Parking garage keeps losing money; rates to increase

By Kathryn Reed

Owning the parking garage at Heavenly Village continues to be a financial quagmire for South Lake Tahoe.

The albatross will be on the books until at least December 2012. Based on how the bonds are structured, the city cannot attempt to unload the concrete facility until then.



It will cost more to park at Heavenly Village in January.

The 425-space garage is 50-60 percent empty most of the time. Projections are for another year of losing money – about $140,000 this fiscal year. It costs $1.3 million a year to operate the garage and pay the debt on the 7-year-old facility.

Raising rates is the prime way to increase cash flow. That will happen Jan. 15.

The City Council this month approved going from 30-minute increments to 20 minute. It now costs $1.75 per half hour and next month it will be $1.25 every 20 minutes. This is an

increase of 25 cents an hour.

The daily rate will go from $23 to $25.

Winter is the busiest time of year for the garage because skiers and boarders park there to access the gondola to ride to the top of Heavenly Mountain Resort.

Blaise Carrig, chief operating officer for the resort, was at the council meeting to see what would be approved and how it might affect his guests. The bulk of Heavenly's riders access the mountain via the gondola, though many of them walk from the surrounding hotels.

Carrig and Gene Palazzo, who oversees the Parking Authority and Redevelopment Agency for the city, have talked in the past about creating a lift ticket-parking package. Nothing has come of those discussions.

"We see the fee being nominal, but during the current economic climate we would like to see prices remain steady for guests," Russ Pecoraro, Heavenly spokesman, said.

Palazzo had recommended the four-hour validation for the movie theater be reduced to three. In 2007 the council boosted it to four hours from 2.5 hours. The council this month chose to leave it at four hours.

Jerry Bindel, who is on the Lake Tahoe Visitors Authority board and president of the South Lake Tahoe Lodging Association, has suggested to the city that it have a couple free days of parking a year for locals in an attempt to drive traffic to Heavenly Village. The city isn't biting on that suggestion.

Locals tend to park at Harrah's for free and walk over to the village.

One moneymaker for the city is selling advertising space in the garage to merchants in Heavenly Village.

Becoming automated has also cut costs – and it eliminated jobs, too.

The city got stuck with the garage when the developer of the entire project backed out of building it. This forced the city to meet parking demand and infuse another $6 million into the redevelopment area.

This is on top of the $7.2 million that was “borrowed” from the general fund to build the center. The Redevelopment Agency is paying back that money in $500,000 increments each year.

Holland 7th in snowboardercross

Tom Kelly, USSA

TELLURIDE -â€“ Ross Powers (Okemo, VT) rode to third at the Visa U.S. Snowboardcross World Cup at Telluride Resort in Colorado on Saturday afternoon, with the 2002 Olympic halfpipe gold medalistâ€™s finish leading a menâ€™s field crammed with American competitors.

Powers, owner of more halfpipe titles than any snowboarder in history, furthered his bid to medal in another discipline by making the podium in the second of five Olympic qualifications for the men.

“The first few rounds went great, I was getting good starts up top,” Powers said. “Final race, Iâ€™d been getting great starts all day, and got a bad start up top. I tried to catch up, landed flat on everything, but luckily the guys had a little mix-up on turn four and I came through and got on the

podium.â€

Powers was happy to prove that last yearâ€™s podium in Sunday River, Maine, was no fluke and that he was a viable contender for the Olympic Team.

He becomes the third U.S. rider to grab a top-four World Cup result in just two events, after Seth Wescott (Sugarloaf, ME) and Graham Watanabe (Sun Valley, ID) took second and third, respectively, in Argentina. A top four result is the lead qualifying criteria for the top spots on the Olympic Team.

The U.S. qualified 10 men and two women for Saturdayâ€™s finals on a challenging course designed by Olympic course builder Jeff Ihaksi.

Olympic gold medalist Wescott was sixth for the men, taking second in a small final that featured three Americans. Five-time X Games gold medalist Nate Holland (Squaw Valley, CA) finished seventh and Graham Watanabe (Hailey, ID) crashed early into eighth.

