USFS looking for project proposals

The U.S. Forest Service, Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit is accepting Round 12 project proposals for Lake Tahoe restoration projects authorized by the Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act. Project proposal packages will be accepted through the close of business Nov. 30.

To submit a Capital Project, click here.

City to erect signs to deter walkers near convention center site

By Kathryn Reed

Trying to prevent a lawsuit and provide public safety, the South Lake Tahoe City Council on Tuesday agreed to increase the signage at the bankrupt convention center site so people will know not to walk on the north side of Highway 50.

Tiny signs are at either end of the dormant construction site saying to not walk there and to cross the street. But they don’t always work based on the number of people seen walking

there.



Cyclists don't have much leeway on Highway 50 by the convention center project. Photo/Kathryn Reed

Caltrans approved an encroachment permit Dec. 3, 2008, which expired Aug. 1, 2009. Nichols Engineering had designed a plan to make the area better for pedestrians, but Lake Tahoe Development Company nixed that idea, according to city staff.

LTDC filed for bankruptcy in October 2009 on the 11-acre parcel and is awaiting the judge's December decision to know the future. At this time, according to city staff, LTDC won't put any money into making the area better for walkers/cyclists.

When the fencing first went up around the concrete and rebar, signs on the wooden fence facing the highway had pictures of what the end project would look like. Those have long since been removed.

Insiders say the $410 million project the city and Randy Lane's Lake Tahoe Development Company agreed to will not resemble what will eventually go on this prime piece of real estate near Stateline. Most people close to the project tell

Lake Tahoe News a convention center is not likely to be built. High-end lodging is expected to be a component.

Before anything gets built, the city has agreed to put up more signs so people don't walk by the area. A narrow strip of asphalt barely wide enough for a cyclist separates traffic from the K-rail – those concrete barriers.

"I would recommend both signage and a boardwalk if funding is available," city engineer Stan Hill told the council Nov. 2.

The council was presented with three plans Tuesday – leave the area as it is, implement the K-rail plan prepared by Nichols Engineering at a cost of about $30,000, or establish a pedestrian access path with Caltrans for about $150,000.



No sidewalk here to get to the other side.

Councilman Hal Cole came up with the fourth idea, which the council agreed to, that is to put more signs up deterring people from walking on the north side of the street. At what cost this will be is unknown.

The money for any work at the site would come from the $365,000 that is collected in tax increment revenue each year from the site. The Teeter Law allows the county to pay the city property taxes from the site despite the property owner not actually paying a dime for year. But that income source will dry up in about 18 months per state law.

Ernie’s secret ingredient – 30 years of good employees

By Kathryn Reed

Plates of food barely leave the cook’s hands before a waitress picks them up. Steam rises from the late morning breakfast order. Hot coffee is being poured to a crowd that doesn’t care it’s almost noon. Money is exchanged.

The waitress – Betsy Sommerfeldt; the coffee pourer – Judy Bruso; and the cashier – Paul Bruso are a formidable trio. Sommerfeldt has worked for Paul Bruso almost since the day he bought Ernie’s Coffee Shop 30 years ago. The Brusos have been married for the last 20 years.



Betsy Sommerfeldt has been taking order at Ernie's for nearly 30 years. Photos/Kathryn Reed

Longevity in the restaurant business is a rarity. Longevity in

Tahoe seems even more rare. A packed house in a recession is impressive.

Drive by the South Lake Tahoe eatery that serves breakfast and lunch seven days a week from 6am-2pm and the parking lot off Emerald Bay Road is nearly always full.

Bruso credits his staff of 20 full-time workers for the success of Ernie's. (Students fill in on a part-time basis during the busy summer season.)

"Good employees create good service, create good food, create a good environment," Bruso said. "If you have a great staff, you are going to be OK. We treat people right and they treat us right."

Sommerfeldt has had job offers through the years, but has never seriously considered turning in her apron for another line of work.

She, like the other waitresses, has locals and tourists who come in specifically requesting to be seated in her section.

"It's kind of like a Cheers atmosphere where everyone knows your name," Sommerfeldt said.

Being a people person makes this line of work ideal for the 51-year-old. She says the interaction with customers is the best part of the job.

Sommerfeldt also has complimentary things to say about the Brusos. She likes that they are hands-on owners. She says their personalities balance each other out – with Paul being a type-A personality and Judy bringing a more calming influence.

