Labor Department says no to Nevada consolidation plan

By Sean Whaley, Nevada News Bureau

CARSON CITY – The U.S. Department of Labor has rejected Nevada's request for a waiver to consolidate its three workforce investment boards into one, due largely to opposition to the plan by the Southern Nevada panel.

Frank Woodbeck, director of the state Department of Employment, Training and Rehabilitation had proposed the plan to consolidate the three separate boards that oversee workforce development, which was expected to reduce administrative expenses by $5 million.

"The waiver request was submitted in July, and we received a response in August to our request and that request was denied," he told the governor's Workforce Investment Board at its meeting last week. "The denial was based on the fact that the members of the southern board were in opposition to the waiver and the consolidation."

The Northern Nevada and state boards supported the consolidation effort.

But Woodbeck noted that the consolidation effort has produced some positive results, including a significant reduction in administrative expenses incurred by the southern Nevada board, called Workforce Connections, under the leadership of Executive Director Ardell Galbreth.

Galbreth, who took over initially as interim director in April, reduced several top six-figure salaries and the size of the agency's staff by more than half.

Woodbeck said the effort at consolidation has improved

communications between his agency and the two local boards.

“So the work at trying to do board consolidation, etc., has not gone for naught,” he said. “It has been successful to a great degree in that we have a much greater line of communication with the directors of the two local boards, and I think we’ll make progress as time goes on.”

Woodbeck, with Gov. Brian Sandoval’s support, had sought the consolidation in part because of excessive administrative costs identified in audits of Workforce Connections.

The most recent audit, performed by the state Division of Internal Audits and released in May, found that Workforce Connections spent nearly twice as much on administration and monitoring of its programs than its northern counterpart.

More than $27 million in federal job training funds were awarded to the two local workforce development boards by the Board of Examiners in August, before the decision on the waiver had been made by the U.S. Department of Labor. The Southern Nevada board received more than $19 million in funding for the coming two years.

Camp Rich parking issues stall Forest Service’s plans

By Kathryn Reed

Parking along the road that leads to the Beacon restaurant has brought the U.S. Forest Service’s renovation plans for the area to a halt.

The federal agency has to go back to the drawing board on this particular aspect of the larger plan because people who live along Jameson Beach appealed the USFS decision from June 14. That decision was withdrawn this month, with letters going out last week to everyone on the project list.

“Although the project is billed as a BMP retrofit, it actually was the beginning of a wide-scale expansion of the Camp Richardson resort intended to maximize parking revenues at the cost of safety, the visitors’ enjoyment, the residents’ rights and most significantly the environment,” attorney Jacqueline Mittelstadt told *Lake Tahoe News*. “We see the project as ‘Disneyland on the South Shore’.”



Parking in the Camp Richardson area will be further studied by the U.S. Forest Service. Photo/LTN file

A dispute that still has not been resolved is who owns Jameson Road.

“Our project moves forward with the assumption it is a Forest Service road,” USFS spokeswoman Cheva Heck told *Lake Tahoe News*. For decades the feds have maintained and assumed liability for the road that is the access point for Camp Richardson Resort.

But that road also winds behind the marina to private residences. That is why they care what goes on with this road.

The Forest Service late this fall will release another environmental assessment for public comment, with the hope a decision can be made this winter.

“What we are going to do is more fully develop an alternative that addresses their concerns,” Heck said.

Inadequate traffic studies and lack of free parking are concerns of the opponents.

“Though the Highway 89 corridor involves some of the highest accident rates on the South Shore, the non-local traffic engineer for this project stated there was ‘no evidence’ of any traffic accidents, so no changes to the Camp Rich entry area were required,” Mittelstadt said.

More information about the project may be found online.

Homemade food bill on Brown’s desk

By Karen E. Klein, Bloomberg

Kristen Farrar would like to sell the cakes, scones and muffins she bakes, using figs, walnuts and citrus from farms near her home in Fresno. But the homeschooling mom of two can’t afford to rent commercial kitchen space or pay the $50,000 she estimates it would take to turn a shed on her property into a certified commercial kitchen, in which food for sale must be prepared under state law.

Farrar is hoping she won’t have to comply with the old rules

because of new legislation – the California Homemade Food Act – that was approved last month and is awaiting Gov. Jerry Brown's signature. It would allow home-based entrepreneurs to sell $35,000 to $50,000 annually in "non-potentially hazardous" foods such as breads, jams and candy.

If Brown signs the bill into law, California will become one of 32 states with cottage food laws, sometimes called "baker's bills" because they often apply to home-baked goods. The financial crisis and recession have sparked the passage of 14 of these laws since 2008, many championed by would-be entrepreneurs motivated by pay cuts and layoffs.

They've also stirred concern, both from established business owners wary of competition and public health advocates concerned about food-borne illness.

Being able to sell the goodies she makes in her home kitchen would allow Farrar to test her products at farmers' markets and get onto shelves at local grocers and coffee shops. If her items prove popular, she says, she plans to upgrade to a commercial facility and expand production.

