South Lake Tahoe says no to plastic bags

By Kathryn Reed

If you like plastic bags, then load up on them now because on Jan. 15 retailers will no longer be allowed to use them in South Lake Tahoe.

On a 3-2 vote Oct. 1, the City Council agreed to ban single-use plastic bags that are given out at the cash register. Councilmembers Tom Davis and JoAnn Conner cast the dissenting votes.

With the passage on Tuesday, this brings the number of municipalities in California with such a ban to 89. (Santa Barbara passed a ban on Oct. 1, too.)

It was in October 2009 that the city's Sustainability Commission first started talking about the plastic bag ban. Several meetings focused on that topic, with tons of community input.

Since the council disbanded the commission a group of concerned citizens has continued the quest to have the city ban the bags. Part of the reason is to eliminate an item that most people only use once, to keep the product out of landfills, to stop the production of a product that uses tons of petroleum, and to make the city an environmental leader.

Davis, in all seriousness, said the city is already an environmental leader because of its bike paths and public transportation.

Davis, as he has said at multiple meetings, also said plastic bags are not a problem.

"You've gotta show me it's a local problem," Davis said. "If

there are 8 million bags (in South Lake Tahoe used each year) and you only picked up 275 (on Coastal Cleanup Day), I would say that is not a problem."

To this Councilman Hal Cole said, "Even if all the bags are off the street, they are in a landfill and that's a problem." A stat from the meeting is that 5 percent of what is in landfills is plastic. "They measure by weight. That's a lot of plastic," Cole added.

It's not like plastic bags have always been a part of daily life. They arrived at grocery stores as an alternative to paper in 1977. From there department stores started using them.

Assuming the council on Oct. 15 at the second reading of the ordinance approves the ban, the first stores that must get rid of their plastic bags are grocery stores. That happens Jan. 15. Then on Oct. 15, 2014, all other retail entities must eliminate their plastic.

Produce bags and bags from the meat department will be allowed. Nonprofits will be able to use plastic bags. For example, each Monday at Bread & Broth people are given a plastic bag full of food to take with them. Pharmacies are also exempt from the regulation.

Retailers, if they want, will be able to charge whatever they want for paper bags. Many cities have imposed a mandatory fee for paper as a way to incentivize people to bring reusable bags with them.

Cole was adamant this was a fee or another tax. Such an imposition here was going to be a deal breaker for him.

When the 5-cent fee that had been recommended was stricken from the ordinance, Cole was able to vote for it.

Other towns, like Aspen, have used the bag fee to fund

outreach – including buying reusable bags for people; while giving a percentage of the funds to the retailer. Aspen has a 20-cent fee that has raised $44,826 since May 2012, according to the *Aspen Times*.

Five of the eight people who spoke at the Oct. 1 South Tahoe meeting were in favor of the ban, including Jim Warlow who owns Cork & More. The nine emails the council received regarding the bag ban were all in favor of the ordinance.

Marcylee Yuki-Hashimoto – 1956-2013



Marcylee Yuki-Hashimoto and Louie

Marcylee Yuki-Hashimoto died suddenly and unexpectedly from a cerebral hemorrhage on July 15, 2013. She was 57.

She was married to Jon Hashimoto, known as “Jon the Plumber”, who died in May 2002.

She lived in South Lake Tahoe from the early 1990s to 2006 when she moved to Salem, Ore. She had hopes of returning to Lake Tahoe one day.

Marcy dearly loved her family, her many friends and especially her dog Louie who was always by her side. She treated everyone with kindness and always lent a helping hand.

She will be dearly missed by everyone who knew her.

Opinion: Tough teachers can motivate students

By Joanne Lipman, Wall Street Journal

I had a teacher once who called his students “idiots” when they screwed up. He was our orchestra conductor, a fierce Ukrainian immigrant named Jerry Kupchynsky, and when someone played out of tune, he would stop the entire group to yell, “Who eez deaf in first violins!?” He made us rehearse until our fingers almost bled. He corrected our wayward hands and arms by poking at us with a pencil.

Today, he’d be fired. But when he died a few years ago, he was celebrated: Forty years’ worth of former students and colleagues flew back to my New Jersey hometown from every corner of the country, old instruments in tow, to play a concert in his memory. I was among them, toting my long-neglected viola. When the curtain rose on our concert that day, we had formed a symphony orchestra the size of the New York Philharmonic.

I was stunned by the outpouring for the gruff old teacher we knew as Mr. K. But I was equally struck by the success of his former students. Some were musicians, but most had distinguished themselves in other fields, like law, academia and medicine. Research tells us that there is a positive

correlation between music education and academic achievement. But that alone didn’t explain the belated surge of gratitude for a teacher who basically tortured us through adolescence.

