Rosas – Balancing school and life



James Rosas

By James Rosas

This is my first year attending Tallac, but Iâ€™ve been involved with the school since my junior year. I am also an up and coming artist and Tallac gives me a generous amount of support.

The main reason I appreciate Tallac is that the staff understands we the students have a life outside of school and new problems arise everyday. They try their very best to incorporate our whole life in the learning process not just academics.

The way the school is set up makes it hard to fall behind when the dilemmas outside of school have to be dealt with. Whether it be counseling or simply getting out at noon to go home and get ready for work.

Our school is as misunderstood as the students that attend. Itâ€™s not a punishment to be here, just another opportunity. And acceptance here is just the beginning. Through Tallac Iâ€™ve had many opportunities to meet with community members for instance the mayor and (BlueGoâ€™s) John Andoh. All students get this opportunity, not just me.

My art is graffiti art and, yes, I did write in the streets. But with support and influence from Tallac and a man named Matt Kaufman Iâ€™ve stopped writing in the streets and recently had a gallery show with some friends. My point is *all* students who attend Tallac are good people, and Tallac gives us the chance and opportunity that so many others have denied us.

James Rosas is a senior at Mt. Tallac High School in South Lake Tahoe.

SLT baseball coaching clinic

The 21st annual South Lake Tahoe Baseball Coaches Clinic will be Nov. 13-14.

Featured speakers are Rudy Garbalosa of Lynn University, Perry Husband, John Altobelli and Rick Steen.

For more information, call (530) 343.8100.

Mt. Tallac open house

Wednesday is Mt. Tallac High School’s open house. Click on the link for details – Mt.Tallac open house.

Crime lab tour

Ever wonder how investigators lift latent prints, how trace evidence is analyzed or how DNA is processed? Come in and check out the Washoe County Sheriffâ€™s Office Forensics Division, better known as the Crime Lab, on Oct. 27, 8:30am to 4:30pm.

Sheriff Mike Haley will be there to greet guests and answer questions.

The Lab is located downstairs in the sheriffâ€™s office building at 911 Parr Blvd., Reno.

Learn about state of the art techniques used in criminal investigations with real criminalists, toxicologists and other specialists on hand to answer your questions.

For more information, call Trish at (775) 328.2800

Please Note: Due to the nature of the business of studying and solving crimes, Content may not be suitable for all ages, Parental discretion is advised.

Reaves – Finally, a school that understands



Deawna Reaves

By Deawna Reaves

I am 16 years old. I started my 9th-grade year at South Lake Tahoe High School. Now, as a junior, I have gone through independent study, charter community school and Mount Tallac High School.

All the other schools were good, but Tallac just works better for me. I plan to stay at Tallac until I graduate because I feel like I have major support here. I have teachers and counselors who help me and care about my education.

I have had many problems in the past with fighting and people that donâ€™t like me for the way I look. This year, I donâ€™t care about all the drama. I am here for me and that is all that matters.

Deawna Reaves is a junior at Mt. Tallac High School in South Lake Tahoe.

Sinatra Jr. makes it to the big room at Harrah’s

By Mel Shields, Sacramento Bee

It couldn’t have been easy. Frank Sinatra Jr., son of the most

famous singer of his time, decided to become a singer in his own right.

He was to be inevitably compared to his father and the comparison was to be inevitably to his detriment.

He sang in Nevada cabarets, drew crowds primarily out of curiosity, and garnered mediocre reviews. There were no lucrative movie contracts or hit songs (not even one hit song).

Read the whole story

LT Basin's master bike plan ready to be written



Post-it notes with comments about bike trails in Lake Tahoe.

By Kathryn Reed

Handwritten comments filled most of the 19 boards scattered about the South Lake Tahoe Senior Center on Oct. 19.

Suggestions ranged from the desire to complete the North Upper Truckee bike route, to leaving non-paved routes in and around Fallen Leaf Lake, to creating an adopt-a-bike plan, to suggestions where to add bike racks.

The six-hour open house gave residents of the South Shore an opportunity to comment on the Tahoe Regional Planning Agencyâ€™s Bike-Pedestrian Master Plan that is being revised in conjunction with the Tahoe Metropolitan Planning Organization.

Dan and Chrissy Robertson who live on Kingsbury Grade are frustrated by having to get in their vehicle to be able to ride with their children.

â€œYou canâ€™t ride or walk here,â€ Chrissy Robertson said. â€œWe are interested in paved and dirt trails.â€

Dan Robertson said bike trails are quality of life and economic issues. The couple pointed to other resort areas providing a network of trails that connect locals and visitors to various points of interest.

