Snippets about Lake Tahoe



• The Economic Development Division of El Dorado County is having kickoff for the Web Portal project on March 5 from 9am-noon in the Board of Supervisors meeting room, 330 Fair Lane, Placerville.

• T.G. Sheppard will be at the Carson Valley Inn on March 28. Doors open 6:15pm and the show starts 7pm. Tickets are $22; (775) 783.6606.

• Truckee has launched a survey to collect input from the community on the Truckee Trails and Bikeways Master Plan Update.

• Truckee Police Department’s annual report is available online.

• While Colorado legalized marijuana, it’s not allowed on most ski slopes. But it would be hard to know it based on the segment below from Inside Edition. After it aired Vail Resorts and the U.S. Forest Service confirmed that a number of structures associated with prohibited marijuana use and constructed illegally on USFS lands within the permitted boundaries of the company’s four Colorado resorts were destroyed.

No one hurt in avalanche at

Kirkwood



A person caught in an avalanche Feb. 27 at Kirkwood is freed from the snow. Photo/Corrina M. Strauss

Updated Feb. 27 10pm:

No one was injured when an avalanche struck Kirkwood Mountain Resort on Thursday.

Resort officials said the avalanche was 50-yards-long and about as wide.

It happened in the Eagle Bowl area in the late morning Feb. 27. Four people were in the area, but no one was injured, according to the resort. But it wasn't as mundane as the resort made it sound.

"Crazy day at Kirkwood! First lines in Eagle Bowl with about 150 others," Corrina M. Strauss said. "White room, people yelling, 'Wait! Wait!' Then when the snow settles I came around a comer to see for the first time someone head deep in the snow with four others digging her out! About a half an hour later they closed Eagle Bowl again due to a major avalanche."

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Snowpack improving, but not fast enough



A wet February in Lake Tahoe has improved the overall water picture, but not enough to end the drought. Photo/LTN

By Kathryn Reed

Maybe the Department of Water Resources ought to schedule snow surveys more often because snow fell each of the last two times.

While every drop of moisture helps, California is not likely to get out of its drought this season. Still, things are slightly improved, but still worrisome.

Statewide, the water content on Feb. 27 was 24 percent of average for the date. On Echo Summit near the entrance of Sierra-at-Tahoe the story was a little better. The 25.7 inches of snow have a water content of 8.1 inches, which is 33 percent of normal.

A month ago, statewide the water content was 12 percent of

normal and the Echo reading was 7 percent.

“We welcome the late storms, but they are not enough to end the drought,” DWR Director Mark Cowin said in a statement. “We can’t control the weather, but we can control the amount of water we use. This drought is a wake-up call that we all have to take water conservation seriously and make it a way of life.”

This is the third consecutive dry winter for California. The snowpack normally provides about a third of the water used by cities and farms as it melts into streams and reservoirs in spring and early summer. The reservoirs store the water for famers and municipalities. But without snow there is nothing to store.

Lake Oroville, the State Water Project’s principal reservoir, is at 39 percent of its 3.5 million acre-foot capacity. Normally it is at 57 percent this time of year. Shasta Lake, California and the federal Central Valley Project’s largest reservoir, is at 38 percent when it should be at 52 percent.

And with the lack of storage, the end users are not getting what they expect or need. Some cities in California have invoked water restrictions. Farmers are leaving fields fallow. Only water for health and safety reasons will be delivered from the State Water Project.

January and February are typically the wet months in the Sierra. While a Miracle March could happen, it can’t make up for three years of below normal snow and rain.

February will end on a wet note. The National Weather Service in Reno is calling for a 100 percent chance of snow in Lake Tahoe.

Also on Thursday, the Legislature sent Gov. Jerry Brown a $687 million drought relief package. Much of the money would come from bond money that has not been spent. Most of the money –

$500 million – would be allocated for communities to build systems to capture stormwater and then use the grey water. Money is also available for communities if they run out of potable water.

Party planned for South Shore Olympians

South Lake Tahoe, Meyers and Sierra-at-Tahoe will celebrate the South Shore's three Olympians with a party on March 15.

Jamie Anderson and Maddie Bowman, who won gold for snowboarding slopestyle and freeskiing halfpipe, respectively, and Hannah Teter who placed fourth in snowboarding halfpipe, all live in Meyers and ride for Sierra-at-Tahoe.

A procession will take the Olympians via fire truck from South Tahoe High School, onto Highway 50, past the airport and through Meyers, concluding at Sierra. Community members may line Highway 50 along the route and cheer the Olympian procession as it drives by.

The party will include autograph signings, music, food and drink specials, prizes and a raffle with proceeds to the Sierra Foundation, which grooms future world class athletes.

The athletes will depart from South Tahoe High School at 1pm.

