaded seats in an exclusive area. Regular tasting packages start at $5 for the "Cautious Tester."

The event is from 10am-5pm along C Street.

For more information, call 775.847.7500.

El Dorado County supervisor candidates' forum

El Dorado County's branch of the League of Women Voters is putting on a forum for District 5 county supervisor candidates on April 21.

Six people are vying for the seat that represents Lake Tahoe and goes to Pollock Pines. Current supervisor, Norma Santiago, is being termed out.

The event will be from 6-9pm at the Pollock Pines Camino Community Center. The group is seeking questions. Email them to info@lwveldorado.org.

Barton Ranch on path to be destroyed



The multiple buildings that once were the Barton Ranch are slated to be demolished. Photo/LTN

By Linda Fine Conaboy

Sometime soon, if family members have their way, the iconic cluster of buildings at the South Lake Tahoe Y known as the Barton Ranch will become nothing more than a heap of historic rubble. Slated for demolition are the barn, ranch house, guesthouses, cabin, cottage and shed.

Even though the property is on the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency's list of historic sites, family members maintain that they are subjected to risk and liability from trespassers, graffiti, abandoned cars, mold, mildew and lead-based paint.

The process to clear the property, which started several years ago but has stalled along the way, may now be moving along a smoother path, as the family has jumped successfully through myriad obstacles along the destruction path.

People have until April 25 to comment on the negative

declaration. There will be a public hearing before the Planning Commission on May 8 at 3pm at Lake Tahoe Airport, with the panel being asked to approve the negative declaration and plans for demolition of all of the remaining structures associated with the old Barton dairy ranch located at 1080 Emerald Bay Road.

Gary Midkiff, a land use and permitting consultant, is the spokesman for the Ledbetter and Mosher families. They are the property owners and descendents of the Bartons. He explained that the request for removal and destruction of the structures began close to three years ago.

“We’ve been working with the city of South Lake Tahoe to address the issues that city staff was anticipating would be raised by the community,” he said.

“So far, we haven’t gotten any comments. The notice was published at the California State Clearing House, where all environmental documents are sent under CEQA. But we’re expecting comments from the Clearing House after the comment period closes. If there are questions we need to address, we will address them,” Midkiff told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Midkiff said he contacted the Lake Tahoe Historical Society three or four years ago and offered them the buildings for removal or relocation, however, he said he hasn’t talked to them lately.

He added, “There is no rule that says because it’s a historical site the buildings have to be retained.”

South Lake Tahoe is an important player in this continuing story, too. Judy Finn, associate planner for the city, said there are problems such as black mold, asbestos, graffiti and people breaking in and attempting to live in the buildings; generally reiterating the owners’ list of grievances.

“The family wants to restore and revegetate the property, and

may want to look at more viable uses in the future," Finn told *Lake Tahoe News*.

The buildings in question, with their green roofs and white exteriors, were once stately. Boarded windows make it look like a forlorn relic waiting for whatever the fates have in mind. The property looks abandoned, even though it's nestled into an idyllic setting amid tall trees on 4 acres of land next to the Raley's shopping center.

The history of the legendary Barton family is important to Lake Tahoe. According to a fall 1972 Lake Tahoe Historical Society newsletter, more than a century ago the Bartons spent their summers ranching their property in Hope Valley and on land they homesteaded in Meyers.

In 1915, they moved to the South Shore and settled in an area that is now the Lake Tahoe Airport. There they established a dairy known as Meadow's Edge. They ran a milk route to Echo Lakes, Camp Sacramento, Twin Bridges, Tahoe Meadow and Beecher's Country Club, where Harrah's is now located.

Several years later the property at the Y was developed, when this region was wide-open and the only road in the basin was Pioneer Trail. Through the years South Lake Tahoe has been the beneficiary of the Barton family generosity, including a gift of land upon which now stands Barton Memorial Hospital.

Although clearing of the land is not a foregone conclusion, there are those individuals and entities that are feeling the crush of an important part of history coming to an end and the need for its preservation.

Lake Tahoe Historical Society spokesperson and board member Lee Vestal is one of those interested parties.

"All I personally want to see with the Barton Ranch is that it gets a fair shake to survive," he said. "If all the environmental reviews, including hazmat remediation for the

suspected contamination, say knock it down, then knock it down. But the ranch needs a fair review and the involvement of the community. If the community wants it saved, it needs to step up and provide financial and emotional support."

Vestal said the historical society has been working quietly behind the scenes to find out what the property owners really want and to see what options are available to save the ranch.

"We've sent letters to the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency and to City Manager Nancy Kerry," he said. However, he said, to date there have been no replies.

At the very least, Vestal said that everything at the ranch will be photographed and the story will be captured by the historical society.

Catherine Whelan, who is president of the historical society, said the family has a right to sell the land.

"But you would think the city would want to preserve it. There are so few old buildings left. The ranches were big here before the casinos went in. This could show the history of the Tahoe basin," Whelan told *Lake Tahoe News*. "The city has a perfect opportunity to turn this property into a cultural center showcasing the ranching period of South Lake Tahoe. I think they're missing a huge opportunity to make money."

Lake Tahoe News was unable to make contact with the property owners – the Mosher family and members of the Ledbetter family; however, Jessica Ledbetter, a cousin, had this to say: "I've worked with Gary Midkiff in the past and I think he is an outstanding representative for my Aunt Melba Mosher and my cousins, William Mosher, Faye Krull and Ouida Garms.

"Whatever decisions my aunt and my cousins have come to, I know it hasn't been easy. It's been an extremely emotional decision for them. We've recently talked about all the wonderful times we've spent on the property and all the

wonderful memories. I support any decision they make.”

Midkiff added, “They are not a development family.”

But the question remains, where will the final journey take the old Barton site?

“There are no plans for use of the property at this time,” Midkiff said. “They’re watching the area plan that is being drawn up by the city and TRPA closely to see the outcome. Based on that, based on the economy, and based on interest by any commercial entity, they may make future plans.”