Ex-South Lake Tahoe employee loses lawsuit

The South Lake Tahoe City Council on Aug. 5 agreed to a settlement with a former employee who had sued the city.

Stan Sherer was the Community Services director from January 2011 to July 2012. He was hired by then City Manager Tony O'Rourke and fired by City Manager Nancy Kerry.



Stan Sherer

In his lawsuit filed in February 2013 he alleged wrongful termination and age discrimination.

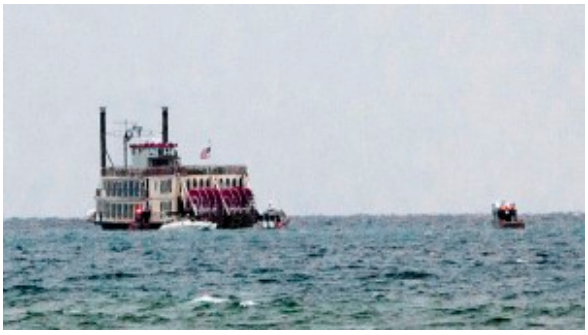
The settlement finds that city did not wrongfully terminate Sherer. The city will pay nothing to Sherer, including attorney's fees.

The agreement says, "(the city) expressly waive(s) any claim for recovery of said cost, expenses and attorneys' fees for Sherer in exchange for Sherer's agreement to dismiss the complaint with prejudice."

Sherer was not available for comment.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Tahoe Queen returns to Ski Run Marina



The Tahoe Queen was dislodged from a sandbar Aug. 5. Photo/DanThriftPhotography.com

Updated Aug. 5 10:58pm

By Kathryn Reed

The Tahoe Queen returned to Ski Run Marina more than 24 hours after hitting a sandbar on Monday.

The paddle-wheeler ran aground Aug. 4 not long after it left Ski Run Marina for an afternoon scenic tour to Emerald Bay. Instead of a leisurely sightseeing cruise, the 250-plus passengers were stuck off Regan Beach in South Lake Tahoe for several hours before rescue boats were called to ferry them back to the marina.

The U.S. Coast Guard, which has a station in Tahoe City, is in charge of the incident. The local office referred questions to an official in San Francisco who did not return a phone call.

Dave Freirich, spokesman for Aramark – the company that owns the Queen – told *Lake Tahoe News,* "We are still working with the Coast Guard to free the Queen from the sandbar. When it is safe to transport her to the marina, we will determine if any damage needs to be repaired." This was two hours before she was back in her home port.

It is not known if the boat sustained any damage.

People who have reservations on the Queen are being rebooked on the M.S. Dixie II, which runs out of Zephyr Cove.



Passengers of the Tahoe Queen were given life jackets to wear on rescue boats; including a child having to wear an adult jacket. Photo/Pedro Martinez

Freirich said company officials don't recall any other time when an incident like this occurred at Lake Tahoe.
He said the initial delay in calling for help was to give the boat a chance to see if "maneuvers" and other vessels could help dislodge it from the sandbar.

"It was very unorganized. No one took control of anything and no one provided any type of emergency plan and there was no one to maintain order. The crew kept working serving drinks and charging credit cards," Pedro Martinez of Los Angeles told *Lake Tahoe News*. "The elderly folks were really scared and

some started to almost panic. It was a little intense since it appeared that everything was escalating into a more serious situation than what it first appeared. I began to get concerned thinking that people were going to panic and rush and stampede the exits. I was scared for my children and almost wanted to take charge and direct the crowd since no one was taking charge."

Aramark officials did not have information on what the official protocols are for such an emergency.

Nevada proposes 'Right to Try' drug law

By Sean Whaley, Las Vegas Review-Journal

CARSON CITY – A state lawmaker says Nevadans facing terminal illness should have every opportunity to try experimental treatments and drugs in an effort to prolong their lives for themselves and their families.

To that end, Assemblyman James Ohrenschall, D-Las Vegas, has asked for a bill to establish a "Right to Try" law in Nevada, making it easier for those threatened with a life-ending illness to seek potential remedies that have not received final approval from the Federal Drug Administration.

If successful, Nevada would join several other states adopting such legislation, including Colorado in May and Missouri last month. A right to try law is on the November ballot in Arizona.

