No outcry to Placerville's measure to raise sales tax

By Carlos Alcalá, Sacramento Bee

Why, in a tea party era, is there no organized fight against Placerville's Measure H, a proposed quarter-percent hike in the sales tax?

No one even offered a ballot argument against it.

"It's kind of eerie," admitted City Manager John Driscoll.

Read the whole story

History: Locals embrace movies filmed at the lake

Publisher's note: ***This is from the February 1973 Lake Tahoe Historical Society newsletter.***

By Marie Walsh, Lake Tahoe Historical Society

The local community, and our own membership, was overwhelmingly responsive to our January 30 and 31 showing of the 1936 classic, "Rose Marie."

The Tuesday evening showing was a delight to our members-only crowd who nostalgically appreciated the opportunity to see the production that was filmed, almost in its entirety, at the South Shore's own Cascade Lake and Emerald Bay.



A standing-room-only crowd was on hand for the Wednesday evening showing, including several persons from the communities of Pollock Pines, Carson City and Alpine County!

Our final tally shows $303.50 taken in for general admissions, and $112.50 in new memberships and renewals. Deducting $100 for the film's rental cost, we arrive at a net profit of $216.00! Profit figures are indeed exciting, but perhaps even more important to us at this time is our much-appreciated membership increase – 37 new members and 7 renewals!

With the film having been so enthusiastically received, it is our feeling that other such productions filmed at Lake Tahoe might be enjoyed by our members and the local community. A very good possibility exists of obtaining "Lightnin," the movie made at Cascade Lake in the early 1930's and starring Will Rogers.

And with "Rose Marie" having been such a marvelous money-maker, it might behoove us to consider showing it again this summer for the tourist crowd, as well as for those who missed our January showings.

Navigating bridal shows takes some skill

By Reno Gazette-Journal

For some brides, the mere thought of attending a wedding planning event is enough to make them consider a quick

ceremony at a drive-through Las Vegas chapel. Alas, Stephanie Anderson, of One Fine Day, said an event-planning company, would like to dispel such outlandish notions with some helpful tips for successfully navigating – and enjoying – the event.

Read the whole story

Opinion: On-time-budget act moves California forward

By Marty Hittelman

California has been the birthplace of so much that is new and better for our country and the world – technology, social change, culture and political thought. But California's budget process is holding us back. We are locked in an antiquated and deadly trap, the Legislature's two-thirds vote requirement to pass a state budget. This is why we need Proposition 25, the On Time Budget Act.

Prop. 25 would do two simple things:

Proposition 25 would break the annual budget deadlock by allowing a majority of legislators to approve a budget. It would leave the two-thirds vote requirement to raise taxes unchanged.

Prop. 25 also would hold legislators accountable by preventing them from collecting their pay and benefits for every day the state budget is late – income they can't recover later when they do pass the budget.

Read the whole story

Marty Hittelman is the president of the California Federation of Teachers.

Placer County art scene sees uptick in attendance

By Edward Ortiz, Sacramento Bee

Patronage of the arts in Placer County is on the rise. At the end of 2009 arts organizations experienced a 13 percent increase in audiences, according to Karen Killebrew with PlacerArts.

And to capitalize on that good news Placer County's arts and culture organizations have joined together to create an umbrella brand for the arts in Placer County.

Read the whole story

South Tahoe Chamber sponsors City Council candidate forum

The South Tahoe Chamber of Commerce will be hosting a community City Council Candidates Forum on Oct. 19 at 5:30pm at the library on Rufus Allen Boulevard.

This structured forum will provide each candidate the opportunity for opening and closing remarks and explain their

position on several local issues. Immediately following the closing remarks portion of the forum, time will be allocated for the audience and the candidates to discuss additional items not covered during the forum.

This event is free and all community members and City Council candidates are welcome to attend.

If you have questions, call (530) 544.7412.

Mother Nature messing with El Dorado County grape harvest

By John Smith

The weather for growing grapes in Fair Play is generally favorable, but there have been exceptions. 1995, 1998, 2005 and now 2010 stand out over the past 21 years here as less than ideal.

In both this year and 1998, the culprit has been El Niño, the Pacific Ocean weather pattern that brings us more rain and cooler summer temperatures. In 1998, it rained through the first week in June, and shoots that should have been 3-feet long by then were barely 3 inches. This year, in addition to the rainy spring, we had lots of sunshine, and the growth of the vines was near normal.

The grapes, however, are not so easily fooled. The time for harvest can generally be predicted by adding up the “degree days” for the growing year (technically from April 1 through Oct. 1, but by the time August is over, we pretty much know what’s in store for harvest).

A professor at UC Davis developed a system of “regions” for California, based on the calculation: take the average temperature for each day in the date range, subtract 50, and add them up. The regions are:

· 2,500 degree days or less: Region I

· 2,501-3,000 degree days: Region II

· 3,001-3,500 degree days: Region III

· 3,501-4,000 degree days: Region IV

· Greater than 4,000 degree days: Region V

Most of Fair Play is considered to be Region II (the same at Rutherford or Oakville in Napa), but this year would have been an almost ideal Region I, and if anyone had planted Riesling or Pinot Noir, it would have been a perfect year.

