Roof tape could be fire hazard after snow melts

To the community,

Every year the fire department responds to many fires that could have been prevented by using just a little common sense.

One such occurrence is leaving roof heat tape turned on after all the snow has melted from your roof. The heat tape under a heavy accumulation of pine needles will eventually ignite the needles and possible cause a roof fire that could extend into your home.

So please, remember to turn off your heat tape and clear the pine needles from your roof and chimney as soon as the snow melts this spring.

Have a safe and fun Tahoe spring.

Sallie Ross-Filgo, South Lake Tahoe Fire Department

Cohee’s new resort to partner with Sierra Nevada College

Sierra Nevada College at Lake Tahoe, home to the West’s only four-year degree in Ski Business and Resort Management, is opening its Center for Ski Business Studies at China Peak

Mountain Resort.

This program is made possible due to the unique relationship between Tim Cohee, program director for SBRM at the college, and China Peak Mountain Resort, which Cohee purchased in April.

Cohee has been a senior executive at a number of the nation's leading mountain resorts for more than 30 years, including 13 as president, general manager and chief operating officer of Kirkwood Mountain Resort. China Peak was the resort's original name until 1982, when it was purchased and renamed Sierra Summit. Cohee has changed the name back effective this month.

The first group of ski business majors will intern at the resort beginning Dec. 12; one of four one-week internships offered.

"I am tremendously excited to be able to offer our top students in the SBRM program the ability to get inside resort operations for an entire week without distraction," Cohee said in a statement. "Not only will they experience firsthand how resorts operate across a variety of departments, they'll begin to develop a sense of which area of the resort interests them most, which will point them in the right direction after graduation. It will also help them focus on seasonal resort jobs that best match their passion while they are in school."

The new Center for Ski Business Studies will offer 10 students at a time a choice of four one-week sessions. Students will arrive at the resort Sunday evening, stay at the resort hotel, and select five departments (out of 15) in which to spend one full day, including hotel, food & beverage, lift maintenance and operations, vehicles, marketing, accounting, human resources, ski patrol, and much more.

For more information, contact Tim Cohee at (775) 831.1314, ext. 7480, or tcohee@sierranevada.edu.

Paddle to the Sea brings awareness to California waterways

By John Holland, Modesto Bee

In rafts, canoes and a 40-foot yacht, advocates will draw attention over the next month to the Tuolumne River and downstream waters.

The second annual Paddle to the Sea will start in the Sierra Nevada on Friday and pass through Modesto on its way to San Francisco Bay.

Participants are signing up to cover one or more of the 18 segments on the 241-mile route. They pay entry fees and must raise at least $50 in donations for the Tuolumne River Trust, which is putting on the event with numerous sponsors.

Read the whole story

Alzheimer’s class

On May 14 from 8am-4pm at Green Valley Community Church in Placerville the public is invited to learn about Alzheimer’s disease – its warning signs, who’s at risk, what treatments are available and how to cope with the unique behaviors associated with the disease from the top experts in the field.

Because of a grant from Marshall Foundation for Community Health, the registration fee is just $10 ($20 at the door) and includes a continental breakfast, lunch, snacks, and all conference materials.

Five hours of continuing education units are available for most professions for only $10. To arrange for free respite care of your loved one, please contact the Family Caregiver Support Program at (530) 621.6151. Registration brochures are available by calling El Dorado County Senior Day Care Services at (530) 621.6180 or Del Oro Caregiver Resource Center at (916) 971.0893.

LT Airport issues a symptom of lousy economy in basin

By Kathryn Reed

As the economy sputters, a new phrase could be coined – fly and dash.

Lake Tahoe Airport has seen an increase in the number of pilots gassing up without paying, as well as shunning the landing fees.

“I attribute it to the economy,” Michael Golden, who operates Mountain West Aviation, told *Lake Tahoe News*.



Lake Tahoe Airport is losing money with pilots not paying for fuel. Photo/Kathryn Reed

At the Airport Commission meeting in April, Golden talked a bit about what is going on with payments. He did not provide *Lake Tahoe News* a figure for how much his business and the city have lost because of people not paying their bills.

Because the South Lake Tahoe airport is not set up for a pilot to swipe a credit card payment is not immediate for gas. Mountain West Aviation fuel trucks go to the plane and fill it up. Often times a pilot orders the gas the day they arrive, then don't pay when they leave a couple days later.

"We can't call the police and have them chase them. They are in the air," Golden told *LTN* days after the meeting.

However, the airport could track a pilot down by the tail number and have the FAA get involved as well as put a lien on the plane. The tail number could be used to find out where the plane landed, too. Tracking down the pilot is not the course the city is currently taking.

