Concord cuts programs to Lake Tahoe camp

By Dana Guzzetti, Contra Costa Times

Despite drastic city budget cuts, Camp Concord will be open for families this summer.

However, youth and teen programs at the rustic 29-acre Lake Tahoe camp will be suspended this year. Concord's Day Camp and Back Yard Explorer programs will continue to be open.

Every department in the city has made significant cuts to its budget this year. Concord Mayor Laura Hoffmeister said that $18 million has been cut from the general fund since 2008-2009 and that city staff has been reduced by 24 percent.

"I hope somewhere down the road we can reinstate teen resident camping," said Joan Carrico, Concord director of Community and Recreation Services. "(Teen camp) is very staff intensive. With no parents present it requires a higher level of supervision."

Read the whole story

California looks to another gold rush

By Jessie McKinley, New York Times

SUTTER CREEK – Standing in a cramped, slanted and slippery crevice some 500 feet below the earth's surface, David

Cochrane turned his eyes to a ribbon of marbled quartz – mainly gray, amber and white – and found the one hue he was actually looking for.

“Right there, see? It’s small but it’s very colorful,” Mr. Cochrane said, pointing at a shiny speck no bigger than a seed. “It’s got that nice yellow color.”

It was gold, and if people like Mr. Cochrane have their way, gold will soon be big business again in California’s Mother Lode, in the same area of the Sierras – and occasionally the same mines – where the old-time prospectors once used pick axes, ore carts and burros to chase their riches.

“People say the Mother Lode’s mined out,” said Mr. Cochrane, a vice president with Sutter Gold Mining Inc., based in Colorado. “But that’s not the case.”

Indeed, Sutter Gold is just one of several companies seeking to reignite a long-dormant industry in California, a state whose early history and growth were intimately intertwined with gold’s discovery, excavation and exploitation.

Most of California’s large mines closed after World War II as price controls made the business model unappealing. But with controls gone, and gold now selling at more than $1,300 an ounce, the math makes sense again.

Read the whole story

Homewood ski area proposals

divide W. Shore community

By Kathryn Reed

KINGS BEACH – Art Chapman is a man who knows what he wants. What he wants is to turn Homewood Mountain Resort into a profitable year-round destination.

What locals want is a mixed bag. Thirty-three people spoke at a public hearing Feb. 23 before the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency. It was split between those who want the West Shore community to stay as it is and those who want it revitalized; with a few in the middle.

The 2,000-page draft environmental impact statement and environmental impact report for the resort are out for public comment. At Wednesday's meeting it was revealed this period has been extended to a total of 90 days, with the cutoff being April 21.

Six alternatives are proposed. One is to close the ski resort if the figures don't pencil out to make a profit.

Chapman is president and chairman of JMA Ventures, the San Francisco company that bought Homewood in summer 2006. At that time the 1,400-acre resort with 1,260 skiable acres was losing money under the ownership of pistachio farmer Jeff Yurosek. Chapman said he planned to turn the ledger black.



JMA President Art Chapman wants to turn

Homewood into a viable ski resort. Photo/Kathryn Reed

He hasn't.

Homewood, Chapman told the Governing Board, has lost nearly $5 million from 2006 to 2009. An auditor has not verified the negative 2010 figures so he is not releasing those.

To make a profit, the resort needs to attract an average of 700 skiers a day during the week. That would be an increase of 400 a day, Chapman said.

JMA wants to build 99 residential units, a 75-room hotel, have underground parking for lodging and a parking structure for day use, replace two lifts – one with a gondola, and build a mid-mountain day lodge.

Talking one-on-one with *Lake Tahoe News*, Chapman said the project could start in 2013, would be completed in two phases over five years, would require one season of limited skiing, and would provide 180 year-round jobs.

He anticipates full-time residents occupying the housing units.

The 15,000-square-feet of retail would include a deli, ice cream parlor and hardware store. Chapman said that is what residents requested. The day lodge will come with a pool for the community. Opening the mountain to hiking and improving the bike trail in the area are also on the table.

What concerns many who spoke in opposition to the development is the size of the project and how it may change the look and feel of this area on Highway 89 that is nearly right on Lake Tahoe. Many also don't believe the stats provided about air

quality and how vehicle miles traveled will be reduced. Concern about the height of the structures was also brought up. Creating light pollution in an area that provides unobstructed views to the Milky Way was another concern.

After the public had its say, the Governing Board echoed some of those concerns and asked for answers. (Board member Claire Fortier, who represents South Lake Tahoe, left before hearing public comment because of a commitment she said she had before being appointed to the TRPA board.)