The knowledge that Watanabe was out and he had nothing to lose led to a nasty landing later in the race for Holland.

“That fifth was still pretty important to me, I really wanted that heat,” Holland said. “So I made a pass in turn three on Wescott and just went into turn four with Xavier de la Rue just head-to-head. I know heâ€™s fast and in control, so I trusted him.”

Holland touched de la Rueâ€™s board and lost balance before a jump on the fastest part of the course.

“It scared the crap out of me in the air,” he said. “I had time to think about how bad it was going to hurt. Luckily I had time enough to squirm a little bit and get the feet down first and take some of the compression.”

Torino silver medalist Lindsey Jacobellis (Stratton, VT) had

her board clipped on the final set of jumps by eventual womenâ€™s winner Maelle Ricker (Canada), causing her to crash after a great start in her first heat.

Faye Gulini (Salt Lake City, UT) won the final qualifying spot for the womenâ€™s race Friday and took a career best eighth after getting second in the first heat with Jacobellis.

Three World Cup events remain for Olympic Team qualifying, Jan. 10-21 in Austria, Switzerland and Quebec.

Action wraps up in the Visa Snowboardcross Sunday with a Team SBX event.

Visa U.S. Snowboardcross Cup Telluride Dec. 19 Finals

Men

1. Pierre Vaultier, France

2. Robert Fagan, Canada

3. Ross Powers, Okemo, VT

4. David Bakes, Czech Republic

5. Xavier de le Rue, France

—

6. Seth Wescott, Sugarloaf, ME

7. Nate Holland, Squaw Valley, CA

8. Graham Watanabe, Sun Valley, ID

9. Nick Baumgartner, Iron River, MI

11. Alex Deibold, New Haven, CT

16. J.J. Tomlinson, Park City, UT

21. Shaun Palmer, South Lake Tahoe, CA

31. Robert Minghini, South Lake Tahoe, CA

Women

1. Maelle Ricker, Canada

2. Simona Meiler, Switzerland

3. Dominique Maltais, Canada

5. Mellie Francon, Switzerland

5. Helene Olafsen, Norway

—

8. Faye Gulini, Salt Lake City

11. Lindsey Jacobellis, Stratton, VT

Northern Italy photo exhibit on South Shore

Northern Italy Photo Exhibition by Dirk Yuricich Dec. 26-Feb. 16 at the Dirk Yuricich Photography Gallery, 171 Shady Lane, Stateline.

* 11am-5pm and by appointment

* closed Wednesdays and Thursdays

* also closed Jan. 27-Feb. 4

* Opening Reception: Dec. 26-27, 11am-5pm with Italian wines and cheeses

* Closing Reception: Feb. 12-16, 11am-5pm with Italian desserts.

The photo exhibition will feature images from Portofino to Venice, Florence to Milan, hill towns and lakeside villages, the walled cities of Lucca and Monteriggioni, vineyards and rolling hills of Tuscany, coastal Cinque Terre, all from the travels of Dirk Yuricich.

For details, call (775) 588.5816 or visit www.dirkphotoz.com.

Tahoe’s Sullivan takes 12th in downhill

By Tom Kelly, USSA

VAL GARDENA, Italy – The men’s speed team continued the U.S. Ski Team streak of packing the points Saturday as Bode Miller (Franconia, NH) led five Americans into the Audi FIS Alpine World Cup top 24 at the famed Saslong Classic downhill. Just one year ago, the U.S. placed five racers in the top 10 and seven in the top 30.

â€œI skied well,â€ said Miller, who captured his fifth top 10 of the young season. â€œI didnâ€™t have any errors. I took some risks. Itâ€™s tough to take risks on this course, because risk doesnâ€™t necessarily make you win, but a lot of times it makes a couple of little mistakes that make you lose.â€



Squaw's Marco Sullivan is interviewed Saturday after his race. Photo/Doug Haney

Charging into a temporary headwind, the seven-time World Cup downhill winner fell a half second behind the pace of winner Manuel Osborne Paradis of Canada at the first interval, but Miller held his form throughout the bumpy, winding Saslong course for a finish just 0.77 back.

