Opinion: Advice for SLT council regarding medical marijuana

By Steve Kubby

How safe are medical marijuana patients in South Lake Tahoe? What will the proposed new cultivation ordinance by the City Council mean for patients? What can the City Council do to actually help patients live without the fear of a violent home invasion by drug police? These are unanswered questions that are of enormous concern and critical importance to the medical marijuana community.

It's been nearly 15 years since the people of California wrote and passed Prop. 215, the Compassionate Use Act. You'd think that by now the medical marijuana community would feel safe, but nothing could be farther from the truth. Fifteen years after voters approved the medical use of marijuana, patients are still living in fear. Sadly, sick, disabled and dying patients are still under assault from hostile police and intrusive agencies such as the DEA and Child Protective Services.

Just the other day I helped a mother who was raided by police for growing 15 cannabis plants, which is over the California state limit. The police not only took all her plants and medicine, they reported her to CPS who took both of her children. Apparently, nobody told the police or CPS that the courts have ruled the state limit is unconstitutional and no longer in effect. Fortunately we found her an attorney and plan to raise money for her.

We worry about police who engage in juvenile and mean-spirited attacks on those who use medical marijuana. When officers are in positions of authority in law enforcement, we expect them

to set aside any personal bias and exercise fairness and restraint while interacting with members of the public.

We worry about a proposed cultivation ordinance that requires patients to publicly reveal their activities and location, thereby exposing themselves to home invasions by drug police or burglars. Patients have the legal right not to disclose that they use or cultivate cannabis and the City needs to respect their privacy.

We worry about a City Council that wants to force patients to jump through regulatory hoops and pay arbitrary fees, but won't provide patients with any actual protection in return. It's time for the City Council to look at what actually needs to be done to protect patients, instead of focusing entirely on regulating them.

For example, the council should consider doing the following:

1. Pass an ordinance that no city officials or police may cooperate or assist in any investigation involving the medical use of marijuana, unless factual evidence has been obtained showing non-medical diversion.

2. Notify the El Dorado County sheriff that we do not want DEA agents receiving any local police support for medical marijuana related investigations or raids.

3. Pass an ordinance that before any raid takes place, the police must confirm the person they are raiding is not a patient. If a raid is authorized and the person being raided can produce a letter from a physician which authorizes the use of medical marijuana, then that raid should be immediately terminated and investigated.

4. Pass an ordinance that protects bona fide patients from having their children taken from them by Child Protective Services, solely on the basis that cannabis is being consumed or cultivated in the home.

5. Request that the district attorney treat the shooting of a family pet by drug police with the same gravity as if the police had shot a human member of the family.

6. Notify the South Lake Tahoe police chief that the city wants medical marijuana to be handled by the Health Department, not the police. Since the Compassionate Use Act is codified as 11362.5 of the Health and Safety Code, not the Criminal Code, it only makes sense to have the Health Department replace the police. Thankfully, the South Lake Tahoe Police Department has done an outstanding job of respecting the rights of medical marijuana patients and dispensaries. However, we have a new Chief and the City needs to be sure to encourage him to follow the current policy.

7. If a patient is suspected of being in violation then the city should ensure that the first response will be a letter, then a visit, and if no response, a citation. The City should have a clear policy that the first response NEVER includes a SWAT team kicking down your door in the middle of the night and tossing a concussion grenade into your living room..

The City Council must take these issues seriously and understand the gravity of the situation faced by medical marijuana patients who must rely upon a medicine that inevitably brings them into conflict with misguided and hostile members of law enforcement.

See for yourself what these raids are about and why patients live in such fear of the police. Here’s the video: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RbwSwvUaRq.

St*eve Kubby is a South Lake Tahoe resident who helped write Proposition 215.*

California first state to adopt energy-efficient light bulb standards

By Mark Glover, Sacramento Bee

Californians will see the light – and a resulting energy cost savings – earlier than the rest of the United States.

The California Energy Commission says Golden State consumers will be the first in the nation to save money under a federal law improving the energy-efficiency standard of light bulbs.

The standard outlined in the Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007 says that a 100-watt bulb manufactured on or after a set date must use 28 percent less energy than a traditional 100-watt incandescent light bulb. In effect, the bulb cannot use more than 72 watts.

