South Lake Tahoe's finances beginning to stabilize

By Kathryn Reed

Compared to a year ago, South Lake Tahoe is doing better financially.

For the first half of the fiscal year that started Oct. 1, the general fund revenue is up 3.2 percent or $344,936 compared to the same time last year. Expenses are down 4.2 percent or $628,446.

Finance Director Christine Vuletich said the reduction in expenses has to do with fewer people on the pay roll.

While the ski season was good and would be reflected in transient occupancy taxes, she reminded the City Council on Tuesday the bulk of TOT comes in the busier summer season.

Councilmember Angela Swanson pulled the item from the May 17 consent agenda because she wants more analysis and depth put into the documents given to the council so everyone has a sense of the city's financial health.

Looking at trends is not something South Lake Tahoe's finance department has done in the past, but it is going to have to do going forward – partly because of how the Business Plan is being written, partly because the council wants it.

Swanson also asked how Gov. Jerry Brown's May revise to the state budget would impact South Lake Tahoe. Vuletich said she had not reviewed the governor's numbers so therefore had no

idea what it means for the city.

Opinion: Hospice volunteers a critical component to health care

By Robert Orr

We all know it takes a very special person to be a Hospice worker, helping the terminally ill patients every day 24-hours-a-day.

Barton Health currently has 18 volunteers and more are needed in weeks to come. Barton's Hospice would not exist if it were not for our volunteers.



Robert Orr

Since 1996, Barton Hospice has been serving the terminally ill in South Lake Tahoe, Carson Valley and the surrounding areas. Their families and volunteers are a crucial part of the hospice team and are cherished by both staff and patients.

Hospice volunteers are very special people; giving of their time, hearts and compassion. They help the terminally ill and provide support and respite for the caregiver that is

desperately needed.

Many Hospice volunteers have personally experienced Hospice Care in their families or communities, giving them the empathy necessary to help other families when they are losing a loved one.

Hospice care is designed for patients who have a terminal diagnosis and a life expectancy of six months or less. Anyone interested in helping Barton Hospice will find being a Hospice volunteer personally rewarding and gratifying.

If you are interested in being a Hospice volunteer at the lake or in the valley, please call me at (530) 307.0288 or the Hospice office at (530) 543.5605.

Robert Orr is Barton Hospice's chaplain.

Barton board to be seated today

Barton Memorial Hospital's board of directors is scheduled to ratify the election of board members at today's meeting.

Six people ran for four of the open spots on the 11-member board. Incumbent Robert Chester was not re-elected and Kathay Lovell was not chosen.

The board members are:

Greg Bergner

John Cefalu

R.J. Clason Jr.

Hal Cole

Paul J. Fry II

Guy Lease

Kirk Ledbetter

Terry Orr

Paul Rork

Chuck Scharer

Dena Schwarte.

El Dorado County town ripe for massive wildfire

By Phillip Reese, Sacramento Bee

Look down from a hill over Cameron Park, and you mostly see a lush canopy of trees. The trees conceal the 7,600 homes there, homes they shade, cool – and threaten.

“It just looks like a carpet,” said Cal Fire Battalion Chief Mike Webb. “When you add up all the conditions and lots, we certainly have a recipe for a bad day.”

Cameron Park sits on land that Cal Fire – the state Department of Forestry and Fire Protection – deems highly hazardous for wildfire, and it is a focal point as officials prepare for the imminent fire season. A plant preserve full of wildfire fuel overlooks the town 35 miles east of Sacramento.

Despite those risks, the number of homes in Cameron Park grew 30 percent during the last decade, largely during the construction boom.

The rest of the region also built heavily in wildfire hazard zones, adding about 17,000 homes to risky areas from 2000 to 2010, according to a Bee analysis of new census figures, housing permits and fire hazard maps.

While much of the growth occurred in suburbs like Cameron Park, homes also went up in the hinterlands. Builders in Grizzly Flats and Happy Valley, two El Dorado County communities far from population areas but close to thick national forest, erected 140 houses during the past decade.

