Convention center creditor trying to find developer

By Kathryn Reed

While nine of the 29 properties involved with the would-be convention center still have not been foreclosed upon, nothing can happen at the South Lake Tahoe site until they are all foreclosed on.

Owens Financial, the largest creditor, is still holding out.

“He is trying to work out something with another developer where it would protect more of his investments,” City Attorney Patrick Enright said of Bill Owens, principal of Owens Financial. “As far as Mr. Owens, we will know in the next two to four weeks if he is successful in bringing someone in.”



The future of this rebar and concrete remains uncertain. Photo/LTN file

Enright would not elaborate about whom Owens is talking to in regards to taking over the development rights on the 11-plus acre site.

Lake Tahoe Development Company filed bankruptcy in October

2009. In December 2010 the creditors decided to begin the foreclosure process.

LTDC had planned to build two hotels, a convention center, retail space and open areas on the land near Stateline.

The city allowed construction to begin without a consolidated parcel map, thus creating one of the delays getting the project out of bankruptcy.

The city believes whoever ends up owning the various parcels will also own the tourist accommodation units and commercial floor area associated with it. Those are items the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency has limited the number of in the Lake Tahoe Basin and thus put a dollar value on.

However, TRPA spokesman Jeff Cowen said, “Everything will stay with the site until permits are executed or expired.”

There are 562 TAUs associated with the property and 26,422-square-feet of CFA.

Opinion: Redevelopment in S. Tahoe is dead

To the community,

On March 11, my wife and I drove around the hole in the ground. I call it the crater, like in bombed out. Nearby properties, former motels, etc. are fenced off. The area is double ugly, like a hurricane smacked it. There’s no telling how much money it will take to clean it up, if and when, something happens to move it “forward” as a redevelopment project.

On redevelopment in SLT



The convention center project from Cedar Avenue. Photos/LTN

At this time it is impossible for the city to sustain its subsidy of $4 million a year to the Redevelopment Agency's debt and stay solvent. Why? Because the source of revenue for the subsidy is shrinking. Without the subsidy, the Redevelopment Agency cannot pay its debt service of $8 million a year. Without the city's subsidy, redevelopment is bankrupt.

To salvage city services at a decent level, the city should stop propping up redevelopment with transient occupancy tax dollars. Redevelopment is a bust and city officials, elected and otherwise must stop devaluing themselves that redevelopment is a godsend.

The Redevelopment Agency is misdirected. Since 1995 the combined tax increment revenues [property taxes] and TOT dollars used for debt service is somewhere between $80 million and $100 million. And the city is left with an empty bag.

It is time to stop dreaming and cut the cord to a stillborn misconception that redevelopment has made this city a good place to live, to work and to visit.

Bill Crawford, South Lake Tahoe



Fenced in Cedar Lodge at Cedar and Friday avenues.



Graffiti on the Blue Jay Lodge on Cedar Street.



Graffiti and boarded up windows at The Block.

Marriage workshop in Incline

FamilyLife, the global, donor-supported leader in marriage getaways, offers an alternative to divorce – the Weekend to Remember marriage getaway. The weekend event aims to strengthen healthy marriages and heal troubled ones in an engaging, supportive and non-threatening environment.

The April 15-17 event is at Hyatt Regency in Incline Village.

Tickets are $159 per person or $318 per couple. Group rates are also available.

For more registration information and details, call 800.358.6329.

Desolation Wilderness permits to be available online only

Desolation Wilderness visitors will be able to make overnight permit reservations online starting March 23. The popular 64,000-acre wilderness area is located in the Eldorado National Forest and the Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit.

The new online service will allow wilderness visitors to make reservations any time of the day. seven days per week. A call center will be available to assist with reservations daily from 7am-9pm in the summer and 7am-7pm in the winter.

The new reservation system will now allow visitors to change

their permit or cancel it. as well as receive a refund as long as they do it a minimum of 15 days from the planned entry date. The cost of making a reservation will increase $1 to $6.

The number of people allowed each day in various areas of this popular wilderness is regulated during the summer months by a quota system.

Forest Service staff will still be available to assist visitors with local information and wilderness trip planning, however, they will no longer accept permit reservations over the phone, through the mail, or by fax. They will also no longer be mailing reserved permits.

Nevada wildlife officials implant microchip in bear cubs

By Jeff Delong, Reno Gazette-Journal

How does one enter an occupied bear den?

Belly-down, face-first and with all due caution.

Nevada Department of Wildlife biologist Carl Lackey demonstrated his technique one day last week in the mountains west of Washoe Valley.

After first darting an irritated mother black bear with tranquilizer – an important step, that one – Lackey squirmed beneath a granite slab and into a den so confined he “couldn’t do a push-up.”

His instructions to a colleague were clear and spoken with emphasis.

“I’m going to have to go in head first and when I say pull me out, pull me out by my feet,” Lackey said. “And pull me out.”

After pushing aside the unconscious 130-pound mother bear, he was pulled free as asked.

Lackey emerged from the hole with the day’s true goal – three yowling, newborn bear cubs.

The cubs, two females and one male, four or five weeks old and weighing a couple of pounds each, were the scientific prize sought by Lackey and biologist Jon Beckmann of the Wildlife Conservation Society.

The biologists are working to gain a better understanding of survival rates of bear cubs in the wild, part of an ongoing body of research that started in 1997 when increasing human-bear conflicts were first noticed in the Lake Tahoe area.

