Wet weather in Tahoe-Reno not going anywhere

By Steve Timko, Reno Gazette-Journal

Only five days into October and, unofficially, it’s the sixth wettest October on record for Reno, the National Weather Service reported.

There’s a chance Thursday another storm will hit the area with intensity close to the one that dropped 1.09 inches of rain on Monday night and Tuesday morning, said Alex Hoon, weather service lead forecaster.

The highest passes in the area – the Mount Rose Highway, Carson Pass, Monitor Pass and Ebbetts Pass – got snow Monday night and Tuesday morning and had either snow tire requirements or were temporarily closed.

Hoon said rain and snow from Thursday’s storm will likely fall more to the north of Reno, where the passes will be below the snow level.

Read the whole story

Winemaker dinner in Incline

Lone Eagle Grille in Incline Village kicks off its Winemaker Dinner Series with Gregory Graham on Oct. 15 at 6pm.

Nine years ago Graham set out to produce world-class wines from Lake County. His hands-on approach to winemaking, complemented by 25 years of experience, is giving consumers

fresh, structured, fruit-forward vintages that are reflective of a high quality wine grape growing region.

The wines will be paired with a four-course meal.

Cost is $120 per person.

For reservations, contact Cecilia Cuff at Lone Eagle Grille at (775) 886.6899.

The restaurant is at 111 Country Club Drive, Incline Village.

Lecture about Anarctic ice regions

Flying under the Big Ice: Robotic submarines under Antarctic ice is a resentation by Alexander Forrest at UC Davis Tahoe Environmental Research Center in Incline Village.

Forrest will have just returned from a research excursion using robotic submarines under the Erebus ice-tongue in McMurdo Sound, Antarctica.

Learn about the unique physical characteristics of seawater under this ice shelf, the influence on the formation and growth of sea ice within the sound, and the affect on marine biology. By deploying a robotic submersible, known as an Autonomous Underwater Vehicle (AUV), the international research team will map under-ice structure and ice thickness; document three dimensional convective and mixing processes; measure phytoplankton distribution; and, model the effect of ice-ocean coupling on water mass evolution, sea ice formation, and biological processes.

This AUV deployment embodies the use of a pioneering technology to make advances in Polar exploration that would not be possible otherwise.

Charting these processes is critical because our Polar Regions are rapidly losing ice cover. International collaboration by scientists and engineers in the fields of physics, chemistry and biology will help us to better understand these processes before the opportunity disappears all together.

Forrest is a postdoctoral scholar with the UC Davis Tahoe Environmental Research Center. He focuses on questions in physical limnology and works on under-ice applications of AUV technologies in a diversity of environments. He has extensive AUV survey experience from the Caribbean to the Caspian Sea.

Details:

Date: Dec. 8

Time: 5:30pm no-host bar. Program begins at 6pm.

Cost: $5 donation requested

Location: Tahoe Center for Environmental Sciences, 291 Country Club Drive, Incline Village.

Unity at the Lake Healing Circle

Nov. 2 at 2pm is Unity at the Lake’s Healing Circle at the Star Tahoe Building, 2489 Lake Tahoe Blvd., Ste. 27, South Tahoe.

Affirm and align in consciousness with the truth that we are already whole. Bring a healing request to share in this ceremony.

Love offering.

For more info, call (530) 544.2266 or visit www.unityatthelake.org.

Drumming with Unity at the Lake

Oct. 31 at 11:30am Unity at the Lake One Heart Drum Ministry at South Lake Tahoe Senior Center, 3050 Lake Tahoe Blvd.

After Sunday Celebration Service share the healing energy of creating rhythms together. Bring your drums and shakers – or just come and dance. No experience necessary; some instruments provided.

Love offering.

For more information, call (530) 544.2266 or visit www.unityatthelake.org.

Unity at the Lake Harvesting

our Dreams

Oct. 22 from 5:30-9:30pm – Unity at the Lake Harvesting Our Dreams Fundraiser at Harvey’s Convention Floor.

It’s an evening of fun, laughter and fellowship, dinner, silent auction, and more.

Song and Soul from the Music Unitics of Tahoe, Carson and Reno. Tickets must be purchased in advance – $30 per person. Ten percent of proceeds to benefit the South Lake Tahoe Women’s Center.