The federal law set adoption of the standard on Jan. 1, 2012, but California was given authority to implement it one year earlier to avoid sales of 10.5 million comparatively inefficient 100-watt bulbs in 2011.

The estimated cost savings to consumers for that alone is $35.6 million.

Read the whole story

Crime prevention conference in Minden

Douglas County Sheriff's Department and Reno Police Department are partnering to support the Crime Prevention Conference for area property owners, managers, and law enforcement officials.

This is an innovative, law enforcement based crime prevention solution designed to help "Keep Illegal Activity out of Rental Property".

The free conference is Jan. 13 from 8am-5pm at the Carson Valley Inn, 1627 Highway 395, Minden.

The program was developed in 1992 by Tim Zehring, a retired 22-year veteran of the Mesa (Ariz.) Police Department.

The program consists of three phases that must be completed under the supervision of your local law enforcement agency. Property managers can become individually certified after completing training in each phase and the property becomes certified upon successful completion of all three phases.

The anticipated benefits are reduced law enforcement calls for service, a more stable resident base, and reduced exposure to civil liability.

When drug criminals and other destructive tenants operate out of rental property, neighborhoods suffer and owners and landlords pay a high price. That price may include:

• Decline in property values – particularly when the activity begins affecting the reputation of the neighborhood.

• Property damage arising from abuse, retaliation, or neglect; property damage from police raids.

• Fire resulting from manufacturing or growing operations.

Civil penalties, including temporary closure of the property – or even property seizure. Loss of rent during the eviction and repair periods.

• Fear and frustration when dealing with dangerous and threatening tenants. Increased resentment and anger between neighbors and property managers.

• The loss of other valued tenants.

To reserve a spot, call Melanie Arnold at (775) 790.6694.

South Tahoe asks employees, citizens what they want

By Kathryn Reed

This month results of two surveys administered by South Lake Tahoe will be released.

In December employees of the city were asked to answer 71 questions from five categories – communications within the city, my supervisor, my work group, quality of the work environment, and the city as an employer.

City Manager Tony O'Rourke said he could not find any evidence of such a survey being done in the 45 years the city has been incorporated.

"We will have action plans for the survey results within 30 days of the findings," O'Rourke told *Lake Tahoe News*. "Department heads and manager will be accountable to make the

changes.”

Bill Chiat, a consultant with Alta Mesa Group, is spearheading the process for both surveys. He is expected to share the employee survey results with department heads in mid-January.

Although there were rumors polls were being taken after the employee sessions, *Lake Tahoe News* could find no evidence of this to be true. Employees could talk to each other about how they answered the questions, but neither the unions nor management organized any strategy to gauge results prior to them being collated by the consultant.

More than 90 percent of employees took the survey, O’Rourke said.

Results from the community survey will be available later this month, with the goal of having at least the raw data for when the City Council has its strategic planning session the afternoon of Jan. 25.

Drilling down to compare South Tahoe’s data to cities of similar size will take some time, with that analysis possibly not available until February. The last time a citizen survey was taken was 2008. Almost the identical questions were asked so the city can make comparisons to responses.

Nearly 3,000 surveys were sent to a random selection of residential addresses. Questions start with ranking quality of life in South Lake Tahoe and end with items about the budget.

There are 22 questions, but many are multi-dimensional, so it’s really longer than that.

O’Rourke is interested to see if the 69 percent who ranked the aesthetics of the town fair to poor in 2008 feel the same way.

“Clearly that issue has been raised in the past and has not been addressed,” he said.

The cost of the two surveys is about $16,000 combined, which comes out of the professional services budget. O'Rourke would like such surveys to be a line item in future budgets. He intends to conduct surveys annually to track trends.

"I'm not overly concerned what the issues are. The focus needs to be addressing them. The focus needs to be on the process of constantly improving, not laying blame and retribution," O'Rourke said. "No matter how good we think we are there are opportunities for improvement."

Here is the employee survey and the citizen survey, as well as the 2008 survey results.

