Court: Lakeview Commons construction work must stop

By Kathryn Reed

South Lake Tahoe's second stalled hole in the ground became a reality this week when a judge granted a construction firm's injunction request to bring work at the Lakeview Commons project to a halt.

"What we're seeking is to have the job awarded to us and we complete the work," BJ Sullivan, president of Clark & Sullivan Construction, told *Lake Tahoe News*. In support of the Sparks company writ is the local Carpenters Union.



The dilapidated wall at El Dorado Beach will be destroyed and rebuilt. Photo/Kathryn Reed

El Dorado County Superior Court Judge Steve Bailey signed the injunction Aug. 30 at 4pm. A hearing is scheduled for Sept. 17. It is not known if Bailey will make a decision that day.

Work may continue at the site through Friday to shore up

erosion issues. Essentially, it is being winterized. Even though it was never going to be available to Labor Day crowds, the minimum three-week delay could affect locals and visitors next year. With it being directly across from Campground by the Lake, this beach and picnic area is a huge draw for campers.

“If it doesn’t go our way, I don’t know how it will play out,” Jim Marino, South Lake Tahoe assistant engineer, said. “July 15, 2011, it was supposed to be done. We were hoping to have it a little in advance for the July 4 weekend. The longer this plays out, the worse this is going to get (to meet the deadline.)”

It will be South Lake Tahoe’s responsibility to defend the bid process in court. It will be up to Clark & Sullivan’s attorney to prove the bid process for the multi-million project at El Dorado Beach was not fair.

The bid process became a bit convoluted this summer. On Aug. 3, the City Council voted 4-1 to award the nearly $4.5 million project to Reeve-Knight Construction out of Roseville. At that meeting Clark & Sullivan petitioned the bid award, saying their competitor’s numbers for subcontractor work v. in-house work were wrong. The Sparks firm was picked as the lower bidder in the first round that was subsequently quashed by the council in June.

The difference between the two firms’ bids the second time around was close to a half million dollars. Legally, the city has to pick the lowest responsive bidder. Responsive is the key word because even though Clark & Sullivan was not the low bidder, the company believes it was the most responsive.

(Calls to Reeve Knight’s CEO, president and VP of operations were not returned.)

Sullivan said the city “over-stepped” its responsibility by allowing Reeve Knight to adjust figures to meet the bid

criteria.

To that, the city has repeatedly said, the clarifications being sought by the low bidder were minor.

Neither the city nor Clark & Sullivan has been in this predicament before, so authorities aren't sure what to expect next. If the city prevails in court, it would like to use the remainder of the grading season, which ends Oct. 15, to get the foundation of the non-motorized boathouse in. If the city loses, it's likely the site will be closed until May 1, when dirt can be moved again.

It's possible the bid process could have to start from scratch, or one of the two firms involved will prevail.

(Whatever the outcome, the project is not destined to go the route of the stalled convention center – which hasn't seen a construction worker on that property in years and remains mired in bankruptcy court for at least another 120 days per the judge's ruling last week.)

Funding for the project is coming from the California Tahoe Conservancy. The state agency isn't about to take sides as to which firm should do the work.

"This is a large project. The important thing is to do it right, do it well, on time and on budget," said Peter Eichar, CTC associate environmental planner. "This (injunction) does not jeopardize Conservancy funding."

Stopping work will hit the local economy. A number of the subcontractors were local. Supplies were being bought locally. Clark & Sullivan had not proposed to use the number of local subs that Reeve Knight is using.

Before *Lake Tahoe News* or Andrew Galicia knew about the injunction, he said the project was ahead of schedule. He runs GB General, an excavating firm based in South Tahoe since the

1950s.

It took less than two days to fell 52 trees. His company was supposed to do all the site work. Now his employees are without work.



What El Dorado Beach area will look like in summer 2011.

Plans call for creating a terraced sitting area, revamped picnic/barbecue sites, access for all, storage for canoes/kayaks, rest rooms and overall upgrades of this stretch of shoreline. The rest of what once was called the 56-acreproject will be built in phases.

“If it turns out the way it’s supposed to, you really can use it,” Galicia said of the beach and barbecue areas.

Fallen Leaf Lake residents vote in 3 new board members

By Susan Wood

Based on semi-official results reported by El Dorado County Elections Department officials Tuesday night, Fallen Leaf Lake residents will get mostly a new board in the coming months.