Call (530) 544.2266 for advance ticket sales or information.

Yoga monk to speak at Unity at the Lake

Dada Nabhaniilananda is the guest speaker for Unity at the Lake on Oct. 17 from 10am-2pm.

The meeting is at the South Lake Tahoe Senior Center, 3050 Lake Tahoe Blvd.

Workshops and concert to follow.

Nabhaniilananda is a yoga monk, meditation teacher, musician and writer.

Love offering.

For more information, call (530) 544.2266 or visit www.unityatthelake.org.

Chamber to spearhead South Lake's business program

By Joann Eisenbrandt

Local businesses have felt the brunt of the economic downturn in a town where survival is difficult even in the best of times. On Oct. 5 the City Council approved a contract with the Lake Tahoe South Shore Chamber of Commerce to provide business coaching to low-income local businesses to help them survive. The $100,000 contract is funded by California CDBG (Community Development Block Grant) funds.

Councilman Bill Crawford pulled the item for discussion, citing a conflict between this agreement and another agenda item, results from the South Tahoe Redevelopment Agency Project Area No. 2 Survey (Tahoe Valley/Y area). "In the Item No. 17 Redevelopment Survey," Crawford stated, "business people said mentoring services were not important to them. Why would we want to give $100,000 to anyone if those taking part in the survey said they didn't want those services?" A summary of the survey results lists "Business Coaching and Mentoring Services" under "Not Important."

Crawford also cited a potential conflict of interest on the part of Nancy Kerry, the city's redevelopment/housing/economic development manager and a former chamber employee, who oversaw the RFP process. "As soon as I saw the chamber had responded to the RFP, I changed the review process. I wanted to avoid even the appearance of a conflict," Kerry said. She withdrew from review of the proposals; the chamber ultimately scored

the highest.

Kerry told Lake Tahoe News that outreach to businesses has been an important part of the city's economic development efforts for some time. The city recently re-branded its program as Business TIES (Tahoe Investors and Entrepreneur Coaches), which has brought increased interest in these services from the local business community. The city had been contracting with Golden Capital from Chico to provide these services.

The chamber will provide coaching by nine business professionals from varied backgrounds. Assistance is available only to low-income businesses that will contact the city to be qualified and then referred to the appropriate coach or coaches depending on their specific needs. Payment will not go to the chamber, but to the individual team members who do the mentoring.

Five of the nine local "coaches" spoke in support of the program and the benefits their years of experience and expertise could provide struggling businesses.

"I can apply what I've learned in 40 years of marketing," said Jim Barr of JFB Creative Services. "It's about helping local businesses. I want to be sure the restaurant that I visited last week will still be there the next time."

Some who spoke to the issue weren't convinced. Danny Freemon criticized the city for "leaving the Y area hanging out to dry," with projects there left "floundering."

"I don't think sending money across the state line (chamber offices are located in Nevada) is a good idea," Freemon said. He is also active in the California-based chamber.

How city money should be spent, who or what it gets spent on, and who should be involved in the decision-making process is not a new issue. In response to Crawford's question, "Who are

these local pros?” doing the coaching, Mayor Kathay Lovell responded the city had been strongly criticized in the past for reaching outside the basin for contractors and consultants, but this time was adding local talent to “the city’s toolbox.”

Crawford also questioned why the chamber had been unable to educate its 750-plus members in basic business survival techniques. B Gorman, president and CEO of the Lake Tahoe South Shore Chamber of Commerce, responded, “I won’t pretend this will be easy. Business owners are busy. It’s a challenge we face on a daily basis. People need help. They just don’t know they need it.”

Gorman told LTN the program will begin outreach immediately, but will remain a work in progress. “The parameters of the grant are for business coaching, but how each business gets that help will be based on their needs, whether it’s negotiating a lease, bookkeeping, developing a business or marketing plan, or confronting an Americans with Disabilities Act lawsuit. There are multiple layers to this program. Coaches may come back with new trends that need to be addressed. Things change. Two years ago no one was talking about ADA compliance.”

The council approved the contract, with Crawford voting no.