Shay Navarro said her daily bike commute from the Sierra Tract area of South Lake Tahoe toward Stateline is haphazard.

She pointed to the map that shows the disconnect around the bike trail as it goes into the Al Tahoe neighborhood and then how crossing Highway 50 at Al Tahoe for cyclists is disjointed. It requires three crossings, instead of one, just like the intersection at Ski Run Boulevard.

Dan Robertson said it would be nice to see South Lake Tahoe City Council members and Douglas County commissioners at some of these meetings.

Karen Fink, TRPA transportation planner, was happy to see new faces filter into the room and share their opinions.

She will collect the data from Monday and Thursdayâ€™s

meeting, with the goal to have a draft of the update in place by January. The public will have 30 days to comment on it. Fink hopes to have all the necessary boards sign-off on it by April so implementation of the plan can begin.

Thursdayâ€™s gathering is also an open house, so people can show up as time allows. It is in the Tahoe City PUD Administrative Board Room, 221 Fairway Drive, Tahoe City, from 2:30-8:30pm.

Prieto – Overcoming obstacles



Maricela Prieto

By Maricela Prieto

Iâ€™m a senior at Mt. Tallac. I am a mother, a daughter, and a student.

At this point in my life I am very proud of who Iâ€™ve become. This past summer I overcame many challenges. One of the biggest obstacles for me was hiking up Jobâ€™s Sister Peak with Generation Green. Seeing how I pushed myself this summer I know I can become very successful and accomplish anything I put my mind to.

I am a senior this year and after graduation I plan to attend our local community college.

Maricela Prieto is a senior at Mt. Tallac High School in South Lake Tahoe.

Truth behind city attorney debacle expected Tuesday



Jacqueline Mittelstadt

By Kathryn Reed

Battle lines are drawn and threats have been issued all because of something the public is not completely privy to despite it being their money being spent on this contentious issue.

In these economic times when staff is being laid off, furlough days proposed, and a budget for 2009-10 that will be a month overdue for a city that does nothing to get visitors to come to a town based on tourism, the majority of the council is choosing to spend thousands of dollars to fire an employee.

Specific reasons why the city wants to get rid of Jacqueline

Mittelstadt, the city attorney hired in June, are not known.

“It’s totally performance based. She is an at-will employee and things didn’t work out. And, in fact, they went sideways,” Councilman Hal Cole said Oct. 18.

Cole would not elaborate on what “sideways” means. He said Tuesday’s hearing will explain why Patrick Enright, the other city attorney hired at the same time, is not fighting for his job as well.

Mittelstadt has been receiving her $10,000/month salary since Sept. 8 even though she is not doing any city work. That is the date she was put on paid administrative leave.

It’s a bit of an irony that outside counsel is being paid to help terminate her when she and Enright were hired to reduce the use of outside counsel.

Mittelstadt is scheduled to go before her five bosses, aka the South Lake Tahoe City Council, on Oct. 20 in open session to defend her right to remain city attorney.

Even though the item is at the end of the agenda, it is likely to be moved up sooner and could be heard closer to 10am.

Telephone threats

On Oct. 19, Jack Hughes, whose firm Liebert Cassidy Whitmore of San Francisco is representing the city in the personnel issue, called *Lake Tahoe News* and in a threatening tone said this publication better not release information from confidential documents that it has obtained.

“It would be harmful to the public. It would be harmful to the city,” Hughes said. When asked which it was really harming, Hughes said, “The city and the public is one in the same.”

It’s expected the public will disagree with that statement at Tuesday’s meeting. Hughes isn’t going to be at the hearing.

Instead, Dick Whitmore, who was at the Oct. 6 meeting, is slated to argue the city's case.

A less threatening comment came from City Manager Dave Jinkens' wife, Terri, on Oct. 18. She said, "You're castrating a good man and that is beneath you." Then she abruptly hung up the phone.

Confidential document

The 16-page document that has Hughes worried if it's released is dated Oct. 5. It was recently left at the *Lake Tahoe News* office by an unknown source. The City Council was given a copy of it by their attorney earlier this month.

The information is from Jay Resendez with Brictson & Cohn of San Diego, the firm representing Mittelstadt.

Not previously disclosed items in the document include partial information from the Sept. 8 letter from the council to Mittelstadt advising her of their intent to fire her. "The reasons for the intended removal are incompatibility of management styles and work performance that is inconsistent with the City Council's expectations."