We’re in the midst of a national wave of self-recrimination over the U.S. education system. Every day there is hand-wringing over our students falling behind the rest of the world. Fifteen-year-olds in the U.S. trail students in 12 other nations in science and 17 in math, bested by their counterparts not just in Asia but in Finland, Estonia and the Netherlands, too. An entire industry of books and consultants has grown up that capitalizes on our collective fear that American education is inadequate and asks what American educators are doing wrong.

I would ask a different question. What did Mr. K do right? What can we learn from a teacher whose methods fly in the face of everything we think we know about education today, but who was undeniably effective?

Read the whole story

K9 trials set for South Lake Tahoe

The South Lake Tahoe Police Canine Association’s 2013 K9 Trials is Oct. 5 beginning at 8am at the Babe Ruth Baseball fields located at 1090 Lyons Ave.

The event is free and open to the public.

More than 50 agencies from California and Nevada will be competing.

S. Tahoe hires veteran to lead fire department

By Kathryn Reed

A veteran firefighter is now at the helm of South Lake Tahoe Fire Department.

With his new employees sitting in front of him and his peers from other departments standing in the back of the room, Jeff Meston was given his badge from outgoing interim Fire Chief Bruce Martin.



Jeff Meston is South Tahoe's fire chief. Photo/Kathryn Reed

Meston told *Lake Tahoe News* the chance to lead a department with so many young firefighters excited him enough to return to the profession. Plus, since retiring from the Novato department seven years ago he has been living in Incline Village doing consulting work. So, he is already a Tahoe guy. For now he plans to commute to South Tahoe.

South Lake Tahoe has been without a sole full-time fire chief since Lorenzo Gigliotti was asked to leave two years ago. For a while three battalion chiefs ran the department, then Police Chief Brian Uhler headed both departments and for the last nine months Bruce Martin had the job on a part-time basis.

Martin has bought a house in the area and will be a reserve deputy chief.

“I think he will take over where Chief Martin left off,” City Manager Nancy Kerry said of Meston. “He has had a very illustrious career.”

One of his board members from the Bay Area came to the badge ceremony, commenting on how to this day they still miss Meston.

While these types of ceremonies are common in the fire service, they have been lacking in South Tahoe. Some of that tradition is what Martin helped restore – along with leadership, training and morale.

Meston in his first gesture as fire chief continued that sense of tradition with a moment of silence for Mitch Underhill, a Lake Valley Fire Protection District firefighter who died Sept. 29 at age 34. All of the firefighters in attendance were wearing a black band across their badge to honor Underhill.

Meston has a master’s degree in public administration, is a chief fire officer designee with the International Association of Fire Chiefs, and a graduate of the Executive Fire Officers Program at the National Fire Academy.

He created a citizen disaster preparedness training program for business and homeowners groups that won an International Association of Fire Chiefs National Award, he has served on the state Training and Education Committee, and is a technical expert for the Fireman’s Fund Insurance Company’s Heritage

Program.

McDonald’s adding fruit, vegetables to its menu

By Leslie Patton, Bloomberg

McDonald’s Corp., which sells 750-calorie Double Quarter Pounders with cheese, will start offering fruit, salads and vegetables instead of fries with value meals in a push to get its diners to make healthier choices.

The world’s largest restaurant chain also will only advertise water, milk and juice for its kids’ Happy Meals, according to a statement from the company and the Alliance for a Healthier Generation, a group founded by the Clinton Foundation and American Heart Association that works to reduce childhood obesity. They didn’t specify the type of vegetables available.

McDonald’s and rivals have been trying to shed their image as purveyors of fatty foods in a nation where about two-thirds of the population is considered overweight or obese. While the Oak Brook, Illinois-based fast-food chain in 2012 introduced a lower-calorie menu, Americans are loathe to eat their vegetables, Chief Executive Officer Don Thompson has said.

Read the whole story

Mutt Strut combines dog walking and poker

Billed as the World's Most Beautiful Dog Walk, the annual Mutt Strut returns Oct. 13.

This is the ninth year the Animal Coalition of Tahoe has sponsored the South Lake Tahoe event.

The poker run will begin at the South Lake Tahoe Library (1000 Rufus Allen Boulevard off Lake Tahoe Boulevard) between 11 and 11:30am. Participants will pick playing cards at stops along a 1.3-mile route, hoping for the best poker hands. Prizes will be awarded to those with the best hands. It's not a race and no poker experience is needed.

