Letter: Asking S. Tahoe for help with snow removal

To the community,

This letter is addressed to whoever is responsible for snow removal along the bike path on Al Tahoe Boulevard. Could the residents of Pioneer Village get the snow cleared at one of the two marked crosswalks that lead from the bike path to our area?

The crosswalks are marked by signs and road paint. If you (the operator) could spend a couple of minutes to clear us some access, we would really appreciate it. Myself and a lot of my neighbors (yes we have neighbors) use the path during the winter to get out and walk with our kids, dogs and each other.

Thanks.

John Spinola, South Lake Tahoe

Man killed by El Dorado County sheriff's deputy identified

By Bill Lindelof, Sacramento Bee

An El Dorado County man was killed in gunfire last night in an officer-involved shooting.

The dead man was identified as Christopher Michael Sheldon,

38, of Pollock Pines.

The incident began when the El Dorado County Sheriff’s Office dispatch center received a call about 9:30pm Wednesday from a resident in the 2900 block of Kimberly Lane in Pollock Pines. The caller said that a man at the residence was threatening to shoot himself.

Deputies immediately began to drive to the address, but before they could get there the man left the home, according to a sheriff’s department press release.

After a search of the area, deputies found the man. He had a firearm and was standing in the 6000 block middle of Pony Express Trail, a main road through Pollock Pines.

During contact with the man, gunfire began. The sheriff’s department did not release information on whether the man fired his weapon.

The armed man was shot by at least one of the deputies. He was pronounced dead at the scene.

“The incident is currently being investigated by sheriff’s coroner investigators and a team of investigators working under the El Dorado County Officer Involved Critical Incident Protocol,” stated the press release.

Ski report: Bring the heated

gloves



A good day for freshies.

Dress warm. The day is starting off with single digits.

Here is the Dec. 13 ski report.

— *Curtis Fong*

Editorial: California lawmakers pushing the limit on perks

Publisher's note: *This editorial is from the Dec. 8, 2012, Sacramento Bee.*

No sooner did a poll come out showing that legislators are less unpopular than they have been since 2008, word comes that they still don't quite grasp that they should pay for their own car repairs.

Associated Press reporter Don Thompson reported that as the state was ending the perk of providing legislators with cars in 2011, a dozen lawmakers imposed on taxpayers to pay for repairs or upgrades to those vehicles, and later bought them for their personal use.

We all paid to fix dents, replace wheel covers, put on new tires, and make repairs costing hundreds or thousands of dollars.

One, former Sen. Bob Dutton, a Southern California Republican, had $6,000 worth of repairs done and evidently used $12,681 in campaign funds to buy his 2005 Chevy Tahoe, prompting the Fair Political Practices Commission to open an inquiry.

In a sense, the legislators were doing what any smart used car buyer would do – get the vehicle inspected and repaired before buying it. But legislators' relationship with state vehicles long has been troubled.

As the *Bee's* Dan Smith reported last year, legislators regularly crash their cars and send the bills to the state, rather than paying for the repairs themselves as good and honest people would do.

In 2011, the California Citizens Compensation Commission took away legislators' cars and their state-issued gasoline credit cards. The decision was short-sighted and vindictive, typical of actions taken by commissioners who were appointed by then-Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger.

California is a large state and legislators are expected to live in their districts. Lawmakers who represent Redding or Bakersfield must drive vast distances, and have every right to bill the state for all legitimate mileage. Those bills regularly exceed $1,000 a month.

Still, legislators have only themselves– or their dim colleagues – to blame for losing state-leased cars. There have been too many instances in which lawmakers misused state vehicles and taxpayer money.

In its latest survey, the Public Policy Institute of California found 34 percent of this state's adults had favorable views of the Legislature, the highest since January

2008. With a few more revelations about misuse of tax money, lawmakers’ approval rating will slide back into the 20s.

State Fair offering college scholarships

Friends of the California State Fair is offering scholarships for the 2013-14 academic year to California college students and graduating high school students. Applications, which are online, are due March 8.

This year, 27 scholarships will be awarded in the following areas: agriculture, animal science, arts, business, culinary, education, enology, event planning, fair industry, international studies, teaching credential program, viticulture, and past exhibitors to the California State Fair.

