Bill seeks Nevada withdrawal from TRPA

By Guy Clifton, Reno Gazette-Journal

Supporters of a bill that would pull Nevada out of the bi-state Tahoe Regional Planning Compact said the TRPA is mired in bureaucracy and litigation and its governing board controlled by environmental special interests on the California side.

Sen. John Lee, D-North Las Vegas, who sponsored SB271, said the bi-state compact with California has become overly restrictive, leaving the TRPA as an agency "hamstrung by heavy-handed legal tactics by our partner (California)" and other groups.

"Nevada residents, users of the region, and the natural resource itself are stuck bearing the burden of what has become broken government, a jeopardized partnership, and by edict of the compact, a failed agency," Lee told members of the Senate Government Affairs Committee on Friday.

Senate Bill 271 would have the state withdraw from the Tahoe Regional Planning Compact and shift its duties for the Tahoe basin on the Nevada side of the lake to the Nevada Tahoe Regional Planning Agency.

Sen. James Settelmeyer, R-Gardnerville, and Assemblymen Kelly Kite, R-Gardnerville; Pat Hickey, R-Reno and Randy Kirner, R-Reno, co-sponsored the bill and also spoke in support.

They said the restrictive regulations discourage businesses and frustrate property owners who sometimes wait for years to get permits.

"We have businesses up there that spend millions of dollars

and years of time to get projects going," said Kite, who added that the TRPA was created with good intentions, but has since 'run amuck' and become 'an obstruction organization.'"

David Fabrizio, a South Lake Tahoe resident who said he lost his home in the Angora fire, agreed:

"You rake up the needles around your house for fire protection and you're told that you have to put them back," he said, "I had the forestry department come out and I had trees that were dead in my yard and I wanted to be able to cut down and TRPA says I can't cut them down."

Opponents of the bill, however, said Nevada would be "throwing out the baby with the bath water" if they decided to set up their own regulatory agency.

"We don¹t think this is the right way to go about the bill," said Kyle Davis of the Nevada Conservation League. "Decisions that are made in Nevada do affect California and decisions in California do affect Nevada."

Rochelle Nason, executive director of the League to Save Lake Tahoe, said Nevada pulling out of the compact would "make it impossible to keep Tahoe blue."

"You can't save one-third of a lake," she said.

TRPA executive director Joanne Marchetta said her agency is caught in the middle of 'two states with profoundly different philosophies.'

She said Nevada's focus is on property rights, while California's is on environmental protection, but she said despite these differences she believes the Compact should stay in place.

"We may have much more to lose (from Nevada leaving the compact), than what can be gained," she said.

TRPA board member Tim Cashman said pulling out of the compact could create a number of unintended consequences.

“We¹re likely to have more litigation that we have today,” he said.

TRPA’s Marchetta said the agency is anticipating $1 million in legal fees over the next two years.

Leo Drozdoff, director of the Nevada Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, said the state is neutral on the bill, but urged consideration of several steps before ultimately making a decision to withdraw from the pact.

They include:

o Allow Gov. Brian Sandoval and California Gov. Jerry Brown an opportunity to meet and discuss management of Lake Tahoe.

o The Legislature should begin an outreach process to counterparts in the California Legislature.

o The TRPA¹s involvement in residential oversight should be shifted to local governments.

Opponents of the bill also supported those moves.

“We believe bi-state cooperation in Tahoe matters is essential to continue ongoing programs targeting such issues as runoff of soil and other elements that threaten the clarity of the lake, and we support the role of TRPA inimplementing such programs,” said Jean Stoess, chair of the Toiyabe Chapter of the Sierra Club.

Lee said previous efforts to reach out to California’s Legislature have fallen on deaf ears.

WHAT’S NEXT

Though no action was taken by the Senate Government Affairs Committee, Sen. John Lee, D-North Las Vegas, said it would be

discussed further in work sessions.

Opinion: Keep Tahoe blue-blooded

By Claire Fortier

The Nevada Legislature’s frustration at the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency is not only understandable. It’s timely.

The TRPA should be called out to explain its archaic and cumbersome bureaucracy that costs local residents and developers too much time, aggravation and money.

