Accommodation Station sold to Vail Resorts

Publisher's note: ***Greta and Mike Hambsch are selling the 34-year-old property management firm, which is the third largest in the South Lake Tahoe area.***

By Denver Business Journal

Vail Resorts Inc. is getting into the lodging business in South Lake Tahoe.

The Broomfield-based company (NYSE: MTN), which owns four Colorado ski resorts and the Heavenly Mountain Resort in South Lake Tahoe announced Tuesday that it has acquired Accommodation Station, the third-largest property management company in the South Lake Tahoe market. Privately owned Accommodation Station manages condominiums, mountain chalets, cabins and luxury homes for short- and long-term rentals.

Vail Resorts owns or manages slopeside lodging already around its Colorado resorts – Vail, Breckenridge, Keystone and Beaver Creek – and in Jackson Hole, Wyo. But this is the company's first lodging collection in South Lake Tahoe.

Read the whole story

Snippets about Lake Tahoe

• Click here for Barton Health's flu clinics.



• California Conservation Corps hopes to have the foundation in on the Meyers overhaul by Oct. 15. Finding the pool for the old hotel in a spot it wasn't supposed to be has caused delays. The whole project is supposed to be done by January 2012, with the buildings done a year from now.

• Friday Night Lights returns to South Tahoe High on Oct. 8. The plan is to one-day install permanent lights on the football field. This will be discussed at the Oct. 12 Lake Tahoe Unified School District board meeting.

• Learn from the experts at IMBA during a weekend-long trail building and maintenance workshop Oct. 15-17. This free workshop will teach mountain bike enthusiasts methods to build sustainable single-track trails. Everyone is welcome – call the Kirkwood Bike Park guys at (209) 258.7233 for additional details.

• The Postal Regulatory Commission denied the Postal Service's request to increase the price of a stamp from 44 to 46 cents.

Hollywood film director at LTCC for 2 events

Lake Tahoe Community College Theatre Arts Department presents film producer David Wisnievitz on two consecutive Mondays in

the Duke Theatre.

Both evenings are free of charge and open to LTCC students and the community.

Wisnievitz has worked in a variety of positions on a number of major films, including “Selena,” “Searching for Bobby Fisher,” and “Training Day,” starring Denzel Washington. He is also an Emmy Award-nominee.

On Oct. 18, 7 to 8:30pm, Wisnievitz will be speaking about the film industry. Whether your interest is in acting, directing, producing, screenwriting, technical and design, or just as a fan of film, Wisnievitz’s insider insights into the business will illuminate this sometimes mysterious, and always fascinating industry.

On Oct. 25, 7 to 10pm, the LTCC Theatre Department will be conducting an “Auditioning for Film” workshop. Participants will have the opportunity to go through the audition process and receive feedback from Wisnievitz. There is a limit of 15 participants and interested people must be 17 or older. Those interested in participating should register in advance by sending an email to Susan Boulanger, director of theatre, at Boulanger@ltcc.edu. Indicate age range and male/female. Those not participating in the audition are welcome to attend the workshop and observe.

Bonner: continue to build our location as a recreation

destination

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: Lee Bonner

Age: 51

Hometown: Minden

How long have you lived here?: 5+ years

Job/profession: Communications, public affairs



Lee Bonner

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

This is excellent, yet, tough question to answer. First, let me start by saying one person doesn't and shouldn't make a decision like this with no regard for the community or its members. It's a community decision, but one that the county should invest in by the giving of expertise and time.

To begin this discussion, I would gather a group of stakeholders that consists of gaming, Realtors, business owners, homeowners and other key Tahoe organization representatives to define what the problem areas are. If you are going to do something of this magnitude, you must define

the problem you are solving. That’s step one. Once the problem has been defined, we begin to look at multiple ways to solve that problem. With a possible outcome culminating with a comprehensive, multi-year approach that addresses the findings of the stakeholders. Each stakeholder will gather input from their group or organization and bring that back to the committee. And a formal plan should emerge that addresses the needs. I believe that we can do this together and come up with the right plan to make this happen. When we all work together the possibilities are endless.

One issue we should address is the stalled convention center project. As we look to a long-term strategy, this should be a part of any lake revitalization plan going forward.