For Zinfandel, Cabernet and even Syrah, though, it has been much cooler than we’d like.

Many growers had the foresight when the cool weather was evident to reduce the crop load and spread the available sugar over a small number of clusters; others will simply have to wait much longer for the crop to ripen. Will it be late September, October, or even later? The answer depends on the temperatures we see from here on out.

In 1998, the harvest at Oakstone Winery for Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot was delayed until late October, after an “Indian summer” brought two weeks of warm weather and finally produced grapes of very good quality.

Not to worry, though, each El Niño is usually followed by La Niña, and 1999 was one of the finest years for growing grapes here in Fair Play that anyone can remember.

We all appreciate your good thoughts and prayers for relief

this year; and if not, we can all hope for a truly fabulous vintage in 2011.

John Smith works for Oakstone Winery in Fair Play.

Unable to figure out nuts and bolts of SLT's 10-11 budget

By Kathryn Reed

In two days, a new fiscal year begins in South Lake Tahoe. The multi-million dollar budget approved in August on the eve of then-City Manager Dave Jinkens' departure is rife with questions.

Lake Tahoe News has been trying to put the pieces together, but the city has been hampering those efforts.

The budget for 2010-11 was approved 5-0 by the City Council on Aug. 3 even though now City Manager Tony O'Rourke wanted to be at the helm when it came before the council. Jinkens at the time told *Lake Tahoe News* it was important to pass the budget then. Why it was important was not articulated. And without the full budget available, *Lake Tahoe News* can't answer the question.

What city staff, aka Finance Director Christine Vuletich, presented to the council is on the website.

What's missing in these documents is the detail.

The city each year sends the budget to some firm to be bound. This takes months to be done. *Lake Tahoe News* has asked for the documents in PDF form and not bound form.

To this request, last week Vuletich replied, “We have not forgotten you, but must check with the City Attorney to make sure the work papers you are requesting are public information, that can be provided to you.”

All *LTN* wanted was the documents that were sent to the printer or backup material that allowed the Finance Department to put the budget together.

On Sept. 27, after *LTN* asked again, Vuletich confirmed what *LTN* already new – the documents are for public consumption.

However, the 500-plus pages will not be available until sometime today. *LTN* will need time to scour them before reporting on the detail. This is assuming they are actually available.

In the documents available to the public and media via the website, *LTN* was able to come up with 21 questions. They were sent Vuletich, O’Rourke and the five councilmembers on Sept. 27 with a deadline of noon Sept. 28.

Vuletich per an email said, “Regarding the twenty one detailed budget questions you asked (Monday), these will take considerable staff time to research in order to provide answers for you. It is not possible to complete this work by noon (Tuesday). We will do our best to complete this work as soon as possible, and will let you know when it is done.”

The response by this reporter was, “… when it comes to answering the questions, I don’t believe you when you say it will take considerable staff time to answer them. You could not have put the budget together without knowing the answers.

“I’m writing the first budget story (Sept. 28) based on the

answers or non-answers to these questions. Subsequent stories will follow once I get through the documents you will be providing."

No word from Vuletich since then.

O'Rourke weighed-in with a phone call Sept. 27 saying he'd like to talk. Calls to him that evening and on Sept. 28 were not returned.

Lake Tahoe News will print the answers when the city answers all of them. A question *LTN* has been able to answer is the increase in the redevelopment budget by $1.5 million. It's the lead paint grant.

In other cities grant income and then expenditures are classified separately and not part of the overall budget. Not in South Lake Tahoe.

Although the below reference to the STR Trust Fund still remains a mystery, *LTN* has learned several departments in the city have trust funds. These are specified funds the public may donate to for a specific cause that are not part of the general fund.

When *Lake Tahoe News* receives the detailed budget documents it will be looking at those funds more closely and specifically to see if the $20,000-plus for Linear Park that was given to the city from Core 24 Charities is in a fund like this or anywhere else. (This reporter was a founding member and past vice president of the now defunct nonprofit.)

Here are the questions *Lake Tahoe News* asked the city. The councilmembers were part of the email. Mayor Kathay Lovell and Mayor Pro Tem Hal Cole make up the finance committee. Neither emailed nor called *LTN* with a comment.

Unanswered budget questions:

1. Why did the City Council budget go up 15 percent? How much

of that $192,541 is for salary and how much for health benefits? And what is the rest for?

2. The City Attorney's Office in 2009-10 had budgeted revenues of $100,000. Why no revenue this fiscal year? How does this department generate revenue?

3. Why did the vehicle abatement budget increase 144 percent? What specifically is this line item?

4. Is it true there is one less fire captain position in the 2010-11 budget? And is it true the fire chief didn't know about this reduction until the morning the council voted on the budget in August?