Unfortunately, that’s only part of the real problem at Lake Tahoe.

Changing the “just say no” culture of the TRPA is the reason I chose to sit on the TRPA Governing Board. And finally that seems possible. The TRPA has an executive director and a governing board who understand that real environmental solutions at the lake require replacing our aging 1950’s infrastructure, not sealing our communities in a regulatory time capsule.

The problem is that “environmental” advocates, like the League to Save Lake Tahoe, are demonstrating that it’s not about keeping Tahoe blue. It’s about keeping Tahoe mired in needless litigation and regulatory muck.

In the past few weeks, the League has shown its true colors as an obstructionist organization bent on stopping any change at the lake, even change for the environmental good.

In the eleventh hour, as an excellent and environmentally sensitive project was to come before the TRPA Governing Board, it appears that “environmental” advocates convinced California Gov.Jerry Brown to replace a moderate governing board member with a League colleague.

The replacement, from what we know thus far, is attorney Clem Shute. Mr. Shute has a long history with the League.

It was Mr. Shute who represented the League to block the TRPA Regional Plan in 1985. As he states in his bio, he had “extensive involvement in Lake Tahoe issues including drafting revisions to the 1980 Tahoe Regional Planning Compact and representation of environmental groups in litigation which enjoined development contrary to the Compact.”

In that sentence alone, Mr. Shute represents just why the League is an obstructionist organization. That suit tied the Regional Plan process up for years. While I’m sure Mr. Shute is eminently qualified to serve on the TRPA Governing Board, his past relationship with the League is concerning given the League’s new litigation posture against TRPA.

Is it a coincidence that the League would tap Mr. Shute at a time when the governing board is desperately trying to get a new Regional Plan approved, a plan more than seven years in the making? And a plan that has been blocked on every front by the League?

Last week, in another 11th hour move, the League showed just how unwilling it is to be part of solution. Through a law firm renown for its environmental litigation history, the League sent a letter to the city raising objections to the city’s general plan. That plan, almost four years in the making, was to come before the council for final this month.

Why after all the public forums and opportunities to comment on the city’s general plan, did the League decide to do so at the last minute? And why did they choose to do so through an

attorney’s memo and not through established lines, thus ensuring cooperation, not antagonism?

In the letter, the League states that there “is no reasonable assurance that a new Regional Plan anytime in the near future.” Why? Certainly the TRPA Governing Board is committed to getting a Regional Plan approved. Could it be because the League doesn’t want the Regional Plan adopted?

So many of the problems that are preventing this community from both improving lake clarity and its economic bottom line lay squarely with the organization that purports to Save Lake Tahoe.

As a member of the TRPA Governing Board, I take very seriously the need to preserve and protect this beautiful lake for generations to come. I also believe it is equally imperative to have planned environmental redevelopment that not only keeps the lake blue, but keeps the community green, environmentally and economically. I believe that the TRPA is capable of doing so with strong leadership and focused vision.

But it’s time to call the League on its misguided efforts. Is the League’s real mission to save Lake Tahoe or save the Tahoe of 50 years ago? Is the League, which is primarily comprised of wealthy second homeowners from San Francisco, really keeping Tahoe blue or just keeping Tahoe blue blood?

Claire Fortier, a longtime Tahoe resident, a member of the South Lake Tahoe City Council and the TRPA Governing Board.

Snippets about Lake Tahoe



•The Tahoe Arts Project turns 25, and it wants to make you a part of it. Designers and students may design a new logo for the arts-oriented nonprofit organization. The winning logo will be used on performance programs and publications. Visit www.tahoeartsproject.org for more information.

• The International Olympic Committee announced halfpipe skiing and women's ski jumping will be on the schedule of the 2014 Winter Games in Sochi, Russia.

• More than 100 CrossFit members from Northern California and Nevada will compete to find the world's strongest man and woman. The benefit, which is scheduled from 8am to 5pm on April 16, will be staged at South Tahoe CrossFit at 2050 Dunlap St. in South Lake Tahoe.

• Be aware of a telephone scam targeting seniors in which the perpetrators falsely declare their grandchildren have been arrested, the Douglas County Sheriff's Department is warning.

