DMV furlough days create lines, not savings in Nev.

By David McGrath Schwartz, Las Vegas Sun

For the impatient motorists waiting in those long lines at the DMV, it might be easy to believe the situation is the inevitable result of the state's fiscal crisis and budget cuts.

But no. Instead, it's a by-product of furloughs of state workers elsewhere in the Nevada government and what some might say is a misguided sense of fairness. Department of Motor Vehicles workers, as well as those processing unemployment claims and welfare, have gotten dragged into furloughs in the name of equity, lawmakers say.

Forcing state DMV workers to take off one day a month – and creating longer lines in the process – does nothing to remedy the state's general fund budget deficit.

But it has forced Nevadans to spend drastically more time tapping their toes in line. In the two years state workers have been forced to take furloughs, average wait times at DMV offices have increased by as much as 67 percent.

Read the whole story

Technology may allow veggies

to be grown in space

By Mike Wall, Space.com

Astronauts flying to Mars or beyond may be able to grow their own veggies during the long trip using new technology tested in the Arizona desert.

During a two-week trial, NASA put a compact vegetable-growing unit through its paces as part of the agency's annual Research and Technology Studies demonstration, also known as Desert RATS. The unit, developed by the Wisconsin-based company Orbitec, grows salad-type crops using a minimum of space and energy.

"We're very excited about it," said Paul Zamprelli, business director for Orbitec. "It's another piece of the puzzle for long-duration missions, and for habitat missions on the moon and Mars."

Read the whole story

Low-cost plants available at Nevada forestry nursery

The Nevada Division of Forestry State Tree Nursery in Washoe Valley still has a great selection of low-cost, conservation plants available for fall planting.

Fall is an optimum time for planting. Warm soils encourage root growth before the ground freezes.

Fall plantings with an already established root system will be

more tolerant of the summer heat. Take advantage of this time to come visit the Washoe Nursery before it closes for the winter on Oct. 16.

The nursery will be open to the public from 8:30am to 3pm Thursday through Saturday. Plants are available on a first-come, first-served basis.

For a list of available species, please call the nursery at (775) 849.0213 or visit the website. Most species are available in D-pots for $2.25.

The nursery is designed to assist landowners by providing plant material suitable for conservation uses such as, but not limited to, windbreaks, soil erosion control, water conservation and wildlife habitats. Plants purchased at the Washoe Nursery must be used for conservation purposes as provided for by NRS 528.105.

The plants are all grown and maintained at the nursery and are conditioned to survive Northern Nevada’s cold winters and hot summers. The nursery is located in Washoe Valley at 885 Eastlake Blvd.

California wardens bag more poachers

By Phillip Reese and Matt Weiser, Sacramento Bee

The road to the Lassen County town of Herlong is wide, dusty and usually deserted. Most days, motorists using it won’t see anything interesting, much less a bloodbath.

Feb. 24, 2009, was different. On that cloudy, crisp afternoon,

a poacher plying his trade near the road picked off antelope one by one with a small-caliber rifle.

The hunter had tallied several kills when something in the distance apparently spooked him, causing him to flee. Game wardens arrived shortly afterward. They found four antelope dead. They euthanized a fifth that had been badly wounded. Two of the dead antelope were pregnant with three calves between them.

“In a matter of seconds, the poacher took eight antelope out of the population,” investigating warden Carol Growdon said at the time.

The issue of illegal hunting received an unusual burst of public attention last month when rock star and celebrity hunter Ted Nugent pleaded no contest to two misdemeanor hunting violations in Yuba Superior Court: illegally baiting a deer, and failing to have a deer tag signed by a government official after a kill.

He had broadcast the violations on his own Outdoor Channel hunting show. The Feb. 9 episode showed Nugent killing a young male deer with bow and arrow near the El Dorado County town of Somerset. The charges were filed in Yuba County because Nugent was accompanied by a guide and cameraman on the hunt, and that is where they live.

Read the whole story

Lakeview Commons future may

fall to new council

By Jeremy Evans

The South Lake Tahoe City Council met in closed session Tuesday, a day after El Dorado County Superior Court Judge Steve Bailey ruled the city needs to start the bid process over for the Lakeview Commons project.