"Once you get your foot in the door and make a name for yourself, then that's when you can go out and get a shop – maybe three or four years down the road – and make a decent living," she says.

Read the whole story

Darvas expected to leave

hospital today

Peter Darvas is expected to be released from Barton Memorial Hospital today.

The South Lake Tahoe artist has no home to return to. His house on April Drive and Pioneer Trail is a total loss after flames ripped through it Tuesday evening.



Firefighters from multiple agencies attack the flames Sept. 18 that destroyed two houses in South Lake Tahoe. Photo/Kathryn Reed

The cause of the Sept . 18 fire remains under investigation and may not be known for another day or two, according to South Lake Tahoe Fire Chief Brian Uhler. Lake Valley Fire Protection District is handling the investigation per an agreement between the departments.

Gareth Harris with Lake Valley did not respond to an email inquiring about the cause and dollar amount of damage.

The fire completely destroyed Darvis' house as well as house next door on April Drive.

"I visited him (Wednesday) in Barton's ICU, and though in pain from burns to his face and hands, he will recover …," Robert Schimmel said in an email of his friend Darvas. "… his

voice/throat is healing as are his eyes and communication is somewhat painful.”

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

CTC in need of pine needles

The California Tahoe Conservancy needs clean pine needles to help complete a restoration project along the Bijou Meadow.

To contribute to the restoration efforts, the Conservancy will accept bags of clean pine needles for a four-day period at the former drive-in movie theater site, located at 1340 Glenwood Way in South Lake Tahoe.

Drop-offs are welcome Sept. 24-27 between 8am–5:30pm.

The site will be staffed to assist people with unloading. Pine needles must be free of pine cones, trash, lawn clippings, and pet waste in order to facilitate restoration activities.

WHS 8th-grade hoop team

rallies behind school’s dean

The eighth-grade girls basketball team at Whittell High School has been doing a lot more than shooting baskets.

They kicked off their season this month by rounding up some money to get pink backpacks to support Kathy Bluethman (aka Ms. B), the school’s dean and athletic director who is battling breast cancer.

Drue Chapman came up with the idea and everyone quickly jumped on board.



Drue Chapman, Michelle Barnes, Ali Copsy, Ms. B, Hannah Brunsman, Tommy Espisito (coach), Sammy Forvilly, Gigi Stetler, Kaitlyn Kjer. (Not pictured: Chelsea Brocket and Heather Wright) Photo/Provided

“These eighth-grade girls are very special and when they say hello to me during the day, my heart stays so strong,” Bluethman said. “These kids are my angels staying with me through all my chemo.

“People ask why do I go to work so much when I’m sick and I

say that being with these kids I don’t think about my illness. There are many angels at GWHS. I let the girls know that I’m a strong Amazon woman with a spear to kill the cancer.”

Bluethman has had some success with chemo, but will have to head back to surgery in October.

The girls say their winning season has everything to do with wanting to play strong for Ms. B.

Opinion: Stracener’s lies should keep him off the bench

To the community,

When a lawyer states, “I have appeared before the California and U.S. Supreme Courts,” people reasonably interpret this statement as meaning that the attorney has argued cases in person before the justices of the Supreme Courts. Most people do not think that submitting a document for filing “technically” constitutes an appearance before the court.

Throughout his campaign Judge [Warren] Stracener has misled the public in boasting he has appeared before the California and U.S. Supreme Courts. He continues to assert this achievement in his campaign literature despite being publicly criticized for his “calculated misrepresentation.”

According to all news articles I have read, Judge Stracener has never personally argued a case before the CA or US Supreme Courts but has “filed” legal documents.

Had Judge Stracener argued cases in person before these justices, it would be quite an achievement and honor. His “technical” appearances by merely filing legal documents is not all that remarkable, especially when one considers that thousands of inmates and lawyers have also “technically” appeared before the California and U.S. Supreme Courts as they too have filed writs or legal documents that were denied by the justices without a hearing.

When witnesses are sworn to testify, they take an oath to “tell the truth and nothing but the truth.” It would seem to me that a judge should be held to the same if not a higher standard in stating the whole truth.

I have lived in El Dorado County for 45 years and have attended sessions of our local court hundreds of times while previously serving our community as a police officer and then as a deputy probation officer. I have always been highly impressed with our local judiciary until recently. Judge Stracener’s ongoing intentional misrepresentation sets a very poor example to the juveniles he presides over and the public he purports to serve.

Joe Hoffman has been an attorney in our community for the last 18 years, and has also served in the capacity as judge pro tem (a temporary judge). He is the only non-incumbent local judicial candidate that I can ever recall being endorsed by local judges. In addition, Joe Hoffman alone is endorsed by local prosecutors, deputy Sheriffs’ and court clerks. Many members of the local bar association also support his candidacy.

Please join us in casting a vote for Joe Hoffman.