One question back to you: Why be like Whistler when we can be better?

On a personal note: I would love to see us build a north facing outdoor amphitheater that has a north view of the lake, with the sun in the west, it would be a perfect setting to view the lake and watch a concert, play or musical. This would be the premiere outdoor venue for concerts in all of Northern Nevada. I believe Edgewood Companies has a great location for something like this.

What form of recreation do you participate in? What improvements to recreation would you strive to make throughout Douglas County?

Equestrian, skiing, boating, hiking, swimming, fishing, camping, art and concerts.

We need to continue to build our location as a recreation destination and work in combination with other agencies to market what we have to offer. This also means a continued investment in roads and trails, upon which to travel.

One aspect of the county that I think is not being utilized to

the fullest as far as tourism is the great equestrian trails we have. We are doing well in many areas, but we could do more in the area of trails and adding the current trails to the geo-tourism area sponsored by National Geographic. If you would like to be a contributor to this site, I would encourage everyone to participate. We are a part of the Tahoe Emigrant corridor. Click on the Tahoe Emigrant Corridor section, you can enter in your own trails and make this a great guide for locals and tourists alike.

Recreation tourism is expected to be the driving force of the South Shore economy in the coming years, what do you specifically plan to do to improve bike paths and roads?

Roads are a critical part of the county plan. We have to maintain our investment in infrastructure if we want to attract more businesses and tourists. Who wants to drive on an asphalt road that feels like a washboard? While we are in an economic downturn we must maintain key investments in the county or we face a longer hurdle later.

Bike paths are not only a form of recreation, but they are a way to keep our citizens safe and protected from the heavy traffic we experience on the roads. We need to establish a long-term strategy to maintain and expand the existing bike path system we have. When you look at future road improvements we should keep pedestrians and bikes in mind. Currently if you try to bike down the lake side of Kingsbury, there are some safety concerns I have for those on bikes.

Bike paths and trails are also a key part of who we are as a community, but as a horseman, let’s not overlook the horse community. We all work well together and we can all share in the beauty of this area that God created.

How do you plan to boost revenue in Douglas County?

The key answer is jobs … we need jobs and that means we need key businesses large and small to make Douglas County home as

well as ensure that existing businesses thrive through our support and efforts. The salary of a person is multiplied five times as money changes hands. From restaurants to grocery shopping to leisure activities and housing. We need jobs from a variety of business types to be sustainable for the next decade. A mix of industries will broaden our portfolio of revenue which will drive sustainability when the economy isn't growing.

With my experience in business process and expertise in collaboration and problem solving, I can bring a skill set to the commission that will help us over the hurdles in the next administration.

When you look at experience, you have to look at what the candidate has done with their experience. I have been committed to the county in many ways in providing leadership and expertise at the nonprofit, county and state level in many different facets from education to economic growth. This experience in working with many organizations across our county and state will only benefit the county with the working relationships I have built.

What stands out for you in the 2010-11 budget?

What stands out to me is that we have had declining revenues for the past four years and while making cuts, over the past four years, we have not done much to create a better business environment.

The county was able to come in with a balanced budget through severe cuts. Everyone pulled together and made the cuts necessary. The economic boom to Douglas County happened over the last 10 years and if we want to make cuts, we should take a look at the programs we have created during those years. As we list all those programs and we look at declining revenue, we must prioritize what makes sense for us to continue providing.

How do we prioritize these programs? By examining the return on our investment, (ROI) those programs that are working well and are returning the largest numbers and giving us value we expected are the ones we keep. Those programs that are not providing the return we need or what we expected from our programs are cut. We continue to support and fund those programs that are meeting the greatest need. We cut those that drain the budget and do not provide the expected return or services to the community.

However, when the economy spirals, there are some things you can count on. As revenue goes down, church attendance and crime go up. Our sheriff has invested his career to ensure a safe place to live work and play in Douglas County. To that end, we must ensure we don't compromise that basic premise of quality of life to cut a few dollars. Further, current business owners and those considering moving here, look at crime in the top three priorities. Let's not shoot ourselves in the foot … pardon the pun.

What needs to be done to allow businesses to thrive in Douglas County?

