Tax, business workshop in Stateline

John Urrutia and Chris Mann from Mann, Urrutia, Nelson, CPAs & Associates are hosting an interactive workshop to help business owners review their tax and business planning strategies.

The workshop is June 29 from 10-11:30am at the Lake Tahoe South Shore Chamber of Commerce, 169 Highway 50, Building D, Stateline.

The two are offering a free one-hour consultation to workshop participants.

Space is limited. Tickets are $5 members and $10 non-members. Prepurchase tickets by calling (775) 588.1728, ext. 303.

S. Tahoe officers to beef up neighborhood patrols

Next week the South Lake Tahoe Police Department traffic unit will initiate a program focused on enforcement in residential neighborhoods.

With school out and summer weather here, more people are on bike and foot. This could mean more accidents between them and motor vehicles.

“We also receive repeated complaints from citizens regarding speeding vehicles and stop sign violations in their neighborhoods,” Sgt. Shannon Laney said in a statement

Two days a week, officers will be deployed to a pre-determined neighborhood to work high-profile dedicated traffic enforcement. The areas will be selected based on requests from citizens and traffic collision data. At the end of the week, the statistical data will be released about how many citations-warnings were issued and if any arrests were made.

If you would like your street or neighborhood put on our list, call or email Sgt. Shannon Laney at (530) 542.6104 or email slaney@cityofslt.us. Provide your name, phone number and a description of the problem in as much detail as possible, including times of day the problem is most prevalent.

Travel poems capture images of the world

MEYERS – Travel writers fancy themselves world travelers, able to share with those left behind something about far-flung places most people will never see.

Poets are the artists of the written word.

Suzanne Roberts through her book “Three Hours to Burn a Body: Poems on Travel” has brought the two worlds together.



Suzanne Roberts on

June 17 reads from her latest book of poems. Photo/Kathryn Reed

She read seven of her works Friday night at a gathering at Bona Fide Books in Meyers.

Besides her captivating poetry that gives insight into places like India, Mongolia and the Galapagos Islands, her photographs on the walls make the words even more illuminating.

With good reason, in 2008 *National Geographic Traveler* named this Lake Tahoe Community College professor "the next great travel writer".

Roberts' delivery, mannerism and inflection bring poems off the page as though they are living organisms and not mere words on paper. Odds are she would do well to create a video reading or an audio version of her poems because reading them alone is not the same as hearing her read them.

– Kathryn Reed

Talks begin to reform TRPA, keep both states involved

Updated June 18, 2011, 9:05am: Gov. Brian Sandoval signed SB271 and vetoed AB578 on June 17.

By Anne Knowles

CARSON CITY – It took until the final, frenetic minutes of the 2011 Nevada legislative session for lawmakers to pass the controversial bill threatening to pull out of the Tahoe Regional Planning Compact, but it may take years to see if the legislation makes a difference.

Senate Bill 271, passed in the Nevada Assembly 15 minutes before the 76th legislative session ended at 1am June 7, seeks first to amend the 41-year-old bi-state Compact before Nevada would make good on its threat to withdraw.



Politics and state lines divide Lake Tahoe in ways Mother Nature never intended.

The legislation calls for an updated Regional Plan that takes into account economic as well as environmental conditions at Lake Tahoe; makes several changes to the voting structure of the Governing Board of the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency to stop what some Nevada lawmakers say is a tyranny of the minority; and requires anyone challenging a project at the lake to prove it violates the Compact, flipping the burden of proof from the TRPA to the petitioner.

It also mandates the creation of a delegation of Nevada lawmakers to negotiate with a similar group of California

legislators to amend the Compact.

Nevada could withdraw from the Compact in 2015 if it deems no progress has been made, or will withdraw by 2017, if changes are incomplete. An interim oversight committee could also file a bill draft request next session to kill the possible withdrawal from TRPA if reform efforts are moving ahead or its deemed going it alone is too costly for the state.

The bill is sitting on the desk of Gov. Brian Sandoval, who is expected to sign it. Sandoval has until June 17 to sign or veto all remaining bills or to allow them to become law by doing nothing.

If SB271 becomes law, what's next?