5. Fire prevention costs went up 17 percent? What is the public getting for those $42,721?

6. Fire training and safety budget was decreased by 20 percent. What was cut? Is this prudent?

7. Engineering under Public Works had an increase of 25 percent or more than $181,000. What is this money for? Are these the same people responsible for bids like the Lakeview Commons fiasco?

8. Can the city be doing its share of EIP projects with this kind of cut? Please explain what isn't getting done with the quarter million dollar cut.

9. Is the 38 percent increase in the TID bottom line related to the TOT increase that went into affect this year?

10. How/why did the Redevelopment and Housing budget increase 58 percent or $1.5 million? Where does that money come from and where will it be spent?

11. The Parking Enterprise category, is that just the Heavenly Village garage? With the numbers indicated, it looks like the projection is for it to lose even more money than this past

fiscal year? How was that scenario arrived at?

12. Why are the airport environmental operations increasing 52 percent? And what are “airport environmental operations”?

13. What is AB939? And why did this fund increase 150 percent?

14. What is the $840,000 in the 2009-10 STR Trust Fund? What is that fund?

15. My calculations come to a deficit of $4,972,735, yet the city talks about $3 million taken from reserves to compensate for the 2010-11 deficit. Please explain how you wiped away the other nearly $2 million from the ledger? From the budget documents on the website, revenues for 2010-11 are $66,061,944. Expenses are budgeted at $71,034,670. This creates the earlier mentioned deficit. These numbers, though, don’t tie back to the PowerPoint on the city’s website. It seems like the Capital Improvement Plan Budget is not in the budget documents that are on the website. Please explain the discrepancy.

16. Did the budget get approved without the specifics of the CIP being documented or discussed? The website said the CIP revenue budgeted is $34,524,280, while expenses will be $30,805.295. Is this the surplus, so to speak? Does that mean the CIP has been “robbed” unknowingly by the council, or perhaps knowingly, I’ll let them weigh-in individually.

17. The lack of detail provided in the documents on the website don’t allow for thorough analysis of how the cost savings from one budget year to the next have been made. Details would be nice.

18. Is it possible to get the actual balance sheet? This would show all assets, including fund balances, equipment and reserves. It should also show all debt obligations. This should be in one easy to read document. May I please have it?

19. In regards to using the $500,000 from the Workers' Comp Reserves during the 2009-10 midyear budget revise, was this legal? Is it prudent?

20. There is also the use of the RDA Loan Transaction for $300,000. The document states, "Principal repayment is a balance sheet transaction, not typically budgeted, but increases fund annually." This sounds like a slush fund to me. Please explain. And what about the interest on this account? Where is it? And how is it spent?

21. Regarding the TOT delinquencies: How do you account for these potential receivables? Is there a "bad debt" account? Interest is added to delinquent TOT, but where is the interest accrued? Is it included anywhere in revenues?

El Dorado County trying to define creative sector

El Dorado Arts Council and the El Dorado County Office of Economic Development want to know what's good about the arts business climate and how it can be made even better.

During the month of October, artists, arts organizations, arts businesses and arts venues are asked to participate in the county's first Arts Census.

"The goal of the Arts Census is to better define the creative sector of our local economy. We want to know how many practicing artists, musicians, actors, dancers, writers and poets there are in El Dorado County. Galleries, music stores, frame shops and other arts-related businesses are part of the creative economy, too. Finding out how they perceive the

business climate is important," Deb Jensen, executive director of the El Dorado Arts Council, said in a press release.

She noted that there are dozens of nonprofit arts organizations as well as venues that integrate the arts, like wineries and cafes, that play a significant role in the local economy.

The Arts Census will be conducted throughout the month of October and will include all communities from South Lake Tahoe to El Dorado Hills, and Cool to Somerset. Artists, arts businesses, and arts organizations may call to schedule an Arts Census interview, which will take about 15 minutes to conduct. Contact Deb Jensen, djensen@eldoradoartscouncil.org

Volunteers are needed to help conduct the Arts Census. Training for volunteers is Oct. 2 at ArtSpace, 459 Main St., Placerville. Volunteers who live in South Lake Tahoe are encouraged to participate and will have a separate training, details to be determined. Contact the arts council at (530) 295.3496 or EDAC@eldoradoartscouncil.org.

Toy run benefits Christmas Cheer

Lake Tahoe's 20th annual Toy Run is Oct. 2.

Line up at Turn 3 Sports Bar at 2227 Lake Tahoe Blvd., South Lake Tahoe at 10am. Depart at noon for the Flight Deck Restaurant at Lake Tahoe Airport.

There will be live music, food, drinks and raffles. Deep Fryed Mojo and Cash Only bands will play from noon-8pm.

Entry fee is one new toy. They all go to Christmas Cheer.

For more information, call Mary Luckel at (530) 541.4332 or (530) 416.4166.