Talk of ‘secret’ tunnel fuels heated water debate in California

By Central Valley Business Times

A 45-mile long tunnel that would drain fresh water from the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta – so wide in diameter that small planes could fly through it – is being talked about in secret meetings in Sacramento.

Broad plans for the tunnel have been worked out, although the planning document prepared by the state’s Natural Resources Agency with the plans says that it is “presented only for purposes of facilitating discussion and is not intended as any preliminary or final decision….”

“These are government officials using taxpayer funds to try to develop a scheme for spending billions more taxpayer funds and they are doing it in a non-public way,” says Jonas Minton, water policy advisor for the Planning and Conservation League, a Sacramento-based nonprofit lobbying organization specializing in environmental issues, and a former deputy director of the California Department of Water Resources.

“It includes many, many specifics that are in the form of a proposal. And perhaps this was a slip-up, but in the first appendix included with the document … it’s actually entitled ‘state proposal.’” says Mr. Minton. “Although they’re saying that this is just an issue paper, it certainly comes across as more than that.”

Read the whole story

Fall farm festival involves produce, maze, scarecrows

Lattin Farms Fall Festival is every Saturday in October. It is a jubilee of family activities.

Visitors can take a hayride to the pumpkin patch to find the perfect pumpkin, build a life-size scarecrow at the Scarecrow Factory, or treat the little ones to a cow train ride or a trip through Critterville. Pick-your-own raspberries and tomatoes are available for a short while.

Highlighting the festival is the Know Your Farmer Corn Maze. This year's maze is carved out of 3 acres of corn, with a design that features produce, dairy and other farm products. The theme was inspired by the USDA Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food initiative to better connect consumers with local producers.



Scarecrow-making is part of the fun in Fallon. Photo/Provided

"It's important for people to know where their food comes from," Rick Lattin, co-owner of Lattin Farms, a five-

generation family farm, said in a statement. “And that’s why we picked this theme. Visitors can come out and have fun and see firsthand all the things we can grow in Nevada.”

The fall festival will be open every weekend in October, 5-8pm on Fridays, and 10am-8pm on Saturdays, beginning Oct. 1.

Lattin Farms is located at 1955 McLean Road in Fallon. For more information, call 866.638.6293 or visit www.lattinfarms.com.

Opinion: Prop. 25 is not real reform

By Arthur Bruzzone

All Californians want an on-time and balanced budget. We all agree on that.

But Proposition 25 is not real reform. The real agenda of the Sacramento politicians backing Prop. 25 is to enable the Legislature to more easily pass wasteful spending through borrowed billions and through budget gimmicks. Prop. 25 will intensify, not alleviate, our budget crisis.

Prop. 25 is the latest attempt by Sacramento politicians to deceive voters into giving them additional unbridled power. These are the same politicians who have raised our taxes and burdened us with runaway spending. In the end, the problem with California’s state budget isn’t the process – it’s the politicians. Real reform will come only when we clean house in Sacramento, not amend our state Constitution to make it easier to pass unbalanced budgets.

Read the whole story

Arthur Bruzzone of San Francisco is a former member of the San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission.

South Tahoe pot cultivation ordinance ready for council

By Kathryn Reed

On the same day the South Lake Tahoe City Council is expected to vote on a medical marijuana cultivation ordinance, residents will elect three new council members and all of California will decide if pot should be legalized via Proposition 19.

Before Nov. 2, the City Council will have a public hearing on Oct. 19 regarding the local ordinance.

Also at the Oct. 19 meeting the agenda is likely to contain an extension on the moratorium to limit the number of pot clubs to the three existing ones. The original one-year moratorium was passed in November 2009. It will require a super majority or four-fifths vote to keep it going. Two years is the maximum for a moratorium like this.



Officials on

Sept. 29 work on South Tahoe's draft pot cultivation ordinance. Photo/Kathryn Reed

It’s not entirely clear what would happen to the collectives if the moratorium were not extended because all three have city business licenses, which was not the case a year ago. It could also mean more collectives would seek to be part of the community.

The 12-person committee recently convened to come up with a cultivation ordinance specifically for the collectives – since growing in other manner would be illegal – met Sept. 29 to finalize the plan that will be presented to the council in October.

The members include two city councilmen, a rep from each collective, a property manager, city manager, assistant city manager, city attorney, building inspector, police chief, and fire marshal.

Not much was changed in the draft pot ordinance even though the meeting went on for nearly two hours.

One of the most talked about issues was Lukins Brothers Water Company’s inability to put out a house fire.