In other action, the council:

• Approved a resolution in support of Proposition 22, the Local Taxpayer, Public Safety and Transportation Act of 2010. Proposition 22 is an Initiative Constitutional Amendment which would prohibit the state from borrowing or taking funds used for transportation, redevelopment or local government projects and services.

• Solicited Applications for Appointment to the Airport Commission, Building Board of Appeals Commission, Delinquent Refuse Fees Hearing Board, General Plan Advisory Commission,

Latino Affairs Commission, Parks and Recreation Commission, Planning Commission and Sustainability Commission.

• Accepted Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality and Regional Surface Transportation Program funding for the Pioneer Trail Pedestrian Upgrades Project ($837,438). Money will be used for sidewalks and lighting in the heavily traveled area of Pioneer between Highway 50 and Larch Avenue.

• Extended the Transit Center Lease between the city and Heavenly for until October 2015.

• Recognized the month of October as Domestic Violence Awareness Month.

• Presented a proclamation recognizing the retirement of Gary Moore, director of Parks and Recreation following 36 years with the city.

• Received a report from Barbara Ferry, Census 2010 Partnership Specialist for the city. Ferry told the Council that Census figures for the city will be available in March 2011.

Curry: grow, strengthen and diversify the local economy

Publisher's note: ***Lake Tahoe News is profiling candidates for South Lake Tahoe City Council and Douglas County Commission. The stories are being published in the order they were received.***

Name: Joy Curry

Age: 63

How long have you lived in South Lake Tahoe?: I made South Lake Tahoe my home in 2003, after frequently enjoying visiting and vacationing in the area since 1979.

Job/profession: South Lake Tahoe planning commissioner, small business owner, community college instructor, dental practice management, community volunteer.



Joy Curry

What would you build or tear down on the South Shore to make it great, as in what Whistler is like?

We need to be South Lake Tahoe and not try to emulate other resort towns. Whistler, Park City, Vail and other resort towns have some of the natural attractions of South Shore, but none have the unique combination of the lake, mountains and forests. We can take ideas and successes from other resort towns and utilize them in South Shore. Our downtown is Highway 50, which is unlike any other resort town. I would like to see a community center and city hall evolve around Lakeview Commons to give the South Shore a sense of community. In the Regional Plan and General Plan Update, the community said over and over again that they wanted common gathering places and Lakeview Commons is a perfect setting to develop those ideas. We need to implement the Tahoe Valley Community Plan and update the Y. Create more pocket parks for our community. We need to create a world-class resort destination at Stateline to improve our economy, which in turn will vitalize small

business, create jobs and provide our residents with wages that enable affordable living within the city.

What form of recreation do you participate in? What recreation improvements would you strive to make in SLT?

I love the Tahoe lifestyle. In the summer you can find me hiking, kayaking, boating, bicycling, playing golf, and just enjoying the beach and the beautiful outdoors. In the winter I ski and snowshoe. I would like to improve and maintain walking and bike paths, ball fields and community parks.

Recreation tourism is expected to be the driving force of the South Shore economy in the coming years, and according to a decade-old study, the majority of the South Lake Tahoe residents would like to see cycling-type facilities and maintenance projects. So, what do you specifically plan to do to improve our substandard, dangerous bike paths and lanes and roads beyond hiring a consultant to tell us how bad they are?:

The poor condition of our streets, bike trails and drainage systems are well documented. I am told that the cost to build and repair streets and drainage alone is over $100 million. The city needs to continue seeking federal and state grants funds to make these repairs and improvements over time to reduce the burden on local taxpayers. The city needs to continue to vigorously oppose any state take-away of city funds for street repair, etc. Whenever and wherever eligible, the city needs to use available RDA funds in both existing and new RDA project areas to make major roadway repairs. Aggressively apply for grants and partner with other agencies. Support another attempt to pass a measure complementing Measure S for ball fields and repair of bike paths. A stronger and more diverse local economy will help generate new funds that can be dedicated for road repairs.

What are the three major issues facing South Lake Tahoe and how do you expect in four years to make it so they are not

major issues when your tenure is through?