The pay is good; hours are flexible – making for employees to be able to enjoy the Tahoe lifestyle. Tips are pooled, so co-workers make sure everyone is pulling their weight. Paid vacation and profit sharing are part of the deal.

Even though the Brusos seem to live at Ernie's, they have plenty of faith in the staff to be able to get away on a regular basis – which could be spending four weeks walking 500 miles across Spain or a month's vacation on the East Coast.

Ingredients of success

Besides the staff, Bruso credits being involved in the community as part of his success story.

"You need to be involved and concerned about what goes on in the community," Bruso said. "We believe in supporting locals, the kids, the schools. That's what makes a community."

Burger nights are one of the most popular fundraisers. Of the approximately 120 Ernie's has hosted for various groups, more than $300,000 has been raised.

When it comes to the food, changes are continually made.

"We rarely take anything off. We add things based on customer requests or ideas from employees," Bruso explained.

Cassie Chandler, a trainer at Push Fitness, suggested meals infused with more protein. Some of her recipes have been incorporated into the daily mix. (See recipe below.)

"We don't like to tell people what to eat, but we like to have things available no matter what they want to eat," Bruso explained.

The Brusos have been eating a vegan diet for about nine months. But that doesn't mean meat, eggs and cheese are about to disappear. It just means more vegan options for diners.

Eve Hall doesn't change her order – it's always eggs over easy, hash browns and sausage.

"It's always consistently good," the longtime South Tahoe resident said of the food at Ernie's.

For Dave Anderson, he used to get the Mountain Man breakfast (6 link sausages or 6 slices of bacon or 4 country sausage patties or a slab o'ham, with 3 eggs, hash browns or home fries, side of biscuit and country gravy). Now he's on a gluten free diet. But Ernie's can accommodate him so he's still a regular.

Times change

One of the biggest changes occurred seven years ago when the Brusos went from renting the building across the street to having a larger building constructed for Ernie's that they (and the bank) own.

Sommerfeldt said it was an adjustment to get used to the bigger layout and it being noisier, but says overall it is much better.

She said one of the other things to get used to was going to computers.

"I can't believe we added checks by hand all those years," Sommerfeldt said.

The Brusos don't intend to go anywhere anytime soon. Paul Bruso said they might be around for the 40th- and 50th-year celebrations as well.

Ernie's first opened in 1968. It had a few owners until the 30-year-old Bruso bought it in 1980.

"I like the name Ernie's better than calling Paul's," he said.

To celebrate their 30th anniversary, the entire menu will be half price Nov. 8-12. It's their way of saying thank you to the locals who keep them afloat in the off-season.

Ernie's Cassie Chandler-inspired Protein Pancakes

3 egg whites

1 T yogurt

1 T crushed pineapple

1 scoop vanilla protein powder

½ tsp cinnamon

½ C oatmeal

1 tsp coconut extract

1 T applesauce

Mix ingredients in blender until smooth.

Cook in pan with unrefined coconut oil.

Topping choices – agave, peanut butter, applesauce.

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STHS athletes bringing home top honors

South Tahoe High School’s athletic program has much to celebrate from the fall season.

· The boys cross country team (team GPA 3.69) and girls tennis team (team GPA 3.73) are the Nevada State Academic Team Champions.

· The boys cross country team is the Northern Nevada Regional Champion.

· The girls cross country team placed second in Northern

Nevada Region.

The boys and girls cross country teams compete Nov. 5 in Boulder City in the Nevada State Championships.

· The boys and girls soccer teams are trying to qualify for the state tournament in Mesquite on Nov. 11-12.

· The girls tennis team earned the Sierra League Championship trophy.

· The girls volleyball team qualified for the Northern Nevada Regional Tournament. The is trying to qualify for the state championships.

· Morgan Murphy placed second in the state 3A Girls Golf Championship.

· The All League Teams and All State Academic teams will be named in the next two weeks.

The Fall Sports Award Night is Nov. 10 at 5pm in the Blue Gym.

Harrah's loses $164.8 mil. in third quarter

By Steve Green, Las Vegas Sun

Harrah's Entertainment Inc. of Las Vegas today posted a third quarter loss as costs expanded and customers spent less on the Las Vegas Strip and around the country.



The company lost $164.8 million in the quarter, a turnaround from 2009's third quarter when Harrah's lost $1.7 billion.

Both quarters included charges against earnings for impairment of intangible assets. The charges were $44 million in the 2010 quarter and $1.328 billion in the 2009 quarter.