One pilot told *Lake Tahoe News* that fuel is the cheapest part of flying.

Even though pilots have to go from the tarmac through the

Mountain West building they are walking by without paying and the employees are not able to get them to do so.

The same goes with paying the landing fee – which is about $30 for a turbo prop and can be $200 for a larger multi-million dollar airplane.

Golden's employees are responsible for collecting the fees and then giving them to the city. In fiscal year 2008-09 the airport collected $39,180.11 in landing fees. For the first seven months of this fiscal year $11,890.31 in landing fees has been paid.

Lake Tahoe Airport is the only airport in the region – including Reno and Sacramento – to charge a landing fee. No general aviation airport in the Bay Area charges a landing fee, Golden said.

Golden said the non-payers represent a cross-section of pilots, though primarily it's the mid-size, business-oriented flyer not paying.

He said the airport traffic was steady all winter, with numbers of landings increasing. More charter flights came in because the weather was fine for them, but not for smaller planes with different visual regulations.

"If you take the airport out of the equation, you remove a couple hundred thousand visits to the basin," Golden said.

South Lake Tahoe Finance Director Christine Vuletich discussed nothing about the airport's situation at the April 27 mid-year budget review with the City Council.

The city's expenses are exceeding its revenues, which required the council to trim $1.47 million from the general fund budget. To cover expenses, the council tapped into four reserve accounts and deferred payment from the Redevelopment Agency to the city – despite they are all city accounts and

taxpayer money. The RDA is still paying the general fund account the $7.2 million it raided unknowingly from taxpayers to complete the Heavenly Village project.

For the second year in a row Vuletich and her well-staffed department have been wrong about how much hotel tax would be collected. This, along with property and sales tax are the three major revenue sources for South Lake Tahoe.

Transient occupancy tax is off by 8 percent from projections or $135,770; sales tax is off by 9 percent or $235,336.

In the redevelopment area, which has a higher TOT, the hotel tax is 10 percent less than budgeted and property tax increment is 1 percent higher than anticipated.

The 911 fee of $540,000 is still at-risk. (Click here to read more about that.) The council has yet to be briefed on the situation by the city attorney.

Another blow came Tuesday when a Sacramento Superior Court judge ruled the state can take $2 billion from local redevelopment agencies. This will be a more than $2 million hit to South Lake Tahoe's bottom line; something that was not addressed with the city's mid-year budget revision.

The council approved the revised budget on a 5-0 vote. But it was noted the actions taken are one-time solutions to an ongoing problem. The council did not rule out putting more people on the unemployment lines. The unemployment rate in South Lake Tahoe is 17.7 percent.

Youths take Earth Day seriously in South Tahoe

Lori Thomaselli was inspired by Earth Day to do a little something special and to show her daughter what an impact they could have in this new community they moved into over the winter.

Last Sunday, Thomaselli organized more than 20 children within the Tahoe Valley Townhome complex on Tata Drive in South Lake Tahoe to clean up the trash and debris that had been left from the winter months.



South Tahoe residents embrace Earth Day.
Photo/Provided

After the two-hour clean up, Thomaselli, along with the Tahoe Valley Townhome management, provided pizza and prizes to the kids for their participation.

Talk of fire prevention fee for water users

By Gary Thomson, Auburn Journal

Could Placer County Water Agency users soon be paying an extra charge on their bills for clearing brush and protecting the upstream watershed against fire and erosion?

It’s a question that the Tahoe National Forest’s top ranger gave an opportunity for leaders of government and private industry to ponder during a workshop on the watershed in Auburn.

Forest Supervisor Tom Quinn told a gathering of about 120 people in Auburn on Thursday that the U.S. Forest Service view of water as a “non-market resource” has shifted.

There’s a new move toward considering non-traditional values that can be attached to watershed – from its role as a wildlife habitat to its impact on climate change to providing water for a plethora of downstream users, Quinn said.

Read the whole story

Melting snowpack causing rivers to rise

By Gus Thomson, Auburn Journal

For 22 years, Bowman’s Bonnie Lightner has been enjoying a front-row seat from her home overlooking the North Fork

American River to the ebbs and flows of the Sierra snowmelt.

This past week things turned sensational.

With the spring snow melt and rains continuing, Lightner watched as the water that continually spills over the Lake Clementine-North Fork dam began to flow more heavily. She judges by how many “dividers” at the top of the dam are obscured by the water and by Wednesday morning, the water was all the way across.