In the North Upper Truckee area near Lake Tahoe, developers added 60 homes just before the Angora Fire ripped through in 2007, causing massive damage.

Read the whole story

Bountiful crop of morels hiding in the Lake Tahoe Basin

By Kathryn Reed

Bring a knife and a canvas bag. Meet in the Mikasa parking lot.

If a friend hadn’t emailed this message, I might have been alarmed.

Friday the 13th turned out to be my lucky day. My first day to forage for morel mushrooms. Kim had been telling me about her escapades in Lake Tahoe and Alaska, but I had never been party to any of the expeditions until last week.



Harvesting a morel on the South Shore. Photos/Kathryn Reed

I wasn't even sure I knew what a morel looked like. I just know they are expensive. Some years they cost $100 a pound. At the Ferry Building in San Francisco on Sunday they were selling for $36 a pound.

Morels fetch such a high price because they cannot be grown like a crop. They are in the wild, usually found in burn areas and in land that has been disturbed by logging or for some other reason. And the growing season is rather short.

In Lake Tahoe these shrooms with their honeycomb caps are most prevalent in May. But they are like chameleons in how they hide under logs, blend with the shades of brown dirt and don't seem to like direct sunlight.

U.S. Forest Service employees and firefighters are said to know when morels are in season because they are in the woods and have been to burn sites – controlled or otherwise. (I'm not allowed to reveal exactly where we began our forage.)

Any type of wild mushroom hunting can be dangerous because

there are so many lethal ones. In fact, false morels are poisonous. And real morels should never be eaten raw. I don't recommend picking any kind of mushroom without someone experienced by your side.

Kim swears by the book "All that the Rain Promises and More" by David Arora. Her pocket guide to Western mushrooms is well used.

She first started foraging for mushrooms while living in Alaska.

"There are so many edible mushrooms there you can't not notice them," Kim said. She and friends would cook them in just about anything.

There is much lore that surrounds the morel. Some say only the chosen are able to find them. Gatherers often don't speak to one another while in the woods. In some ways, this mushroom foraging cult is a bit underground.

Our first morel sighting is about 25 feet from our vehicle. We keep walking. Kim drops to her knees. And suddenly it's like a veil has been lifted from the ground as several morels reveal themselves.

With our Swiss army knives, we cut off the stems and put the mushrooms into our canvas bag. Kim has a special morel knife that on one end is a brush to get rid of the dirt. It also allows you to measure the mushroom.



Kim with her

special morel knife. Photo/Provided

We have a good bounty – about a pound in less than an hour.

Back at my house we take the stems of, wash the mushrooms in cold water, dry them with paper towel and get out the butter and wine. The butter is for cooking, the wine for drinking.

It only takes a few minutes for the morels to get a little crispy. What a dinner.

They are a bit nutty in flavor. Definitely fattening with the butter. But so rich, delicious and addicting.

With the bigger morels, Kim suggests filling them with Gruyere cheese, coating them with olive oil and grilling.

When she has more than she can use, she dries them, stores them in a Mason jar and uses them until the next season in pastas, risotto and omelets.

Morels like warm days and cold nights. Time will tell if the recent snow will hurt the harvest.

In late summer Kim is out hunting for porcini mushrooms. These delectables show up when the Sierra has had plenty of thunderstorms.

Mesick, Mich., claims to be the mushroom capital of the United States. For 51 years it has had a festival devoted to the fungi.

A county in Kansas is calling 2011 an exceptional year for morels.

I’m hoping to say the same for Lake Tahoe. I’m ready for my next expedition.

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Zephyr Cove alum stars in ‘Wizard of Oz’

They say what goes around, comes around. And it seems the Yellow Brick Road of Oz is no exception.

May 19-21, Barbara Rugg reprises her role as Dorothy in the classic production of “The Wizard of Oz,” at Sage Ridge School, a part that she played several years ago in for the Get in the Act Youth Theatre Company as a student at Zephyr Cove Elementary School.