The committee that would be responsible for putting together the negotiating team is in flux. The bill calls for the Legislative Committee for the Review and Oversight of the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency and the Marlette Lake Water System, the interim committee that already oversees the TRPA, to pick the delegation. But another late-passing bill, Assembly Bill 578, would restructure the Legislature's interim committees so the Joint Interim Committee of Government Affairs, consisting of eight members from the existing government affairs committees of both houses, would have oversight.

AB578, however, received only two Republican votes in the Assembly and none in the Senate, giving an indication Sandoval may veto it. The governor's office declined to comment on when or whether the governor would sign or veto any bill.

In any event, Sen. John Lee, R-Las Vegas, a sponsor of SB271, is the chair of the Senate Government Affairs and the existing interim committee that has been looking into the TRPA issue. And whatever interim committee emerges in the next few months, the committee will pick one senator and two members of the Assembly, representing both parties, to begin negotiating with

California legislators.

“The committee is up in the air,” Lee said, several days after the session ended, saying he would be discussing it in the next few weeks with Sen. Steven Horsford, D-North Las Vegas, the Senate majority floor leader.

Lee told *Lake Tahoe News* he wrote a letter to the governor proposing Leo Drozdoff, director of the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, be the ongoing point man for the legislation. Drozdoff’s office said he would not comment on SB271 or its implications until the bill becomes law.

Lee said he hopes a conversation between the two states, and representatives from the federal government, starts at the 14th annual Lake Tahoe Environmental Summit, being hosted this year by Sen. Dianne Feinstein, D-Calif., at Homewood Mountain Resort on Aug. 16. While that is the actual day of the summit, lawmakers and stakeholders in the basin have several behind the scenes meeting before and after the summit.

Neither Feinstein nor Sen. Harry Reid, D-Nev., responded to a request for comment about SB271.

Informal talks have begun

“My office has had discussions with some (legislators’) offices in Nevada,” said state Sen. Ted Gaines, R-Roseville, a California legislator who in April issued a statement supporting SB271 and what Nevada lawmakers were trying to accomplish.

“I support the simple majority vote” mandated in the bill, said Gaines, which he said is similar to the way city councils and county commissions conduct business.

“I am contemplating my own legislation that would mirror the legislation,” he said.

If Gaines were to introduce a bill, it wouldn’t be until February 2012 during the next California legislative session. Gaines represents the California side of Lake Tahoe.

“Communications have already been opened,” said Joanne Marchetta, executive director of the TRPA. “There are informal discussions happening almost everywhere. I’m very optimistic. This is a very healthy discussion right now and I’m looking forward to participating in it.”

But the most important thing the TRPA staff can do, said Marchetta, “is bring forward a reasonably clear and concise update to our Regional Plan.”

The update to the Regional Plan, already four years overdue, is on track to be delivered by the end of 2012, Marchetta said.

“You hear talk that there is no Regional Plan,” Marchetta said. “We do have a Regional Plan.”

She said much of the current plan would remain intact, and the issue now is to narrow the focus for current needs and economic constraints.

The main sticking point is the $1.5 billion needed for the next 20 years for treatment systems and environmental programs.

“Will it come from Congress, the states or from the private sector?” Marchetta asked. “We’ve always thought it should be some combination of those sources.”

What others have to say

While the Nevada bill calls on the TRPA to produce the Regional Plan, and for state legislators to work together, others involved in the lake hope to have some influence, too.

“Last month the South Lake Tahoe City Council passed its own

plan and we hope the TRPA will adopt some of our plan," Councilman Bruce Grego said of the city's General Plan. "I intend to write a letter this week to the oversight committee to see if South Lake Tahoe as well as Douglas County and Carson City can be part the team sent to negotiate with California legislators."

In addition, said Grego, the council is upping the billable hours of its lobbyist and intends to lobby the California Legislature to take up a measure similar to Nevada's SB271.

"Now it's back in California's court," Nancy McDermid, vice chair of the Douglas County Commissioners and TRPA Governing Board member, said. "I don't know if there's anything we can do here. It's state legislator to state legislator now. Key thing now is to get California to recognize it."

The Douglas County Commission as well as the South Lake Tahoe City Council and the Carson City Board of Supervisors voiced support for SB271.

