Poland admits guilt; could get 20 years



Johnny Poland will never be a police officer again after pleading guilty May 22 to a federal crime. Photo/LTN file

By Kathryn Reed

South Lake Tahoe police Officer Johnny Poland is going to prison.

Poland pleaded guilty today to obstruction of an official proceeding. This was one of four charges leveled against the 44-year-old earlier this year.

He will be sentenced Aug. 7.

He faces a maximum sentence of 20 years behind bars, a $250,000 fine and three years of supervised released.

According to court documents, on June 29, 2011, Poland interfered with the FBI's investigation of a South Lake Tahoe gang member. He persuaded the gang member's girlfriend to conceal and destroy evidence. In October and November of that year, Poland tampered with this witness in an investigation into his own conduct as well as the conduct of the gang

member. Poland instructed another witness to conceal and destroy evidence rather than provide it to federal authorities. Poland admitted that he corruptly attempted to alter, destroy, mutilate, and conceal evidence material to an official proceeding.

Poland admitted guilt to all of this on May 22 in federal court in Sacramento.

The original federal complaint against Poland had details dating to 2003.

Poland, who was hired by the department in 1998, began having substantial public run-ins with his superiors beginning in November 2006. He was one of the officers called to South Tahoe High School regarding gang violence that led to the campus being on lockdown for several hours. The previous three years Poland had been the resource officer at the school.

He was fired in June 2007 after admitting to letting a student involved in the tussle to keep a BB gun in a vehicle despite a no weapons ban at the school.

He fought that termination and was reinstated in fall 2009.

In November 2011, when the federal investigation began, he was put on paid administrative leave.

Local FBI Agent Chris Campion, who was instrumental in the investigation, could not be reached for comment.

When the indictment came out earlier this year, the city was able to take him off the payroll. But even today, despite the guilty plea, the police department cannot automatically fire him.

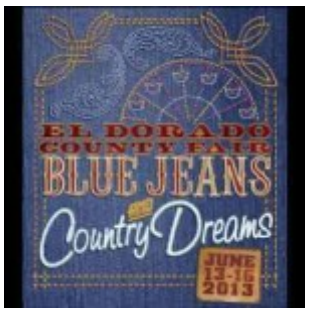
“There is still a process that protects him under the Police Officer Bill of Rights,” Police Chief Brian Uhler told *Lake Tahoe News*. “We hope that he understands that resigning would free up a spot.”

Poland remains out on bail until sentencing. He was released after his arrest in January on $100,000 bond.

South Tahoe man's fair knowledge wins him tickets

Keith Cooney of South Lake Tahoe and a friend are going to the El Dorado County Fair next month compliments of *Lake Tahoe News* and the fair board.

He correctly answered the question about when the fair began.



Here is a little more history about the fair from the organization's website:

> *The first recorded Fair in El Dorado County was held in 1859 in Coloma. Until 1939, the Fair was held at various locations including Coloma, Diamond Springs, and downtown Placerville.*
>
> *The Fairs of 1859, 1860, and 1864 were held in Coloma. Two other towns where the Fair was held in the early years were Placerville and Diamond Springs. The downtown areas of these small towns were transformed into the fairgrounds each time the County Fair was held.*

With no permanent facilities to call its own until 1939, the County Fair annually used whatever facilities it could glean

to hold the event. In those early days, the entire town where the Fair was held became the Fairgrounds. When in Placerville, some venues included the Confidence Hall, Sigwart's Opera House, the Central House Hotel and Ballroom, and the Stockyards.

The first County Fair at the current site on Placerville Dr. (old Hwy 50) was held in 1939 conducted by the American Legion under a contract with El Dorado County. The American Legion conducted the County Fairs until 1952 when the current Fair Association was formed. World War II caused the Fair to become dormant from 1942 until 1947 when the American Legion reactivated the event.

Lake Tahoe News has three more pairs of tickets to give-away for the June 13-16 fair in Placerville.

Winner must agree to have their full name published. Winners must be part of *LTN*'s NEWS Team or a paid subscriber. Here is a paid subscriber form for those who need one.

Acrobatic athletes sought by ski-snowboard group

The U.S. Ski and Snowboard Association is looking for future Olympic acrobatic athletes who are younger than 19 to participate in the Elite Aerial Development Program in Lake Placid, N.Y., or the Western Development Aerial Program Fly Freestyle in Park City, Utah.