First, while we are in a downturn economically, we should be working to streamline the process. If the process is 143 steps, let's make it 43. Second, the county should be surveying the new businesses and as a county let's learn from our current businesses what the pain points are in the process and ask them what they would have changed. Let's also talk to builders and do the same thing with their permitting process. The county has customers in the way of business and her citizens and their voice should be heard and should tell us what the needs are.

Our county has a reputation of not being business friendly and if we are to be successful we must simplify the process and become a bit less cumbersome and more nimble, while always ensuring public safety.

We have had businesses that wanted to come here, but due to issues in working with the county they left and went elsewhere. Word of mouth travels fast and makes its way back to other companies wanting to do the same thing. If we cannot change public perception, we will have a long road to become business friendly.

What are the three major issues facing Douglas County and how to expect in four years to make it so they are not major issues when your tenure is through?

Jobs! Education! Government!

We have lost jobs in the last few years and that along with the economy has caused some local businesses to go under. An influx of jobs into the county will help us have a healthy, vibrant community. This can be done by being more business friendly and streamlining the permitting process for builders and business.

I think we all agree we need jobs and that will help turn the county revenue situation around, but also involved in this process is to look at what the pain points for business are and what the county has done to help or to stifle businesses across the county.

Another focal point in our county should be promoting education. While Douglas County has a good education system, we are in a state that is consistently ranked near the bottom. The state budget doesn’t have the funds to help us in the next few years and in order to attract and retain businesses and employees I would like to see the county make a deeper investment in education. Let’s look at public-private partnerships with education to make our county a flagship county for education, not just in the state of Nevada, but beyond her borders. We may not be able to change the rank of our state, but by making Douglas an even better stronger school system we can do what’s best for our county and

influence the state.

I also list government as a key issue. When the Legislature reconvenes in February they must cut 50 percent of the state budget and I see that a significant portion of this will fall to the county in both revenue taken and services passed down to fulfill. We need leadership that knows and understands the issues and knows how to deal with the legislature and has experience in doing so. I have that experience.

What have you done to help Douglas County be a better community?

I have spent my time in Douglas County giving back to the community as both a volunteer and participating with many nonprofit organizations. Prior to my work as an engineer and working with GE, I was spent years working as a youth minister and teacher to high school students and I have always been very involved in working with communities. I believe that you lead from your head, but you run for office because of your heart. In order to be an effective public servant you must care as well as lead and that is the make-up of who I am. I am involved in many aspects of the valley, both in the nonprofit sector and in the business sector by being on the Board of Directors for the Business Council. I work closely with the Nevada Commission on Economic Development and am also engaged in the Renewable Energy Task Force for the state. All of this experience can be leveraged in the county in providing expertise in business and leadership for our county.

I serve the community out of respect for its legacy and expectations for the future. I not only serve on several boards, this is my passion, this is who I am and this is who I will be as your county commissioner.

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

I am currently involved with the following organizations:

Nevada Commission on Economic Development – Energy Technology Advisor

Northern Nevada Development Authority – Board of Directors

Workforce/Education Task Force – Chairman

Business Council of Douglas County – Executive Board, Vice President

Carson Valley Arts Council – Board of Directors

Douglas County Sheriff's Mounted Posse

Douglas County Sheriff's Advisory Council – Board of Directors

RAVE Foundation

Family Support Council

United Way

GE Volunteers

Lake Tahoe Shakespeare Festival

10,000 Kids Inc

Backcountry Horseman

Lifepoint Community Church

Carson Valley Chamber of Commerce

E. Clampus Vitus

Why should voters vote for you over someone else?

I am a problem solver, collaborator, leader, volunteer, and I know how to get things done. In the past two years the world has changed, we can't do things the same way we have done them. It will take someone who knows how to work with others, is a team player and can work to get measured results. We need

a leader that understands where we need to go and also has a respect for the legacy of this great county. I feel I am that person.

Being employed by a global energy leader, I have experiences locally, nationally and internationally. And my career as an engineer and businessman, has given me tremendous fortitude, understanding of local and global problems. All of my professional experience will translate directly to the job I am running for.

What would you do to make the lake and valley more unified?

