Letter: Paid parking is a dead-end pursuit

To the community,

Many years ago when Kerry Miller was the city manager and before I was on the City Council, I attended a council meeting. That night the city parking garage was on the agenda. A citizen asked Miller why the private sector wouldn’t build the garage. Miller’s answer was short and sweet. He said because they know it will not work. Miller was right. It has been a loser since the ribbon was cut.



Bill Crawford

I realize that is the past and that nothing is gained by beating that nag that can’t get to the finish line without a city subsidy. But we can use the past to guide us in the present and the future. We must keep a public memory. To build the garage at public expense was a crapshoot. And the present attempt at paid parking in the city is also a roll of the dice.

The main problem with city councils and city mangers is: They get a bright idea and though it looks shaky, might come up snake eyes, they force it upon the public to the bitter end and the public pays the bill for failure. Too often council members have a dream and say that it will be a sure fire success. They don’t think in terms of probabilities. The present council and city manger argue that paid parking will

create new big revenue for the city.

But there are sound arguments voiced by a loud opposition. Thinking back to what Kerry Miller said about the private sector not willing to build the parking garage, it appears that a majority of the council and city manger have no memory of past experience, past failures. That’s disturbing when the game is a game of chance. Put your best down.

Bill Crawford, South Lake Tahoe

Letter: Boys & Girls Club says thank you

To the community,

The Boys & Girls Club of Lake Tahoe would like to express our sincere appreciation to Edgewood and Southern Wine and Spirits for the success of our recent Spirit of Spring fundraising event.

Because of their generosity and sponsorship of the event, we were able to raise $7,000. And 100 percent of those proceeds goes directly to our local kids and the programs at the Boys & Girls Club.

We also appreciate the numerous businesses who contributed to our great premium raffle packages. Thank you to everyone who attended.

The Boys & Girls Club needs and appreciates this support as we continue to grow, and the need in our community is critical for quality youth programs.

Thank you!

Karen Houser, executive director Boys & Girls Club of Lake Tahoe

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Bill would allow consumers more TV channel choices

By Drew Guarini, Huffington Post

America's disgruntled cable subscribers have found a fighter for them in Washington: former presidential candidate John McCain.

McCain, R-Ariz., introduced the Television Consumer Freedom Act last week, a bill that would allow cable subscribers to pick the channels they want and pay for them on an a-la-carte basis. The bill would also repeal blackout restrictions for local sports teams using publicly funded stadiums.

In a statement during a Commerce Committee hearing on Tuesday, McCain made his qualms with the current model – in which subscribers pay for tens or even hundreds of channels they don't watch – well known.

"It is time, in my view, to restore the proper operation of the market by empowering American consumers," McCain said in his statement. He went on to say that the a-la-carte model is "the right thing to do and popular with consumers in large part because of rising cable prices, which are dramatically outpacing cost of living."

McCain has the numbers to back up the claim. He cited a recent FCC pricing survey, which found that since 1995 the average

monthly cable bill for expanded basic service – the most popular tier – has skyrocketed from about $25 a month to $54 a month – a 116 percent increase. That $25 in 1995 only has the purchasing power of about $38 today, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

While McCain may have the support of consumers seeking cheaper cable, his bill will likely face very stiff opposition from broadcasters and cable companies, while also suffering from a lack of co-sponsors. One anonymous television industry official told The Hill that McCain's bill has "no chance" of becoming law. The Arizona senator proposed similar legislation in 2006 that didn't make it past committee.

Michael Powell, head of cable trade group National Cable & Telecommunications Association, also spoke at the hearing. "It's a very serious question mark whether consumers would have lower bills or cheaper service as a result of a la carte," Powell said. In 2004, when Powell was head of the Federal Communications Commission, he had the groups economists work up a study on this new pricing model that found a-la-carte pricing would do the opposite of its intentions by driving up costs and causing many channels to go out of business. Though the study has faced some scrutiny, Powell has continually defended it.

Still, cable may be forced to fix their pricing woes as the discourse develops. An April survey by Belkin and Harris Interactive found that 30 percent of Internet users would consider becoming cable cutters as online streaming services like Netflix, Hulu Plus, Aereo and Amazon Prime continue expanding their video selection.

S. Tahoe police officer expected to plead guilty

By Kathryn Reed

South Lake Tahoe police Officer Johnny Poland is expected to plead guilty next week to federal charges.

“They said in court that they needed a week for negotiations,” Lauren Horwood with the U.S. Attorney’s Office told *Lake Tahoe News* after the May 15 hearing in Sacramento. “Another hearing is set for May 22 for entry of a guilty plea.”

Poland was indicted earlier this year on three counts related to tampering with a witness, victim or informant, and one count dealing with obstruction of an official proceeding.



Johnny Poland

He could have been sent to prison for 20 years on each count if the case had gone to trial and he were found guilty. It is not known what the plea agreement is. Horwood said because the two sides are negotiating the terms of the plea, details are not being released.