The fun continues after the walk, with a party at Timber Cove featuring music, giveaways, raffle drawings, and contests such as best trick, hot dog eating, and musical sit.

Poker hands may be purchased for $10 each, or three hands for $25. There is ample free parking in the library parking lot.

ACT is a nonprofit, all-volunteer corporation with the goal of raising funds to support a low-cost spay-neuter program. ACT also donates 10 percent of funds raised to the El Dorado County Animal Shelter.

For more information, call (530) 307.3638 or email info@tahoeanimals.org.

USFS Fish Festival a victim of government shutdown; other Tahoe entities faring OK

By Kathryn Reed

Crime will still be fought on the South Shore, but this weekend's Fall Fish Festival has been canceled because of the federal government shutdown that took effect today.

A big unknown is how the social service programs that so many in the area rely on will be affected by the government essentially turning off the financial spigot. While there is money in the pipeline, it won't last forever. And there is no known date for when Congress might figure out how to resolve its differences.



Gina Swankie with the Sacramento FBI office said the government shutdown is not affecting agents – including the ones stationed in South Lake Tahoe. However, the U.S. Attorneys Office is shuttered.

The U.S. Forest Service offices throughout the country are closed. Law enforcement and firefighters are still working.

For Lake Tahoe it means the Oct. 5-6 annual Fall Fish Festival, formerly known as the Kokanee Festival, has been canceled. Taylor Creek Visitors Center is closed, as well as Forest Service operated campgrounds.

However, campgrounds that are operated by a concessionaire and other concession-operated facilities are open as of now. The Forest Service is leaving gates and roads open, too.

The trail building day on Oct. 5 in the Angora burn area has been canceled because USFS personnel were going to oversee the work.

Tahoe National Forest offices, including the headquarters in Nevada City and ranger district offices in Camptonville, Foresthill, Sierraville, and Truckee are closed.

TNF is leaving its woodcutting hotlines open, and anyone with a fuel wood permit may continue to gather firewood as conditions allow.

The shutdown could delay the sale of any Forest Service cabins. Escrows will be unable to close unless the buyer has already interviewed with the Forest Service and documents were provided to title and escrow.

The other main federal agency in the basin – Tahoe Regional Planning Agency – is staying open.

"TRPA may not be impacted by a federal shutdown for some time. We are not directly funded by any federal agency, but partners with various agencies, such as the [U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service] through the Aquatic Invasive Species Program. We may not need to submit any invoices to the federal government for several months," Jeff Cowen, with the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency, told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Barton Health officials do not anticipate any direct impact from this shutdown. Medicare reimbursements will still be forthcoming.

While the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says the shutdown will affect its flu vaccination program as the country goes into flu season, Tahoe-ites should be OK.

"Barton has worked closely with El Dorado County Health and Human Services on the flu shot program for our community this year. El Dorado County will provide flu shots to community

members at a low rate," Monica Sciuto, Barton spokeswoman, told *Lake Tahoe News*. "Pharmacies in town are already offering flu shots as well. Barton will be providing flu shots through the physician offices and to patients at the hospital. Barton already has flu vaccines – we order a year in advance – and is ready to go with our flu program for this winter season."

Educators believe they will weather a short shutdown just fine.

"The district has received this year's federally funded program appropriations. However, payments may be delayed from the U.S. Department of Agriculture funded school lunch and breakfast programs. The district will continue to serve meals to all students until this possible federal shutdown is addressed," Jim Tarwater, superintendent of Lake Tahoe Unified School District, told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Douglas County School District also receives funding for the free and reduced lunch program, as well as federal dollars for its three Title 1 schools.

Rich Alexander, assistant superintendent for DCSD, said the district is operating as normal and anticipates doing so for the foreseeable future while the feds work out the problem.

"If the shutdown does not last too long, we are not anticipating any issues. It is very hard to get a reading on the long-term impact, as there is a lot of speculation," Lake Tahoe Community College President Kindred Murillo said.

Other government entities also are keeping an eye on Washington.

Steve Mokrohisky, Douglas County manager, told Lake Tahoe News, "While it appears that critical emergency support services may not be immediately affected, our continued efforts to resolve FEMA flood map issues, seek approval of our comprehensive lands bill, work with the Forest Service on

improvements at Round Hill Pines, pursue federal funding for transportation and water quality improvements at Lake Tahoe, as well as several other areas will likely be delayed. New grant opportunities will also likely be on hold, which will impact our efforts to meet the infrastructure needs of local residents."