This is a goal many before me have had and not succeeded. When you look at what the county has in place currently, it has the appearance of being separate. We have two commission meetings in the two areas. Two sheriff locations. And when you add the natural barriers of the grade as well as the mountains and the high desert we have created and fostered this separation. The reason for this apparent separation was correct in spirit. The county wanted to respect and acknowledge that the lake was important enough to duplicate certain aspects of government. In the future we could examine having more joint meetings for the commission with both the lake and the valley in attendance at the same time and place.

BlueGo, 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?:

Transportation is a key issue in any community and Douglas County is no exception. It’s unfortunate that issues with BlueGo are where they are. We need public transportation, but we also need to have our services pay for themselves. With county revenues in a decline of the last four years, we simply cannot afford to do what we used to. We have to cut back and unfortunately that has affected transportation.

In the future we need to evaluate where the needs for

transportation are. I see that as connecting the lake to the valley and also connecting Topaz with the valley. Let's meet with the groups and see what type of limited service is needed, establish a budget and work to find ways to make this happen. Unfortunately, we cannot afford everything and ultimately and any program needs to be self-sufficient.

What is your stance on the 100-room rule for gaming growth in the county?

Let me first mention that gaming growth is the toughest two words to use together right now. Gaming has been in a decline for 20 years and shame on us for not seeing this and diversifying our economy years ago. The problem we have is not the fault of gaming, it's the fault of us not being able to see around the corner that this was an issue long ago.

There are two issues at play here. First, a local valley business, Hamdogs, planned to expand and increase the number of gaming machines, which required a zoning change. Second, is the implementation of a rule designed to protect our local investment in the gaming industry.

Let me start by saying – we don't want 100 more rooms in Douglas County and for that reason alone I think it should not have been approved as written. If you want someone to make an investment in the area, there are other ways of doing this that would make more sense to the community. I don't want to see more hotel rooms here in our near future.

The 100-hotel room issue was designed to protect our casinos and protect the investments that are already here. While it's not connected to the local business Hamdogs, it is partly in response to them. If elected, I will inspire and nurture more ideas, vetting of the possibilities, and will not jump to any one conclusion. I will do my homework, suggest more than one option or solution on these difficult issues and invest all the time needed to know all the pros and cons. As well, I will

ensure that they are clearly explained to the public before I place any vote. This is not to be construed as delay and red tape tactics, but just the opposite … transparency and efficiency.

What bothers me about this issue, and I see both sides, is that we are a free enterprise system where capitalism is a part of what makes us who we are. To establish rules that stop capitalism and protect certain establishments is moving away from the principles that made us who we are as a country. Other countries do this, but it makes me cringe to see this happen in our own valley.

Think of it this way … suppose you want to open a pizza restaurant at the lake and the commissioners tell you that in order to open your pizza place you have to build a 5-mile asphalt bike path. What if the county commissioners required this because they think we have too many pizza parlors? And if we add more pizza parlors, it will make other pizza parlors suffer and close down. We essentially shut off free enterprise by requiring something that doesn't really connect to the issue at hand. (This is not to say that after eating pizza maybe we all need to bike that 5-mile route to get the pizza off.)

Consolidation of water agencies is stalled, yet ratepayers are faced with higher bills. What are your thoughts on this issue?

Some county ratepayers will now be asked to pay more for water than in property taxes. When you do this to people on fixed incomes in these economic times, I find to be unacceptable. We must find a better resolution to this issue.

When I see that the county paid $140,000 for a consultant and allowed only one option to be returned, I have to look at the county for being the responsible party. As in any business, when you pay a consultant, you let them know what you want for that return. You will get what you agreed to and in our case –

it was only one option, which was not a good option.

On the November ballot is an ordinance regarding the Minden airport. What is your position on it and why?

The airport is critical to Douglas County and is an important revenue stream for us of approximately $50 million according to past figures. I agree with the ordinance and believe that it is the best solution in order for us to continue to receive federal funding. The airport brings a tremendous amount of revenue to the county and in order for it to be self-sufficient we rely on the federal grants.

When I talk to those not in favor of the ordinance I see there is a bit of mistrust with the county and when you lose trust it's hard to gain it back. I would like to work with both groups to re-establish trust, address the concerns of the community and bring the groups together. I do, however, support the airport ordinance as it is written.