Applicants will be evaluated on the basis of personal commitment, goals established for their chosen field, leadership potential and civic accomplishments. All applicants are also eligible for the Ironstone Concours d’ Elegance $5,000 outstanding candidate scholarship.

El Dorado County offering $10 flu shots

The Public Health Division of the El Dorado County Health and Human Services Agency has wrapped up its community flu vaccination clinics for the season, and is now offering the flu vaccine by appointment.

The seasonal influenza vaccine is available for $10 per vaccination. No one will be turned away due to inability to pay.

To schedule a vaccination appointment, call (530) 621.6100 in Placerville or (530) 573.3155 in South Lake Tahoe.

People at high risk for serious complications from the flu, and their close contacts, are especially encouraged to be vaccinated. These high-risk individuals include children younger than age 5, adults age 65 and older, pregnant women, people with chronic health conditions (asthma and other lung disease, diabetes, neurological conditions, and heart disease), people who are morbidly obese, healthcare personnel, and those living with or caring for persons at high risk of severe influenza-related complications. Individuals must be at least 6 months of age to receive the influenza vaccine.

Change in seasons does not

bring end to drought

By John Eligon, New York Times

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — Even as the summer swelter has given way to frost, nearly two-thirds of the country remains in a drought, with forest fires still burning, winter crops choking in parched soil and barges nearly scraping the mucky bottoms of sunken rivers.

More than 62 percent of the continental United States is experiencing moderate to exceptional drought, according to the weekly Drought Monitor report released on Thursday, compared with just over 29 percent at this time last year.

Save for patches of California, Montana and Wyoming, the drought is expected to persist in most of the dry regions west of the Mississippi River over the next three months, according to the Seasonal Drought Outlook released Thursday by the National Weather Service.

“It’s not looking very promising right now,” said David Miskus, a meteorologist with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration’s climate prediction center.

This is typically the driest time of the year, Mr. Miskus said, so precipitation will have to be far above normal levels to put a dent in regions that have been rain starved since the spring.

With the Great Plains — from southern South Dakota to the Texas Panhandle — enduring the most desiccated conditions, the agricultural sector is bracing for the hardest blow. Most of the Plains and the Mississippi River Valley had less than a quarter-inch of rain over the past week, according to the Drought Monitor.

The drought expanded across parts of Southeast Texas through

central Louisiana in areas that had precipitation shortfalls of 8 to 14 inches over the past three months, the report said.

Just over a quarter of the nation’s wheat crop, planted mostly in September and October, was in poor or very poor condition, according to a report released last week by the United States Department of Agriculture. Those are the worst conditions since the department began keeping records in 1986, said Brad Rippey, a meteorologist with the department.

In Nebraska, where most of the state has been in an exceptional drought, farmers have reported planting their wheat in dry soil with the hope that rain or snow will eventually come and germinate the seeds and allow them to sprout, said Caroline Brauer, a spokeswoman for the Nebraska Wheat Board.

But for now, in some dehydrated fields, thin, green whiskers resembling grassy patches poke from the dusty ground, rather than the thick, wavy plants that typically sprout from a healthy wheat field.

The wheat harvest is not until next summer, so there is still time for it to bounce back. But a dry winter would make adequate precipitation in March and April that much more essential for the crop. And snow is also important to help insulate the wheat from extreme cold and wind during the winter.

Corn and soybean farmers are eager for precipitation to prepare the soil for their plantings in April.

“We know we got time ahead of us,” said Dennis McNinch, a corn and wheat farmer in west-central Kansas. But, he added: “Every day is a day closer to needing more moisture. That time will come that we’re going to have to get the tractors rolling and putting seed in the ground. We’ll just keep praying that next storm’s on its way.”

Perhaps the most unusual sign of the nagging drought is the 3,700-acre wildfire raging in the Rocky Mountains in northern Colorado.

The fire in Estes Park, which started in October from an illegal campfire, is burning at altitudes of 8,000 to 10,000 feet, on peaks that should be covered in snow right now.

The fire more than doubled in size on Saturday morning after 70 mile-per-hour winds swept through the area, forcing the evacuation of about 600 residences nearby, said Don Ferguson, a spokesman for the National Park Service.

The lack of moisture is also taxing water systems throughout the country, most notably the Mississippi River.

