Ousted Yolo County counsel hired by El Dorado

By Kathryn Reed

Beginning Sept. 2, El Dorado County will have a new county counsel.

Ed Knapp is retiring effective Aug. 29. Taking his place is Robyn Drivon.



Robyn Drivon

Per state law, county counsels serve four-year terms.

“There was about a year and a half left in Lou (Green’s) term when he retired, so the board appointed me as county counsel to fill out the last year and a half of Lou’s term. That term ended May 5, 2014. I advised the board that I didn’t want to put my name in for the next four-year term since I’m 65 years old and didn’t particularly relish the prospect of working until I was 69,” Knapp told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Knapp started with the county as assistant counsel in the early 1990s.

Drivon’s term in Yolo County ended April 5. However, this is from the Feb. 19 *Davis Enterprise*, “The Board of Supervisors emerged from closed session last week with a two-sentence statement announcing that recruitment would be getting under way for a replacement for current County Counsel Robyn Drivon,

but no additional information or explanation was provided. Evaluation of the county counsel, however, was one of the items on the closed session agenda."

Drivon was hired by Yolo County in 2006 as chief counsel, having spent a year as assistant. She also was interim chief administrative officer in 2009.

She has been hired by El Dorado County at step 5, which has a salary range between $12,833.60 and $15,600 per month.

Stephanie McCorkle, public information officer for El Dorado, said finalizing the contract would occur before Drivon starts.

The July 14 El Dorado County supes' meeting minutes say, "She is hired at step 5 of the salary range plus contingent upon board approval on an open agenda item the 5 percent salary increase already scheduled to commence in January 2015 will be accelerated to her start date plus she will be given credit for 80 hours of vacation and 80 hours of sick leave on her start date."

Parents sue company after son's avalanche death

By AP

ANCHORAGE — The parents of a 26-year-old Truckee snowboarder who died after an Alaska avalanche have filed a federal lawsuit against a heli-skiing company, alleging it failed to

assess the danger in the area.

Nickolay Dobov died after the March 2012 Haines-area avalanche hit a group of skiers. Dodov was flown to Seattle for treatment and died there the following day.

The Takhin Ridge avalanche also killed 35-year-old Rob Liberman of Telluride, Colo., who was guiding the group for tour provider Alaska Heliskiing, based in Haines. Liberman was found dead after the snowslide.

Natalia and Alex Dodov allege Alaska Heliskiing also failed to provide more than one guide and adequate radios, among other complaints, the *Alaska Dispatch News* reported. The couple also alleges the company used misleading marketing that implied reduced risks.

A voicemail message left at a telephone number listed for the company was not immediately returned Friday.

Alaska state troopers said 6 to 8 feet of snow buried Nickolay Dobov and Liberman. Everyone in the group was wearing avalanche beacons, and a second nearby group of skiers rushed to help uncover those hit by the snow.

The wrongful-death lawsuit was filed July 16 in U.S. District Court. It seeks an unspecified amount of money, including money for funeral and burial expenses, and to promote backcountry snow safety.

An earlier lawsuit was filed in state court in February, and the venue has since been moved to federal District Court.

Alaska Heliskiing is expected to respond to the lawsuit by Aug. 20.

After their son’s death, the Dodovs created a nonprofit foundation promoting snow sports safety and awareness, and have sought sanctions against the company. They allege Alaska Heliskiing “sought profit above safety,” according to court

records.

The couple also wrote to five U.S. senators last year, urging Congress to investigate.

Nevadans saddled with large amount of debt

By Jeanne Sahadi, CNN Money

NEW YORK – Americans have a debt problem.

An estimated 1 in 3 adults with a credit history – or 77 million people – are so far behind on some of their debt payments that their account has been put "in collections."

That's a key finding from an Urban Institute study.

It examined non-mortgage debt, including credit card bills, car loans, medical bills, child support payments and even parking tickets.

The debt in collections ranged from as little as $25 to a whopping $125,000. But the average amount owed was $5,200.

Geographically, no area of the country is untouched.

Among the states, Nevada had the highest percentage of residents with debt in collections – 47 percent – as well as the highest average amount owed – $7,198. That was helped in part by the Las Vegas metro area, where 49 percent of residents had debt in collections.

Read the whole story

Chautauqua on South Shore

The Lake Tahoe Historical Society will present its first Chautauqua on Aug. 7 at 6:30pm in the Boathouse Theater at Valhalla.
Four influential pioneers will present their stories with featured speaker Mark Twain (aka McAvoy Layne) relating more of the Twain tales.
Tickets are $18 for members and $20 for non-members. They may be purchased at the museum (3058 Lake Tahoe Blvd. from 11am-3pm Wednesday-Sunday) or call 530.541.5458 with credit card number.
Doors open at 6pm.

Full moon hike at Washoe Lake

There will be a full moon walk at Washoe Lake on Aug. 10 from 8:30-10pm.

Participants will walk to the sand dunes and beach while learning why the winds in Washoe Valley are so important to the dunes.

Reservations are required – call 775.687.4319 or email washoelake@hdiss.net. Leave your name, phone number, and the number of people in your party. Staff will call back to confirm reservations.

Wear sturdy hiking boots, and bring water and a flashlight. Dogs are not allowed.

Meeting location will be made known upon registration.

The event is free, except for the $7 parking fee; Nevada residents receive a $2 discount.

Drone disrupts CalFire air space at Sand Fire

By Dan Whitcomb, Reuters

A private drone trying to film a wildfire that has charred nearly six square miles in Northern California briefly disrupted firefighting efforts, although workers had gained the upper hand against the blaze, officials said on Monday.

