South Lake Tahoe City Council to appoint fifth member; Lovell-Sass-Grego want the seat

By Kathryn Reed

Three people familiar to South Lake Tahoe voters have told *Lake Tahoe News* they want to be appointed to the City Council – Kathay Lovell, Austin Sass and Bruce Grego.

With Claire Fortier abandoning her seat midterm, it means the four remaining members were left with the decision to either appointment a replacement or call for an election. On Dec. 27, they unanimously agreed to have people apply, then go through a public interview process before the council picks the fifth member.

Any registered voter living in the city limits has until Jan. 25 to apply. Applications should be available next week through the city clerk's office.

Interviews will be conducted Feb. 5 at the start of the regular council meeting. It's then likely that person will be sworn in that day and expected to have read the agenda in order to be able to vote on items.

The term expires in December 2014.

Lovell was on the council for two terms before deciding not to run again in 2010.

"I feel like there is more to do and I want to be part of it," Lovell told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Lovell said when Fortier first indicated months ago that she would not fulfill her commitment she began thinking about getting back on the council.

Sass, who came in third in the November council race, and Grego, who was fourth, were at Tuesday's meeting listening to the council weigh the pros and cons about how to fill the vacancy.

The council had the option to pick someone who was on the November ballot. While the electeds did not go that route, nothing is preventing the men from filling out the paperwork for consideration.

Sass and Grego said after the meeting they each intend to file an application.

At the meeting John Cefalu, Kenny Curtzwiler and Mike McKeen spoke in favor of Grego being appointed.

Grego has the distinction of being one of less than a handful of people to ever have been appointed to the council. This happened after then Mayor Terry Trupp was arrested in June 1989 on a slew of federal drug charges stemming from Operation Deep Snow. He was not elected after the appointment expired. Grego was elected four years ago before being voted off seven weeks ago.

Four letters were read into the record – all in support of Sass being on the council. Those were from Harold Anino, Pat Pohl, Josh Benin and Toogee Sielsch. Sass has twice unsuccessfully run for the council.

The cost of an election – which could have been as much as $15,000 – was the overriding reason the council chose the appointment route. Second, was the desire to have a full council before the next possible election date. Had it been a mail-in election, May would have been the time frame; the soonest a traditional election could have been called was

June.

Law enforcement ready to tackle Stateline New Year’s Eve problems

Douglas County sheriff’s deputies are preparing for upward of 60,000 celebrants to ring in the New Year in the Stateline casino core.

Highway 50 may be closed to vehicle traffic for public safety. If that should occur, vehicle traffic will be diverted around the Stateline casino core area using upper and lower Lake Parkway Drive – aka the Loop Road.

Drivers anticipating traveling through the Stateline casino core area on New Year’s Eve should expect it take 15 minutes longer than usual – and that’s not including weather being a factor.

In additions to DCSO present in the Stateline casino-core area throughout the evening, representatives from the Nevada Highway Patrol, South Lake Tahoe Police Department, El Dorado County Sheriff’s Office, California Highway Patrol, and the FBI will also be on the ground.

Douglas law enforcement warns that incidents that will most likely result in an arrest include acts that place celebrants or law enforcement officers in jeopardy; including acts of rowdy behavior, fighting, throwing projectiles, vandalism, theft, narcotic violations, severe public drunkenness, possession of or discharge of fireworks, minors consuming or possessing alcohol, or any other act that disrupts the goal of achieving a peaceful and safe environment for all in attendance.

Glass or metal containers, regardless of contents, are prohibited in the casino core area on New Year's Eve. Alcohol or other liquids must be in a plastic or paper cup or other similar container.

The curfew in Douglas County is midnight for those younger than 18.

2012 – a good year for California wine growers

By Chris Macias, Sacramento Bee

There's plenty to toast among the local wine region, which enjoyed a fairly solid 2012. An ideal growing season, new businesses and increasing recognition from national media added up to a choice year for the greater Sacramento area's wine season.

Here are some of the ways in which 2012 rocked in terms of wine:

• Mother Nature: After two years of unseasonable weather and lighter than normal harvests, 2012's growing season offered some much-needed salvation. This year's statewide wine grape crop is projected to reach 3.7 million tons, a 10 percent jump over 2011 and a tie with the second-largest harvest on record. For a domestic wine industry facing possible supply shortages, 2012 was like a reassuring hug from Mother Nature.

• Positive press: The greater Sacramento region's wine offerings continued to land on the national media radar. After a lengthy feature on the Sierra foothills in 2011, the *San Francisco Chronicle* came back this year listing El Dorado County in "5 California wine areas to watch."