Parking at the resort is expected to be limited, so carpooling is encouraged.

‘Still Life with Iris’ coming to LTCC

“Still Life with Iris” chronicles a young girl’s quest to regain her memory, her past, and with them, her home. It is a fantastical adventure that centers on a young girl’s search for a simple thing: home.

The play comes to Lake Tahoe Community College in March.

Rather than using all adult actors for the production, LTCC Theater Director Susan Boulanger cast five children to play the leading role of Iris and her friends.

There are two sets of real-life parents and children who have been cast in this production. Maddy Evans, who plays the role of Iris, will share the stage with her brother, Sam, as well as her mother, Diana, who plays the role of Iris’ mother. Emery Hansa Beaver will also be onstage with her mom, Carolin.

Performances of Still Life With Iris are March 14, 15, 20, 21 at 7:30pm, with Sunday matinees on March 16 and 23 at 2pm. Tickets are $10 for general admission, $7 for seniors and groups of eight or more, and $5 for students with a valid student ID and children under 13. Tickets may be purchased in advance at LTCC’s bookstore starting March 3. The box office will be open for ticket sales one hour prior to performances. For more information, call (530) 541.4660, ext. 207.

South Tahoe adds ladder truck to fire fleet



South Lake Tahoe's ladder truck is the fire department's newest piece of equipment. Photo/Provided

By Kathryn Reed

A million dollar truck is rolling around South Lake Tahoe. It's the fire department's ladder truck.

The old ladder truck was so decrepit it was taken out of service in 2012. The city has possession of the new one, but a few things still need to be done before it hits the streets.

"There will be extensive training, installation of radios and equipment and fire station 2 needs to be remodeled to account for its size; it's a bit over 48-feet-long," Fire Chief Jeff Meston told *Lake Tahoe News*. "Our folks will get lots of drivers training before she goes into service."

South Tahoe has been able to rely on neighboring agencies in

the interim. It was Tahoe Douglas Fire that supplied the ladder truck when the house went up in flames on Pioneer Trail in April 2012.

One of the conditions in the original contract for the Chateau project near Stateline was to be able to provide adequate fire protection. This meant the city had to have a ladder truck. It did when the contract was signed.

Ladder trucks tend to have a lifespan of 15 years. South Tahoe doubled that number with its last truck. But it was also costing the city about $100,000 in annual maintenance costs. And then it got to the point where parts were no longer available.

It’s possible with better equipment and improvements being made to South Tahoe Public Utility District and Lukins Brothers Water District water lines that the city’s ISO rating could improve.

ISO provides advisory services and information to many insurance companies.

In March 2012, the city received an ISO rating of four. This is out of nine, with one being the best.

“For a city our size, four is very good. This rate has little affect on homeowners insurance. It’s more about commercial rates for businesses,” Meston said. “We could add staff to improve the rating, but that is costly.”

Ratings are done about every six years.

STHS wrestling coach sidelined

South Tahoe High School wrestling coach Ryan Wallace has recently been bound to a wheelchair because his prosthetic leg has been a major source of trouble for a long time.

He had his right leg amputated after he was diagnosed with a rare form of bone disease.

The wheelchair is preventing him from being able to coach. A fund-raising campaign is under way to help Wallace get a new leg. The goal is to raise $25,000.

To contribute, go online.

Membership airline headed for Truckee

Surf Air, the nation’s first all-you-can-fly private membership airline, will expand its service to Truckee beginning May 2, pending government approval.

Service to Truckee from San Carlos will be available on weekends only. Connecting flights will be available for members traveling to and from Burbank, Hawthorne and Santa Barbara airports.

Surf Air started last year as a way to fly between the Los Angeles metro area, San Francisco Bay Area and Santa Barbara. This year Las Vegas and Truckee have been added.

For a monthly fee starting at $1,350, members have access to unlimited flights on executive aircraft departing from private air terminals with free parking and no lines or additional fees.

For more info, go online.

Zephyr, Whittell closed; more snow in forecast

A snow on rain event overnight is making for slushy conditions on roads.

It also means Zephyr Cove and Whittell High schools are closed for the day.

A winter weather advisory remains in effect for the Lake Tahoe Basin until 10 Thursday morning. Another 2 to 4 inches could fall in the basin, with 6 inches at higher elevations.

A couple inches fell overnight in South Lake Tahoe. Kirkwood says it got a foot, Squaw Valley 10 inches, and Sierra-at-Tahoe 10 inches.

The Sierra Avalanche Center has issued a “considerable” warning for today in the backcountry.

Another storm will be rolling into the area on Friday that could bring 5 to 9 inches of snow.

There is a chance of rain and/or snow in the forecast into

Monday.