Sources have told *Lake Tahoe News* that Poland is expected to plead to one felony count and more than one misdemeanor. It’s possible he would not face any prison time, but could be put on probation.

Poland is out on bond, but could not be reached. He remains

active in the Army National Guard.

The FBI, which was heavily involved in the case, said until the case is over, their office has no comment.

Poland is still on the local police force, but he is not getting paid. An internal civil investigation remains open.

“We are hoping it resolves in close time proximity to the criminal case. It could, or it could drag on two or three weeks after that,” Police Chief Brian Uhler told *Lake Tahoe News*. “The biggest reason for trying to resolve it is to get the slot resolved.”

The department cannot fill Poland’s position as long as he has not resigned.

Fire damages South Tahoe house

A house in the 900 block of Los Angeles Avenue sustained interior and exterior damage from a fire early Thursday morning.

South Lake Tahoe firefighters responded to the blaze about 3:30am May 16.

A city official called the fire accidental, but no other details were provided. Fire Chief Bruce Martin did not know about the fire until *Lake Tahoe News* called inquiring about it.

The eves, wood deck and fence were damaged. Then the fire spread slightly into the interior, according to the official.

The resident was outside when police and fire personnel arrived. No one was injured.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Sugar Pine Foundation fundraiser in Stateline

The Sugar Pine Foundation is having a fundraiser at the Eagle's Nest at the top of Kingsbury Grade on May 31.

For $10, have all-you-can-eat homemade chili, salad and bread. The bar will donate 50 percent of drink proceeds to the foundation.

Music and a live auction will be part of the festivities. The event is from 6-9pm.

The Eagle's Nest is located at 472 Needle Peak Road, Stateline, above Heavenly's Stagecoach Lodge.

Nevada targeting people not wearing seat belts

The annual Nevada Click it or Ticket seat belt awareness and enforcement campaign is planned for May 18 through June 2.

During this two-week time frame, state troopers, sheriff's deputies, and police officers from around the Silver State

will be joining forces and placing a high priority on this vitally important traffic law.

Last year in Nevada there were 234 fatality crashes resulting in a total of 257 traffic-related deaths. The Nevada Highway Patrol investigated 92 of those tragic events where a total of 113 motorists were killed. Thirty-nine of those highway deaths involved drivers and passengers who were not wearing a seat belt.

Median sales price of houses jumps in El Dorado, Placer counties

By Hudson Sangree, Sacramento Bee

The median price of resale homes in El Dorado County jumped by about 33 percent last month compared with April 2012, DataQuick reported Wednesday.

Placer and Yolo counties also experienced double-digit percentage gains, the San Diego-based real estate information service said.

“These eye-popping increases in medians remain a function of two things: home values going up because a lot of people are trying to buy in a supply-constrained market … and we’re seeing a lot more move-up activity,” said DataQuick analyst Andrew LePage.

The median is the price at which half of houses sell for more

and half sell for less. Factors that influence it include the mix of homes sold.

Last year at this time, investors snapping up foreclosures dominated the region’s market. Today, foreclosure sales have plummeted and traditional buyers account for the majority of the open market, with many buying pricier move-up homes.

Sales of Sacramento County homes in the $300,000 to $800,000 range nearly doubled in April compared with the same month a year ago, while the number of homes that sold for less than $200,000 dropped by 26.5 percent, LePage said.

Median prices in all four counties also rose from March to April. In Sacramento County, for instance, the median sale price for detached single-family homes went from $162,000 in April 2012 to $208,000 in March to $215,000 last month.

Sales volume has also been picking up across the region, though the number of homes on the market remains at historic lows. Last month, the number of resale homes bought in Placer County was the most for any April since 2005, near the peak of the housing boom.

S. Tahoe receives stormwater grant from state

South Lake Tahoe has been awarded a competitive grant from the State Water Resources Control Board through the Proposition 84 Stormwater Grant Program.

The city was one of 37 applicants to make it through the first round of the application process, and one of 24 selected for

funding.

South Tahoe was awarded the maximum grant amount available of $3 million, which will be used for construction of the Bijou Area Erosion Control Project. The project will take two years starting this summer.

A total of $42 million was given out by state for projects designed to reduce and prevent stormwater contamination of rivers, lakes, and streams.

Author to talk Tahoe Tessie and other creatures

Tales of a creature in Lake Tahoe have been around for centuries, and sightings have continued into modern day. Find out what really lurks in the blue alpine waters in the final Conversing with Creatures lecture.

In the 1980s, Lake Tahoe resident Bob McCormick coined the name Tahoe Tessie. He is also the author of two children's books that feature the adventures of Tahoe Tessie, and continues to research Lake Tahoe and its mysteries. He will visit the May Museum to give a detailed presentation on his findings.

After a Q&A he will be available for a book sale and signing.

The lecture is June 1 at 4pm at Wilbur D. May Museum, Rancho San Rafael Regional Park, 1595 N. Sierra St., Reno

The cost is $5.

For more info, call (775) 785.5961.