Wine Enthusiast also featured a big spread this year on Sierra foothills wine country, while Eric Asimov of the *New York Times* recommended the Edmunds St. John 2009 El Dorado County Bone-Jolly Gamay Noir in his "memorable bottles for $20" column.

• The China connection: Delegations from China made numerous visits to Lodi in 2012, tasting the region's wine and seeking new trade partners. Given the rapidly growing wine market in China, and increasingly seeking value-friendly California brands, this relationship could bode well for the region's wine business for years to come.

California fails to secure No Child Left Behind waiver

By Sharon Noguchi, San Jose Mercury News

Signaling that California again is marching to its own drum –

perhaps trailing the parade – the federal government has denied the state's request for a waiver from a key U.S. education law, thus assuring that schools will have to keep striving to meet what's generally accepted as unachievable goals, then be punished for missing them.

Like other states, California had been hoping to win a reprieve from the restrictive provisions of the No Child Left Behind law. Among other terms, the law punishes schools and districts if not enough of their students reach proficiency in English and math.

With 33 states and the District of Columbia winning waivers from the law, and 10 more with waiver applications pending, that leaves California in the select company of states that must strive to meet escalating federal goals.

The sticking point for the Golden State was whether it was willing to evaluate teachers based in part on how well their students do on standardized tests.

California, pressed by politically strong teachers unions, has resisted.

"We felt our application was approvable," said state Board of Education President Mike Kirst, professor emeritus of education at Stanford University.

He said he had anticipated the rejection, which came via telephone Friday. Instead, he blamed Congress for failing

to rewrite No Child Left Behind, a 10-year-old George W. Bush-era law known as the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, the primary federal legislation governing the education of poor children.

Efforts to revise the law have been mired in political bickering.

The law has required that a certain percentage of students

test proficient in English and math. That percentage has increased annually; by 2014, every student – including the learning-disabled, poor and English learners – must reach proficiency.

If not, then schools must offer parents the option for their children to transfer to other schools within their district, and they also must set aside money for tutoring, transportation and teacher training.

Education officials don't dispute the goals of educating all students, nor even some of the ways to do that. But they do object to the law's punitive and prescriptive means, denoting schools known as "Program Improvement" and potentially mandating that a school's entire leadership and staff be fired.

No Child Left Behind requires test scores that show yearly improvement. "When you have everybody not meeting annual progress, it gets to be ludicrous and it gets to have no impact," Kirst said.

When asked whether the state should tie teacher evaluations to student test scores, he said, "I don't have a personal position on this."

On Friday, Kirst and state Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Torlakson wrote a joint letter to county and district school superintendents and charter school administrators. The letter in part railed against the "unrealistic goals, labeling and programmatic burdens put on districts and schools" by the federal law, and it also said that California will continue using its own system to measure academic success.

Snippets about Lake Tahoe



• For those who like to explore the backcountry this time of year, be sure to bookmark the Sierra Avalanche Center so you know the risks before you go.

• South Lake Tahoe author Todd Borg's latest book "Tahoe Trap" is free for Kindle readers through Dec. 29.

• Tahoe Cross Country and Tahoe City Winter Sports Park are open for the season.

• Zephyr Cove snowmobiles are running.

• There are more than 140 technology companies in Douglas County. They employ more than 1,800 people and pay $111 million in wages – 20 percent of all wages paid in the county. Their average pay is more than $61,000 per year.

Slick roads keep NHP troopers busy

Troopers from the Nevada Highway Patrol investigated 92 motor vehicle crashes in Northern Nevada between 10am Wednesday an 6am Thursday.

Thirty-three crashes involved injuries, while the remaining 59 were property damage only.

Most of the activity was in the greater Reno-Sparks area. As for the injury crashes outside of the Reno-Sparks area, three were in the Carson City area, and one each in the Fernley and Fallon districts, while the property damage crashes yielded three in Fernley, one in Carson City and two near Lake Tahoe.

Another 54 calls for service were handled in that time frame. They included responding to vehicles that had spun out or slid off the roadway or whose driver's needed assistance with some sort of vehicle mechanical failure.

NHP troopers urge motorists when driving conditions are challenging due to wet, icy, or snow covered roadways to increase distance from other vehicles, slow down, and allow more time to get to your destination.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Ski report: Break between storms



Enjoy the break in weather and all the fresh snow.

Here is the Dec. 27 ski report.

