Lake Tahoe Restaurant Week returns in October

The 2nd annual Lake Tahoe Restaurant Week (Oct. 2-9), according to organizers, is a celebration of the scrumptious cuisine and culinary talent that has made the Lake Tahoe region the best mountain-dining destination in the country.

Local food aficionados and visitors may participate in three-course prix-fixe menus at exceptional values that incorporate organic, seasonal and local ingredients – all served up at Lake Tahoe's eateries.

There are no passes, tickets or coupons needed to take part in Lake Tahoe Restaurant Week. Instead, guests simply visit their favorite Lake Tahoe restaurants (60-plus are participating), which are offering the prix-fixe menus for $20, $30 or $40 per person (tax and gratuity not included). Reservations are strongly recommended.

Last year's restaurants included Manzanita a the Ritz-Carlton Lake Tahoe, Ciera Steak + Chophouse at MontBleu casino, Six Peaks Grille at the Resort at Squaw Creek, Edgewood Restaurant, Lone Eagle Grille at the Hyatt in Incline Village, Fresh Ketch, PlumpJack Cafe, 19 Kitchen & Bar at Harveys, Soule Domain, Friday's Station at Harrah's, River Ranch Lodge, Après Wine Company, The Lodge at Tahoe Donner and the Beacon.

To learn more about Lake Tahoe Restaurant Week, a list of participating dining establishments and their downloadable prix-fixe menus, lodging discounts and how to take part, visit the event's official website or call Pettit Gilwee Public Relations at (530) 525-1164.

History of BMX film to air in South Tahoe

South Lake Tahoe BMX Association will show the 90-minute film "Joe Kid on a Stingray – the history of BMX" on May 6 at 7pm.

The showing will be at Stateline Brewery and Restaurant, located between Embassy Suites and Marriot Timber Lodge.

A $10 donation is requested. All ages are welcome.

For more information, call (530) 542.9337.

Controversial Boulder Bay project OK'd, Biltmore is gone

By Kathryn Reed

KINGS BEACH – Depending on who one listens to, the Boulder Bay project is either going to be the gold standard for redevelopment in the Lake Tahoe Basin or will be the worst thing to ever be approved by the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency.

On a 12-1 vote, the Governing Board on April 27 approved the more than $150 million project. Mara Bresnick voted no on everything concerning the project. (Board member Byron Sher

left before the vote, but said before he left that he would have voted no.)



Boulder Bay is designed to revitalize Crystal Bay.

The multi-phase project will obliterate the outdated Tahoe Biltmore in Crystal Bay and in its place will be the Boulder Bay Resort & Wellness Center. This is the brainchild of Roger Wittenberg, who made his money as co-founder of Trex Company.

As the last of the 80 people who commented on the project during the public hearing Wednesday, Wittenberg told the board that after four years of back-and-forth with the TRPA, he is not going away. He encouraged the board to approve the project unanimously to send a message to the naysayers. While he didn't get that, he can now move forward.

"There will be two phases, with the bulk of the utilities, BMPs, new roads, and major concrete pour in the first phase," project manager Brian Helm said. This allows the existing facility to keep operating.

In a perfect world, construction could begin in May 2012, though with paperwork (aka permitting process) that still needs to occur, dirt may not be turned until 2013.

The first phase is likely to take two seasons – which in the basin is May 1-Oct. 15 in terms of being able to move dirt.

What was approved was the final environmental impact statement, an amendment to Chapter 22 of the TRPA rules regarding height of buildings, and acceptance of the Community Enhancement Project.

Eight structures will be built. The number of hotel units will go from 111 to 275 at the end of build-out. Fifty-nine units will be whole ownership. Fourteen will be affordable housing – with another 10 units also designed for employees to be constructed off-site.

As a sign of the decline of gaming in the region, the area devoted for gambling will drop from 22,400 square feet to 10,000.

The four casinos in the Crystal Bay corridor – like their counterparts on the South Shore – are outdated. The North Shore gaming venues were built in the 1930s and ’40s.

Sticking points

Of the 80 people who voiced their opinions Wednesday, 58 were for the project, 16 against and six were in the middle.

The League to Save Lake Tahoe voiced its displeasure with the project mostly in terms of overall size and the height amendment.

