Congressional candidate to visit South Tahoe

There will be “meet and greet” for Clint Curtis, the District 4 candidate for U.S. Congress, on Sept. 26 at 3pm.

For full information, check out the Lake Tahoe Democratic Club website.

Tallac Association struggles to be financially solvent

By Kathryn Reed

CAMP RICHARDSON – Negative numbers fill the ledger of the Tahoe Tallac Association – putting the board in the awkward position this week of offering the executive director a contract extension with little or no money to pay her.

Staff (high season has three full time and four part time) has been cut, though it is a bit normal to make cuts as the season winds down; Executive Director Lori Cramer and Director Carl Wooland are essentially working as volunteers despite the fact they should be paid staff; rates on weddings have been cut in an attempt to lure brides and grooms; grants are be sought; and an advisory committee is in place to help right the unstable ship.



Carl Wooland and Lori Cramer are almost working for free for the Tahoe Tallac Association. Photo/Kathryn Reed

As of Sept. 20 the TTA had $2,617.19 in the bank.

“I’m having a hard time selling the site (for weddings) without the lawn,” Cramer told the board Monday.

In the past, the association has rented out the Grand Hall at Valhalla for weddings, with receptions often on the adjacent grassy area. But the U.S. Forest Service, which owns the property on the outside of the South Lake Tahoe city limits on Highway 89, recently nixed that practice.

The decision resulted in needing to refund $9,000 worth of deposits for the 2009 season.

Rental income, which is wedding and the holiday faire, raised $53,215 for the fiscal year ending Sept. 30. For 2008-09 that figure was $118,451. That’s a difference of 55.1 percent.

One of the problems is the Forest Service doesn’t usually manage buildings. That’s one reason why the agency was going to burn all the buildings down when it took ownership of the historic sites that were once home to wealthy San Franciscans.

Jonathan Cook-Fisher, special uses program manager for the Forest Service, has been in the position for less than a year. He isn't familiar with the 30-plus year history of his agency's contentious relationship with the Tahoe Tallac Association.

Cook-Fisher wants to work with the TTA so its annual Valhalla Arts and Music Festival thrives. The summer-fall festival season is the purpose of the TTA. It's just that weddings came along and helped keep the nonprofit afloat.

The Forest Service has a financial interest in ensuring TTA is financially solvent. The Granger-Thye permit sends about 15 percent of gross profits to the USFS to be used solely for restoration at the site.

Cook-Fisher said he doesn't know why the lawn was once allowed to be used for weddings and now isn't.

The TTA board says other Forest Service staff has reinterpreted the environmental impact statement and special use permit that it works under.

The association claims it lost between $5,500 and $11,000 by not being able to stage outdoor culture events on the lawn. What irks the board even more is that it pays to maintain the lush green expanse to the tune of $7,000 year.

When the two sides do meet, another issue the TTA will bring up is the gate not being open and the parking spaces it believes are theirs that the USFS keeps for itself.

Again, these are issues Cook-Fisher said he is not well versed in.

The TTA is crafting a letter to send to Terri Marceron, forest supervisor, and hoping for a meeting before she heads to Alaska.

Cook-Fisher said he is ready to talk to TTA now.

“I would like to move from emails and informal discussions to a formalized proposal (from them) that this is what (they) want to do and why. We are not quite there, but I think we will get there,” Cook-Fisher said. “We like to see (from all permitees) some sophistication of how folks develop a business plan, what service they provide to the public and how it all works together.”

The Tallac Association has a plan, but believes the Forest Service changes the rules. TTA has done some number crunching, extrapolating what the loss of use at the site per current USFS rules means to the entire South Shore bottom line, not just TTA’s. It is in the millions of dollars when things like lodging for the people not able to use the site is added in, linen rentals not booked, photographers not used, restaurants not frequented and so on.

The TTA is not blaming its meager bottom line solely on the Forest Service. It knows it has to change some thing going forward regardless of what the landowner does.

This is Cramer’s first season at the helm after the board let the previous executive director go. Ticket prices did not necessarily reflect what it cost to bring in a performer. Grants have not been written for all the money that is out there.

A tentative schedule was presented to the board for the 2011 season that calls for recurring events like a local band performance the first Thursday of each month. The idea is people would get used to being at the site more consistently.

At the end of the evening the board met in closed session to discuss Cramer’s future. They offered her the executive director’s job and she wants it. It remains to be seen if a contract can be worked out along with a conflict of interest clause crafted. Executive directors have made in the mid-$40,000s in the past, with no benefits. The conflict issue is

Cramer has a wedding business. This past season she was not permitted to schedule any weddings at Valhalla for her business.

TTA’s annual gala fundraiser is Dec. 4. The Tahoe Improv Players are having a benefit performance Sept. 27. TTA also sells memberships.

Man Black Booked for cheating at Stateline club arrested in Vegas

By Richard N. Velotta, Las Vegas Sun

A New Jersey man who has been on Nevada’s List of Excluded Persons – the Black Book – since 1994 and on New Jersey’s List of Exclusion since 1989 was arrested in a Las Vegas casino Wednesday morning.