Marco Sullivan (Squaw Valley, CA) charged to an early lead as the fifth racer on the course, laying down a 2:02.16 that eventually landed him 12th to follow last-yearâ€™s fourth-place result in the luminescent haze that covered the course.

“For the early guys, you get sun on the top, and the later guys get sun down in the ciaslat, so itâ€™s kind of a trade-off,” Sullivan said.

Despite a return to snow little more than a month ago, Steven Nyman (Sundance, UT) scored 18th place for the U.S., with Erik Fisher (Middleton, ID) .12 seconds behind in 19th.

The World Cup circuit stays in Italy in Sundayâ€™s giant slalom and Mondayâ€™s slalom in Alta Badia, Italy.

Ted Ligety will return to action trying to improve on last yearâ€™s fourth-place finish.

Val Gardena, Italy â€“ Dec. 19. Menâ€™s Downhill

1. Manuel Osborne-Paradis, Canada, 2:01.27

2. Mario Scheiber, Austria, 2:01.40

3T. Ambrosi Hoffmann, Switzerland, 2:01:52

3T. Johan Clarey, France, 2:01.52

5. Michael Walchhofer, Austria, 2:01.75

–

9. Bode Miller, Franconia, NH, 2:02.04

12. Marco Sullivan, Squaw Valley, CA, 2:02.16

18. Steven Nyman, Sundance, UT, 2:02.55

19. Erik Fisher, Middleton, ID, 2:02.67

23. Scott Macartney, Crystal Mountain, WA, 2:02.67

24T. Andrew Weibrecht, Lake Placid, NY, 2:03.10

49T. Jeremy Transue, Hunter, NY, 2:05.30

Lake Tahoe ski report, Dec. 19



Partly cloudy skies are in the forecast for the day. Curtis Fong, the Guy from Tahoe, says to dress in layers. Here is his ski report.

Women’s downhill canceled; U.S. aerialists disappoint

USSA

VAL d’ISERE, France – After more than two hours delay due to low visibility on the Oreiller-Killy course in Val d’Isere, officials finally canceled today’s women’s downhill World Cup. It was not immediately known if and when it would be rescheduled.

It was a tough break for the U.S. Ski Team’s Lindsey Vonn (Vail, CO), who had dominated downhill training earlier in the week and had picked up a convincing win in Friday’s super combined.

Frigid temperatures were the story of a disappointing day for the U.S. in the FIS Freestyle World Cup aerials opener in Changchun, China, today. Americans Emily Cook (Belmont, MA) and Jeret “Speedy” Peterson (Boise, ID) made finals, with Cook’s eighth leading the way. Belarus skier Anton Kushnir took the win while the Chinese women swept the podium.

Temperatures dipping to minus 12 Fahrenheit greeted skiers for the opener. China dominated the competition, grabbing five of six podium positions, cracked only by Kushnir’s second career win at 247.15. Xinxin Guo won for the women with 206.09.

Scotty Bahrke ofÂ Tahoe City placed 21st with a 89.38.

Claudio: Tahoe Victims of CPS need to be heard

Letter to the publisher,

On Dec. 8, four members of Tahoe Victims of CPS spoke at the South Lake Tahoe City Council meeting. The Tahoe Victims of CPS asked the council to endorse the Parents Bill of Rights giving better protection to children seized by Child Protective Services (CPS). At the end of the council meeting, under â€œAnnouncementsâ€, Councilmen Bill Crawford and Jerry Birdwell spoke in support of Tahoe Victims of CPS and the efforts to reform CPS and the foster care system.

Councilman Crawford spent his career in the school system, mainly with the continuation school, which he helped to create in South Lake Tahoe. His position gave him access to information not readily available to the public about the money in foster care. He cited an example involving two girls from Sacramento sent to live in a group home in South Lake Tahoe. The group home received monthly checks from Sacramento County for $1,800 for the first girl and $2,100 for the second girl.