Ohrenschall said he was asked to request the bill by a

constituent. He is basing his measure on model legislation crafted by the Arizona-based Goldwater Institute, a template that has been used by other states as well.

The right to try law would enable terminally ill patients under the care of their doctors and cooperating drug companies to receive potentially life-saving medications that have been deemed safe by the FDA but are still years away from being approved for market.

Read the whole story

Deerfield Lodge fire cause may never be known

What caused the fire that resulted in millions of dollars of damage to the Deerfield Lodge in South Lake Tahoe last month may always be a mystery.

“I’m not sure if we will ever know what it was,” Fire Chief Jeff Meston told *Lake Tahoe News*. “We know it started by the stairwell in the back of the building.”

He said the cause of about 25 percent of fires is never determined.

The fast moving fire forced three dozen guests to be evacuated. Some lost everything they were traveling with. The community came to their rescue by providing lodging, food vouchers, clothing and things to do to take their mind off the tragedy.

The owners of the Ski Run Boulevard property, who live out of state, plan to rebuild. Right now they are working through

insurance issues.

While fire investigators found the sprinklers to be turned off, there had been an inspection earlier this year that found them to be in working order.

Who turned them off and when remain unknown. While it is easy to turn them off, it could not be done so accidentally.

Meston said it is hard to know if the sprinklers had been working, if it would have made much of a difference because the fire started outside.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Workshops to focus on creating business plan

Lake Tahoe South Shore Chamber of Commerce in partnership with South Lake Tahoe is offering a Create Your Business Plan workshop series.

It will be on three consecutive Wednesdays starting Aug. 20. The goals is that by the end of the three 90-minute sessions participants will have a completed draft of a business plan.

Topics covered during the sessions will include business vision and mission, overall business objectives, competitor analysis, unique selling proposition, business strategies, budget, income projections, start-up capital and an action plan that describes what specific tasks entrepreneurs must complete now and going forward as they grow their businesses.

This workshop is for those thinking about starting a new

business or current business owners who need to update or fine-tune their existing plans.

The sessions are from from 9:30-11am at the chamber, 169 Highway 50, Stateline. The series is free for participants registered in the Tahoe Tactical Team business coaching program.

For more information or to register, call 775.588.1728.

Bears homing in on fruit trees

By Chris Healy

Fruit trees throughout western Nevada blossom in the spring and will produce ripened fruit in mid-summer. As the fruit develops, the black bears in western Nevada are sure to take notice.

Armed with a sense of smell that is 2,100 times better than a human's, black bears can tell when it is time to venture down the hill into places like west Reno, Washoe and Pleasant Valleys, Carson City and the western edges of the Carson Valley (Minden, Gardnerville and Genoa).

"Fruit trees are a major attraction for Nevada's black bears," says Nevada Department of Wildlife biologist Carl Lackey. "During this time of year and especially during this drought, fruit is on their radar."

Since it is a bear's overwhelming instinct to eat and the human's responsibility to not attract the bears, people who own fruit trees need to harvest their fruit as quickly as

possible and not allow it to become an attraction for the bears.

“We have had many cases over the years where people allow their fruit to ripen and fall to the ground and then bears become a nuisance in their yard and the surrounding neighborhoods,” adds Lackey. “If you own fruit trees and you do not want bears to eat your fruit, then you need to act quickly in harvesting the fruit from the trees. People who leave the fruit on the trees stand a good chance of the bears damaging the trees while they climb them in search of a meal.”

The pace of bear activity and the sightings of those bears along the edges of western Nevada’s cities are only going to increase as summer rolls toward fall.

We are not trying to create panic by advising people of these potential bear encounters. We are trying to create tolerance amongst people living in these urban interface areas. They need to be bear aware and do what they can to keep bears alive and wild. Part of that responsibility means managing fruit crops and the weekly trash better.

The bears are nocturnal and a bunch of trash cans left out overnight is a strong attractant and way too easy a meal for the bears. Add the attraction of ripened fruit and you can almost guarantee a visit from a bear in your neighborhood.

Since July 1, NDOW has handled 19 bears in western Nevada. Fourteen of those bears have been safely released back in to the wild. Three of the bears were hit and killed by cars, one was euthanized for public safety reasons and one was euthanized for depredating upon livestock.

Chris Healy works for the Nevada Department of Wildlife.