The EADP has converted acrobatic athletes from sports like

gymnastics, trampoline, diving and tumbling (who can't necessarily ski) into Olympic athletes in the sport of aerial skiing.

Submit your acrobatic videos here.

The athlete's video with the most votes will train with the U.S. Team.

Mooney aircraft lovers to descend upon South Lake

The Mooneys are about to take over Lake Tahoe Airport.

After a two-year hiatus, Mooney Aircraft owners and pilots are returning to South Lake Tahoe for their largest fly-inn in the nation. They will be in town June 21-23.

Mooney Aircraft Company has manufactured more than 11,000 aircraft. The Mooney line is renowned for high performance and efficiency, achieving 132 world speed records, the fastest trans-continental flight in a single engine piston powered aircraft, the fastest single engine civilian aircraft ever produced and the first aircraft produced to achieve 200-plus mph from a 200 horsepower engine.

At the last Gathering of Mooneys, aircraft owners, pilots and passengers set a record by having more Mooney Aircraft on the ramp at Lake Tahoe Airport than at any other time or place in history. Approximately 200 people were in attendance from around the country.

Snippets about Lake Tahoe



• Valhalla's free concert series starts June 16 with the South Tahoe High School jazz band performing from noon-2pm. The Tallac Historic Site is located two miles past the intersection of highways 50 and 89, just past Camp Richardson, on the lake side of Highway 89.

• Lake Tahoe Community College's graduation is June 28 at 6pm in the gym.

• AAA Carson City gave the Carson City fire and sheriff's departments $2,500 each for public education materials and the K9 unit, respectively.

• Truckee is hosting a site walk for the Tahoe Donner to Downtown Trail on May 31 from 8:30 to 11:30am. Park at flat area on Euer Valley Road accessed from Bridge Street. For more info, call (530) 582.2938.

• Elizabeth Carmel, a former land use planner and adviser with extensive experience working in the Sierra, was appointment by Assembly Speaker John Perez, D-Los Angeles, to the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency's Governing Board.

Paid beach parking in S. Tahoe is a done deal

By Kathryn Reed

No longer can opponents to South Lake Tahoe's expansion of metered parking point to Truckee as an example of a town that continuously loses money with paid parking.

Truckee is projected to net $140,000 this fiscal year that ends June 30. And the town council this month agreed – unanimously – to keep the program intact.

South Lake Tahoe on a 4-1 vote May 21, with Mayor Tom Davis dissenting, made what is expected to be the last tweak to its parking plan for this summer season.

The vote was to install the parking kiosks at the two lots serving Lakeview Commons and not put them in at Regan Beach.



A pilot parking meter program started in 2011 on Bellamy Court in South Lake Tahoe. Photo/LTN file

At previous meetings it was agreed meters will go in at Venice Drive, with operation being seasonal during the warm months; and year-round near Lakeside Beach in the state line area.

“Everyone knows my position on paid parking. I hate it,” Davis said. He said in the fall he hopes it will have not been a success so he can be the first to make a motion to abandon the whole thing, and perhaps then the city can resell the used kiosks.

Councilmember Hal Cole said, “I’m a big believer in user fees. I think the people using it should fund it.”

Councilwoman Brooke Laine pointed out how the U.S. Forest Service charges at all of its beaches in the basin except for Kiva. She tied this to the city’s having paid parking at its beaches except Regan and Timber Cove.

State Parks is asking for $10 at the lot at Vikingsholm – and that could be for a 10-minute visit.

The city is going to charge $2 per hour, with a maximum of $10 per day.

Paid parking has been talked about for three years. In the past year, those against the concept have come out in large numbers to oppose the plan. However, at Tuesday’s City Council meeting, only four spoke – all against paid parking.

The council intends to assess in the fall how the program worked – or didn’t.

In other action:

• The council agreed to Tom Watson’s three-year contract. The city attorney starts July 8. He will make $154,000 per year, receive the same benefits as other city staff, and be given up to $7,500 in moving expenses. If the council wants to terminate him before the contract expires June 30, 2016, he will be paid six-months severance.

• Deputy City Attorney Nira Feeley will be the interim city attorney from June 1-July 7.

• Tom Greene with the Tahoe Prosperity Center updated the council on that group's plan to bring broadband to the Lake Tahoe Basin.

• It was agreed in the near future the council would discuss the possibility of going to voters to seek a raise in the snow removal fee that currently stands at $20/year. That money is for equipment. Tying increases to the Consumer Price Index will also be broached.