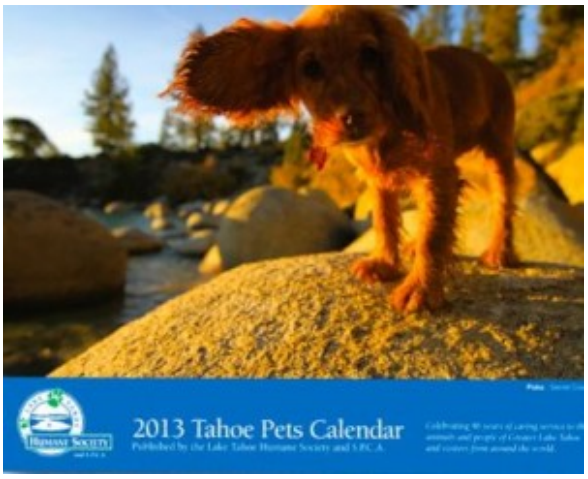
– Curtis Fong

Animal lovers ensure Tahoe pets are cared for

By Kathryn Reed

Pets are often a barometer for how the economy is doing. In good times people fill their homes with four-legged family members, while in bad times shelters are what get filled up.

From 2006 to 2011 all pet ownership decreased 2.4 percent, according to the American Veterinary Medical Association. Cat ownership decreased 6.2 percent and dog ownership declined 1.9 percent in that time span.



Humane societies on both ends of Lake Tahoe are selling 2013 pet calendars as a fundraiser.

The American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals says more than 2 million dogs enter U.S. shelters each year. While there are a variety of reasons why animals wind up in

shelters, not being able to afford their care is on the list.

Sometimes there aren't even scraps for four legged family members.

As the economy sputters to regain stability, pet food can be the last item on the grocery list – assuming it even makes the list.

Humane societies on both ends of the lake would rather help people be able to keep their pets than have them wind up at a shelter. That is why there are food pantries for animals.

"The Lake Tahoe Humane Society has always maintained a community pet food bank for pet owners in financial difficulty (lost a job for example), seniors in financial difficulty and folks waiting for assistance, for clients of other agencies (such as Tahoe Youth & Family Services, Live Violence Free, mental health) who may be transient or in life change/crisis situations, etc.," Dawn Armstrong, executive director of the South Lake Tahoe humane society chapter told *Lake Tahoe News*. "During and after the Angora Fire, we maintained a large cache of food and supplies available to all community members for almost a full year."

Donations are accepted at the Emerald Bay Road office or at the shelter in Meyers, but it must be designated for the LTHS food bank if dropped off at the shelter.

The Humane Society of Truckee-Tahoe's Pet Pantry's slogan is "Give what you can, take what you need." This program collects pet food and distributes it to needy families and their pets in the Truckee-Tahoe area.

Through the holidays the Safeway in Truckee and Kings Beach have collection barrels for pet food. Year-round there are barrels at the Pet Station and Scraps Dog Bakery in Truckee.

The shelter in Truckee keeps all those animals on the same

food.

The El Dorado County shelter in Meyers accepts a variety of donations, with the following on its current wish list: peanut butter for kong toys, dog collars, cat and kitten food, cat beds, cat toys, dog toys, and scoopable cat litter.

Both humane societies are selling 2013 pet calendars as a way to raise money for their respective programs. Money helps pay for food when the pantry is bare. It also helps people during disasters, like the Angora Fire. The Truckee facility is also still raising money for the shelter that is under construction.

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Contact info:

• **South Lake Tahoe Humane Society**

Phone: (530) 542.2857

Address: 1221 Emerald Bay Road, South Lake Tahoe

Website

• **El Dorado County Animal Shelter, Meyers**

Phone: (530) 573.7925

Address: 1120 Shakori Drive, Meyers

Website

• **Humane Society of Truckee-Tahoe**

Phone: (530) 587.5948

Address: 10720 Riverview Drive, Truckee

Website

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Notes:

• Dogs With Issues will give one free dog training session for any puppy or dog rescued during this month or in January. Call (530) 577.0263 for an appointment.

• *Lake Tahoe News* is making its final holiday donation to the animal shelter in Meyers. New paid subscribers have helped *LTN* be able to give back to human food pantries, and now we are helping the animals of Tahoe. Here is a paid subscriber form if you would like to join the special NEWS team and be eligible for specials.

• Each Monday *Lake Tahoe News* publishes Tahoe Tails – an item provided by Karen Kuentz from the Meyers shelter about a dog or cat that needs adopting.

Tahoe Snowcial melds snowsports-social media

Tahoe Snowcial, slated for Feb. 27–March 2, will bring top minds from the worlds of digital storytelling, snowsports and social media to Heavenly Mountain Resort.

The fifth annual Tahoe Snowcial is a winter social media and technology festival that celebrates a common passion for snow and provides attendees with insights from some of the most innovative players in the market today.

Speakers include:

· Tariq M. Shaukat, executive vice president and chief marketing officer of Caesars Entertainment.

· David Armano, managing director at Edelman Digital Chicago.