UNR beats Boston College in Kraft Bowl

By Chris Murray, Reno Gazette-Journal

First quarter

After winning the coin toss and electing to receive, the Wolf Pack quickly moved into BC territory before a Kaleb Ramsey sack of Colin Kaepernick killed the drive and forced a punt. On the Pack's next possession, Kaepernick fumbled on a third-down play and it was recovered by BC's Donnie Fletcher. Eagles running back Andre Williams scampered 30 yard around the left end on the next play to put BC up 7-0. Nevada answered on its next possession after Kaepernick extended the drive with two completions on third downs and then hit Rishard Matthews on a 27-yard touchdown pass to make it 7-7. After a BC three-and-out, Matthews returned the ensuing punt 72 yards for a touchdown to put Nevada up 14-7.

Read the whole story

Opinion: Was Saturday's rampage really unimaginable?

By Laurie Roberts

On Saturday, Gov. Jan Brewer stepped before the podium outside the old state Capitol to speak to a nation looking at us, and perhaps to us, for answers. Like every Arizonan, she was shaken. Like all of us, she was shocked and straining to understand how such horror could happen in our beloved state.

"(It is) an unbelievable tragedy that the people of Arizona experienced today," she said. "One of which, of course, in our worst nightmares we … never could have imagined would have taken place."

Couldn't we?

On Monday, Brewer will step before the podium and open the 2011 session of the Arizona Legislature. A Legislature that has slashed funding for the seriously mentally ill. A Legislature that has loosened gun laws to the point that any nutball can legally walk around with a pistol in his pants.

We don't yet know what role, if any, the actions of the Legislature played in what happened on Saturday. But if ever there was a time to re-examine the cliff we are headed toward, this tragedy certainly provides it.

"We're the Tombstone of the United States of America," Pima County Sheriff Clarence Dupnik said on Sunday and really, who could disagree.

The first bill filed for the legislative session that gets underway Monday is Senate Bill 2001, which would allow faculty members to pack heat on Arizona's college campuses and to heck with what the police think about the idea. The bill's sponsor, Sen. Jack Harper, R-Glendale, didn't return a call to talk about it in light of this weekend's events.

Laurie Roberts is a columnist for the Arizona Republic.

Read the whole story

TripAdvisor officials to speak in Stateline

Representatives from TripAdvisor will give a presentation at this month's South Lake Tahoe Lodging Association meeting.

The meeting is Jan. 13 at 9:30am at the Lake Tahoe Visitors Authority office in Stateline.

The discussion will be about the website and tools to help businesses leverage their exposure.

Arizona shooting victims have ties to Reno

By Denise Wong, KOLO TV

That shooting tragedy in Arizona is hitting very close to

home. We've learned two of the victims had grown up in Reno and raised their children here.

76-year-old Dorothy Morris was one of the six people killed in the shooting. She was known as Dorothy Burns when she was a student at Reno High School. That's where she met her future husband, George Morris. He was also shot and is in the hospital. The couple's friends can't believe what's happened.

"They're so well known here in Reno. They were born and raised here. High school sweethearts," says Marilyn Melton. She's still in shock after learning what's happened to Dorothy and George Morris, near their home in Arizona. Before the couple moved to the Tucson area about 13 years ago, they had built a life here in Reno.

Read the whole story

No foul play suspected in New Year's death at Stateline

Douglas County sheriff's deputies do not believe the death of a 26-year-old man on New Year's Day is the result of foul play.

However, Nevada law requires all unattended deaths be investigated as homicides. Toxicology reports may not be available for two months.

David Marriner, an Incline Village High School graduate who was living in Southern California, was found at the bottom of a stairwell at the Horizon casino in Stateline.

Sheriff's Capt. John Milby said Marriner's injuries were

consistent with having fallen down stairs. It is not known how long he was there before being discovered.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Reward offered for info about damage done to Gardnerville park

The Douglas County Sheriff's Office is seeking the public's help in identifying a suspect wanted for Destruction of Property at Heritage Park in Gardnerville.

The park off Gilman Avenue and Courthouse Alley was damaged sometime between Dec. 31 and Jan. 3.

The damage was committed by an unknown person who intentionally drove his/her vehicle on the grass and spun their tires while driving in circles.

In addition to the grass that was damaged, five valve boxes and other irrigation parts were also damaged in the incident. The value of repair is estimated at $3,000.

A reward of up to $250 is being offered to anyone with information leading to the arrest and conviction of the suspect. Your identity is not needed and you will remain anonymous.

Anyone with information regarding this incident is urged to call Secret Witness at (775) 782.7463); or DCSO Valley Investigations Office at (775) 782.9905.