Ray Zachau, fire marshal, said the issue to fight a fire if one of the 900 residences off Highway 89 is in flames is a concern that goes beyond the cause. The lack of water pressure in this area was exacerbated and brought to public’s conscience during the 2007 Angora Fire. Former City Manager Dave Jinkens spent years trying to rectify the issue to no

avail.

Current City Manager Tony O’Rourke on Wednesday said it would be discriminatory to not allow grow operations in houses supplied by Lukins Brothers water.

“The No. 1 cause of residential fires everywhere is kitchen fires. Are we going to prevent kitchens in Lukins?” O’Rourke said.

He said the capability to put out a fire is not a reason to ban a grow-house when there are plenty of day-to-day causes that ignite fires.

On the flip-side, O’Rourke used the example of Monday’s fire on Wildwood Avenue as a reason to make sure the cultivation ordinance works. That house had a grow operation. (Renter Kevin Christensen was at the meeting to dispute his two plants under a 600-watt bulb were the cause of the fire that is likely to render the house a total loss. He said an outside uncovered electrical outlet was the cause, which contradicts the fire marshal.)

Part of the application for a grow permit will require the homeowner’s consent – and that person’s validated signature. Background checks will be done on want-to-be growers.

“If I can see something from the street that indicates it’s a grow operation, then it’s a violation,” O’Rourke said.

The goal is to write a document that will stand up in court if it were challenged. O’Rourke believes this has been done by using existing standards like electrical, building, and health and safety regulations and not writing something from scratch.

Minor tweaks will be made to the draft ordinance from this latest meeting. Some of which include adding attics are not permissible grow areas and reworking the violation language. The revisions are expected to be completed by Oct. 4 and then

available at city offices at Lake Tahoe Airport.

Councilman Bruce Grego unsuccessfully sought stricter penalties for people who violate the ordinance.

“I want to bury them,” he said.

City Attorney Patrick Enright explained to the councilman, who is also an attorney, city ordinances per state law are misdemeanors and the maximum fine is $1,000. Grego had thrown out the number $10,000.

Councilman Bill Crawford weighed-in that being able to revoke a business license for people operating in the industrial area should solve the problem.

Several people at the table noted that if city officials find substantial violations at a residence to make the structure a public safety hazard, the electric company could pull the meter.

Small fires in South Tahoe blamed on kids with lighter

Two minor fires in South Lake Tahoe on Wednesday afternoon are believed to have been started by children.

Both were behind Heavenly Valley Estates and were close to each other.

At the scene fire officials found a lighter that was presumably used to light the pine needles. A Jeffery pine was torched, which sent smoke billowing into the air.

Although neither plot of charred land was more than 400-square-feet, South Tahoe Fire Marshal Ray Zachau said investigators want to know who started the fires. He expects it was the same kids in both instances.

This time of year fuels are extremely combustible because moisture has been scarce.

– Compiled by Kathryn Reed

Real estate group helps students defray college expenses

Every year the South Tahoe Association of Realtors awards scholarships in honor and memory of past president Barbara Kelly. Kelly served as president of the association in 1988.

Successful applicants to the STAR Barbara Kelly Memorial Scholarship must be graduating seniors with at least a 3.2gpa, be an offspring or a step-child of a current STAR Realtor or affiliate member, and plan to attend college or a trade school after graduation.

This year STAR is giving $750 to two young women to help defray the costs of continuing education.

This year’s scholarship award recipients are Kelly Johnson, daughter of affiliate members Paul and Anne Johnson of Homes and Land Magazine, and Katie Poet, daughter of Realtor member Bob Poet of Coldwell Banker Select-Round Hill.



Kelly Johnson

Johnson graduated from Sierra Lutheran High School in Minden and is attending Whitworth College in Spokane.



Katie Poet

Poet graduated from Whittell High School and is at Lake Tahoe Community College in South Lake Tahoe.

Chautauqua-style performance

Nevada State Parks is presenting a free Chautauqua-style show Oct. 2 at 10am at the Dangberg Home Ranch Historic Park in Minden. Nevada State Park Ranger Mike Dinauer and community organizer Linda Conlin, will give a Chautauqua presentation on Nevada pioneers Samuel and Eliza Buckland.

In 1859, Samuel Buckland established a ranch and a trading post along the Carson River next to the California Trail in what is now Lyon County. He met his wife, Eliza Prentice, when

the wagon train she and her sister were traveling with stopped at his trading post. As Fort Churchill was dismantled in 1870, the Bucklands salvaged materials to build a two-story house for what became an important stop for travelers as they supplied goods to immigrants, travelers and ranchers. The Overland Stage Company kept horses there and Pony Express riders stopped to change mounts. Today, Buckland Station is open to the public as part of Fort Churchill State Historic Park.