Developers want the proposed amphitheater to be the permanent home to the Lake Tahoe Music Festival.

Board member Casey Beyer was perplexed by how the TRPA measures height.

Executive Director Joanne Marchetta replied, “The way we measure height we compare apples to televisions. There is great room for misunderstanding.”

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.

Board member Byron Sher carried forward the public's concern about the amendments and code changes that would be required. His contention is codes need to be changed and then the project brought to the board.

Colleague Nancy McDermid told him that isn't possible. She learned this in her four years on the Douglas County Planning Commission. She said it's impossible to know what building codes will be in 10 years, so the rules need to continue to be tweaked to keep up with the times.

Marchetta explained this property straddles three plan area statements that are "old and disjointed."

"A lot of the amendments are to address inconsistencies made 2½ decades ago when we didn't know what this ski area would be," Marchetta said.

Friends of the West Shore is a group opposed to the development. The organization is conducting a survey to see what people have to say about the developer's plan.

The League to Save Lake Tahoe sent a press release Feb. 18 stating its opposition as well as having a representative speak Wednesday.

Amanda Royal, spokeswoman for the League, told *Lake Tahoe News* after the meeting that ended at 4:35pm, it's possible some project at Homewood would work, but not this one. She said the League's focus is on making sure the thresholds TRPA is mandated to uphold are not violated.

Even though economics was a common theme throughout the day, Royal said that is not a threshold and therefore is not a concern of the League's.

The League's release said, "In the past several years, the TRPA has changed course dramatically to a piecemeal approach to planning at Tahoe. Projects are negotiated on a case-by-

case basis. The process is clearly flawed as it has produced several projects that have received stunning exceptions to Tahoe's rules. Each irresponsible project sets the stage for more irresponsible projects down the road, creating an unpredictable system that overall endangers Tahoe's unique ecological values."

Board member Shelly Aldean seemed to pick up on this sentiment when she asked whether staff had looked at other projects in the works or was this an isolated analysis.

The answer by TRPA staff was they look at funded and unfunded projects.

"I would think then the improvement at Fanny Bridge should have been included," Aldean said.

The bridge in Tahoe City is a choke point for traffic. However, seismic and other concerns require it to be replaced, which will also come with realignment. None of this is in the environmental documents.

A copy of the draft EIS/EIR is available on the TRPA's website.

Estate planning workshop

Attorney Jacqueline Mittelstadt is offering two seminars on estate planning.

Both start at 5:30pm. One is March 10, the other March 11. Both are on the South Shore.

Reasons to attend and learn about living trusts:

1) To avoid giving your money to the government;

2) Ensure loved ones are provided for;

3) Avoid wasting money and time on unnecessary court fees;

4) Retain control over your assets.

Wine and cheese will be served. Space is limited. Call to reserve a seat, (530) 307.9412 or email jm@mittelstadtlaw.com.

Discounts apply for all who attend.

Science Expo for families in Incline

UC Davis's Tahoe Environmental Research Center in partnership with the Tahoe Expedition Academy will host the sixth annual Science Expo. The Science Expo features interactive experiments and demonstrations for children grades 3–6 (ages 8–12) and their families.

The Science Expo is open to the general public on the evening of March 16 from 4–6pm at the Tahoe Center for Environmental Sciences in Incline Village.

Ice cream will be provided by Susie Scoops of Incline Village and UC Davis TERC. Admission is free.

The 2011 Science Expo will showcase 20 hands-on investigations that explore Earth Science concepts such as:

* Erosion

* Atmospheric Processes

* Fossilization

* Astronomy

* The Properties of Rocks and Minerals

* 3-D Geographic Visualizations – Bathometry and Topography.

Interest in the event has grown tremendously. Last year, nearly 700 people, students and parents, participated in the Science Expo. The event is hosted annually and operates according to a three-year cycle; thematic emphases include Earth Science (2011), Life Science (2012), and Physical Science (2013).

This year, students from Tahoe City, Kings Beach, Incline Village and South Lake Tahoe will be attending during the school days of March 16-18. High school students participating in the Youth Science Institute will facilitate science investigations with the younger students in the community. Lake Tahoe School middle school students and parents in the community will also participate. UC Davis Americorps volunteers and docents will also be staffing some of the activity stations, however, additional volunteers are still needed.

If you or someone you know is interested in volunteering, contact volunteer coordinator Mary Danahey at (650) 743.2309 or email marydanahey@gmail.com.