More than two-thirds (321) of the 461 registered voters cast ballots for Thomas Barber to replace former board member Dana Clark, Wanda Kownacki taking board member Eric Thaden's seat and Thomas Bacchetti taking over where former board President Mike Kraft once sat. More than 80 percent opted to recall board members Thaden and Kraft, the latter resigning Aug. 20 as president amid a report of him not qualifying to be a registered to voter in the Community Services District.

Kraft has become a controversial figure with a segment of the community. He led a movement to oust longtime general store and marina concessionaire John and Ruth Rich. Since then, Rob and Sandy Wirth have taken over the hub of the lakeside community. For more than a year, CSD meetings have been punctuated by perceived threats, standing room only attendance, shouting matches and has led to a divided community.

When all is said and done, board member Jennifer Thornton will be the only familiar face on the board, as Terri Thomas decided to move on as well. Thornton has been on the board for less than a year.

Board clerk Patsy Miller resigned at about the same time as Kraft with no public explanation. A new clerk will be appointed by the incoming board. Choosing officers of the board is on the Sept. 4 agenda for the district.

In his resignation, Kraft said he's "disheartened" about the "selfish" nature of some citizens of the village at the base of the Desolation Wilderness near South Lake Tahoe.

His successor, Bacchetti, told Lake Tahoe News he looks forward to the opportunity.

“One thing I’ve looked at over the last year is how important it is to make sure we take care of the process and make sure everyone knows what’s going on,” Bacchetti said, adding how the CSD board shouldn’t “go off and do whatever it wants.” He believes the outgoing board failed to do that.

Bacchetti, an arts administrator, noted how the lake represents the one constant in his life over the last 45 years.

Phone calls to Kownacki and Barber were left unanswered.

The district turmoil also prompted a review of the elections code from El Dorado County. A question arose as to the eligibility of board candidates and registered voters if they don’t permanently reside in the district.

“(Residency) is where they claim their homeowner tax exemption,” Green said.

Report: Angora Fire didn’t hurt Tahoe

UC Davis researchers noted several bright spots in their annual Lake Tahoe health report issued today: The 2007 Angora Fire had no significant impact on lake clarity; a small test of a method to kill invasive clams worked; the pollutant phosphorus was at its lowest level in 29 years; and free-floating algae in the lake have generally remained constant since 1996.

Earlier this month, the UC Davis Tahoe Environmental Research

Center announced lake clarity held relatively steady in 2009. It was noted the rate of decline in Lake Tahoe's clarity since 2000 was less that that seen in past decades.

"Overall, we remain cautiously optimistic," John Reuter, associate director of the UC Davis Tahoe Environmental Research Center, said in a press release.

The "Tahoe: State of the Lake Report" is intended to give the public a better understanding of the changes occurring in Lake Tahoe on a year-to-year basis and to place current conditions within a historical perspective. It summarizes tens of thousands of scientific observations of lake weather, water conditions and aquatic life made since 1900.

"This report is an impartial, annual accounting of many key variables of lake change," Geoff Schladow, director of the UC Davis Tahoe Environmental Research Center, said in a statement. "It helps us all recognize the differences between natural variability and longterm change, and how our efforts toward the restoration of Lake Tahoe are progressing."

Reuter emphasized the lake is not out of the woods, "but it does have the ability to improve, provided that pollution control is achieved."

The report also shows these 2009 events: Potentially disastrous invasive quagga mussels were found on 10 boats inspected by Tahoe management agencies as they headed for the lake. More precipitation fell as rain and less as snow. Algae attached to rocks and docks increased along the northeast shoreline. The amount of water-clouding particles and nutrients reaching the lake by west-side streams increased as precipitation rose from previous years. Lake levels fell below the natural rim of the lake, causing water to stop flowing into the Truckee River.

The full 69-page report is online.

Lake Tahoe Boys and Girls Club needs volunteers

Enjoy helping out? Like office work? Like kids? Like arts and crafts? Like to teach a subject or activity? Have two hours or more to spare each month? If so, the Boys and Girls Club of Lake Tahoe wants you.

The Boys and Girls Club of Lake Tahoe is seeking volunteers for a multitude of areas: Sports, Teen Enterprise, the Environment, Arts and Crafts, Book Club, Cooking, Writing, Photography, Computer Lab and Gardening.

This isn’t just for adults as Junior Volunteers are needed too. One can be a Junior Volunteer if they are in grades 9-12.

For more information, contact Paula Peterson at (530) 542.0838 or email ppeterson@bgclt.org.