South Lake Tahoe City Manager Nancy Kerry said there are no direct impacts right now, but that staff will be looking at how federally funded grant projects could be affected.

California driving up traffic fines

By Caroline Chen, Center for Investigative Reporting

Motorist Derick Neal doesn't remember the April night when he rolled through a right turn at a red light in San Leandro.

The video from the red-light camera clearly shows the violation, he admits. Nevertheless, the 40-year-old software engineer is outraged about the price of the ticket: $490, plus an additional $59 for traffic school.

"It's one thing if I was barreling through, but you can see my brake lights all the way through," he said after viewing the video. "I expected it to be $100, $150 at most for the infraction."

Like Neal, many of the more than 6 million California drivers who get tickets each year experience sticker shock. State records show that traffic citation fines have skyrocketed over

the last decade, with some common infractions now costing close to $500.

Running a red light, currently $490, cost $340 in 2003 and $103 in 1993, according to the Judicial Council of California, which sets the base fines for traffic offenses. A ticket for rolling through a stop sign costs $238; a decade ago, it was $130. Speeding up to 15 mph over the limit also comes with a $238 price tag – more than eight times what it cost in 1993. And traffic school can add $60.

Oddly, the base fine for most violations has remained the same for the last 20 years. The growth in fines is due to add-ons known as penalty assessments, which are set by the Legislature. These fees are tacked on to citations, with the money earmarked for projects ranging from court construction to DNA research for solving crimes.

Viewed separately, each assessment might not seem particularly onerous, but the penalties add up. About a decade ago, there was one penalty assessment. Now, there are 10 – and total fines average four or five times the amount of the base fine.

The soaring fines don’t seem to have encouraged Californians to become better drivers. Each year, between 26 and 30 percent of drivers get a traffic citation, records show. But the high price of a ticket has led many traffic offenders to plead not guilty and contest their tickets in court, hoping to have them dismissed or reduced.

In 2003, about 196,000 traffic citations were

Derick Neal’s ticket

Base fine	$100
State penalty assessment	$100
County penalty assessment	$70
DNA identification fund	$50
Court construction	$50
State surcharge	$20
Emergency medical services	$20
Emergency medical air transportation	$4
Court operations	$40
Conviction assessment	

disputed in California courts, according to Judicial Council statistics. That was 4.5 percent of the total issued. By 2011, that number had nearly doubled to 383,000, 7.1 percent of all the citations issued.

Advocates say the increased fines are especially hard on the working class.

“If you’re a single parent barely making it, one of those (red-light) tickets could really set you back,” said Shane Gusman, legislative representative for the California Teamsters union. “I think folks are doing the math and hoping that it will get dismissed if the officer doesn’t show up. I know our drivers are doing that calculation.”

$35
Night court
$1
Total ticket
$490
Traffic school
$59
Total cost
$549

Some traffic court judges offer community service, rather than fines, to those who plead guilty. Gusman says this isn’t much help for many people. At the community service rate of $10 an hour, it would take 49 hours to pay off a red-light violation ticket.

The courts don’t track whether they are losing revenue because more motorists are fighting their tickets. But some courts around the state are struggling to handle the influx of people contesting tickets.

Trial dates are backed up in San Diego County, where the number of motorists contesting tickets has doubled in a decade, said court spokeswoman Karen Dalton. The current wait is six months.

Those accused of traffic violations in Los Angeles County have been facing waits of nine months or more for a hearing, said court spokeswoman Mary Hearn. But it’s about to get worse. Recently, courts underwent their third round of layoffs in four years.

“With the changes our court was forced to make in the past few months, I expect those numbers will again increase dramatically,” Hearn said.

Derick Neal pleaded not guilty on his red-light violation and went to court in Oakland this month. He was found guilty and must pay the full fine.

Some courts offer discounts to motorists who plead guilty rather than fight their tickets. At the San Francisco Hall of Justice on a recent day, a court officer offered deals to about 80 people who had shown up to dispute their tickets. Motorists could pay $285 to settle any ticket of $400 or more, the officer said, and tickets of less than $400 could be settled for $178. If motorists went to trial and lost, they would pay the full fine, the officer warned.

But there was no such clemency across the bay in Oakland at the Wiley W. Manuel Courthouse, where Commissioner Taylor Culver reigns over his courtroom with sarcastic humor. During a red-light camera trial on a recent afternoon, when one defendant asked for a reduction in his fine, Culver boomed, “Nobody here is special or better than anybody. There’s nobody here special but me.”

In another case, Culver cut off a defendant’s comments by saying, “Just tell me about the money. How are you going to pay?”

