Letter: Reminder about being fire safe

To the community,

This is a public safety service message to remind all residents of South Lake Tahoe that due to extreme fire danger and severe drought conditions throughout the state of California, there remains no outdoor open burning of any type within the city limits.

The city of South Lake Tahoe and the South Lake Tahoe Fire Department have adopted section 307 of the California Fire Code prohibiting open burning “when atmospheric conditions or local circumstances make such fires hazardous”.

For further information go online.

Sallie Ross-Filgo, South Lake Tahoe Fire Department

Doc causes controversy promoting vegan diet

By Anahad O’Connor, New York Times

Kim A. Williams, the president-elect of the American College of Cardiology, often sees patients who are overweight and struggling with hypertension, Type 2 diabetes and high cholesterol. One of the things he advises them to do is to change their diets.

Specifically, he tells them to go vegan.

Williams became a vegan in 2003 because he was concerned that his LDL cholesterol – the kind associated with an increased risk of heart disease – was too high. The doctor wrote about his reasons for going vegan and his belief in the cardiovascular benefits of a plant-based diet in a recent essay at MedPage Today.

Veganism has grown in popularity in recent years, reflected by the explosion of meat-free cookbooks and restaurants, and vegan-friendly products in grocery stores. But the endorsement by the man who is set to become the president of one of the country's leading cardiology associations, which helps formulate health policies and guidelines, did not strike a totally positive chord.

One person suggested he was promoting a radical diet to his patients based on the experience of a single person: himself. Others accused him of trying to get the college of cardiology to encourage everyone to go vegan, which he dismissed. And some critics suggested that Williams and the college were "unduly influenced by industry," which baffled him.

Read the whole story

Immunizations available through public health

El Dorado County Health and Human Services Agency, Public Health Division is offering back-to-school immunizations for eligible children beginning school this fall.

Public health can provide all childhood vaccinations required for school entry, as well as vaccinations that are recommended

to keep children healthy.

Schools are required to verify each child's immunization record to make sure all shots and boosters are completed before entry to kindergarten and seventh grade. Kindergartners need a total of five DTaP (diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis), four polio, three hepatitis B, two MMR (measles, mumps, rubella) and one varicella (chickenpox) shot. In addition, since a new California law was signed in 2010, students entering seventh grade will need to show proof of the Tdap vaccine before starting school.

Parents who do not have a health care provider and wish to have their child vaccinated through a scheduled appointment at Public Health may call 530.573.3155 in South Lake Tahoe or 530.621.6100 in Placerville. Any child on Medi-Cal, or who is uninsured, is eligible for Public Health's immunization services. A $10 administrative fee is charged per shot, though no child will be refused a vaccination due to inability to pay.

Parents are asked to bring their child's immunization record.

SLT rejiggers debt; spending on infrastructure

By Kathryn Reed

Money was the dominant theme during this week's South Lake Tahoe City Council meeting – mostly how to cut expenses.

With the reduction of some long-term debt, the city will then have money to invest in infrastructure.

And an added source of revenue is changing the pricing at the city owned parking garage at Heavenly Village.

City Manager Nancy Kerry and staff have been scrutinizing the budget to come up with significant cost savings in relation to some of the unfunded liability that is on the books.

Staff estimates saving $264,000 a year by paying off the CalPERS side fund with pension obligation bonds. This will add up to a savings of $3.3 million once the bill is all paid.

This side fund is a portion of public safety's unfunded CalPERS liability. As of Sept. 30, 2013, that figure was more than $11.6 million. Issuing bonds would pay off that debt, while incurring a smaller overall debt because of lower interest rates.

The council unanimously agreed to do this.

The same five then acted as board members to the Successor Agency, which handles things regarding properties that the defunct-Redevelopment Agency oversaw.

Some of the bonds pertaining to Lake Tahoe Resort Hotel (former Embassy Suites), Ski Run Village and Heavenly Village will be refinanced. A lower interest rate will reduce the payments on the more than $135 million of debt.

When it comes to the parking garage, the $3.75 per hour rate is not changing, but there may be more opportunities for validation from various businesses.

Before the meeting it cost businesses $1.50 to buy an hour's worth of validation from the city. That has been cut to $1. The consumer is likely to receive a free hour from participating businesses. The cinema, though, retains its sweetheart deal of paying 35 cents per validation. However, the number of free hours for the public went from four to three.

The goal is with more businesses opting into the program, patrons might find more incentive to stay in the village longer and ultimately spend more money. Signs saying which businesses validate will likely be erected in the garage. It is up to each business to decide if a purchase is necessary to get a validation stamp.