• "Eating Well the Vegetarian Way" is the subject of a talk on April 27 at 6:30pm at the El Dorado County Library in South Lake Tahoe by Lynn Norton, a registered dietician with 25 years under her belt. Norton will discuss various vegetarian diets, as well as their health benefits and potential risks. The program, which is sponsored by the Friends of the Library, is free. Refreshments will be served. Call (530) 573.3185 for additional information.

• Genoa's Cowboy Poetry & Music Festival will feature a wide lineup of entertainers who can tell a story with song and amusement. The event will go on May 5-8. One may learn more by visiting www.cowboypoetrygenoa.com or calling (775) 782.8696.

Snow, gusty winds return after short reprieve

The National Weather Service in Reno issued a winter weather advisory for Lake Tahoe starting at 11pm Wednesday through 11am Thursday.

Snow is expected to fall Wednesday evening into Thursday morning then turn to showers,with the heaviest precipitation being around midnight overnight.

Snow accummulations are predicted to measure 4 to 8 inches at lake level and 8 to 14 above 7,000 feet, which encompasses most of the passes.

Travel may be sketchy with possible whiteout conditions from the gusty winds. Road restrictions will probably apply.

Ski report: Snow on the way



A winter weather advisory is in effect from 11pm tonight through Thursday morning – more powder on the slopes! Here is the ski report from Curtis Fong, the Guy from Tahoe.

Cycling lecture in South Tahoe part of Amgen events

“10 days to Amgen” Pedaling to Peak Performance Lecture is May 12 from 6-8pm at Embassy Suites Lake Tahoe, 4130 Lake Tahoe Blvd., South Lake Tahoe.

In mid-May, thousands will be pouring into the Lake Tahoe region for the start of the Amgen Tour of California, the largest bike race in the nation. To help kick-off this event, Barton Health will have an informative cycling lecture by physical therapist Jason Collin, avid cyclist, certified strength, conditioning and bike fitting specialist during the “10 Days to Amgen” series.

The lecture – designed for cycling athletes of all levels – focuses on increasing pedaling efficacy and power, improving handling performance, decreasing overuse injuries and saddle soreness, as well as reducing or eliminating back, neck and knee pain. Additionally, the lecture will feature a stretching and nutrition components to aid in maximizing bicycling performance.

The lecture is free and open to the public.

One enchanted evening

By Laurie Brazil

STATELINE – The dance floor was crowded for most of the night

Saturday as Soroptimist International of Tahoe Sierra hosted its annual fundraiser Elegant Evening at Harrah’s Lake Tahoe. More than 420 delicious meals were served by the catering staff to the crowd who gathered to support nonprofit group and spend a few dollars at their live and silent auctions.

It was an exciting and fun filled event with a lot of smiling faces and a constant excitement-filled low buzz. The wine was flowing, the hips were swinging and laughter could be heard all throughout the elegantly decorated convention center starting at 6pm.

Young and old were there to share in this year’s festivities including donations on exquisite original art pieces to products and other services from a lot of local businesses and friends.

“I used to work at Barton and live here for many years, and I love the continued community spirit and the great music, so I just had to make it a weekend at the lake. I am taking home some fabulous art, a glider ride plus three of these great bags. We’re having so much fun,” said Jonna Paz Loose, who came up from Santa Cruz.

George Alm, the dapper auctioneer for the evening, emceed during the live auction to get bids for several vacation holidays including one in Carmel another in Maui and one all the way to the blue skies of Montana. Tahoe Douglas Fire Protection District personnel paid a visit to the event to help promote their donation of a dinner at the firehouse with firefighters serving for eight people.



The dance floor filled yet again for another successful Elegant Evening. Photo/Laurie Brazil

The music of the Soul Experience was an added draw for the many fans of this long time community band, which consists of the talented Trey Stone and Rocky Sleight plus the amazing vocals of Carlee Knight.

If interested in attending or joining this group that supports women and children both locally and globally, visit the Facebook page or website at www.sitahoesierra.org for meeting schedules and speakers.

Laurie Brazil is a member of Tahoe Sierra Soroptimist International.

Cowboys wax poetic

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