"As someone active in the TRPA sphere of influence, I hope I can contribute to the solutions at the lake," said Lew Feldman, attorney with Feldman McLaughlin Thiel in Zephyr Cove. He has represented many building projects at the lake, including the recently approved Boulder Bay redevelopment project at the Tahoe Biltmore site in Crystal Bay.

"I would certainly continue to interact with the decision-makers and assist in gathering of information and data. For California to partner in this, it is going take statewide effort," Feldman said.

And, like Marchetta, Feldman is hopeful.

"The original bill was a shot across the bow that was not in the best interest of the basin. As amended, it's an invitation for everyone to roll up their sleeves and get to work on this," Feldman said. "California has a lot more to gain by

working with Nevada on this than by blowing them off and going it alone. I can’t imagine a responsible California elected official not opening the door and welcoming the Nevada delegation.”

LTCC hires community education director

Twenty-six people applied to be director of the resurrected community education program at Lake Tahoe Community College, with Megan Waskiewicz coming out on top.

She will start the 20-hour week job July 1.



Megan Waskiewicz

With the state changing how it pays colleges and the local community clamoring for enrichment classes, the college has come up with a way to make money and keep people happy.

While it’s not expected that many classes will be offered in the fall, a larger selection should be available in the winter. Classes are expected to much less than a quarter in length.

Cynthea Preston, dean of Instruction, said a website just for

community education is being developed. There will also be a link to it directly from LTCC's website. This should be operational in August.

– Kathryn Reed

Snippets about Lake Tahoe



• Liza Minnelli emptied her Lake Tahoe home and hauled her possessions to the Hamptons for a yard sale June 11. The *New York Post* reports the singer sold lampshades, wine glasses, worn dance shoes – and a set of epaulets given to her by Michael Jackson.

• Bill Crawford, who never supported the South Lake Tahoe Ice Arena being built, finally got his name removed from the plaque – something he has been trying to do since the day he first learned his name was on it.

• Lake Tahoe Unified is selling bricks to be installed around the concession stand at Viking Stadium. The money is for the South Tahoe High football field improvements. For more information, contact Tami Wallace at (530) 544.3818.

• Squaw Valley will not offer mountain biking this summer due to the significant depth of the spring snowpack – more than 14 feet in mid-June.

• Sacramento Mayor Kevin Johnson has named a commission to analyze options for financing a sports arena in the capital city. Some of the Tahoe-connected members are: state Sen. Ted Gaines, El Dorado County Supervisor Jon Knight and Placer County Supervisor Kirk Uhler.

• Here is Caltrans’ Sierra roadwork schedule for next week.

Opinion: Education cuts shortchange future of all Californians

By Mark Paul

When pollsters ask, most of us say California is going in the wrong direction. We’ve been saying so, with the rare exception, for almost a decade. So we have to consider an unhappy possibility: California, after trekking off-course for so long, may have crossed over into unfamiliar and dangerous territory. Call it the State of the Dimming Dream.

Not everyone agrees, of course, on what’s wrong. To some of us, California remains a place of bloated government, rampant spending on the poor and punishingly high taxes. As is so often the case in a state where change is the only constant, the old stories lag behind the news and the numbers. A generation ago, when graybeards like me were starting out, California rivaled New York as a high-tax state. No more.

The top personal income tax rate is lower than when some fellow named Ronald Reagan was governor. The corporate tax has been cut and the code turned into a Swiss cheese of credits and exemptions. The estate tax has been abolished. Proposition 13 cut and capped property tax rates and limited reassessments. The vehicle license fee has been halved. The sales tax rate is higher but its yield has fallen because the items on which it is levied — mostly tangible goods — make up a declining slice of our consumption.

So it should be no surprise that the budget fight this year in Sacramento is not over whether state government will be big or small. It’s about whether the state government will be small or smaller.

Mark Paul, formerly deputy editorial page editor of the Sacramento Bee and deputy treasurer of California, is the co-author, with Joe Mathews, of “California Crackup: How Reform Broke the Golden State and How We Can Fix It.”

Read the whole story

Tahoe-Baikal event raises money, awareness

Tahoe-Baikal Institute’s annual Friendraiser Gala is July 1 at Heavenly Mountain Resort’s Lakeview Lodge.