Annual passes will resume. They will be $600. Monthly passes are $125, while it costs $400 for a ski season pass.

Staff is looking at renting the top part of the garage for special events. This already happens on New Year's Eve. It's also possible there will be advertising for local shops on the back of parking tickets.

By the end of the fiscal year – Sept. 30 – projections are for a surplus of $500,000 in the general fund. That money is going into infrastructure. The plan is to improve recreation facilities, which ideally will have locals and tourists taking out more cash to play in South Lake Tahoe. That additional revenue would then pay for things like more streets being upgraded.

Money is being set aside to build a bike park at Bijou Community Park, for planning Regan Beach improvements, planning for upgrades to the Recreation Center and planning for completion of the 56-acre site – which is across Highway 50 from Lakeview Commons.

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In other action:

• The council on a 3-2 vote upheld its decision to delay further implementation of the plastic bag ban to October 2015. Brooke Laine and Angela Swanson were in the minority.

• Ben Fish with TAMBA, the mountain bike group, said plans for the bike park at Bijou Community Park were resubmitted to staff last week.

Letter: Heavenly takes a turn at Bread & Broth

To the community,

“I really enjoy being a part of Heavenly’s Adopt A Day and support what the Bread & Broth organization is accomplishing in our community,” said Tom Maugeri, Heavenly Mountain Resort’s security manager.

Joining Maugeri at B&B’s June 21 dinner were Damian Lanum, Nicholas Corbridge, Nathan Castellanos (all security supervisors) and Frank Papandrea, environmental manager at Heavenly Mountain Resort.

These five AAD sponsor volunteers from Heavenly did a great job of helping the B&B volunteers put on a great spread for our 105 dinner guests for the evening. From bagging give away bags to drying dishes, to working the serving line, to stacking tables and chairs, Heavenly’s volunteers cheerfully and enthusiastically worked side by side with B&B volunteers throughout the evening.

The Bread & Broth program will soon be celebrating their 25th anniversary of providing meals to the needy in the Lake Tahoe South Shore community at St. Theresa Church Grace hall and over five years at the Lake Tahoe Community Presbyterian Church. B&B would like to thank Heavenly Mountain Resort and the Vail Echo Grant Program for their long time financial support and their employees’ active participation at Heavenly’s sponsorship dinners.

To help B&B as a donor or sponsor, contact meat 530.542.2876 or carolsgerard@aol.com.

Carol Gerard, Bread & Broth

Snippets about Lake Tahoe

• The League to Save Lake Tahoe is having an Eyes on the Lake training at the Tahoe Keys Property Owners Pavilion in South Lake Tahoe on Aug. 16 from 10am-noon. This free training is open to the public.

• Tahoe Donner is having an archery tournament Aug. 16 from 2:30-4:30pm at the Northwoods Clubhouse.

• The Kirkwood Inn is celebrating its 150th birthday on Aug. 9 from 11am-5pm.

• The 26th annual Alpen Wine Festival is Aug. 31 from 2-5pm in the village at Squaw Valley. All proceeds from the festival benefit Can Do MS, a national nonprofit organization sponsoring lifestyle empowerment programs for people with Multiple Sclerosis and their support partners. Tickets are $40 and may be purchased online.

• The Race Walk Championship will be at South Tahoe Middle School track Aug. 10. The women's race starts at 9:30am, and the men's race will start immediately afterward, at about 10:20am. For more info, email aaejprice@att.net or jprice@unr.edu.

STHS tennis coaches quit just before season

South Tahoe High School is struggling to have a tennis program this fall with the abrupt resignation of both coaches.

The husband-wife duo of Justin and Jenny Clark recently gave notice.

Practice for the boys' and girls' teams is supposed to start Aug. 16 per NIAA rules. The governing body mandates the teams have 10 practices before match play begins.

"We have bit of wiggle room. We will make sure we can compete," STHS Vice Principal Pat Harnett told *Lake Tahoe News*.

The jobs have been posted, with the deadline to apply being Aug. 11.

Justin Clark, who coached the boys, did not return multiple phone calls. He has taken a teaching job in Carson City.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Tahoe Queen not damaged, may sail in a week

By Kathryn Reed

The Tahoe Queen is structurally capable of operating, but

because it does not have updated U.S. Coast Guard mandated paperwork in place it is sitting idle at Ski Run Marina in South Lake Tahoe.