Sincerely,

Laurie Edwards, Cameron Park

Access to trails, parking lots dominate Fallen Leaf talks

By Kathryn Reed

While no decisions have been made as to what the trail system at Fallen Leaf Lake will look like in the future, four additional alternatives have been added to the mix to reflect what the public desires.

Nearly 40 people attended a workshop Wednesday night at the U.S. Forest Service office in South Lake Tahoe to learn about the changes that have been made since the discussions started earlier this year as well as to offer more input. The original preferred alternative – No. 2 – remains on the table. Alternatives 3-6 incorporate the more than 150 responses the feds received. Alternative 1 would be to keep the status quo.



Jacob Quinn of the U.S. Forest Service talks about alternatives to the Fallen Leaf Lake plan. Photo/Kathryn Reed

When the final document comes out in the first quarter of 2013 it's possible a combo of the alternatives could be selected instead of one as it is written in draft form.

The goal is to address this section of the South Shore that is on the north side of Camp Richardson and captures the entire Fallen Leaf Lake area trail system. Trails, parking and public access are all part of what is being studied.

One person at the Sept. 19 meeting asked if all the improvements would mean more people re-creating in this area.

Jacob Quinn, who led the bulk of the meeting for the Forest Service, said with the increase in use in this area in the last 10 years it has meant overuse of some trails and that people tend to create their own trails when the ones they've been on become overcrowded. The idea is even if more people come, the trail system will be better to disperse the various users.

The goal is to decommission most of the user-created trails, while improving others. At the same, trails in the backcountry will remain designed for less use, while trails closer to population bases will be able to handle more people.

Parking is an issue, as was expressed regarding the Glen-Alpine area at the far end of Fallen Leaf Lake. But Quinn pointed out it's a fine balance between providing enough parking spaces and not wanting to draw the masses to an area than can't sustain that many people if they were to all arrive.

All of the new alternatives have the bridge at the dam at Fallen Leaf Lake being 4- to 6-feet wide. Originally the Forest Service wanted to widen it up to 14 feet.

Another thing the new alternative has in common is retaining the trail along the west side of Taylor Creek that runs north and south. The Clark and Church trails would also stay.

The polo field parking lot near the entrance to Valhalla has been scrapped and instead will be incorporated into the Tallac Site plans. Improvements to the Pope Baldwin Bike Path, better known as the Camp Richardson paved trail, are out of this study and instead will be part of the Camp Rich plans.

Accessing public lands during the winter and at other times was discussed at the Sept. 19 meeting. Liana Zambresky asked why parking lots need gates.

Garrett Villanueva, trails guru with the Forest Service, said part of the reason is because concessionaires run some Forest Service land and when they are not on site there is no one to monitor activity going on. He said his agency doesn't have the staff to manage sites in the off-season.

However, he said solutions are being worked on to provide more access. But snow removal and year-round access are not being considered.

Bill Connolly brought up the issue of the gate at the entrance to Valhalla/Tahoe Tallac Site being closed so often which creates an access issue for the handicapped because this is one of the easiest places for the disabled to access Lake Tahoe.

Brenda Knox with the Tallac Association told the group it's a tricky balance between accommodating the public and needing the spaces for events – whether it's a show or a wedding. But she added that the gate issue is something her colleagues are working on.

More information about the project is online. The Forest Service will accept comments through Oct. 12.

Donner Lake trees to remain for now

By Ed Fletcher, Sacramento Bee

The neighborhood association behind a proposal to remove more than 20 trees near Donner Lake pulled the plan before it faced a vote Tuesday.

No date for a Truckee Planning Commission review of the plan has been rescheduled, according to Truckee officials. Some residents of the neighborhood and some environmental groups had issues with the proposal.

The plan from the Tahoe Donner subdivision called for removing 23 Jeffrey pine trees near the lake shore to make way for marina improvement and a walking path compliant with the American with Disabilities Act.

Tahoe boat inspections switching to off-season locations, times

Thursday will be the last day of operations for the Northstar and Homewood boat inspection stations. Boat inspections and decontaminations will still be available at the Alpine, Spooner and Meyers stations until Sept. 30.

On Oct, 1, Tahoe boat inspections will move to select launch ramps and winter hours will begin. Tahoe RCD inspectors will be stationed at Cave Rock and Lake Forest boat launches from 6am to 4pm seven days a week, weather permitting. Boats with attached Lake Tahoe wire inspection seals and valid Tahoe inspection stickers will be permitted to launch during these times, but any new inspections are required to take place during daylight hours.

Hot water decontaminations will be available through the month of October from 8am to 3pm for watercraft that are not clean, drained and dry. Additional fees may apply for the decontamination process.

Boats with intact inspection seals will still be permitted to launch at Sand Harbor, Obexer’s and Tahoe Keys Marina, but no inspections or decontaminations will take place at these locations.

Inspection and boat ramp hours are weather permitting, and may be delayed or closed during winter storm conditions.