Tickets are $60.

Parking will be at Heavenly’s California Base Lodge

The tram will begin operation at 5pm. The formal program begins at 6pm.

The Tahoe-Baikal Institute is a nonprofit organization based in South Lake Tahoe that promotes international cultural understanding and global cooperation in meeting environmental challenges, specifically through an exchange program that focuses on Lake Tahoe in California and Lake Baikal in southern Siberia. This event is used to showcase the exchange participants and the successful international partnership between Lake Tahoe and Lake Baikal. All proceeds benefit TBI’s programs.

For more information or to purchase tickets, call (530) 542.5599 or email gala@tahoebaikal.org.

Surge in graffiti adding to South Tahoe’s rundown look

By Kathryn Reed

Art isn’t usually the first word business owners or residents think of when they see graffiti marring structures.

While tagging is nothing new on the South Shore, it has been cropping up in more visible locations in the past six weeks.

Adidas was hit in early May just below the roofline, with taggers covering up a good part of the high wall along Highway 50. It took several weeks for it to be painted over.



Graffiti on the back of the Miller's Outpost. Photos/Kathryn Reed

A large tag still remained Thursday afternoon on the back of the old Miller’s Outpost with the word “kind” and the number

420 in a circle dotting the I. The number represents California Senate Bill 420 regarding medical marijuana cards. And April 20 is known as an international pot smoking day.

Some businesses do patch jobs to cover up the graffiti; others like at the Y Factory Stores do a better job so there is no evidence of the vandalism.

The cumulative cost to businesses to clean up after the vandals is unknown. But it definitely is an unbudgeted expense.

“It’s not just the Y, but there it has been the most brazen and more public,” Detective Nick Carlquist said.

Carlquist is South Lake Tahoe Police Department’s point man for gang and graffiti activity. He works odd hours – much like the taggers. He’s not in a uniform most of the time – much like the taggers who don’t want to be easily identified.

His is a world where people don’t like to talk. While interviewing people about all the tagging on the interior and exterior of the old C&M Lodge on Bonanza Street, one guy said he wouldn’t name names for fear of retaliation from the gang members allegedly involved.

Taggers don’t stop at the state line. Law enforcement believes some of the same people are working that area – at the casinos, and the run down, closed motels on Cedar Avenue. Nearly every pillar at the bankrupt convention center site is tagged.

Experience counts

Carlquist has been with SLTPD for about three years, having come from the Hollister department. Even when departments like the K-9 unit were cut there, the gang unit stayed intact.



Taggers like large areas where they can leave their mark.

His experience in these matters helped him get the job in Tahoe.

What he noticed when he arrived is not a lot of talk going on between neighboring jurisdictions. Now gang investigation meetings are taking place on a regular basis for detectives of various agencies to share info. That wasn't happening a year ago.

When Carlquist asked about South Tahoe's "gang registry" his bosses had no idea what he was talking about.

The department now has that registry which is allowed per a California law passed years ago. It works in somewhat the same as the sex offender registry. Once a gang member is out of prison they must register with the law enforcement agency where they reside.

But there are no limitations of where they can live or with whom. However, it gives cops an address for at least a one-time gang member, if not current.

While Carlquist won't give the exact number of people on the registry, he said it's high for the size of city South Lake Tahoe is. But it has become a tool for law enforcement.

"It has proved to be a deterrent," Carlquist said of the

registry. “About 95 percent of registrants are not repeat offenders. It has helped some get of out of a gang and some have moved to another town.”

Who is doing the tagging?

As is tradition in Tahoe, the taggers come out as the snow melts. Winter isn’t a big season for them.

It’s not that there are necessarily more of them, but there are more places to vandalize. Carlquist has noticed the sagging economy in South Tahoe has left more vacant buildings – commercial and residential – for taggers to use as a canvas.



Brick is hard to restore after it's been vandalized.

People aren’t at the buildings so there is more opportunity to get away with the crime.

He sees the graffiti being a mix of taggers who think what they are doing is creating art and gang members marking their territory. Either way, it’s criminal activity. When these men and boys, that is the predominant gender, are caught they are often charged with vandalism, burglary, breaking and entering, and trespassing.