The Coast Guard on Aug. 6 inspected the vessel to see if had been damaged. It wasn't. The sightseeing paddle-wheeler ran aground Aug. 4 off Regan Beach with 257 passengers on board.

All were safely evacuated, mostly via small law enforcement boats.

The certificate of documentation is what's delaying the boat from operating. This is similar to registering any watercraft with the state. The difference for the Queen is that because of its tonnage it is required to have the federal certification.

Coast Guard Lt. Theo Vaughan did not know now long the Queen has been out of compliance.

The Queen cannot carry passengers without the valid documents. Vaughan estimated the paperwork should be completed within a week.

"The vessel will be allowed to operate. The only thing pending is the administrative issue," Vaughan told *Lake Tahoe News*.

The full investigation of what caused the Queen to launch itself onto the sandbar is ongoing. Vaughan said it could be two months before it is finished. The report must be signed off by folks at headquarters in Washington, D.C.

"The low level of the lake is definitely a contributing factor," Vaughan said.

As for what might happen to the captain or any other crewmember remains to be seen.

"We will look at the report and see if any changes need to be made based on recommendations," Dave Freirich, spokesman for

Aramark – parent company of the Queen, told *Lake Tahoe News*.

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1 arrest in S. Tahoe marijuana trimmings case

Nearly 300 pounds of marijuana trimmings were confiscated Thursday in South Lake Tahoe.

Dwayne Crenshaw was arrested on charges of possession of marijuana for sale and manufacturing of a controlled substance.

“The marijuana trimmings were being used to create concentrated cannabis oils via several methods including butane fuel extraction,” Matt Underhill, commander of South Lake El Dorado Narcotics Enforcement Team, said in a statement.

Also found at the Fresno Avenue residence on Aug. 7 at 7am were 180 expended and 65 partially used butane fuel canisters, all 300 ml in size. Agents seized nine extraction tubes made of glass and steel, which they said were used to process marijuana/hash oil. Agents also confiscated approximately 10 ounces of concentrated cannabis in various forms.

“In addition to being illegal, (butane hash oil) extraction is a highly volatile process. When an ignition source such as a cigarette or pilot light comes into contact with the butane, an explosion will occur. The size and damage of the explosion are dependent upon the amount of gas present, but can cause serious injuries and death,” Underhill said.

The last such explosion in South Lake Tahoe was in 2013.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Man charged with starting Rim Fire

By Scott Smith, AP
FRESNO – A California man was charged Thursday with starting the state's third-largest wildfire, a 2013 blaze that charred hundreds of square miles of land in Yosemite National Park and the Stanislaus National Forest.

A grand jury returned a four-count indictment against Keith Matthew Emerald, 32, alleging he started a fire Aug. 17, 2013, and it spread beyond his control and turned into the massive Rim Fire.

The fire raged for two months across 400 square miles of land. The wildfire also ranks as the largest in the Sierra Nevada's recorded history. The costs of fighting it totaled more than $125 million. Federal prosecutors said temporary fire restrictions in place at the time prohibited fires.

Investigators said Emerald, who has not been arrested, has at times admitted to starting the fire and other times denied it.

Hunting for deer with a bow that day, he initially told investigators that he caused a rock slide that sparked the fire, according to a search warrant affidavit for sites, including his house. He then allegedly suggested it was started by marijuana growers in the area.

After multiple interviews, he acknowledged starting a fire and

cooking a meal. He burned trash from his backpack, but some of the embers blew uphill and set the brush on fire, he allegedly told investigators in a handwritten statement with some misspellings.

“The terrain was almost vertical, so I physically couldn’t put it out,” he wrote.

He expressed concern about possible community retaliation if his name were disclosed.

He was picked up by a rescue helicopter from the Clavey River Canyon area of the Stanislaus National Forest about an hour after the fire was reported, prosecutors said.

A resident of Columbia, a town in the Sierra Nevada foothills, Emerald is also charged with lying to a federal agent by saying he did not set the fire. A call to his attorney, federal public defender Janet Bateman, was not immediately returned.

Prosecutors said no court date has been set for his arraignment.

Authorities previously said the wildfire was started by an illegal fire set by a hunter, but they withheld the hunter’s name pending further investigation.

“The Rim Fire was one of the largest in California history and caused tremendous economic and environmental harm,” U.S. Attorney Benjamin Wagner said in a written statement. “While those harms cannot be undone, today we have brought criminal charges relating to the cause of the fire.”

The charges were the result of an investigation by the U.S. Forest Service and the Tuolumne County district attorney’s office, Wagner said.