TRT trail steward workshop

Did you know that the Tahoe Rim Trail Association is still building new trail? Join us at 6:30pm on May 19 at REI in Reno for a presentation by the TRTA.

Learn how to become a trail steward. As a volunteer you will learn new skills, meet like-minded people, and give back to your community trail system. No experience is necessary.

Workdays are every Saturday, Tuesday, and Thursday (9am-4pm) throughout the spring/summer. We will discuss our two exciting trail building projects The Rim to Reno Trail System and The Daggett Trail System. Check out www.tahoerimtrail.org for more info.

Marketing meeting on South Shore

Smart Marketing Strategies for Tough Times No. 2 is May 21st from noon-2pm at MontBleu in Stateline. The lunch will be followed by an optional social media workshop, from 2-3:30pm at no extra charge for any businesses interested in one-on-one help with Facebook and Twitter.

Featured guest speaker, David Thiemann, returns for a second installment of last year’s Smart Marketing Strategies for Tough Times with Digital Marketing Demystified. Attendees will learn how to take advantage of interactive ways to target customers, including social media marketing, video, online advertising and directories, search, mobile, email blasts, e-newsletters and more.

Thiemann is publisher for Windsor Now and Sales & Marketing Director for Northern Colorado Communications Group, based in Greely, Colo.

Reservations are required by May 14. Fees are $30 for Lake Tahoe South Shore Chamber of Commerce members and $45 for non-members (materials and lunch included). To make reservations, call (775) 588.1728 or go to www.tahoechamber.org.

Snippets about Lake Tahoe



• The League of American Bicyclists gave the North Lake Tahoe-Truckee area honorable mention in its quest to be named a Bike Friendly community.

• IntenSati is a new class being offered through Help Me Rhonda personal training. Click on class for more details.

• Patricia Gibbons-Johnson, who sat on the Tahoe Truckee Unified School District board from 1999 to 2006, was appointed to fill the vacancy until after November's election.

• Howard Coleman created a video from the protest at Lake Tahoe Community College this spring before the "Laramie Project" was staged.

Sierra Cascade bicycle map released



By Terry Richard, Oregonian

The Adventure Cycling Association of Missoula, Mont., has released its new Sierra Cascades Bicycle Route, a 2,389 -mile road-based map that runs from Sumas, Wash., through Oregon to Tecate, Calif.

The new route brings Adventure Cycling Route Network to 40,633 miles, the equivalent of riding around the planet more than one-and-a-half times.

Adventure Cycling's network, which was launched in 1976 with publication of maps for the 4,262-mile TransAmerica Bicycle Trail, is the largest mapped cycling route system in the world.

Read the whole story

STPUD to vote on budget after rate hike is settled

By Claire Fortier

How could the South Tahoe Public Utilities District justify a 4 percent increase when the economy of South Lake Tahoe has flat lined?

That was the question asked by a half dozen people who addressed the STPUD board during its public hearing Thursday night. The board answered by directing STPUD staff to present a budget based on a hike of just 2 percent at its May 20 meeting at 2pm.

About 30 people filled the utility district's board room for more than two hours.

"We need to be active about replacing our water and our sewer line, but this is not the right time for a 4 percent increase," board Chairman Dale Rise said. "Cutting that hike down the middle will give staff the tools they need to do their jobs without severely impacting our ratepayers."

The board's decision to reduce the rate hike was as much a shout out to STPUD's staff, which found more than $8 million in grant funding and $19.6 million in low interest state loans to cover critical capital improvement costs, as it was to the public's outcry over rising rates.

"Can you justify 4 percent? Yes," Ken Curtzwiler, a candidate last year for the STPUD board, told the elected officials. "But is it the right thing to do? Overall, the rate increase is not much compared to other people around the lake who are paying as much as 77 percent more. But when the entire community is down 15 percent, how can you justify going up at all?"

Driving the rate hikes is an extensive $136 million, 10-year capital improvement program that is top heavy with projects in the first two years. Many of those projects are being paid out of federal stimulus funds.

Topping the list for STPUD is replacing the Headworks, the 1950's structure through which all the district's wastewater flows. "This structure is in bad shape and deteriorating rapidly," said Paul Sciuto, STPUD's assistant general manager.

Replacing and maintaining the district's 336 miles of pipelines inside the Tahoe basin and the 26 miles of export line outside the basin, as well as the 44 pumping stations is a "massive investment of infrastructure," Sciuto said. Almost 150,000 feet of line within the basin is undersized and must be replaced for adequate fire protection. Another 180,000 feet of recently replaced pipe may have to be redone if a whistle-blower prevails in a national lawsuit over bad PVC pipe.