Road information may be obtained by clicking on the state icons on the home page of *Lake Tahoe News*.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Catalyst project gone; Meyers' future undecided

By Kathryn Reed

MEYERS – "The catalyst project is dead. You have my word on it. If you want, I'll put it in writing."

That's how El Dorado County Supervisor Norma Santiago started Wednesday night's meeting about the Meyers Area Plan.

It ended with local resident Steve Bannar pointing out the good aspects of Meyers, that the policymakers are not the enemies, and that it is time to concentrate on the positives and for people to get involved. His words were met with the loudest round of applause during the two-hour meeting at the CCC offices.



El Dorado County Supervisor

Norma Santiago pulls the plug on the catalyst project for Meyers. Photo/Kathryn Reed

In between those two speakers was an hour of Q&A where about 30 of the nearly 150 people in attendance spoke. At times it was contentious, but mostly it was passion that came through.

In the audience were South Tahoe High students getting extra credit for their AP environmental studies class.

The first hour of the Feb. 26 meeting was county and Tahoe Regional Planning Agency officials comparing the 1993 community plan to the draft area plan.

Catalyst project shelved

The so-called catalyst project was something Santiago spearheaded. She is the one who directed Kim Kerr, assistant county administrative officer, to process the contract that was then signed by CAO Terri Daly.

It was $25,000 worth of taxpayer money that is now in the trash.

“I caused a lot of angst, anxiety, fear and all kinds of things in this community, even divisiveness. I am sorry for that,” Santiago said in her apology for having pushed the catalyst project through.

Symbolically, she then crossed the project off the board.

While One Globe’s idea is off the table, the draft Meyers Area Plan as it stands today would allow anyone to come forward with a similar idea. Santiago only has the power to nix this particular idea because she was the driving force behind it.

Santiago later said it’s possible to add to the area plan that the community does not support a large development.

Differences between 1993 and 2014

Adam Lewandowski with TRPA went over the basics:

• Meyers has about 33,000-square-feet of commercial floor area.

• There are 17 leftover tourist accommodation units from a former hotel. Ten new TAUs are available.

• Eight residential units may be built.

“Those numbers are not set in stone. You can transfer development rights,” Lewandowski said.

He said the TRPA Regional Plan update did not change the density and height for Meyers, but instead allows Meyers to have a say in what the rules will be.

The old plan had five special districts. The new plan condenses them. The old plan allowed lodging in specific areas. The new one allows it in more areas.

The draft plan includes a recreation district that encompasses the campground and golf courses. New residences would not be allowed in that zone, whereas the old plan would allow that use.

The draft plan adds 357 acres of conservation land that includes land for hiking, trails and other recreation.

A big change from 21 years ago is the two-tiered incentive program.

“It’s definitely the most controversial part of the area plan based on comments and the petition that is circulating,” Lewandowski said.

If developers met certain criteria, they would be allowed to build a taller, denser building than the baseline regulations.

Meyers used the TRPA standard for height in the community plan. The range is 24 to 42 feet, with a slew of factors determining what can go where.

The draft plan calls for 35 feet to be the maximum, but 45 feet if incentives are met.

The CCC building is 35-feet tall and Lira's is 36 feet.

The existing plan calls for motels to allow 40 units per acre, apartments 15 per acre.

The draft calls for 30 hotel units per acre or 40 if incentives are met. Apartments would be 20 per acre or 25 with incentives.

Going forward

Scenic issues are a big concern for residents that go beyond the typical TRPA definition.

While the view corridor will be protected so a building does not obscure the mountain vistas, the whole look of the area could be improved through the area plan. This includes landscaping and signs.

No matter what plan is approved, Caltrans this summer will be putting in major water quality improvements. Included in this is a crosswalk on Highway 50 at Apache Avenue.

The county has money to improve the Pat Lowe bike trail.

Grants are being sought for other projects.

Brendan Ferry, chief planner for the county, said implementation is a huge component of the area plan. That is one reason he is actively seeking grant money to make Meyers a more walkable, bikeable community.

A couple people questioned whether there could be wriggle room with the height in case a unique project came forward that

would need more space, such as a climbing wall or ski ramp like Woodward at Boreal has.

Some want to keep the old plan as the law of the land.

John Friedrich asked who is going to decide whose ideas eventually end up in the final document. Santiago did not have a concise answer, but instead said it will be based on general consensus.

Bruce Grego proposed the voters have final say. Santiago told him he was free to do just that, adding that she would not bring it to the Board of Supervisors to consider placing it on the ballot.

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Notes:

• The next meeting on the draft area plan is March 19 at 6pm at the CCC building.

• No deadline has been set for when comments will end.

• Comments and responses will be posted on the county's website.

• Comments may be emailed to MeyersAreaPlan@edcgov.us.