About two-thirds of the crimes are committed on commercial sites, with the other third being a mix of residential and

city property like pump houses and street signs. Businesses are easier to hit because usually they aren’t occupied at night.

The culprits don’t fit into a nice profile. It’s all races, ages and genders. With gang members, oftentimes the affiliation is passed from parent to child or sibling to sibling.

They are a bit like male dogs, though, in needing to leave their mark without any regard to the property they are doing it on.

In 2009 and 2010 the Surenos hit the Ski Run Boulevard area, putting out a roll call with all the monikers the individual members go by. While this helps law enforcement put together a profile, those monikers don’t always stay the same. Some have four or five ways to sign a tag.

This gang also has been known as the Southside 13.

South Tahoe also has Nortenos. N is the 14th letter of the alphabet and represents northerners.

With the convictions in three Cyclones gang members in 2010 for the 2009 stabbing of a South Tahoe teen, it basically wiped out that group.

Carlquist doesn’t believe the gangs mentioned above are responsible for the spike in graffiti at the Y. He won’t say anything more until arrests are made.

With the South Shore being along the triangle of Reno, Carson City and Sacramento, the area has a lot of transient gang members. Some stop a while, some pass through.

Drug sales, trafficking and transporting weapons are common.

When it comes to taggers not in a gang, it’s all about being creative.

“It’s a mindset thing. Taggers really think they are doing artwork. They say ‘we are great artists and want to show the world’,” Carlquist said. “They say the world is their canvas and there is no such thing as private property.”

These people know about the websites touting which tips on spray paint cans will do what, what markers are good, how to tag or bomb or scratch.

And taggers in Tahoe don’t just need a wall. They hit granite rocks and bike trails.

Proactive possibilities

Property owners can make their buildings less attractive to taggers by using motion sensor lighting, cutting vegetation away so taggers can’t duck behind it, and putting up chain link fences instead of wood so there isn’t a surface to tag.

It’s creating defensible space to stop would-be taggers.

Heavenly Village rarely has graffiti because security officers are constantly roaming the area and lighting plays a role in deterring that kind of behavior.



Dumpsters are a common item to be tagged.

Carlquist recently met with security for that center to talk about gang awareness so they understand indicators.

The city has a graffiti abatement program to provide some

assistance with cleaning up tagged buildings and structures. But call officers before painting over the crime scene.

Parents and teachers can pay attention to what might seem like innocent doodling when in fact it’s miniature graffiti on their notebooks or in their rooms – sketches possibly before hitting the streets in a bigger way.

Carlquist wants to talk to concerned adults about whether something might be an indication a person is in a gang or potential tagger. He may be reached at (530) 542.6121.

He wants to do more outreach with the community and is hoping grants the police department is applying for will pay for that. In the mean time, when he’s not out searching for the bad guys, Carlquist is doing what he can to talk to local groups.

“Enforcement and prevention are the two important points,” Carlquist said to ridding the area of graffiti and those responsible for it.

Lakeview Commons’ terraced setting taking shape

El Dorado Beach is always a busy location each summer in South Lake Tahoe.

The difference this year is it’s full of construction workers instead of beach-goers and barbecuers.



What Lakeview Commons will look like when its done.

While the weather shut down the multi-million beautification-recreation-water quality project for two days, Clark and Sullivan Builders are not behind because hiccups like that were built into the calendar.

South Lake Tahoe City Councilman Tom Davis at a South Lake Tahoe Lodging Association meeting this month told that board the project will be completed for the most part before winter. However, he said landscaping won't be done until next spring.

"I would like to have a locals' beach party next year," Davis said.

Driving by on Highway 50 it's hard to know what is going on. Most of the work is near the beach. The dirt piled near the highway is essentially the eroding hill that was there. It is being developed into a terraced sitting area.

More tables and barbecues will be near the street like before. A structure near the boat ramp will be used to store canoes and kayaks. Restrooms are also part of the project.

Improvements are being tied into Caltrans' three-year Trout Creek to Ski Run Boulevard street improvement project so the road won't be constantly torn up.

– Kathryn Reed

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Photos/Kathryn Reed