Heli-skiing to take off from Truckee Airport

Pacific Crest Heli-Guides in partnership with HeliTahoe will offer helicopter skiing and snowboarding in Lake Tahoe for the 2010-11 winter season. The operation will be based out of the Truckee Airport and access more than 100,000 acres of privately owned land located along the spine of the Pacific Crest.

By comparison, the combined total skiable acreage at all 14 ski resorts surrounding Lake Tahoe is less than 25,000 acres.

Besides a few small heliskiing enterprises in the early 1970s, this will be the first full-fledged helicopter skiing operation launched in the Lake Tahoe region or in the entire Sierra Nevada.

The operation will be limited to a maximum of 16 guests per day with a ratio of one guide per four guests. The cost structure will be based upon flight time rather than vertical feet, allowing like-minded guests to customize their experience based on their budget, their desire to ski/ride as much vertical as possible and/or their desire to explore a variety of different zones. Full day trips will start at $899 per person.

The terrain accessed via helicopter will be a variety of open bowls, spaced trees, steep chutes and technical couloirs geared toward the advanced to expert skier or snowboarder.

In addition to founding Pacific Crest Heli-Guides, Dave “Happy” Rintala has been operating Pacific Crest Snowcats for close to a decade and is also one of the owner/operators of Alaska Backcountry Adventures, the original heliskiing operation located atop Thompson Pass near Valdez.

“The addition of a helicopter skiing operation to the region allows Lake Tahoe to position itself as a complete winter destination on par with locations such as Whistler, Jackson Hole, Utah and Colorado,” said Rintala. “Pacific Crest Heli-Guides looks forward to being part of the ultimate Lake Tahoe skiing or snowboarding experience.”

For more information, click here, email info@tahoegravityguides.com or call 888.792.9222.

Lawsuits, runway improvements dominate SLT council agenda

By Kathryn Reed

Much of today's special South Lake Tahoe City Council meeting will be behind closed doors. Litigation matters are the topic of the day.

The cases before the council are former transit operator John Andoh. A second civil rights case also involves the city and police officers filed by Daniel Thomas Harvey. The other cases are MV Transportation's lawsuit and Lake Tahoe Development Company's bankruptcy status.

Action that is likely to take place this morning is approval of a last-minute grant from the Federal Aviation Administration. Word came earlier this summer the FAA may have money that would need to be spent before Sept. 30.



The area where cars parked for Saturday's air show is Phase III for ramp improvements.

Photo/Kathryn
Reed

The nearly $1.45 million grant would require a 5 percent match by the city, or $76,000.

The money would complete Phase III of the runway-paving project at Lake Tahoe Airport. Phases I and II were finished in June. This would be the final phase of repaving the terminal area.

In anticipation of the money coming forward, the city went out to bid last month. The council is being asked this morning to accept the grant and award the bid.

The grant will also buy a snowblower for the airport. A 25-year-old blower hasn't worked since December and would cost $40,000 to fix. The other blower dates to 1992 and is often on the fritz, with $20,000 having been put into it this year.

The meeting is at Lake Tahoe Airport starting at 9 this morning. The meeting is expected to be over by 11am.

Opinion: Curing social ills will help fix physical pain

By Laura Gottlieb

I had known and adored Jeremy's family for several years. So when the sandy-haired, good-natured 8-year-old came to see me in my clinic with abdominal pain, I bent over backward to find out why his tummy hurt. I poked and prodded; did tests of his urine, stool and blood; and took X-rays, over the course of

several months. When those tests came back normal, I did more. I had trained at a top medical school and gone on to one of the best residencies in my specialty; in Jeremy, I thought I had identified a real clinical mystery. But in the end, the mystery was not a best-seller: It turned out that Jeremy's family couldn't afford to buy food.

It had never even occurred to me to ask his mother about how much food there was in the house.

In Jeremy's case, I had diagnosed "abdominal pain" when the real problem was hunger; I confused social issues with medical problems in other patients, too. I mislabeled the hopelessness of long-term unemployment as depression and the poverty that causes patients to miss pills or appointments as noncompliance. In one older patient, I mistook the inability to read for dementia. My medical training had not prepared me for this ambush of social circumstance.

Read the whole story

Laura M. Gottlieb, a physician at UCSF, is a Robert Wood Johnson Health and Society scholar.

Menus set for Lake Tahoe Restaurant Week

Forget planning a Labor Day menu. Escape to Lake Tahoe, for the inaugural Lake Tahoe Restaurant Week.