Where: The park is located at 1450 Highway 88, one-half mile south of the Carson Valley Swim Center. For further information, call (775) 783.9417.

Other: Chairs and shade shelters are provided by the park.Visitors are welcome to bring lawn chairs, and encouraged to bring drinking water. Dress according to the weather for this outdoor program. Pets should be left at home.

Looking for answers to marijuana cultivation questions

Publisher's note: ***The author of this letter read part of it into the record at the Sept. 29, 2010, marijuana cultivation committee meeting in South Lake Tahoe. Below is the letter in its entirety.***

To the publisher,

At last week's committee meeting called to develop an ordinance for the home cultivation of medical marijuana, a

homeowner on the committee spoke of her concern about the disposal of soil potentially contaminated with fertilizer, herbicides, pesticides and other grow products. There is also the problem of the washing and disposal of contaminated equipment used to apply these products. This possible introduction of toxins into neighborhoods and commercial grow warehouses will have to be squarely confronted and resolved. Some regulatory agencies and neighbors will demand it.

Grow advocates on the committee agreed that in order to dissipate marijuana fumes and reduce mold problems, fans would be required to circulate the air from the grow room (up to 10 percent of the floor area of a house) to outside fresh air every three minutes. Unlike fans made for home use, these may have to be of an industrial sort, and if so, are likely to make noise well above the peace and quiet that neighborhood residents presently enjoy. Fans will be programmed to switch on and off for as long as marijuana is growing in the houses. Will they be running 24 hours a day? Just one of these fans may announce to any passerby that they are close to a grow house and every neighbor will know where the grow houses are. Several of these fans placed in close proximity could contribute a continuous noise to some significant part of the neighborhood.

If marijuana is grown in garages, flammable and toxic material such as gardening chemicals, anti-freeze, gas grills and other equipment that is now suitably stored in a garage will be displaced. While is may be legal to store such items in the home, is it the preferred location? Can the fire department recommend alternative storage spaces?

Since growing marijuana in neighborhoods will in part include a business transaction – the selling of the unused product to dispensaries – will water use be billed at the commercial or residential rate?

The City Council may impose a one-or two-year moratorium on

new dispensaries. Nevertheless, the three existing storefront dispensaries are “grandfathered in”. Why? Isn’t it appropriate for there to be periodic reviews of the dispensaries by the public, City Council and staff? Shouldn’t their continued operation be provisional? Who made the decision that the three dispensaries are grandfathered in and why was public comment not sough beforehand?

Originally, this ordinance was to be presented to the City Council at its Oct. 5 meeting. That date has been changed to the Oct. 19 City Council meeting. Hopefully, the public will have a chance to comment.

Gloria Harootunian, South Lake Tahoe

Conference spotlights link between mental illness, violence

By Jaclyn O’Malley, Reno Gazette-Journal

Recent headlines of violence – from double murders to child kidnappings – committed by suspects with a history of mental illness, is causing concern to local mental health advocates who say there is a lack of awareness on the issue.

A Friday conference hosted by the National Alliance on Mental Illness Northern Nevada chapter – free to the public – could provide families with some help, said NAMI president Bunchie Tyler. A continental breakfast and lunch will also be provided.

Tyler said mental health experts at the conference will be

discussing treatment and medications, coping strategies, how to erase stigma toward mental illness and describing what local resources are available. NAMI officials will also be donating $10,000 to the Reno Police Department so that it can continue to maintain its specialized van used for transporting mentally ill persons in crisis to treatment facilities.

Tyler, who also teaches a 12-week course for relatives of the mentally ill, said recent news stories regarding mentally ill suspects committing acts of violence demonstrates a lack of available treatment, or awareness that the person needs immediate psychiatric help. For example, Eyward Pereyra, of Reno, remains jailed without bail on charges he fatally stabbed his elderly parents in an August unprovoked attack, and tried to kill his brother. Court records show he has a history of mental illness, including two stints in the county's mental health court. At the time of the slayings, he was an out-patient at the state mental hospital in Reno, according to court records.

Read the whole story

TGRI Oktoberfest in Incline

Event: TGRI at Oktoberfest

Date: Oct. 16

Time: noon-5pm

Location: Village Center, 774 Mays Blvd., Incline Village

Cost: Free

Description:

Get to know your community. Stop by The Global Resource Initiative (TGRI) booth during Oktoberfest at Village Center to grab some goodies and find out how TGRI is helping build locally vibrant and sustainable communities through research and education in Asia, Africa, and right here in Tahoe.

Oktoberfest at Village Center is a community fair featuring crafts, food, music, and information.