Councilmembers Cole, Kathay Lovell and Bruce Grego voted Sept. 3 to begin the termination proceedings. Lovell will not talk about personnel issues and Grego remains unavailable for comment.

The document questions whether the Brown Act, the state opening meeting law, has been violated; it gets into why Mittelstadt believes she is being retaliated against; and includes information about the Finance Department being unable to provide consistent figures.

"On August 3, 2009 the Finance Department staff emailed Ms. Mittelstadt and confirmed her conclusion that the numbers did indeed frequently differ. The Finance Department revealed a

serious accounting problem reporting that: – it is hard to compare apples to apples when so many different expense codes are used for these legal bills. On August 6, 2009, Ms. Mittelstadt notified the Council Finance Committee of the Finance Department's explanation," the document says.

Mayor Jerry Birdwell and Cole are the finance committee.

The document goes on to say Lovell was notified Aug. 3 that Jinkens has two reserve funds at his disposal.

Birdwell at one meeting called them "slush funds."

Some of the more alarming accusations are on Page 10 of the document where Mittelstadt's attorney writes, "In an additional attempt to blackmail the City from further investigating the payment to outside counsel without the City Council's approval, during a July 15, 2009 meeting between the City Manager and both the City Attorney [Ms. Mittelstadt] and the Assistant City Attorney [Mr. Enright], the City manager threatened litigation against the City and the Mayor personally if the investigation continued."

Birdwell said he had been told of Jinkens' threat, though Mittelstadt did not provide the information to him.

"I do not have the referenced documents. In my capacity as City Manager I act within the scope of employment to protect employees and City government," Jinkens said in an email to *Lake Tahoe News*. "Unfortunately and regrettably, I am unable to comment on the pending personnel matter with Ms. Mittelstadt on the advice of counsel. I am truly sorry that I cannot provide more information to you."

Outside counsel

The firm representing Mittelstadt is also the firm the council hired Aug. 4, upon her recommendation, to represent the city against ATM, the former transit operator that is suing the

city for breach of contract.

Enright would not return calls Oct. 19 seeking comment as to whether the firm was still under contract or if it had been paid.

Birdwell does not believe the contract is still in effect.

Grumblings have come from councilmembers about the continued hiring of outside counsel. However, it was the council at the Aug. 4 meeting that hired two other firms – one to file a motion related to a Lahontan Water Board matter and the other to handle an employment issue.

All three were on the Consent Agenda. Often the public does not scrutinize this segment of the agenda. But if the public or a councilmember wants to pull it for further discussion, that's possible.

About 10 firms were in place doing legal work for South Lake Tahoe before Mittelstadt and Enright came on board. They handled things like the Meyers Landfill, Johnny Poland, redevelopment and personnel issues.

It was the council that told Mittelstadt and Enright to find out how much money has been spent on outside counsel. It was disclosed in their joint June 30 report that about 90 percent of the nearly $800,000 that has been spent on outside counsel was "incurred by the Departments without the involvement of the City Attorney's office."

All along any contract of more than $30,000 was to be approved by the council. That has not been the case, as proved by Enright and Mittelstadt. It was also noted in that report that firms are overbilling the city and the Finance Department run by Christine Vuletich is paying the bills without scrutiny.

That report says, "As a result of the lack of consolidated oversight, application of consistent hiring and/or billing

requirements that conform to best billing practices in the legal industry, and the lack of monitoring of total outside counsel expenditures, the City may be losing money on legal fees."

City Manager Jinkens response to the attorneys' report dated June 28 says, "The concern by staff in the past and only interest has been to receive from our legal department competent and timely legal advice on pressing municipal matters."

It is well known inside city hall that Jinkens and former City Attorney Cathy DiCamillo did not get along. They were even ordered to counseling to help enable them to work together better.

The Jinkens' issue as it relates to personnel matters is scheduled for closed session Tuesday.

Part of this whole mess is how he handled a complaint filed by Vuletich against Mittelstadt and Enright. Mittelstadt was given a copy of the complaint Oct. 16.

Jinkens was hired in August 2002. His contract expires next summer. Per normal course of action, his review is scheduled after the first of the year. It is not known if the council would buy out his contract if his services were no longer wanted.

The public will be able to comment during Mittelstadt's hearing – which, after all, is who the council reports to.

South Tahoe housing Mono County inmates

El Dorado County Jail in South Tahoe is housing inmates who are not accused of committing crimes in its jurisdiction.

Mono County called on its neighbor after the Bridgeport jail in the Highway 395 corridor flooded during last weekâ€™s storm.

Itâ€™s expected to take a couple weeks before the jail is livable.