First, grow, strengthen and diversify the local economy. Complete and adopt a business-friendly and business-encouraging city General Plan and Tahoe Valley Community Plan and vigorously support development of a business-friendly TRPA Regional Plan. Second, invest new dollars from a growing economy that provides the revenue base to make needed capital improvements in the community (streets, drainage, sidewalks where desired and lighting). Third, encourage current local businesses and new companies to establish desired products and services that are appreciated and supported by locals and tourists alike. In support of each of these, I will encourage, support, and seek to facilitate completion of the convention center/hotel project.

What compelling idea have you read in the citizens' input of the revamped, in-progress update of the city's General Plan?

As I have advocated on the city Planning Commission regarding this and other important planning issues that come to the table, we must have public outreach meetings, dialogue, and more community input on the proposed General Plan and Tahoe Valley Community Plan before final approval is made by the City Council. We are at an important juncture with these plans that will establish our city's future. We must exercise due diligence to gather information, get input and deliberate effectively to get it right the first time. I would also evaluate the final plan options to be presented to the City Council to see how they match up against the public opinion poll of local residents done by the city in December 2008 regarding city needs and priorities. I will carefully evaluate resident comments on any new plan and weigh this together with other factors including funds available, costs, outcomes and technical input. We must have good plans that the community wants and supports if we are to prosper in the future.

How do you plan to boost revenue in SLT?

Recreation tourism is the backbone of our community, and it is the City Council's duty to grow, strengthen, and diversify our local economy. Re-establishing commercial air service to Lake Tahoe Airport would be a great boost to our overall economy. Support a more business-friendly business regulatory system that is also environmentally friendly. Support continued and expanded business retention, expansion and new business development programs by the city's RDA. Continue city collaboration and support of the Lake Tahoe Basin Prosperity Plan and support activities of it that will help to grow the local economy. Review consolidation opportunities and seek grants that may have potential for new resources of funding. Particularly those related to sustainability. Collaboration with others agencies, school district, STPUD, and with them we might be able to consolidate or combine resources to save money. Turn over every rock to reduce cost and increase revenue while still providing critical essential services to the community. Police, fire, snow removal are critical.

What stands out to you in the 2010-11 budgets?

The city budget is lean and tight because local government revenues are down due to a sluggish national, state and regional economy. The state confiscated $2 million in RDA funds from the city. The city has made cutbacks in employees but assures us that a high level of public services will continue to be provided. The budget is protected by a strong reserve (unlike the state of California) that can help pay for emergencies that may arise. Employee groups have made concessions with furloughs, accepting salary reductions, paying part of their retirement contributions and giving back COLAs to help maintain needed services to the community. Growing the local economy needs to be the focus of city government or the city will be unable to sustain over time providing a high level of service to the community. We need to always look at ways to do more than less.

What needs to be done to allow businesses to thrive in SLT?

Take back more regulatory control of business from TRPA and give it to city elected officials. It is then incumbent upon these elected officials to fashion more business-friendly environment to include business expansion, new business development and business beautification and appearance enhancements, e.g. responsible rules for signage and property attractiveness.

What have you done to help South Lake Tahoe be a better community?

I have donated my time and service to the city as a member of the City Planning Commission for the last 3½ years. I am also a member of the General Plan Update Committee, which has worked on the General Plan and held many public meetings for input from the community. I served on the Public Working Group for the Regional Plan Update. This committee met over a two-year period, with many open meetings to allow full public input for the Regional Plan. I have hundreds of hours invested in participation in these working groups to expand my knowledge and ability to lead our city and move us forward.

What boards, commissions, or other experience do you have?

I am currently the vice chair of the South Lake Tahoe Planning Commission, having served on the commission for 3½ years. I serve on the General Plan Update for the city. I have served on the Public Working Group for Pathways, which is managed by TRPA. Before residing in SLT, my experience also includes being a Schoolpower board member, Capital Campaign for the Laguna Beach Unified School District, a member of the Sandpiper Board, Hoag Hospital Foundation Board and involved in the Capital Campaign for the Hoag Cancer Center.

Why should voters vote for you over someone else?

I want to move us forward by being dedicated as a city councilmember and serving with a full-time commitment. I have experience running a business in town and know the struggles

faced by local business owners. I will make a positive impact on the community by focusing on the real issues of interest to the people, combined with a process that allows civil and courteous discourse on local government issues at the City Council and in the community. I am my own person. I am not beholden to special interests. I want what is best for the entire community. I am dedicated to that end and move us forward.