Rochelle Nason, executive director of the League, told *Lake Tahoe News* her group will gather and debrief – as they do with all decisions like this one.

While Nason was at the meeting, a staff member spoke on behalf of the League during the public hearing.

Most of the people who had mixed feelings about Boulder Bay shared the League’s concerns.

Passion ran strong from all sides, though it was civil discourse. The morning presentation on the project took three

hours. After lunch the public spent about four hours giving input. Then the board deliberated for more than three hours before the vote was taken.

With minutia to detail, the board took a break at 8:22pm, resuming at 8:43pm. The votes were taken at 9:25pm with adjournment right after that.

While the height issue received much discussion, it was repeatedly pointed out that the amendment could only be applied to other projects in this community plan area – not universally throughout the basin.

This is an important fact because the Homewood project that is also in the TRPA process wants to be granted a height variance.

Some of the problem is how TRPA measures the height of buildings. The controversy is when a structure is built on a slope. Instead of measuring from the foundation to the roof at each spot, height is essentially calculated by the lowest point to the highest point.

Traffic was another major sticking point. The environmental document says vehicle miles traveled will be reduced. Many who spoke took issue with how this statement came to be.

VMT is a huge component of air quality measurements.

Mixed use is designed to reduce vehicle miles traveled. This is because people have what they want in one place instead of needing to make multiple stops.

But one could easily argue casinos by nature are mixed use based on being a hotel, casino, having restaurants and sometimes a spa – meaning this new project may not change how people travel to the site on Highway 28.

About an hour was spent by the board discussing how traffic studies are done, what goes into them, the standards of the

studies and validity of them.

What the public wanted to know is how Wittenberg wants to increase patronage with a new complex, but traffic will be less. That question was never answered.

Although Boulder Bay has to put money into public transit, it's a well-known fact people who live and visit the basin like to drive their cars. This was obvious by the full parking lot at North Tahoe Event Center and lack of carpooling.

Another concern was the transfer of tourist accommodation units – including 72 from the old Colony Inn in South Lake Tahoe to Boulder Bay.

Some guarantees

The failed convention center project in South Lake Tahoe that has left the South Shore with a more blighted eyesore of concrete and rebar than the rundown buildings that had been there before was repeatedly brought up.

No one wants another hole in the basin. To help combat that, Wittenberg is going to have to prove he has financing before he can break ground.

Another bone of contention is erosion control measures (best management practices) have only been temporary since Wittenberg bought the property a handful of years ago. The reasoning being he would have to undo those as construction took place.

Board member Clem Shute proposed changing the five-year mandate to have a bond to fund BMPs to be extended to 20 years. This is to ensure that if the project goes belly-up, the property owner is still doing the basics to keep sediment from going into the lake. This was added to the requirements.

When the project is done, it will reduce the amount of sediment reaching Lake Tahoe by 90 percent – going to 3,500

pounds a year.

Another thing the project will do is bring jobs to the area. It’s estimated Boulder Bay will employ more than 200 people.

For more information about the Boulder Bay project, go online.

Douglas County rounding up prescription drugs

The Douglas County Sheriff’s Office and Partnership of Community Resources, in conjunction with the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration, will be conducting a Prescription Drug Roundup on April 30 from 10am to 2pm.

The purpose of the Rx Roundup is to get unused and unwanted prescription medications out of medicine cabinets – where they can be stolen or abused – and safely dispose of them.

A majority of teens who abuse prescription medication secretly obtain them from medicine cabinets of friends or relatives. The goal is to reduce the availability of access to these drugs by reducing or eliminating the quantity of old medications in homes.

Additionally, many people are unsure of how to dispose of old prescription medications, so they dump them down the sink or flush them down the toilet. These substances can end up in the water table, where they can contaminate the water supply and the environment.

Pet medications may also be turned in. No syringes or epipens will be accepted or collected.

The Prescription Drug Roundup will take place at the following locations:

Walgreen’s Pharmacy, 1342 N. Highway 395, Gardnerville

WalMart Supercenter, 3770 Topsy Lane, Carson City

TRE Volunteer Fire Station, 1476 Albite Road, Wellington

Safeway Supermarket, 212 Elks Point Road, Round Hill

DCSO Substation, 1281 Kimmerling Road, Gardnerville Ranchos.