Take a hearty hike along the Tahoe Rim Trail, mountain bike the famed Flume Trail or spend the day kayaking Lake Tahoe's picturesque waters, then head to one of the 30 restaurants offering three-course prix-fixe menus as part of the seven-day celebration, Sept. 5-12. Lake Tahoe Restaurant Week attendees also save on lodging, up to 35 percent off, by booking at participating properties.

There are no passes, tickets or coupons needed to take part in Lake Tahoe Restaurant Week. Instead, guests visit their favorite Lake Tahoe eatery, historic bistro or charming resort, all of which are offering menus for $20, $30 or $40 per person (tax and gratuity not included). Reservations, however, are recommended.

On the South Shore, 19 Kitchen & Bar has lobster corn chowder and beef medallions fromage, with Fresh Ketch providing a stuffed halibut with shrimp, lobster, scallops, Brie, dill and lemon beurre blanc. For authentic Mexican, Latin Soul has lamb steak with goat cheese crust and caramel flan with seasonal berries. Don't miss the maple leaf duck breast at Edgewood Restaurant. It's served up with an apple ginger sauce and sweet potato gnocchi, and can be paired with a 2006 BR Cohn, Silver Label, Cabernet.

North Lake Tahoe restaurants: Cottonwood Restaurant is offering a pine nut crusted Asian Basa with a tomato and dill beurre blanc and roasted autumn vegetables. River Grill has green chard raviolis with Sonoma goat cheese and portabella mushrooms, while Six Peaks Grille is providing a pan seared Bristol Bay salmon (with $2 of every $30 three-course dinner going to the Tahoe Forest Cancer Center). Right on the lake, Lone Eagle Grille has a mesquite grilled New York steak over watercress and red cabbage salad.

To learn more about Lake Tahoe Restaurant Week, a list of

participating dining establishments and their downloadable prix-fixe menus, lodging discounts and how to take part, visit the website or call (530) 583.2138.

Astrobiology presentation at Sierra Nevada College

Microbe Planet: Life on Earth, Extreme Environments and Astrobiology will presented by Alison Murray of the Desert Research Institute on Sept. 9.

What kinds of life inhabit extreme environments? What strategies do they use to survive? What significance does this research have for the history of life on Earth and future studies on other planets?

As an overview of Murray's current research, this program will provide a better understanding of the unseen life forms that dominate this planet and connect the study of life on earth and studies elsewhere in the Universe.

The discovery of a Martian meteorite in the Antarctic with evidence of microbial life resulted in a new field of science called astrobiology. This field has grown rapidly in the last 10 years as evidence of water on Mars and the moon of Jupiter and other bodies in the solar system have been discovered.

Murray's research in aquatic and ice-laden environments utilizes new approaches for exploring the diversity and complexity of microbial life in order to understand how life functions and adapts to its surroundings here on earth. The implications of this work have far-reaching significance for understanding the history of life on Earth.

Murray has led a research program at the Desert Research Institute since 2001 focused on studying free-living and symbiotic aquatic microorganisms and their ecology to understand their capabilities for survival in often extreme environments. Murray's research utilizes molecular tools to examine diversity, activity, community composition and genomic structure. Her work is interdisciplinary in nature, drawing upon oceanography, geosciences, computational biology, and chemistry. She has also worked in Lake Tahoe to characterize the diversity of organisms throughout the water column.

The program is presented by Squaw Valley Institute and UC Davis Tahoe Environmental Research Center. For additional information, visit www.squawvalleyinstitute.org or terc.ucdavis.edu.

Time: 6:30pm no-host bar; 7pm program

Cost: $10

Location: Assembly Rooms 139 and 141 Tahoe Center for Environmental Sciences, 291 Country Club Drive, Incline Village, on the campus of Sierra Nevada College.

Sheriff's Team of Active Retirees looking for members

In September, a two week S.T.A.R. Academy will train candidates wishing to volunteer a few hours each month with the Sheriff's Team of Active Retirees.

You must be at least 55 years old, in good health and interested in becoming the "eyes and ears" on El Dorado

County’s Sheriff’s team. This is an opportunity to serve the community by volunteering during special events and patrolling in the local county areas.

The academy will be Sept. 13-17 and Sept. 20-23 from 9am-noon.

Graduation will be Sept. 24.

Pick up an application to become a S.T.A.R. at the sheriff’s department (1360 Johnson Blvd., Ste. 100, South Lake Tahoe) or call Dick Young at (530) 577.7415 or Deputy Mike Yarbrough at (530) 957.3534 or the sheriff’s office at (530) 573.3005.