Nothing earth-shattering resulted from the meeting as the city is still mulling its options. One option is to appeal the judge's ruling. Another option, the more likely of the two, essentially restarts the bid process and opens it back up to all contractors.

Once the judge signs the written ruling – Monday's ruling was oral – the city would have 30 days to appeal the judge's decision. The written ruling should be received within the next week.



Lakeview Commons is still on hold. Photo/Kathryn Reed

"As far as I know, there was no decision about what the city is going to do with Lakeview Commons," said Councilman Bill Crawford. "It was a closed session and I can't talk openly about what was discussed."

If the city doesn’t appeal the judge’s ruling and waits the entire 30 days, it could be January before another bid is awarded. Once the 30-day appeal period has passed, it would take roughly 60 days for a new contractor to be awarded the bid – 30 days for the city to accept bids and then 30 days to review them before awarding a bid. That means the new City Council, which will be formed in November’s election with three open seats available, will likely handle the future of Lakeview Commons.

“The judge ruled exactly like I had thought he would,” said Councilman Jerry Birdwell. “It wouldn’t have been fair to make the city accept another bid. But the new council needs to be in charge of this as this council has had two failed attempts with this project. This council has had its chances.” (Birdwell will be leaving the council after the election.)

The city discovered last month it was operating under an invalid contract with Reeve Knight, the contractor that was awarded the bid on Aug. 3 and broke ground a day later. Clark & Sullivan, a competing firm that challenged the awarding of the $4.5 million bid, brought the case to court after excavating had begun.

Judge Bailey issued an injunction on Aug. 30 that halted construction, and then ruled in mid-September that the contract was void and invalid. With Monday’s ruling, it was assured there won’t be any improvements to the El Dorado Beach area until next spring. Proper winterizing of the property will take place this month.

Bailey could have ruled the city had to award the bid to Clark & Sullivan, which believed the bid process was invalid. It was believed all along, however, that the judge would simply return the contractual mess back to the city, allowing it to start over and ensure the process be completed correctly.

TTD to keep BlueGo buses rolling on the South Shore

By Joann Eisenbrandt

The wheels on BlueGo buses have been going round and round for years, but they have not been able to get riders to their destinations efficiently, reliably and affordably. The City Council is hoping its unanimous approval of an interim funding and service agreement between the city and the Tahoe Transportation District on Oct. 5 to manage the coordinated transit system most recently run by South Tahoe Area Transit Authority will be a positive new step.



TTD was created under Article IX of the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency Compact. Its board includes representatives from the public and private sectors. TTD is responsible for implementing transportation plans and projects, and can own and operate transportation systems and/or facilities. Under the contract approved Tuesday, it will be the governing body of BlueGo, responsible for its day-to-day management.

A South Shore Transit History

Bus service the on South Shore has a long, but not always successful history. In 1985, local Ken Daley formed ATM (Area Transit Management) and began running STAGE (South Tahoe Area Ground Express), the predecessor to BlueGo. Daley sold ATM in 2006. Operational and financial problems followed under the new ownership. In late 2008, ATM abruptly stopped service, leaving the buses and bus barns in disrepair.

STATA, a nonprofit Nevada umbrella agency, was formed to create a coordinated public/private transit management entity. Funding for STATA came from grants, state and federal governments and money from the member partners, which included the South Lake Tahoe, El Dorado County, Douglas County, TRPA (non-voting), TTD, Ridge Resorts, Harrah's, Harvey's, Lakeside Inn, MontBleu, Horizon and Heavenly Mountain Resort.

STATA contracted with MV Transportation to run the transit service, which included BlueGo, Nifty 50 Trolley, Heavenly ski shuttles, and routes to Carson City and the Carson Valley. MV faced financial challenges from the outset. Cleaning up the problems left by ATM was expensive. STATA worked on a cash-in cash-out basis. From the start, more cash was going out than coming in. Service reductions and bus route manipulation didn't solve the problem. In May 2010, MV threatened to walk away if it didn't get the more than $2 million it contended STATA owed it. In late May, STATA terminated MV's contract.

STATA then contracted with TRC Consultants, a firm it had used earlier to assess the system and make recommendations on cost savings. MV Transportation filed lawsuits against TRC, STATA and its individual members. STATA's assets were frozen; the lawsuits remain unresolved and mediation has so far been unsuccessful.