Blue Go, the public transit, is mired in lawsuits and bankruptcy. Do we need public transit on the South Shore? If so, how do you propose to make it functional?

We need a fully functional and efficient transportation system in South Shore. Having both public and private sector involvement and financing of a transit system is a good thing. The public should not have to bear the full cost of a viable public transit. The current organizational structure of transportation in the South Shore needs to be re-examined and restructured, with competent and efficient operators brought in to run a system that serves the community, meaning affordable and reliable.

Do you support commercial air service at Lake Tahoe Airport? Why or why not?

Yes. I'm in favor of re-establishing commercial air service to the Lake Tahoe Airport, which would be a big boost to small businesses and the overall local economy. The airport is not only important economically, but vital to the public's protection in case of a catastrophic wildfire. Commercial air service would facilitate easy, quick access to South Shore that would benefit tourism. The reality is that South Lake Tahoe isn't a convenient destination. Opening the airport to commercial traffic – as it was years ago—would facilitate arrival at South Shore within an hour from points on the West Coast and within several hours from any point in the country

Is there any individual, group or organization you would not take campaign money from? Why?

I welcome the support of community members and legitimate interests in my campaign. However, no one should think that by contributing to my campaign that they will gain special favors from me. I will always vote favorably on matters before the City Council that I think best serve all the people of South Lake Tahoe.

Nepotism and favoritism runs rampant in the city when it comes to hiring preferences. The council sets policy. What type of policy would you write regarding nepotism and favoritism?

People hired by the city should be hired on the basis of their qualifications, experience and what they know, not who they know. The city has an anti-nepotism policy in place, and no one has found that it has been violated. All hiring, purchasing and contracting policies and practices for the city should be based upon a level playing field that provides fairness, objectivity, transparency and cost-effectiveness in all city dealings and transactions. I will support and encourage a complete review by the City Council of the current policy and practices, taking whatever steps are necessary to ensure strict compliance policies and procedures that accomplish these ethical and operational standards.

You and three other council candidates met with the Lake Tahoe South Shore Chamber of Commerce. Then you and two others were invited back for a follow-up meeting. Tell us about that meeting.

I spoke to a small group of business leaders and would be happy to speak to any group that invites me to speak. The follow up meeting provided educational information about running for office that was helpful.

Tell us something about yourself that voters don’t already know:

I am a go-getter. I am a mom and wife first and have always taken very good care of my family, and I pledge to do the same for the city of South Lake Tahoe.

South Shore highways to be a mess in 2011

By Kathryn Reed

Improvements to Highway 89 (aka Luther Pass) won't be done this building season as planned, and will instead require two months of work in 2011.

However, with Echo Summit slated to be closed part of the spring while the retaining wall is overhauled, officials aren't sure when the work on Highway 89 will be done because that is one of the alternate routes for Highway 50.



Improvements to Highway 89 in Meyers will be done in 2011. Photo/Kathryn Reed

Replacing the rock wall on Highway 50 coming into the Lake Tahoe Basin has been on the books for a while. With a coordinated effort under way to ensure traffic still flows into the South Shore, Caltrans officials don't want to impede that process with delays on another highway.

Echo Summit will be closed for 14 days. This will be in May 2011, unless work can start earlier. It will be followed by 20-30 days of controlled traffic except for Friday afternoons when it will be open in both directions. It will be wide-open Memorial Day weekend, too.

Click on Echo FAQ for some answers to the project provided by Caltrans.

The Highway 89 project is a water quality project – meaning shoring up erosion concerns, putting in curbs and gutters.

The 2.2 miles of roadway on 89 from the junction of 50 will have a 4-foot shoulder for cyclists. Beyond that road bike riders are still in for a bit of a harrowing experience being so close to vehicles.

Mike Cook, Caltrans project manager for the basin, said intentions are the asphalt will be smooth to the curb and gutter so the surface is safe for cyclists.

All the grates are designed to be bicycle proof, meaning a front wheel won't get lodged in it and send the rider flying over the handlebars.

At this point it's anyone's guess how all the roadwork is factoring into Amgen's decision to bring the Tour of California bike ride to Tahoe. That decision is expected any day.