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

Integrity and transparency are critical to me as both an individual, as a businessman and as a politician. I have no problem turning down contributions based on moral standards, pay to play scenarios and any organization I do not agree with.

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

Play guitar and sing

Love to cook

I'm on my horse as much as possible

Taught high school students for 14 years

Two patents for my work as an engineer in the global energy sector

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Lowden shares tapestries at SNC

Returning this month to the Tahoe Gallery, located on the third floor of SNC's Prim Library, is accomplished tapestry and weaving artist Antonia Lowden.

According to Lowden, her act of weaving necessitates, "a different kind of attitude and a mode that requires you [to] express an idea…." By doing so, she has elevated her large-scale tapestries – which often reveal themselves more like paintings or sculptures – beyond a common "craft" to a well-received art form. A 2001 recipient of the Governor's Arts Award for Service to the Arts, Lowden and her work are deeply woven into the fabric of northern Nevada's art community.

Having founded Artouring (now Reno Open Studios) in 1999, a non-profit community program which offers a behind-the-scenes look at local artists' in-home studios, Lowden ensures artists in the Reno-Tahoe-Virginia City area remain in the foreground of the art scene. Her long association with Reno's Nevada Museum of Art as curatorial assistant, Museum School educator, and Board of Trustees member, as well as her dedication and service to the Nevada Opera confirm Lowden's genuine status as a true champion of the arts in the state of Nevada.

"Sticks and Stones" runs through Oct. 15. On Oct. 7, Lowden will give a lecture on her work at 5:15pm in the Prim Library, room 320. The Gallery will host an opening reception that evening from 5-7pm. The public is invited to attend both of

these free events; light refreshments will be provided.

Gallery hours are Monday-Friday, 9am-5pm. For more information, contact Tahoe Gallery Coordinator Ashley Aguilar at (775) 831.1314 or aaguilar@sierranevada.edu.

Truckee River Day set for Oct. 17

The 15th Annual Truckee River Day is Oct. 17. The event will include a full day of restoration followed by a celebration fair.

Truckee River Day started in 1996 with only three weeks of planning. Four hundred volunteers came to lend a hand and completed 10 projects. Since that first year thousands of volunteers have participated in the restoration projects throughout the Truckee River Watershed. Each year the number of volunteers and completed projects has grown.



Working during the 2009 cleanup. Photo/Debborah Urich

“The 15th anniversary of Truckee River Day marks the completion of over 100 restoration projects with the help of 5,000 volunteers,” Lisa Wallace, executive director of the Truckee River Watershed Council, said in a press release. “Our volunteers pounded-in willow stakes, planted wild rose, built meadow boardwalks, placed fish gravel and spread pine needles. Together we have done a lot of work, but there is still a lot to do – we need another 15.”

This year participants will have their choice of half day or full day projects followed by a celebration at the Truckee River Day Fair. The fair will include live music, food, educational and art activities, and the annual fish release.

To participate in this year’s festivities, visit the website or call (530) 550.8760. The deadline for pre-registration is Oct. 8.

Pioneer marijuana collective stays true to its roots

By Peter Hecht, Sacramento Bee

SANTA CRUZ – By his count, Don Ivey, 56, should have been dead six times by now.



The artisan and former competitive in-line skater survived both a stabbing and a scuba diving accident as a young man. Fifteen years ago, he was diagnosed with AIDS and hepatitis C. Five years ago, he crashed a motorcycle, landing facedown, partially paralyzed, in an ocean bay.

Recently, just 30 days removed from his second emergency room visit for internal bleeding and vomiting blood, Ivey walked up a terraced marijuana garden that is a medicinal and spiritual refuge for the sick, injured and dying.

Rising above rows of English lavender and shielded by a crescent-shaped ridge in the Santa Cruz Mountains, the pot garden for the Wo/Men's Alliance for Medical Marijuana is an icon in the history of the California marijuana movement.

The garden survives despite a 2002 raid – and seizure of the crop – by heavily armed federal agents. It thrives amid an aura of death, as members reap the harvest while grieving for those who succumb to terminal illnesses.