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

Opinion: Washington needs to learn bipartisanship

Publisher's note: ***This editorial is from the Feb. 22, 2011, Las Vegas Sun.***

The No. 1 domestic priority in Washington should be job creation, although one wouldn't know it by the way House Republicans are pandering to their party's hard-core base. By approving a draconian measure Saturday to slash more than $60 billion from the federal budget, the majority led by House Speaker John Boehner of Ohio demonstrated it is more willing to waste time on legislation that everyone knows will not pass the Democrat-led Senate than it is prepared to focus on sound economic policies.

Approving deep budget cuts simply to appease Tea Party adherents who don't care much for federal government isn't the magical answer that will suddenly help drive down Nevada's double-digit unemployment rate to healthier pre-recession levels. Employers aren't going to create jobs simply because a group of lawmakers wants to shred the budget. The formula it takes to cure the sluggish economy is far more complex than the one-dimensional solution Boehner and his adherents have proposed.

The first step that is necessary is a willingness to forge bipartisan compromise on major legislation that can have an effect on the economy. As Sen. Ron Wyden, D-Ore., told The New York Times: "The first thing you have got to realize is that real bipartisanship has to be a verb, not a noun, and it means getting people talking about specifics. I do interpret this election as one where people were saying: 'Knock it off! We're tired of this food fight.' "

Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid of Nevada senses the need

for bipartisanship on the budget, noting that fellow Democrats have proposed $41 billion in cuts. That plan recognizes the need to cut wasteful spending without going overboard. A key difference is that the Democratic proposal would spare the jobs of 65,000 educators, the very resource needed to produce a better-trained workforce to help America compete with other nations in the 21st century. House Republicans want to eliminate those jobs, which is one of the worst things that can happen while this nation's economic recovery remains fragile.

Read the whole story

Choices for Children fundraiser

All you can eat chili for just $1 on March 3 from 5-10pm at Coyote Grill in Round Hill.

Proceeds benefit Choices for Children.

Any questions, call Kathy at (530) 541.5848.

Drinking running club winds up in court against Aerojet

By Andy Furillo, Sacramento Bee

They call it a “hash” and they hold them from Lake Tahoe to Davis – runs for the fun-loving who like to mix a few beers in with their jogging miles.

There’s the “Donut Dash Hash” scheduled for next month in Land Park, and for anybody who can’t wait for the “4/20 Hash” on April 20, there’s the “Can’t Wait for 4/20 Hash” on April 16.

But some of the fun has gone out of the hash in the last few years. A routine, mid-week jog that veered into Aerojet-General spawned a lawsuit and a countersuit. It also cooled off the mojo of the Sacramento Hash House Harriers, the local franchise of a worldwide organization that calls itself “The Drinking Club with a Running Problem.”

“People were quite scared afterward,” said Daniel, a 45-year-old South Lake Tahoe engineer whose telephone number is on the harriers’ website, but who declined to give his last name for fear it would affect his job.

The trouble began on May 16, 2007, the date of a hash on Aerojet property that one member described as “epic.” The run started at the Nimbus Fish Hatchery, crept along the Folsom South Canal, and then cut off into 8,500 acres of Aerojet wildland, where scientists test rocket launchers and cruise missiles and chemicals that can kill on contact.

Read the whole story

Heart Opening Retreat

The Heart Opening Retreat at Zephyr Point Conference is May 5-8.

Find your authentic voice and be completely supported in the

process as you deepen your awareness of the real you, outside of your roles and stories. Experience a true connection with yourself and others as you practice honoring yourself and communicating your true feelings.

The retreat is facilitated by presenter/performing artist Kathy Zavada and meditation trainer Sarah McLean.

Retreat fees start at $375.

For more information, email sedonameditation@gmail.com or call (928) 204.0067.

National Pancake Day

In celebration of National Pancake Day, IHOP restaurants nationwide – including the one in South Lake Tahoe – will offer each guest a free short stack of buttermilk pancakes in an effort to raise awareness and funds for Children's Miracle Network Hospitals.

This year, IHOP is hoping to stack up more donations than before, with a goal to raise $2.3 million, for a total of more than $7.65 million in six years.

Diners will be asked to leave a little something behind. Tahoe donations will benefit the Children's Miracle Network Hospitals' programs at UC Davis Children's Hospital.

Pancake Day is March 1 from 7am-10pm.

Pancake Day is a tradition that dates back several centuries to when the English prepped for fasting during Lent. Strict rules prohibited the eating of all dairy products during Lent, so pancakes were made to use up the supply of eggs, milk,

butter and other dairy products.

This year, IHOP’s National Pancake Day will come one week early, as the popular annual campaign has evolved into a monthlong celebration that takes place during the month of February. It will culminate with the free flapjack giveaway on March 1.