Net revenue of $2.289 billion in the third quarter of 2010 was up slightly from $2.282 billion in the year-ago quarter, with revenue affected positively by the acquisition of Planet Hollywood on the Las Vegas Strip but hurt nationwide by "the continuing impact of the recession on customers' discretionary spending."

Read the whole story

Prescribed burn on South Shore

U.S. Forest Service fuels management crews will conduct prescribed fire operations at Tahoe Mountain Road and Angora Ridge Road on Lake Tahoe's South Shore beginning Nov. 6 and possibly continuing into Nov. 7.



The project size may be up to 20 acres.

Operations will continue in the McKinney/Rubicon, Meeks Bay and Blackwood Canyon areas through early next week.

Residents and visitors can expect to see smoke from prescribed fire project areas. Smoke management is part of every prescribed fire burn plan, and efforts will be taken to reduce actual or potential smoke impacts on community areas.

This and other prescribed fire projects are designed to reduce wildfire risks to communities and critical resources. State and local fire management agencies may also be conducting prescribed fire work during this period.

Literary Journal Lollapalooza

Literary Journal Lollapalooza at Bona Fide Books in Meyers is the celebration for two Lake Tahoe literary journals – the Edge and the Kokanee.

The event is Nov. 18 from 7-10pm, 1069 Magua St., No. 4, Meyers – behind the Getaway Cafe.

Barton Foundation gives $26,000 to 9 organizations

Barton Foundation and Barton Health's Community Advisory Committee on Nov. 5 gave more than $26,000 in grants to several South Lake Tahoe groups. The Foundation received 22 proposals and nine were awarded.

Lake Tahoe Children's Dental Coalition received $10,000 – the largest sum.

Other recipients include:

* We Can! "Funding for the Spanish Language Learning Program" $7,500;

* Police Activities League "Local Youth Programs" $1,500;

* Tahoe Youth & Family Services "The Backpack Buddies Program" for at-risk youth $1,500;

* Family Resource Center "Nutritional Snacks and Education for Latino Youth" $1,500;

* Bijou Community School "Equipment for Physical Education Classes" $1,415 and $900 for the Walk-A-Thon prizes;

* Sports Connection "Funding for Local Youth to Participate in Athletic Programs" $1,000;

* NAMI "Funding for medications of mentally ill patients" $1,000.

Garrido competency hearing set for March

By Sam Stanton, Sacramento Bee

Phillip Garrido's competence to stand trial in the Jaycee Lee Dugard kidnapping will not be decided until a hearing in early March, an El Dorado Superior Court judge decided Thursday, and more mental health experts may be appointed to examine him before then.

Judge Douglas Phimister also said he would allow arguments in early December by a lawyer for The Bee and other media groups seeking to have dozens of documents in the case unsealed, including Garrido's psychiatric records and transcripts of Dugard's secret testimony to a grand jury in September about her 18 years of captivity.

Garrido and his wife, Nancy, are accused of kidnapping Dugard in 1991 when she was 11 and holding her captive. As the case has proceeded over the past year, the judge has sealed about 29 documents and held a number of closed hearings, including two sessions that took place out of public view Thursday.

Read the whole story

Howell thanks campaign supporters

A message to Douglas County,

I would like to say thank you to all of those who supported

and helped during my campaign to be elected county commissioner. Many displayed signs at their homes and businesses, wrote letters of support, folded brochures, made phone calls, talked to friends and neighbors, opened their homes for meet and greets, and donated financially.

I am grateful to have had the opportunity to run for an office that I believe has a greater influence on the direction of our community than any other elected official. When the campaign started I said I did not want to get to Nov. 2 and wish I had done more. Well, I am proud to say that during the last nine months we did what we said we would. We ran a campaign focused on the “issues” and what I, as your commissioner, would bring to Douglas County instead of focusing on my opponent.

A special thank you to my wife, Heather, and my sons, Ben and Griffin, for putting up with me being away from home when I was out meeting voters at debates, at meet the candidate nights, at community meetings, and going door to door in Topaz Ranch Estates, Carson Valley and Lake Tahoe.

Although I will not be the next District 4 commissioner, I will continue to serve my community and country where and when I am needed. I have great respect for the election process and therefore respect the decision made by the voters. My passion to be involved in and lead our community in a positive direction has not been extinguished; if possible … it burns stronger than before.

Sincerely,

Lawrence W. Howell, Stateline