Fire officials spotted the drone over the Sand Fire on Sunday and immediately called police to find the drone's owner and have the toy grounded to avoid a possible mid-air collision, a California fire official said.

"That drone was flying within our air space and was a hazard for our aircraft," said CalFire spokesman Kevin Lucero. "It essentially inhibited some of our operations going on."

The El Dorado County Sheriff's Office told the *Sacramento Bee* it was investigating the incident. It said the drone's owner was a hobbyist trying to film the blaze.

Read the whole story

Free hands-on science day for children

Children’s Environmental Science Day is Aug. 9 at the Tahoe Center for Environmental Sciences in Incline Village.

The 15th annual event is free from 1-4pm.

Children’s Environmental Science Day includes more than 30 interactive science activities hosted by local organizations, all aimed at children ages 6 and older. The hands-on activities are designed for the whole family.

Visitors will get up close and personal with fish and microscopic zooplankton from Lake Tahoe, learn about native species in the Lake Tahoe Basin, and test the water quality of a stream, along with many other science-based games and activities.

In addition, free ice cream will be provided from 2-4pm by Susie Scoops of Incline Village.

The Tahoe Center for Environmental Sciences is located on the Sierra Nevada College campus at 291 Country Club Drive, Incline Village.

For more information, call 775.881.7560. To volunteer or participate, email Kylee Wilkins at knwilkins@ucdavis.edu or call 775.881-.7560, ext. 7474.

10K race goes from Squaw to Alpine

The Squaw 2 Alpine 10K Challenge is Aug. 23, with proceeds benefiting Squaw Valley Alpine Meadows Foundation and the Humane Society of Truckee-Tahoe.

The race begins at 9amand consists of a 6.2 mile run from Squaw Valley to Alpine Meadows. The trail run is open to runners and walkers, as well as dogs.

Registration for the 10K Challenge is $30 until Aug. 8, or $40 Aug. 9-22. Participants can register their dogs in the “People and Pets” category for an additional $5. Registration is online.

Awards will be presented at 1:15pm at the Center Stage in the Vvillage.

Residents returning home; Sand Fire 75% contained

By Peter Hecht, Sacramento Bee

Firefighters gained the upper hand Monday on a nearly 4,000-acre wildfire in El Dorado and Amador counties, allowing a procession of displaced homeowners to return as most evacuation orders were lifted on the fire’s fourth day.

People returning to the communities of Fair Play, Mount Aukum and Somerset in southern El Dorado County hauled horse trailers back on country roads. They passed signs reading,

“Thank you, firefighters, for valiant efforts saving homes,” and “We love our firefighters.”

In the blaze that destroyed 51 structures, including 13 residences, most people could celebrate over returning to the same homes and lives they left behind.

On Monday, fire officials said the risk had diminished considerably from the Sand fire. The blaze, declared 75 percent contained as of Monday evening, wasn’t spreading. But fire crews, reaching nearly 2,000 personnel, were still attacking hot spots. And the blaze may not be completely extinguished until Aug. 1, officials said.

“The fire is not getting any bigger,” said Ventura County Fire Capt. Ron Oatman, serving as a spokesman for the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection. “But it’s still not fully contained. Even though we don’t have active flames, we have to secure the entire perimeter.”

Authorities have blamed the fire, still under investigation, on a vehicle driving into brush near Sand Ridge Road and Highway 49. The brush was believed to have caught fire, engulfing the vehicle in flames as the blaze spread. No injury was reported.

Read the whole story

CTC funds restoration of old

campground



This cement filled culvert will be removed as part of the restoration efforts at the old Tahoe Pines Campground. Photo/LTN

By Kathryn Reed

For the first time in more than 80 years, an 8-acre parcel in Meyers is about to look a lot more like it did before white people took over the Lake Tahoe Basin.

At the California Tahoe Conservancy board meeting this month, $650,000 was allocated to the restoration of the former Tahoe Pines Campground. (Board members Norma Santiago, Karen Finn and John Hopper were absent.)

In 1932 Alma Mater started the campground. From 1983 until when the CTC bought the land for $4.19 million in 2007 the Poulen family ran it. When the Conservancy board was given a tour of the area in 2008, Greg Poulen told many stories about the flood of 1996. A loud clang would echo through the campground. Another barbecue pit from one of the 59 campsites had been dislodged and was banging along the rocks in the raging river.

“The ground is smashed from years of automobiles. We will try

to get rid of the soft coverage and grow some vegetation," Peter Eichar, lead planner for the site, told *Lake Tahoe News*. "It's heavily armored. There are culverts filled with concrete. We will get rid of the debris."

Work will take place over the course of next summer.

While the public is allowed to access the area today, in a year it should be even a more pleasant place to visit.

"Passive recreation improvements, such as picnic tables, benches, a new bridge, and walking trails will complement the restoration objectives," the staff report says.

But no one expects it to be a destination spot. No trailheads are being built. And the terrain does not link up with any other trails.

It could be a parking area for cyclists, though. Conservancy officials have noticed people using the area to park and then ride South Upper Truckee Road. Caltrans is putting in a Class 2 bike lane along Highway 50 that will be directly in front of the old campground. This, then, will link to the Pat Lowe bike trail.

The current pavement will be removed and a new parking area with 12 slots will be installed.

The major improvements to the site are environmental. The streambed will become more natural like it was before the campground. This means removing the culverts, some of the boulders, and planting vegetation to stabilize the banks of the Upper Truckee River.