Concours d’Elegance returns to West Shore

In 1972 a group of Tahoe Yacht Club members and friends got together to share their passion for wooden boats. From this modest beginning, the Lake Tahoe Concours d’ Elegance has grown to play a significant role in the wooden boat community, as well as the Lake Tahoe maritime community.

Since its induction in 1994 the Tahoe Yacht Club Foundation has hosted the Lake Tahoe Concours d’Elegance.

This year the Aug. 8-10 show returns home to West Shore and the birth place of wooden boats to Lake Tahoe, Obexer’s Boat Company.

For more information, go online.

Congress on recess without addressing fire funding

By Cliff Weathers, AlterNet

Congress is heading home for summer vacation, failing to act on emergency funding to combat the wildfires that are raging in the West.

President Obama had requested $615 million in emergency funding to help the U.S. Forest Service and Interior

Department pay for firefighting efforts, and the Democratic-controlled Senate proposed a $2.7 billion spending bill to deal with the wildfires and the influx of unaccompanied minors along the Southwest border. But Senate Republicans used a procedural objection to block its consideration.The House did not introduce a bill to combat wildfires.

Although Congress returns next month, the fire season in some states will have passed its peak.

Ironically, without emergency funding from Congress, the Forest Service and Interior Department will need to transfer money from elsewhere in their budgets, including funds earmarked to remove flammable vegetation from forests, projects that help prevent such fires from raging in the first place.

The two federal agencies have budgeted over $1 billion for firefighting this year – five times more than 20 years ago – but that may not be enough.

Wildfires are currently raging through the Pacific Northwest and California, in regions that have been affected by unseasonably warm temperatures and drought. The long-range forecast in the region calls for above-average temperatures through October, which can translate into fuels that are much drier than usual.

Fires continue to rage in Oregon, and communities in the southwestern part of the state are being asked to evacuate their homes, as fire spreads along the border with California. Some 5,300 acres in the Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument have been scorched and the town of Ashland, just to its east, is threatened by the fire. Meanwhile, lightning has sparked two new large wildfires in the state.

About 780 square miles of land is currently burning in Oregon, and a continued heat wave, along with forecasted lightning storms, are expected to bring more fires to the region.

Fires in central Washington, which have raged since early July, are threatening the state's famous orchards at the time apple harvest begins.

Read the whole story

Barton to receive full Medicare reimbursement

Barton Health will be getting its full Medicare reimbursement from the Hospital-Acquired Condition Reduction program.

There had been some doubt earlier this summer if that was going to happen

Barton Memorial Hospital will actually receive an additional 0.5 percent in Medicare reimbursement for its high performance scores in patient care. The higher reimbursement will be allocated from October 2014 through September 2015.

In a separate assessment, Barton Memorial Hospital has also received notification that it will not receive a penalty from the CMS's Hospital–Acquired Condition Reduction Program, as erroneously speculated by Kaiser Health News.

"We are pleased, but not surprised that Barton is a high-performer," Clint Purvance, Barton's chief medical officer, said in a statemement. "Our hospital's staff and physicians consider patient safety, quality and patient satisfaction their highest priorities. The time and energy they have invested has greatly improved the outcomes on these measures for the past several years and continues to do so."

Agenda set for annual environmental summit

Gov. Jerry Brown will give the keynote address at the 18th annual Lake Tahoe Environmental Summit on Aug. 19.

This year's summit, hosted by Sen. Dianne Feinstein, D-Calif., will take place at the Tallac Historic Site at Valhalla starting at 10am.

The theme of the summit is Drought, Wildfire and Invasive Species: Confronting the Effects of Climate Change on Lake Tahoe. The event is open to the public and will feature remarks from:

· Nevada Gov. Brian Sandoval

· Nevada Sen. Harry Reid

· Nevada Sen. Dean Heller

· Nevada Rep. Mark Amodei.

Those speakers will be followed by a panel of local stakeholders:

· North Lake Tahoe Fire District Chief Mike Brown will speak on the fuels work being done in the basin to address wildfire risk.

· Tahoe Environmental Research Center Director Geoff Schladow will speak on work being done to prevent the spread of invasive species in the lake.

· Tahoe Regional Planning Agency Executive Director Joanne Marchetta will speak on TRPA's Regional Plan update and

restoration work.