Brent Eli Morris was apprehended by enforcement agents of the state Gaming Control Board at about 1am at Caesars Palace after he was spotted playing craps by casino surveillance personnel.

Read the whole story

Lahontan's Tahoe office threatened with power being cut

By Kathryn Reed

California's budget mess had employees at Lahontan Water Quality Control Board scrambling to figure out a way to keep the lights on.

With rent not being paid on the South Lake Tahoe office on Lake Tahoe Boulevard, it also meant the electric bill was not getting paid. These checks are cut in Sacramento and the state isn't writing checks because it doesn't have a budget for the fiscal year that began July 1.

NV Energy had threatened to shut off power beginning Sept. 27. The landlord stepped in, paid the bill and Lahontan workers will keep working – except, of course, on the second, third and fourth Fridays of the month because of the state-imposed furlough days.

Contingency plans were being made for some Lahontan workers to squeeze into the annex building on James Street if the lights went out at the main office.

Ordinance on cultivating pot in South Tahoe takes shape

The draft ordinance of South Lake Tahoe's marijuana cultivation ordinance is expected to be discussed at next

week’s pot committee hearing.

More input was given at this week’s meeting. Representatives from the three medicinal marijuana collectives, concerned residents, city staff and others are working on crafting language for the ordinance.

The South Lake Tahoe City Council is expected to take up the issue Oct. 19. Council meetings begin at 9am.

The next committee meeting is Sept. 29 at 3pm at Lake Tahoe Airport.

– Compiled by Kathryn Reed

Free defensible space cleanup day

Residents in the Tahoe Truckee Sierra Disposal service area may drop off natural wood debris on Sept. 25 for free from 7:30am-2pm.

This offer is open only to property owners – no commercial customers. Proof may be required. A limit of three yards (approximately 20 bags) per trip, or 3-yard capacity trailers.

Acceptable items include tree limbs and brush, pine needles, yard trimmings and dry grass and dead leaves. No garbage, stumps, construction debris, dirt, sod or rocks.

Where: Cross Country Ski Area, 925 Country Club Drive, Tahoe City

Homewood South Lodge (Tahoe Ski Bowl)

North Tahoe Regional Park (Snow Park Area)

For more information, call North Tahoe Fire at (530) 546.2212.

Discovering the Northwest through Living Voices

Discover a unique combination of theater, video and live interaction that creates a high impact experience and an unforgettable journey through history with Living Voices presented by Tahoe Arts Project.

Witness the dynamically changing Northwest at the turn of the century. The expansion of the railroad, the discovery of gold, labor struggles, and world war – these are the passages experienced by a young Swedish immigrant and her community. As she interacts with her African, Asian, and Native American neighbors you'll discover the diversity of the American experience.

The Northwest Passages' program is Oct. 1 at 7pm at the South Lake Tahoe Senior Center.

Suggested donation of $5.

For more information, call Tahoe Arts Project at (530) 542.3632.

SLT City Council 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.

Marathon events expected to slow weekend traffic in basin

Drivers in the Lake Tahoe Basin should expect a few inconveniences this weekend because of Lake Tahoe Marathon events.

On Sept. 25 is the Great Lake Tahoe 72 Mile Bike Race that starts and finishes at Zephyr Cove. Anticipate the peloton coming across the state line into California from the start in Zephyr Cove about 7:15am. The California Highway Patrol will lead them through South Lake Tahoe and arrive at the Y about 7:35am before heading up Emerald Bay.

Try to avoid Highway 89 north between 7:30 and 8:30am as there

will be some slow going. Race officials also advise avoiding traveling from Tahoe City around the East Shore to intersection of highways 28 and 50 between 8:30 and 9:30am.

Marathon Sunday, Sept. 26, will see Emerald Bay Road closed at 7am at Spring Creek. Camp Richardson and Fallen Leaf Lake Road will remain open all the time. Highway 89 will reopen northbound at about 1:30pm. Southbound remains open, but slow and with delays, south from Tahoe City.

Traffic between Tahoe City, Homewood, and Tahoma should be clear in both directions by 10am. The leaders will leave Commons Beach in Tahoe City at 8am.

Former Cal-Neva owner indicted on wire fraud charges

By Stuart Pfeifer and Robert Faturechi, Los Angeles Times

Los Angeles real estate mogul Ezri Namvar, an Iranian immigrant who amassed and then lost billions of dollars of commercial real estate holdings, has been indicted on wire fraud charges, his attorney said.

Namvar, former owner of such high-profile properties as the Marriott hotel in downtown Los Angeles and the Cal Neva resort in Lake Tahoe, was accused of five counts of wire fraud related to a company, Namco Financial Exchange Corp., that sheltered proceeds from real estate transactions, said defense attorney Marc Harris.

Thom Mrozek, a spokesman for the U.S. attorney’s office, said

a grand jury indicted Namvar on Tuesday.

Read the whole story