· Patrick Harrington, technical team lead of Walmart Labs.

· Michael Jaquet, vice president and chief marketing officer, U.S. Ski and Snowboard Team.

· Stanley Hainsworth, chairman and chief creative officer, Tether.

· Barbara DeLollis, travel reporter for USA Today.

· Chris Steiner, co-founder of Aisle50.

· Ian Swinson, senior director of user experience at Salesforce.com.

· Chris Heuer, specialist leader of social business at Deloitte Digital.

Register online. Early-bird rates starting at $500 are available through Dec. 31.

Opinion: Free online news era fading away

By Howard Kurtz

It’s time to pay up, America.

The era of free news is rapidly coming to a close.

The *Washington Post*, one of the last holdouts among major newspapers, will probably begin charging for online access next year. And the *Philadelphia Inquirer* and *Philadelphia Daily News* announced this month that they will launch separate paywall sites early next year.

We're all spoiled by the illusion that we can get whatever we want on the interwebs without having to pay a dime. Fire up the Google, troll the Twitter, see who's got the most tantalizing links. We all do it, and we all take it for granted.

But you can't have a media ecosystem in which everyone is aggregating, summarizing and retweeting content from everyone else. At some point there have to be actual human beings making phone calls and attending events and pawing through public documents.

And these people – known as "reporters" – need to put food on the table. Newspapers and magazines are partially to blame for this state of affairs. For many years they gave away their wares to anyone with a modem, anxious to avoid being left out of the burgeoning world of online commerce. Readers thought nothing of subscribing to a paper that landed on their doorstep but balked at paying for news on their computer screens and mobile phones.

The result, as we all know, has been widespread carnage in American newsrooms. Some papers, such as the *Rocky Mountain News* and *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, have folded. Others, such as the *New Orleans Times-Picayune*, have cut back to three times a week. The Cleveland Plain Dealer just announced it is slashing a third of its newsroom. Even the *New York Times*, which has made fewer cuts than most papers, said last week that 30 jobs will be lost to buyouts.

There were several rounds of buyouts when I worked at the

Washington Post, where the newsroom has shrunk significantly and the new editor, Marty Baron, warns that more cuts are in store. In an overdue move, the paper now says it will likely move to a metered paywall, charging readers after they get a certain number of free articles each month. The *Times* was among the pioneers of this movement in March 2011 and now has nearly 600,000 digital subscribers. It also helps to have an affluent expense-account crowd, which is why the *Wall Street Journal's* pay site has always thrived.

The *Post* has a unique problem in that it is a national brand online, but a local newspaper in terms of circulation. So the out-of-towners who might want to read political analysis by Dan Balz and Chris Cillizza don't have the option of subscribing to the ink-on-paper version. Yet the lucrative print ads that reach consumers in D.C., Maryland and Virginia are worth far more than the modest rates that can be charged for digital ads. So the paper badly needs another source of revenue.

The *Daily Beast*, where I work, is also considering a metered paywall, now that the parent company is folding the print edition of *Newsweek*, which led to substantial layoffs.

Of course, readers have no august responsibility to pay for anything. And Big Media got too fat and happy in the days of easy money. The Google era is all about disaggregation – that is, you can search for only the information you want about Medicare or Meryl Streep or Miami without the packaging of a publication. You can get your fix from Facebook friends. With new apps you can be your own editor, selecting the stories that suit your needs.

So this is not a plea for charitable support. Increasingly, the name of the game online is providing something that is so unique or compelling that readers feel it's worth reaching for their credit card.

But it is a reminder that we are hollowing out the business of newsgathering. This is a particular problem at the local level, where no one else is going to investigate decaying schools or the mayor steering contracts to his cronies. Sadly, the shriveled staffs of many local papers are less able to do this kind of distinctive reporting, and will have a hard time persuading readers to pay for meager coverage with an overlay of local sports.

It's also true that there is less original reporting nationally on the environment, health care, criminal justice, finance and other vital areas. The *Washington Post*, where I was once New York bureau chief, has shut down its bureaus around the country.

The slow stampede toward paywalls will prompt a shakeout in which some publications survive by proving their worth and others head for the graveyard. Some early signs are discouraging: Rupert Murdoch's iPad magazine the *Daily*, which never had a clear identity, folded this month, and Arianna Huffington's hugely successful site couldn't get people to pay a modest fee for a monthly digital magazine.

Hey, if folks don't think a paper or magazine or online venture is worth the weekly equivalent of a frappuccino, that's their choice. But man does not live by buzz alone. In the end, we get the journalism we deserve.

Howard Kurtz is the host of CNN's "Reliable Sources" and is Newsweek's Washington bureau chief. He is also a contributor to the website Daily Download.