Both girls were in Councilman Crawfordâ€™s class and one day the girls reported they did not have breakfast because there was no food in the house. Councilman Crawford stated that he has never seen a child from a group home come to school in a new winter coat. He observed that foster care parents fit into two categories; older people trying to make up for their shortcomings as parents and those searching for ways to supplement their incomes. Councilman Crawford said, â€œThere is a real problem out there.â€

Councilman Birdwell, a former judge in the state of Texas, mentioned his talks with Superior Court judges in the state of

California and found they had the same problems with CPS as the judges in Texas. The problems stem from the turnover of CPS employees, often right out of college with no experience, put in stressful positions where they often “over reacted” to the detriment of the children they were supposed to be protecting. Councilman Birdwell concluded by saying he hopes the El Dorado County Board of Supervisors will hear the complaints and do something about the way CPS is handling these children.

Ernie Claudio, co-founder of Tahoe Victims of CPS

Holidays at Squaw Valley

Santa Claus on skis, Christmas carolers, movie nights, holiday parties, and the Christmas Eve torchlight parade are a few of the holiday events and festivities at Squaw Valley.

The marquee event of Holidays at Squaw is Christmas Eve – the torchlight parade. It can be seen from anywhere in the village or Squaw Valley base area.

Holidays at Squaw come to a crescendo on New Yearâ€™s Eve when parties (for every age and reveler) erupt all over Squaw Valley, from High Camp down to the Olympic House and base village bars. A fireworks display kicks off the New Year at 9pm on New Yearâ€™s Eve.

Starting Dec. 19, Squaw Valley opens for night skiing and riding.

Holidays at Squaw:

Dec. 19-Jan 2: Sierra Nevada Carolers strolling through the Village from 4-6pm.

Dec. 19: 18th Annual Snow Godâ€™s Ball benefit for the Squaw Valley Avalanche Awareness Education Fund. Tickets can be purchased at the door for $20 or in advance for $15 at the Ski Patrol Office or by calling (530)452.7260.

Dec. 23-25: Sierra Nevada Chorale performance in the base area from 3-5pm.

Dec. 19-24: Santa visits the village from noon-4pm.

Dec. 22-25: Santa and his elf hit the slopes.

Dec. 24: Christmas Eve Torchlight Parade. Parade begins at dusk. (530) 583.6985

Dec. 26: Squaw Stocking Scavenger Hunt. Find one of the 100 red Christmas stocking hidden around the mountain and win free lift tickets and other great prizes.

Dec. 26-Jan. 3: Squaw Sessions Teen Ski & Snowboard Camp for 13- to 18-year-olds. (530) 452.7263

Dec. 26-Jan. 2: Ski with Jonny Moseley. Tours meet at the top of the Funitel at 1pm.

Dec. 26: Apres Ski Music in the village from 4-7pm.

Dec. 26: Jibbing for Jacksons. In this â€˜best trickâ€™ night jam session there are many winners, as riders are given a $20 bill (a Jackson) for every trick that impresses the judging panel of pro skiers and riders. The contest is open to skiers and snowboarder and is on Searchligh.

Dec. 29-30: Full Moon Snowshoe Tours guided by a knowledgeable tour leader and the light of the full moon, snowshoers trek to upper mountain vistas to take in spectacular views of the snow covered Sierra and Lake Tahoe. A mountaintop dinner at Alexanderâ€™s Restaurant, overlooking Lake Tahoe, can be included..

Dec. 31: Family New Yearâ€™s Eve Celebration at High Camp. Call (530) 452-7122 for more information.

Dec. 31: Fresh Tracks New Yearâ€™s Eve Extravaganza; Squaw Valleyâ€™s â€œmatureâ€ guests can choose from myriad New Yearâ€™s Eve celebrations including the biggest party on the North Shore in the Olympic House.

Dec. 31: Fireworks launched at 9pm from Exhibition.

Dec. 31: 50/60 New Yearâ€™s Eve Party in the Olympic House and kicks off at 9pm.

Jan. 1: Lift Operatorsâ€™ Snow Sculpture Contest

Jan. 2: Yaleâ€™s Bakerâ€™s Dozen Sing A Capella.