Read the whole story

Fallon farmers may expand business into distillery

By Johnathan L. Wright, Reno Gazette-Journal

The Frey family, Nevada farmers for five generations, don't simply want to remain on their land in Fallon.

They want to work it, see it breathe and thrive – even as water rights have dramatically diminished and surrounding farms have been abandoned to the wind.

In 2001, the Freys began planting fine wine grapes, a low-water, high-value alternative to traditional hay and grain crops. Today, Churchill Vineyards occupies part of their 738-acre Frey Ranch and releases about 1,500 cases annually, all of them made and bottled on the ranch.

But having successfully taken up the grape, the Freys now are taking a new look at their grain. Or, more accurately, a new look at both grape and grain.

Read the whole story

A plan to revise federal tax structure

By Keith Libbey and Evan Thomas, Newsweek

Most Americans spend dozens, if not hundreds, of hours attempting, not always successfully, to do their tax returns. We spend almost $30 billion paying accountants to fill out the complicated forms, and by some estimates we devote $110 billion of our own labor just keeping track of all the necessary records and paperwork. Americans pay about 85 percent of the taxes they owe, better than in most countries, but the shortfall is still a drain on the Treasury (and the rich seem to find a way to avoid taxes legally). Is this costly, demoralizing struggle between the IRS and the rest of us really necessary?

The short answer is no. There is a way to relieve almost all Americans of the annual April 15 nightmare. What's more, it's a necessary first step toward a plan to cut the looming federal deficit. The time is right for thoroughgoing tax reform—a true clean slate—that will bring in more revenue while giving the public a greater sense of fairness. The reforms we propose will even allow most people to take home more pay than they do now.

The place to start is to cut almost everyone's payroll and

income taxes by half. Yes, you read that right. Cut most tax rates, which now run from 10 to 39 percent, by half. All individual taxes would be collected through company withholding taxes on compensation (salary, bonus, deferred payments, etc.) and investment income (dividends, interest, capital gains, rents) to individuals. The very rich—those making more than $2 million a year—would still pay a top tax rate of 30 percent on earned income. The rate on investment income would be 15 percent. The result: individuals would not have to file tax returns, most Americans would take home more pay than they do now, the tax base would be broadened, and the AMT—the alternative minimum tax, which sweeps up more taxpayers every year—would be eliminated.

Read the whole story

Judge: Lakeview Commons' future in SLT council's hands

By Jeremy Evans

South Lake Tahoe discovered last month that it was operating under an invalid contract with construction company Reeve Knight, the contractor selected to complete the Lakeview Commons project.

On Monday, El Dorado County Superior Court Judge Steve Bailey ruled the city needs to start the bid process all over again, a decision that will derail any improvements to the El Dorado Beach area until at least next spring.

"We expected the judge to send it back to the city," said City Attorney Patrick Enright. "Now we need to decide what we will

do next.”

The city will meet on Tuesday in a closed session to evaluate its next move, although the city is likely facing two options. It can either appeal the judge’s decision within 30 days or it will turn the bid process back over to the City Council, which would restart the process of accepting bids for the project.



The future of Lakeview Commons is uncertain. Photo/Kathryn Reed

If the closed session results in a decision that the project’s fate be handled by the City Council, it will discuss the matter at its next meeting on Oct. 19.

“We might wait until the full 30 days are up before we do anything or we could turn it over to the City Council to decide,” Enright said. “We will go over our litigation options tomorrow in the closed session.”

Bailey could have ruled that the city had to award the bid to Clark & Sullivan, the Sparks-based firm that brought the case to court. While Reeve Knight was awarded the bid on Aug. 3 on a 4-1 vote by the City Council, Clark & Sullivan challenged the awarding of the $4.5 million bid after excavating had begun. Bailey issued an injunction on Aug. 30 that halted construction, and then ruled in mid-September that the contract was void and invalid.

Since construction will remain at a standstill until spring at the earliest, Bailey signed an executive order to ensure proper winterizing of the property, per requirements by the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency and the Lahontan Water Board.

Calls from *Lake Tahoe News* to both Clark & Sullivan and Reeve Knight went unreturned as of Monday evening.