STATA subsequently made route and service changes, eliminating Meyers Route 40 and Zephyr Cove Route 22 and enhancing Highway 50 service from 60-minute to 30-minute intervals to fill in the gaps.

In late June, El Dorado County pulled its $181,000 in funds allocated to STATA for fiscal year 2010-11. County concerns focused on liability because they were not on the certificate of insurance, and on STATA's failure to release the 2009 state audit.

In July, STATA brought in TTD to handle the day-to-day transit

operations through Sept. 30, 2010. TRC retained its earlier contract to actually run the buses. Rumors about STATA filing for bankruptcy had been swirling for some time, but had been consistently denied. State and federal agencies had become nervous about their precarious financial situation, with the Nevada Department of Transportation threatening to pull their funding because of the instability. On Aug. 13, 2010, the STATA board voted to file for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection in Nevada.

At its Sept. 10 meeting, the STATA board approved more route changes, including the elimination of Routes 52, 54 and 55. These changes became effective Oct. 3.

Handoff to TTD

The transit hot potato is now in TTD's hands. The money the city will use to fund the agreement come from the state under the Transportation Development Act (TDA), one of the main sources of public transit funding in California. No general fund monies will be used.

TTD also signed a lease agreement for use of the South Tahoe transit facilities, including the bus garage on Shop Street and the South Y Transit Station on Emerald Bay Road at $3,000/month, and a license agreement for the Y transit facility, Stateline Transit Center and all bus stop locations in the city.

"Each entity that is a part of STATA is giving TTD their assurance that the funding they provide now to STATA will continue as TTD takes over management of the transit service," said Assistant City Manager Rick Angelocci.

City Attorney Patrick Enright explained to the council that this is a "short-term resolution" to the problem, which will allow time for STATA's future and pending lawsuits to be resolved. The TTD board is expected to approve the agreement next week.

Not everyone thinks this is the best solution. Councilman Bill Crawford told *Lake Tahoe News*, "TRPA is a total failure when it comes to public transportation in the basin. They are supposed to be the planning deity. If we want a regional transportation system in the basin, it should be federally funded, since TRPA was created under a federal charter. It should be TRPA's responsibility."

Crawford added, "STATA had too many players. The city had a reliable bus system that worked years ago. It should run its own system, one with fares that the working class citizens of the community can afford."

When asked by *LTN* why the city doesn't consider running an independent bus system again, Angelocci cited inconsistent funding.

According to Angelocci, STATA designed its routes and services based on the total amount of funding it expected – close to $5 million – when in fact the actual funding received was about $3.6 million.

Tahoe transit's future

As of Sept. 30, most members of STATA had withdrawn their funding from that entity and provided letters approving the takeover of the transit system by TTD. Lakeside Inn, Ridge Resorts, Heavenly and TTD remain part of STATA.

At present, STATA still exists, but should board members choose to file Chapter 7 bankruptcy, the entity will then dissolve and their assets and funds will be distributed according to bankruptcy law.

TTD does not want this management role long-term. An RFP will go out in December. The precise configuration of that RFP, Angelocci explains, will determine "who takes over and does what. TTD could retain part of the responsibility, or none, but this RPF will dictate the future of our transit system."

Facebook the movie is more than being friends



The Social Network

Rated PG-13

4.5 bagels out of 5

By Howie Nave

First off, I have to admit it’s pretty surreal posting daily on the very social networking site that has been turned into a movie. It’s also trippy that had Facebook creator Mark Zuckerberg (played eerily to perfection by Jesse Eisenberg) learned better social skills when it came to the opposite sex, he probably wouldn’t have invented the social network known as Facebook.

You can bet that MySpace founders Tom Anderson and Chris DeWolfe would have wished for that.

“The Social Network” is not just about Zuckerberg, but also about the obstacles that were created as the money and

popularity started rising. The movie is explained in a narrative format with flashback scenes giving us a peek into the environment as to how it was invented. The movie is edited in a way that it moves along at a pace that keeps the viewer interested even if you're not into the high-tech geeky stuff. One moment you're on campus thinking that Facebook was a means to checking out the hot chicks on campus and then speeds forward to the present where your friends are suing you for untold millions and then back to Zuckerberg's awkward behavior in a social environment getting ready to create the world's premiere social device to connect people from around the world.