"If we had used the industry rule of thumb," board member Jim Jones, "we should have increased our revenues $16 (million) to $32 million a year. We are only putting in about one-third of what we should be."

In addition to federal stimulus money, STPUD has benefited from lower contractor bids on major projects and internal cost-cutting measures.

None of the additional revenue generated by a rate hike will go toward staff salaries or benefits. And the district anticipates no additional staffing for five years.

Despite no increase in salaries or benefits for staff in the immediate future, several members of the audience called for staff cuts or furloughs.

"Four percent, it's not much, but it's a lot to me and many others in this community," Jake Jacobs said. "I have taken a major hit to my income. Maybe it's time the employees in the

district share that pain as well.”

Rise said, “The way our contracts are with our staff, there is a zero percent increase. But no increase in rates in not the right and prudent thing to do because we need to maintain our water and sewer lines. It will be much more expensive down the road if we do nothing now.”

Jonnie Crawford questioned whether it’s possible to wait on some of these projects until the economy starts to improve.

Board member Eric Shafer pointed out that with the stimulus money if it’s not spent now, the money is lost.

Much of the money STPUD receives from the state and federal governments requires matching dollars from the district.

More than one person pointed out that if the infrastructure is not fixed now, it will cost more down the line.

Maxson done with being college leader

By Doug Krikorian, Long Beach Press-Telegram

It was surprising to me awhile back when Dr. Robert Maxson, who had retired as president of Long Beach State after a successful 12-year incumbency, decided to resurrect his academic career by accepting a similar position at a tiny private institution next to Lake Tahoe called Sierra Nevada College.

Of course, I was informed he was offered considerable money-it was speculated by some it was twice as much as he earned in

Long Beach-and such an enticement is difficult to resist for a healthy fellow with uncommon resourcefulness not exactly accustomed to doing nothing more every day than hiking, fishing, reading and clipping coupons.

I mean, it was Maxson's intention to live happily ever after with wife Sylvia in their 4,400-square foot shoreline home on Fidalgo in the San Juan Islands-and enjoy the intermittent company of his children and grandchildren.

But an old friend, Dr. Barry Munitz, a one-time chancellor of the California state college system who had become the board of trustees chairman at Sierra Nevada College, coaxed Maxson to return to the campus.

Read the whole story

Poetry-writing sergeant to teach at Sierra Nevada College

By Michael Doyle, Modesto Bee

WASHINGTON – Combat was a good career move for award-winning war poet Brian Turner, though it took a toll.

The native of California's San Joaquin Valley now has a deep, dark pool of memories from which to draw. He dips down, if he dares, and there they are.

He's been learning "how to write about the ghosts that live among us, whether we recognize them or not," Turner said.

Now, the former Army sergeant has a second volume of poems out influenced largely by his service in Iraq with the 3rd Stryker Brigade Combat Team. The collection called “Phantom Noise” follows up on “Here, Bullet.”

Read the whole story

Stateline man part of California AG’s fraud lawsuit

By Jim Wasserman and Dale Kasler, Sacramento Bee

California officials filed a fraud suit against the former chief executive of CalPERS and his close friend, a former pension fund board member turned placement agent, in an explosive new twist in the influence-peddling scandal that’s been simmering at CalPERS for months.

The lawsuit by Attorney General Jerry Brown says former CalPERS CEO Fred Buenrostro accepted thousands of dollars worth of gifts from Alfred Villalobos, a former CalPERS board member who has earned tens of millions of dollars as a placement agent. These agents are hired by private equity firms to obtain investments from public pension funds such as the California Public Employees’ Retirement System.

Among other things, the suit says Villalobos “substantially subsidized” the cost of Buenrostro’s 2004 wedding at Villalobos’ Lake Tahoe mansion – an incident first reported by *The Bee* last fall. Buenrostro has said he reimbursed his host.

Read the whole story

Checkpoint ends with 4 DUI arrests

South Lake Tahoe police officers along with the California Highway Patrol made four driving under the influence arrests May 5.

The sobriety checkpoint in town also netted four arrests for driving without a license or with a suspended license.

The next checkpoint will be Memorial Day weekend.

Barefoot runners refuse to lace-up ever again



By Jim Krajewski, Reno Gazette-Journal

Dr. Mel Magboo lost his shoes more than a year ago. On purpose.

And it was one of the best things he ever did.

For most people, running without shoes seems a little risky. There is debris in the form of rocks, glass and other hazardous material on the ground. And it goes against years of

ingrained thinking, which is that more padding is better.

But for runners who have made the leap, there is no alternative to running barefoot. It’s not sweeping the running world, yet, but practitioners are passionate about this “new” way of running.

Read the whole story