• There will be a special council meeting May 30 at 4pm regarding the Bijou erosion project.

• Depending on the action taken Thursday by the Planning Commission, the Chateau project may be on the June 11 council agenda.

• A special council meeting may be needed in June regarding the area plan for the tourist core.

Nevada's past to come alive on stage

The Wild West returns to Virginia City on July 12.

See the early days of Nevada through the eyes of Eilley Bowers – famous "Queen of the Comstock" – and Julia Bulette – Virginia City's most beloved "working girl". With their dislike for one another, the comedy and the drama will unfold on the stage of Virginia City's Historic Piper's Opera House.

In this original two-act play by CobwebPalace Productions,

Eilley Bowers is played by Lisa Bommarito. Julia Bulette is played by Kim Copél. Both women are long-time locals to the Sierra Nevada community.

Performances are scheduled for 2pm and 7pm. Doors open one hour prior to each performance. Period attire is encouraged.

Tickets for the 2pm matinee show are $10. For the 7pm show, tickets are $15 ($12.50 for seniors over 62). Will call tickets may be charged by calling (775) 847.0433 or purchased at the Delta Saloon at 22 S. C St. in Virginia City.

Piper's Opera House is located at 12 N. B St. in Virginia City.

Letter: Heavenly employees making a difference

To the community,

For their fifth Bread & Broth Adopt A Day sponsorship of the year, Heavenly Mountain Resort covered the financial cost of the May 13 evening's meal. They also sent a first time crew of four from the Heavenly Tahoe Vacation office along with frequent B&B volunteer Jolena Hearn, assistant manager, greeters/hosts.

The "first timers" were Darcy Nealis, reservations manager; Kari Natividad, reservations assistant manager; Mary Hajdas, reservations; and Connie Yee, reservations.

Heavenly's volunteer crew enthusiastically helped the B&B volunteers throughout the evening bagging giveaways, setting up for the dinner and working the serving line. With their

help, over 90 meal were served and 60 giveaway bags were distributed to the evening’s guests. The Heavenly volunteer crew was impressed with how “everyone of the dinner’s guests were really appreciative” of the tasty and healthy meal they were served.

Bread & Broth would like to thank Heavenly Mountain Resort for their financial donation and their corporate program which supports and encourages employee volunteerism. In one year alone, Heavenly employees volunteer over 150 hours of their time at Bread & Broth’s Monday evening dinners.

As a nonprofit, all volunteer program, B&B is able to feed the needy of South Lake Tahoe with the backing of generous sponsors like Heavenly Mountain Resort.

For information on how you can support Bread & Broth, contact me at (530) 542.2876 or carolsgerard@aol.com.

Carol Gerard, Bread & Broth

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30 years ago – Tahoe was sliding away

Two mudslides and two landslides in April-May 1983 impacted the Lake Tahoe Basin. The two slides on Highway 50 virtually isolated tourism-driven South Lake Tahoe for months, causing some businesses to close. This old VHS tape is Tad Dunbar reporting on KOLO-TV Reno detailing all four slides.

Bill Kingman of South Lake Tahoe compiled this footage.

Phone glitch impacts potential murder trial jurors

Unable to call the courthouse, prospective jurors did their due diligence and showed up for potential jury duty on Tuesday.

What happened is hundreds of – with some estimates being close to 500 – people were outside the Johnson Boulevard facility in South Lake Tahoe. About 20 percent of those people were needed for questioning.

People were parked all over the place – at the cemetery, dog park and the north entrance of the complex at Marlette Circle.



Joseph Michael Nissensohn

The court didn't know there was a problem May 21 until employees saw the line of people.

Jurors are needed for the Joseph Michael Nissensohn murder trial. He has been housed at the El Dorado County Jail in South Tahoe for several years.

He is accused of murdering Kathy Graves, 15. The remains of the South Lake Tahoe teen were found near the Mount Tallac trailhead in 1990, about one year after she was last seen

alive. He was charged with that crime in January 2008.

Nissensohn, now 62, is also accused of killing Monterey County teenagers Tanya Jones and Tammy Lynn Jarschke in 1981. He was charged with those murders in fall 2008.

In 1990 he was convicted of second-degree murder in the 1989 stabbing death of a woman in Tillicum, Wash.

Jury selection is expected to take a bit. It started last week. The trial is likely to last until the fall.

If found guilty, Nissensohn faces the death penalty.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report