In essence, the movie is less about the genius of the invention but more about those who you thought were your friends and then want to back stab you in any way they can. Ultimately money is to blame as the stakes became higher than anyone could have imagined – not to mention bragging rights for historical reasons.

At the heart of this movie is actor Jesse Eisenberg who's come a long way from "Adventureland," "Zombieland" and on-land movies such as "The Squid and the Whale." He not only has Zuckerberg's characteristics down, but also has an uncanny resemblance giving "The Social Network" almost the look of a documentary.

What's interesting is at its core Facebook was first conceived and limited to is fellow Harvard students, but was expanded to other colleges in the Boston area before becoming the network phenom that it is today. And to think had he not been dumped by his girlfriend, Erica (Rooney Mara) and getting drunk pulling off an all-nighter creating the seed of what was to come we might not be communicating here at all now would we?

Directed by David Fincher and written by Aaron Sorkin (creator of TV's "The West Wing") "The Social Network" also surrounds

itself with a top-notch supporting cast that includes Andrew Garfield as Eduardo Saverin, Facebook's co-founder, Josh Pence and Armie Hammer as two brothers who claim Zuckerberg stole their idea and Justin Timberlake in a first-rate job as Napster founder Sean Parker. But it's Eisenberg as the nerdy Zuckerberg who manages to be the most interesting of the lot as is Sorkin and Fincher who have crafted a modern day classic within our lifetime.

"The Social Network" is rated PG-13 for sexual content, drug and alcohol use, language and clocks in at two hours.

Howie Nave is host/emcee/manager of The Improv at Harveys. You can hear him Monday-Friday 6 to 10am on KRLT FM-93.9.

Nevada Day run-walk event

Event: Nevada Day Classic 8k Run & 2 Mile Run/Walk

Date: Oct. 30

Time: 8am

Location: The Nugget, Carson City

Age categories: 12 and under, 13-15, 16-19, 20-29, 30-39, 40-49, 50-59, 60 and over

Awards: Will be determined by event sponsors

Course description: This is a classic road course through the streets of west Carson City.

Beneficiary: Special Olympics of Nevada

Mail registration to: Tahoe Mountain Milers Checks payable to:

Tahoe Mountain Milers

214 W. Applegate Way, Carson City, NV 89706

Registration: online

Packet pick-up: CV Sports, at 911 Topsy Lane will be hosting packet pickup and registration Oct. 29 between 3-7pm.

Race day pick-up: 6:45-7:45am second story of The Nugget Casino

Fee: Early pre-registration $30 up to Oct. 16; $35 after Oct. 16. Walk in registration on race day $40

$5 Sagebrush Stomper and Tahoe Mountain Miler discount applies to early pre-registration only.

Information: Tom Wion, tomleewion@hotmail.com or (775) 882.0410.

Democrats to unite in South Tahoe

To the community,

For America's progressive voters there is no room for apathy or "sitting it out" this election year. After the Tea Party takeover of the Republican Party, America is standing on a political precipice. If enough voters are hoodwinked into voting against their own economic interests and the health and well-being of their families and communities, then the obstructionism cynically practiced by the Party of No will result in a violent lurch to the right unparalleled in the

American political experience.

Locally, Tom McClintock said commercial logging should be explored as an option to pay for forest fuel reduction projects in the Basin and cutting large trees to subsidize less profitable fuel reduction work could mark a return to “common sense” forest management practices.

Join us for a Day of Action Oct. 9 at 10am in the library parking lot … 1000 Rufus Allen Blvd., South Lake Tahoe. Will you spare one day to help elect people who will protect our lake and the Sierra? We have too much to lose if we don’t get involved.

Judy Williams, president Lake Tahoe Democratic Club

Winter Survival Workshop

Winter Survival Workshop with the Tahoe Nordic Serarch and Rescue Team on Dec. 11 from 10am-noon.

Led by members of the nonprofit, all volunteer Tahoe Nordic Search & Rescue Team you’ll be guided through an easy snowshoe and cross country ski trek. Along the way they’ll cover planning, preparation, proper dress, equipment, emergency shelters and more. Dress for the elements.

Donation: $25 Sorensen’s Resort guests/$50 non-guests. www.tahoenordicsar.com