“If we continue to get or stay below normal for rainfall, and if the level continues to drop, we could even get close to or surpass the record low level on the river,” said Jim Kramper, a warning coordination meteorologist for the National Weather Service.

This could spell trouble for barges that transport billions of dollars in agricultural products, chemicals, coal and petroleum products. The industry estimates that water levels could bring navigation closings between St. Louis and Cairo, Ill., before the end of December.

Debra Colbert, a spokeswoman for the Waterways Council, a group that lobbies on behalf of inland carriers, operators and ports, said, “We are headed for our own fiscal waterfall here.”

Steven Yaccino contributed reporting from Chicago and John Schwartz from New York.

South Tahoe therapist to sign just released book

South Lake Tahoe therapist Ray Goodenough on Dec. 13 at 4pm will sign the book he co-authored with his daughter.

Goodenough and Kathy Rem just published “Parallel Journeys”. After 33 years of separation, the two were reunited. In this book they compare stories and parallel journey.

The signing is at the Center for Higher Learning at 2048 Dunlap Drive in South Lake Tahoe.

TRPA board approves Regional Plan update

By Kathryn Reed

STATELINE – Historic. That is what some called the near unanimous vote Wednesday by the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency Governing Board to approve the Regional Plan.

For a document that was supposed to be approved in 2007, it was long in coming. It got derailed, turned upside down and faced the threat of Nevada not being at the table.

In the end, the voluminous document earned the support of all

but two California appointees.

Now all eyes are on the calendar 60 days from now. For one, that is when the Regional Plan would become the law of the land. Second, that is the deadline individuals and groups have to file a lawsuit to prevent the Regional Plan from taking effect.



The TRPA Regional Plan is the planning bible for the Lake Tahoe Basin. Photo/LTN file

While the board approved all the items voted on, not everyone in the room agreed with the decision. Of the 51 people who spoke at the daylong meeting at Harveys casino on Dec. 12, 34 were for the plan, 14 against and three were non-committal.

The first 22 people who spoke were either from the government, fire service, utility district, science community, education or health care. All were in favor.

Then it was open to the public at large.

“Today is your legacy. It is your legacy to leave,” Joanne Marchetta, executive director of TRPA, told the board before the vote.

Ultimately seven items were voted on. The Advisory Planning Commission voted on each first. For the item to be approved by the Governing Board each required four votes from California

reps, and four from Nevada members.

The items were:

1. Issuance of 2011 Threshold Evaluation

2. Certification of Regional Plan Update Final Environmental Impact Statement

3. Amendment of Environmental Threshold Carrying Capacities

4. Adoption of Regional Plan Update and Code of Ordinances

5. Certification of the Mobility 2035: Regional Transportation Plan and Sustainable Communities Strategy Final Environmental Impact Statement

6. Adoption of Mobility 2035: Regional Transportation Plan and Sustainable Communities Strategy

7. Submit 208 Plan to California and Nevada Agencies for Approval and Certification.

The APC board voted unanimously to approve all the items.

Governing board member Mara Bresnick, who is the California Assembly Speaker appointee, voted no on everything.

Governing board member Byron Sher, California Senate Rules Committee appointee, voted for Nos. 1 and 7, and then abstained on the rest.

During deliberations Sher said, “If I were going to remain on the board, I would probably vote against the Regional Plan update.”

While Sher has been a vocal opponent to the Regional Plan, he was given a standing ovation by the board and those in the room for his service. This was his last meeting as he plans to resign Dec. 13 from the Governing Board.

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Note: Here are a TRPA RPU fact sheets that give an overview of the new Regional Plan.

Sher stepping down from TRPA board

STATELINE – Byron Sher made it publicly known Wednesday that he will be resigning from the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency Board of Directors effective Dec. 13.

He made the declaration during deliberations of the Regional Plan update.



Byron Sher

“If I were going to remain on the board, I would probably vote against the Regional Plan update,” Sher said. “I hope what you adopt today will move us forward and it will meet the

thresholds.”

Sher said he expects to abstain on most of the votes.

As of 3:35pm, the board was still deliberating. The meeting began at 9:30am at Harveys casino.

Sher is the California Senate Rules Committee Appointee.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report