As a graduating high school senior, Rugg has a performance resume that includes screenwork for Reno-area film companies, voiceover work for an off-Broadway puppetry performance in New York and Atlanta, and stage experience with the Nevada Civic Light Opera Company, the D.G. Menchetti Youth Shakespeare program, and the Nevada Shakespeare Company.

For the past two summers, she has organized a troupe of elementary-school students to perform shows for local senior citizens and nursing homes. In August, she will begin studying drama at Brandeis University in Massachusetts.

Reserved tickets for the Sage Ridge School production of “The Wizard of Oz” are $20. General admission tickets are $15 for adults and $10 for students and seniors and will be sold at the door.

For tickets and information, contact Cameron Crain at (775) 852.6222, ext. 525, or ccrain@sageridge.org.

Opinion: Ho-hum about redistricting in N. Nevada

Publisher's note: ***This editorial is from the May 7, 2011, Reno Gazette-Journal.***

Democrats and Republicans and the Legislature released their competing redistricting plans over the past week and a half, and the biggest surprise for Northern Nevada residents was that there was no surprises at all.

Washoe County is going to lose a seat in the Senate – the one held for decades by the now-retired Sen. Bill Raggio and now kept warm by Sen. Greg Brower, who's already announced his plan to run for the vacant Northern Nevada seat in the U.S. House of Representatives – and a couple of seats in the Assembly.

But there was never any doubt of that once the lawmakers rejected out of hand any discussion of increasing the number of districts in both Senate and Assembly because, it's said, of the cost.

Beyond some possible tinkering with the lines, Northern Nevadans no longer have a dog in this fight. The struggle will be among Southern Nevadans, who will have the vast majority of seats in the Legislature, as well as probably three of four in the House, when the next election rolls around.

Read the whole story

North Tahoe summer recreation lunch

The North Lake Tahoe Chamber of Commerce is hosting its annual Summer Recreation lunch June 9 from noon to 3pm at Sunnyside Resort in Tahoe City.

This event is geared to provide insight about summer happenings, including events, festivals and activities to frontline, front desk and concierge employees, along with business owners and managers. Attendees can give a brief presentation at the event, as well as provide 90 brochures or other pieces of collateral to be distributed during the lunch.

This event sells out with approximately 100 attending, so early sign ups are recommended. Deadline to register is June 6. Cost is $27/person for chamber members and $37/person for non-members and includes lunch.

For more information about the event, to register or provide collateral, call Kym Fabel at (530) 581.8764 or kym@puretahoenorth.com.

Fremont Avenue Block Party

Fremont Avenue Block Party – aka Lake Tahoe South Shore Chamber of Commerce mixer – is June 23 from 5:30-7:30pm.

There will be lots for food, drink and raffle prizes to discover in any one of our host locations:

A to Z Insurance

Freshies Restaurant

Tranquility Massage & Integrated Wellness Center

Law Offices of John J. Castellanos

Nel’s Hardware

Sessions Salon

Tahoe Bowl

Tahoe Youth & Family Services.

MacDuff’s Public House is where to check in – 1041 Fremont Ave., South Lake Tahoe.

South Tahoe registered sex offender back behind bars

While South Tahoe police officers conducted a follow-up investigation to the registered sex offender who was outside the city ice rink Monday, they discovered he had not registered where he is currently residing.

Joseph Scanino was arrested May 18 on a felony charge of violating his mandatory sex registration obligation.

Scanio is a registered sex offender on federal probation for possession of child pornography.



Joseph Scanio

Scanio lives in the 2000 block of Wyoming Avenue. In June 2010 he had reported he was living at a different residence in South Lake Tahoe. At that time Scanio signed an acknowledgement that he was aware of his legal obligation to update his registration within five days of changing his residence address. Scanio failed to comply with this obligation.

This felony charge is separate from, and in addition to, any violation of Scanio's federal probation status. That matter will be pursued by federal probation. It is also separate from the prior request SLTPD has made for the District Attorney's Office to review the matter for a possible violation of a local city ordinance which prohibits registered sex offenders living in restricted areas or from being present at specified locations.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report