Tahoe fishermen tired of waiting to get on the lake

By Kathryn Reed

Fishing is often a waiting game. But itâ€™s usually done on the water, not in a parking lot.

Waiting on dry land has been the case lately for a number of fishermen trying to access Lake Tahoe at the Cave Rock boat ramp.



Locked gates after 6am are frustrating fishermen. Photo/Kathryn Reed

â€œItâ€™s getting fairly irritating. (Friday) there were three boats waiting at 6 and (the inspectors) show up at 7:30,â€ Chuck Bartlett of South Lake Tahoe said.

The ramp is supposed to be open from 6am-4pm. The reason for the gate is so boats can be inspected for invasive species.

Cave Rock, on the South Shore in Nevada, is one of two public launches open this time of year. The other is on the North Shore in Tahoe City. The former is on Nevada State Parks land and the latter on Tahoe City Public Utility District property.

Nicole Cartwright with the Tahoe Resource Conservation District did not return a phone call. Her agency is responsible for the inspections and therefore locking and unlocking the gate.

Itâ€™s the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency that is mandating the inspections. Quagga and zebra mussels are the main threat. The worry is if these species enter Lake Tahoe, they will destroy the ecosystem, cause billions of dollars in damage and ruin this tourist destination. The Great Lakes and Lake Mead in Southern Nevada are two areas that have been devastated by these mussels.

â€œWe need those inspectors present at the time they are

supposed to be there,â€ Dennis Oliver, spokesman for TRPA, said. â€œThere is a full contingent of folks who want to and need to get out on the lake for sport fishing. The inspectors are definitely supposed to be there during the posted hours.â€

Blue Ribbon Charters out of South Tahoe uses Cave Rock as its boat ramp.

â€œUsually the bites are a lot better in the morning. If they open later, you miss the bite,â€ Eric St. Denis, who is part of the family run operation, said. He added, if they close the ramp early, itâ€™s hard on afternoon charters.

Mackinaw, brown and rainbow trout are primarily what people are catching. Many of the recreational fishermen are there for the fun â€“ catch and release.

Ray Damato of Gardnerville is in his 19-foot boat once or twice a week. Heâ€™s been casting a line on Lake Tahoe for about 30 years.

â€œWe like to get out there right at 6 oâ€™clock. Mackinaw fishing seems to be best in the morning,â€ Damato said. â€œWe only bring home maybe one fish if we are going to eat it that night.â€

When the gates are closed the fishermen call the number that is posted. Sometimes they reach a person who says theyâ€™ll see whatâ€™s going on, other times only a message can be left.

â€œIf nobody shows up, nobody can fish,â€ Damato said.

Budget gifts: Barton Cheese Balls



Publisherâ€™s note: *Get in the spirit and share your idea for a gift valued at $20 or less. Click here for details.*

This in from Denise Sloan of Barton Healthcare:

Hereâ€™s an easy, tasty one â€“ the amazing, famous Barton Auxiliary Cheese Balls, which are still available, and whose secret ingredients are still secret. No one can keep a secret like an Auxiliary member.

I actually volunteered one year to help â€œmakeâ€ the cheese balls, hoping to learn the secret herb or spice – but it was just that, making the balls: Rolling the creamy, cheesy, goofy stuff into a ball and rolling it in chopped nuts.

The Auxiliary Cheese Balls are $7.50, available the next two Wednesdays in the Barton Hospital Gift Shop from 1-8pm and new this year is a Cheese Ball Cook Book, also $7.50.

So many people have used the tangy cheese balls for more than an appetizer on a cracker that the Auxiliary members collected dozens of recipes in which the cheese balls are featured and made their own Cheese Ball Cook Book. For $15 you have a two-for gift under $20.

Someone, somewhere must have the famous Cheese Ball recipe written down. Surely, the dear Auxiliary members wonâ€™t take that secret to their graves?

Pearl Parks has been Cheese Ball chairwomen forever and she must have that closely held secret recipe in a safe deposit box. Pearl will agree with me, itâ€™s not Christmas without an Auxiliary Cheese Ball at the buffet â€“ and Christmas calories

donâ€™t count.