That’s a rare occasion, Lightner said, and indicative of the amount of water now pouring downstream from the mountains.

Read the whole story

K’s Kitchen: Cinco de Mayo salad



By Kathryn Reed

Even though California cuisine has a definitive flavor, the broader definition in my mind incorporates the various ethnicities that make up this state. Not necessarily at the same time, though.

Asian, Italian and Mexican food – they are California cuisine in my mind.

With Cinco de Mayo more of a U.S. celebration than one in Mexico, I thought a recipe for today would be appropriate.

It’s the authentic stuff I’m talking about – not something you get at Taco Bell.

A couple years ago I took the Mexican food class taught by Steve Fernald at Lake Tahoe Community College. Some of the items are rather time consuming – like mole, the national sauce of Mexico. I have no intention of ever making it again, but that’s the fun thing about taking any class – learning and doing things outside your ordinary life.

The variety of ingredients and complexity of some dishes was great to learn.

As with all the food classes I’ve taken at LTCC, I left full and had lunch for the next day.

The following is a salad one group in the class made. It was one of my favorite dishes during the four-week class.

The nopaoles can be found at local Mexican markets. Cooked green beans (chayote) can be substituted for the nopaoles.

Ensalada de Nopalitos (Salad of Cactus Pieces)

3 C cooked nopaoles, cut into squares

3 T finely chopped white onion

½ C loosely packed, finely chopped cilantro

½ tsp dried oregano, Mexican if possible

2 T fresh lime juice or vinegar

The topping

3 small tomatoes, unskinned, sliced

1/3 C finely chopped cilantro

1/3 C crumbled queso fresco or anejo

1/3 C purple onion rings

3 canned chiles jalapenos en escabeche, cut into quarters lengthwise

1 avocado, peeled and sliced (optional)

inner leaves of romaine lettuce for the sides of the service platter

Mix the nopalitos with the next four ingredients and set aside to season for 30 minutes. Stir well and adjust seasoning. Spread the nopalitos over platter about 1½ inches deep. Decorate with the tomato slices and top with cilantro, cheese, onion rings, chile strips, and slices of avocado. Overlap the romaine leave around the edge of the platter and serve at room temperature.

Most of South Tahoe now deemed a redevelopment area

By Kathryn Reed

In less than an hour and with a split vote, the South Lake Tahoe City Council on Tuesday declared 20 percent of the city blighted in order to create a redevelopment area that encompasses 3,100 acres.

State law requires an area be deemed blighted before creating a redevelopment area. With the latest area encompassing most of the Y to Herbert Street, it means the majority of town is blighted because most of the parcels from Ski Run Boulevard to

the state line are in a redevelopment area.



The redevelopment area is in blue.

It was a 3-1-1 vote, with Councilman Bill Crawford voting no and Councilman Hal Cole recusing himself because he owns property in the area. Even though Councilman Bruce Grego's law office is in the area, he can vote because he is on a month-to-month lease with his landlord.

Crawford took issue with approving the environmental documents, questioning how a negative declaration can be determined without knowing the projects that might be brought forward. He also has issues with calling the whole town blighted.

Since the April redevelopment meeting, a flurry of letters and emails have been sent back and forth between the city and its two major opponents – South Tahoe Public Utility District and El Dorado County. Those entities believe they will be shortchanged on property tax dollars when the tax increment becomes effective.

The county asked the city to delay the decision. The city believes the county has had ample time to voice its concerns, including at a two-hour meeting where the city presented its position to the Board of Supervisors.

The property tax these entities receive is frozen instead of

going up 2 percent each year. The city's Redevelopment Agency gets that money.

South Lake Tahoe believes it will generate $178 million in tax increment in the 45 years the project will be on the books.

The issue was brought back to the council because in April the panel voted to shrink the area. The Planning Commission put the kibosh on that idea, though the council has the ultimate authority. The council reversed course from last month to include the entire area except for the handful of parcels the county says are theirs.

"This is an important day for our community," Mayor Kathay Lovell said. "(This is) so we can rebuild our tired little town."

Councilman Jerry Birdwell asked city staff for the May 18 meeting to come up with ways to show the public how redevelopment can work and to possibly assist areas like the Y and Harrison Avenue with developing business improvement districts like his street – Ski Run Boulevard – has done.

The other item on the agenda Tuesday was to review the annual report for the Ski Run BID and keep it going for another year. Birdwell and Cole recused themselves from the vote. Crawford abstained even though he didn't make any comments about the issue.

City Attorney Patrick Enright said the vote was sufficient for the matter before the council, but added three votes would be needed for approval of any matter in the future that involves spending money.