Experts say there is little chance that the penalty assessments will stop increasing because it’s an attractive source of revenue for state and county governments. A 2006 report by the California Research Bureau, which studies issues for the governor and Legislature, estimated that traffic violations bring in more than $500 million per year.

“I don’t know we’ll ever have a rollback unless the state had enough money in the general fund,” said Gregory Pagan, chief counsel for the Assembly Public Safety Committee. “It’s an

easy way to find a revenue stream to fund (a program). They'll never stop."

K's Kitchen: Time for comfort food

By Kathryn Reed

With the change in seasons, so comes the change in what I'm cooking. The cooler temps make me want to whip up foods that are more comforting.

Below is a recipe I don't make often, but I don't know why. And it's one that is good for guests.

It is from the cookbook "Cucina Viansa". It's a cookbook I bought several years ago at the winery. Sam and Vicki Sebastiani owned Viansa Winery at the time – they've since divorced – and someone else owns the winery. He ran the winery; she ran the eatery and wrote the cookbook.



I like that the cookbook suggests wines to serve with each dish. This particular one calls for a Chardonnay or Nebbiolo. Since the recipe needs red wine and I didn't have any Nebbiolo in the house, I cooked with Merlot and finished the meal with a Cabernet.

I took the easy route and bought cannelloni (manicotti does the trick too) shells. I lightened the fat content with reduced fat cheeses. And I really did grate the Parmesan, but pre-grated (not the stuff in a green can found on a shelf) should suffice. I didn't save any liquid from the tomatoes,

and I couldn’t find this variety in that size can so I bought something similar that worked just fine. I had filling left over and just put it on top of the stuffed shells. You might want to put foil under the pan in case the marinara sauce overflows.

I served it with a salad and bread.

Cannelloni di Formaggio e Erbe con Salsa Marinara (Cheese and Herb Cannelloni with Marinara Sauce)

Crepes:

2 large eggs

1 tsp salt

1 T sugar

¼ C chilled white wine

¾ C flour

1¼ C milk

Olive oil

In a medium bowl, whisk eggs until frothy. Add salt, sugar and wine and whisk thoroughly. Add flour and milk alternately, beating well after each addition. Cover and allow the batter to rest one hour in the refrigerator. Whisk again to mix.

Spread a very small amount of olive oil with a brush (or paper towel) on a 6- to 8-inch non-stick crepe pan or skillet. Pour 3 tablespoons batter into the skillet for each crepe (use a large cooking or serving spoon that holds 3 tablespoons, so you can pour the batter all at once). Quickly swirl to spread the batter to a 6-inch circle. Brown lightly on the underside over medium heat, turn to briefly brown the second side (use a rubber spatula to loosen the crepe around the edges, slide it under and flip the crepe over). Slide each crepe onto waxed

paper. Crepes can be stacked between layers of waxed paper until ready for use. If preparing well ahead of time, wrap the stack of crepes in plastic wrap and refrigerate.

Makes 12 to 14 crepes.

Filling:

2 C ricotta cheese

¾ C freshly grated Parmesan cheese

2 packages (8 ounces each) cream cheese at room temperature

2 eggs slightly beaten

½ C minced green onions, including green tops

2 T minced Italian parsley

2 T minced fresh basil

¼ tsp salt

Dash pepper

Combine the ricotta, grated Parmesan, cream cheese and eggs in an electric mixer or food processor and mix until well blended. Add the remaining filling ingredients and mix to combine. Spread about 1/3 cup of filling down the center of each crepe. Fold the sides of the crepe over the filling to form a roll. Place filled crepes, seam side down, in a single layer in shallow 9 x 13 inch baking dish.

Marinara Sauce:

¼ C olive oil

4 cloves garlic, minced

2 medium yellow onions, chopped

2 cans (28 ounces each) Italian plum tomatoes

½ C red wine

1 tsp minced fresh oregano

1 tsp minced fresh basil

½ tsp salt

¼ tsp pepper

¾ C freshly grated Parmesan cheese

Preheat oven to 350 degrees.

Heat oil in a large skillet and sauté garlic and onions for 10 to 12 minutes, until tender. Drain 1 cup of the liquid from the canned tomatoes and discard or save for another use. Stir the tomatoes (mashing with a fork or spoon to incorporate), remaining tomato liquid, wine, oregano, basil, salt and pepper into the onions. Bring to a boil, reduce heat, and simmer 20 minutes, stirring occasionally. Pour the marinara sauce over the cannelloni and sprinkle Parmesan over the top. Bake 40 minutes. Makes 6 cups sauce.