Opinion: Casino giants’ problem gambling efforts are shoddy

By Steve Friess, Las Vegas Sun

A few years ago during Responsible Gaming Education Week, every MGM Resorts employee was required to wear an orange wristband that read: “Keep It Fun.” At lunch with an MGM executive that week, I needled him about how ridiculous the gesture was, only to have him scold my skepticism. Plastic jewelry, he insisted, was important to raising awareness of problem gambling, and the company seriously wants to help problem gamblers.

That encounter sprang to mind this month after I strayed accidentally into the “responsible gaming” section of the Monte Carlo website, was quite appalled, and then took an extensive and damning inventory of how major casinos handle this matter online. Then, I watched with sadness as some of

the Strip’s mouthpieces went into damage-control mode rather than soul-searching mode upon the April 14 release of a credible $3 million study that found gambling addiction is twice as common as alcoholism.

This is an era in which gambling – casino or otherwise – has never been easier. The shutdown in recent days in the U.S. of the world’s biggest poker websites amid a federal indictment will make playing online temporarily more challenging, but there’s also legislation in Carson City to allow mobile gaming devices to be taken to private places such as hotel rooms. So I find the industry’s sincerity questionable.

Read the whole story

Tahoe City Bike Derby

The Tahoe City Parks and Recreation Department “Bike Derby” is going into its 4th year at the Rideout Community Center May 14 from 11am-2pm.

The Tahoe City Recreation Department along with the other hosting associations have an afternoon planned full of food, games, bike safety and repair stations, obstacle course, and even the “Tour de Rideout.”

This free event is the day before professional cyclists ride around Lake Tahoe.

For more information on this event or if you are interested in volunteering, contact Shaun at (530) 583.3440, ext.14.

The address for the Rideout Community Center is 740 Timberland Lane, Tahoe City.

Tougher boating regs for Lake Tahoe likely

By Jeff Delong, Reno Gazette-Journal

Lake Tahoe regulators aim to get tough when it comes to people attempting to evade inspectors trying to protect the lake from aquatic invaders attached to boats launching into the lake.

Later this month, the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency will consider rules making it illegal to lie to boat inspectors or tamper with seals designed to show boats have been inspected and are free of invasive species such as the quagga mussel.

The change is designed to beef up a boat inspection and decontamination program that's been in place at the landmark alpine lake since the spring of 2008.

Read the whole story

Warning: Be wary of property tax mailings

By Cathy Locke, Sacramento Bee

El Dorado County Assessor Karl Weiland advises residents to be wary of mailers offering to reduce property taxes for a fee, noting that property owners can obtain the same tax relief free of charge.

The latest mailer, from Property Tax Assessor Records Corp., offers to assist homeowners in obtaining a homeowner's exemption for $25. The reverse side of the mailer offers additional information on comparable sales along with an offer to provide a customized report, again for a fee, according to a news release from the Assessors Office.

Weiland suggested that any property owner who receives a solicitation offering help with property taxes should contact the Assessor's Office to make sure the service is not available for free.

In 2007, property owners received an official-looking notice that solicited a payment of $189 before the deadline and $209 afterwards. The mailers included an unrealistic value and implied significant savings. The owners of the Southern California company were subsequently charged with mail fraud and deceptive business practices.

Read the whole story

Heller appointed to replace Ensign in Senate

By Las Vegas Sun

Gov. Brian Sandoval appointed Rep. Dean Heller today to fill the Senate seat being vacated by Sen. John Ensign.

Sandoval said last week that he would appoint Ensign's replacement before his May 3 resignation. The appointment of Heller was widely expected.

Sun columnist Jon Ralston reported the appointment late this

morning.

Sandoval had already endorsed Heller for Senate in 2012, and given the boost Heller will get from assuming the title of "senator" and the experience and incumbency that comes with it, Heller seemed his most sensible choice.

Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid issued a statement welcoming Heller to the Senate.

Read the whole story

Helmet law for skiers moves to Calif. Assembly

State Sen. Leland Yee, D-San Francisco, is making another run at making it mandatory skiers and boarders younger than 18 would be required to wear helmets.

His bill, SB105, passed the state Senate on Monday 32-6. The Assembly will now hear the measure.

If it takes effect, the penalty would be $25.

Because Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger vetoed a companion bill before leaving office, the helmet law that had been approved last year did not become law.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report