Read the whole story

Miranda Lambert set to perform at Harveys

Harveys Lake Tahoe and Another Planet Entertainment are bringing country music star Miranda Lambert to the Lake Tahoe Summer Concert Series at Harveys Outdoor Arena on Aug. 19 at 7:30pm.

Tickets go on sale March 28 at 10am via Ticketmaster outlets.

Also appearing with Miranda Lambert is country vocal quartet Little Big Town.

Lambert recently kicked-off the Revolution Continues tour with two sold-out shows at the iconic Billy Bob's Texas in Fort Worth, becoming the first artist to sell out back-to-back shows in the history of the venue.

She is fresh off winning a 2011 Grammy Award for Female Country Vocal Performance for "The House that Built Me."

Tickets are $39.50, $59.50, $69.50, $89.50 and $125.50, plus applicable fees.

Woman denied access to affordable senior apartment

By Kathryn Reed

Carol Stiles wants out of her hotel room and into Kelly Ridge.

American Baptist Homes of the West, which runs the affordable senior housing complex in South Lake Tahoe, isn't letting her in even though she had a signed agreement.

Now both parties are in court.



El Dorado County Superior Court Judge Steve Bailey on Wednesday granted a restraining order that in effect says the vacant unit – not the one she was to originally live in – must not be rented to someone else until the next court hearing on April 15.

With occupancy of the 30 one-bedroom and two two-bedroom apartments usually at capacity, getting into Kelly Ridge is difficult under normal circumstances.

Stiles left Jackson, Miss., in mid-January after she found out a unit was available. She had been on a waiting list since summer 2009.

During the drive to California with a family member, Stiles was notified by ABHOW she needed to provide more paperwork. She provided it. And kept providing what was requested.

“Despite the overwhelming evidence and their prior approval, on February 1, 2011, Respondent denied Ms. Stiles application on the grounds that her ‘Income exceeds the income limits established by the program.’ Ms. Stiles was given a handwritten sheet that was purportedly the basis for Respondent’s new calculations,” court documents read. “This sheet contained numerous errors including consideration as income a category which Respondent called ‘earnings/income.’ They derived this title from a category on Ms. Stiles’ financial statement which included both appreciation, and dividends. However, the denial letter indicated that Ms. Stiles could appeal, and she timely filed an appeal on February 2, 2011. It appeared to Ms. Stiles that Respondent made several errors in calculating her income level. Had they done the calculations correctly and as the law requires, she would have been eligible. Since February 2, 2011, Ms. Stiles has been forced to live in hotels pending resolution of these issues.”

She is still in that hotel for at least another month.

Ancel Romero, senior vice president for ABHOW’s affordable housing department, did not return a call.

Jacqueline Mittelstadt, who is representing Stiles, said, “They have not given the legal authority to justify why she is not qualified.”

Mittelstadt said ABHOW approved all of the paperwork, which entails disclosure of all financial records to ensure all residents qualify.

“The reason she was denied is the amount she took out of her retirement account was over the limit,” Mittelstadt said. “But the amount she took out shouldn’t be looked at because regulations don’t consider lump sum withdrawals.”

According to Mittelstadt, ABHOW wants to regulate how residents withdraw their money. This is after the applicant’s financial holdings have been scrutinized and verified to be accurate.

At the April 15 court hearing the judge is likely to determine if a restraining order should be in place until the financial issue is resolved and in doing so would determine if Stiles is likely to prevail.

The more than $9 million Kelly Ridge senior complex opened in August 2009. The bulk of the funding came from:

• California Housing Finance Agency – $4.73 million in tax-exempt bonds.

• South Lake Tahoe through the California HOME Program – $3.4 million loan.

• South Tahoe Redevelopment Agency – $906,000 loan.

EPA detects radiation in

Sacramento from Japan

By Matt Weiser, Sacramento Bee

A monitor in Sacramento maintained by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency today showed slight increases in radiation from sources that are likely from troubled nuclear energy reactors in Japan.

The “beta” category picks up strontium, while the “gamma” category picks up cesium and iodine. All three are constituents typically associated with nuclear energy production.

Read the whole story

Rural Roundup focuses on attracting new visitors to Nevada

Nevada’s statewide rural tourism industry will gather in Mesquite April 6-8 for the 21st Annual Rural Roundup conference in Mesquite to learn the latest trends in developing new markets and attracting more visitors from places far and near, including Las Vegas.

NCOT produces the conference, which will be at the CasaBlanca Resort-Casino-Golf-Spa. Registration day, April 6, includes an optional golf tournament in which visiting travel writers from the United Kingdom will participate, a walking tour of Mesquite and a welcome reception and barbecue at the Mesquite Sports Complex.

Larry Friedman, NCOT’s interim director, said this year’s conference includes tips from three tourism industry partners who successfully tapped into the massive Las Vegas market to attract visitors to their communities.

Rural Roundup registration fees are $65 through March 21 and $80 afterward. To register, go online.

Man arrested in Incline hit-and-run incident

By Reno Gazette-Journal

Update at 2:34 p.m.: The driver has been identified as 23-year-old California resident Luke Craig.

Detectives interviewed and subsequently placed Luke Craig under arrest for attempted murder, battery with a deadly weapon, and hit and run causing injury – all felony charges. Craig was transported to the Washoe County Detention Facility, where he was booked without incident. Luke Craig’s bail is set at $88,000.

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A fight early this morning in Incline Village involved about 20 people, some of whom were throwing glass bottles, the Washoe County Sheriff’s Office reports.

Read the whole story