Nev. says “no” to betting on presidential elections

By Sandra Chereb, AP

Proposals to allow betting on federal elections and monitoring taverns and slot parlors for compliance of “incidental” gambling activities failed to garner support of a legislative panel Tuesday.

Both measures were debated during the 2013 session and there was little to no appetite by members of the Committee to Conduct an Interim Study Concerning the Impact of Technology Upon Gaming to sponsor bills rehashing the issues when lawmakers meet again next year.

State Sen. Tick Segerblom, D-Las Vegas, had hoped to persuade the panel to request a bill draft for the 2015 session allowing Nevada sports books to take pari-mutuel wagers on elections for president, U.S. Senate and House of Representatives.

The Senate Judiciary Committee, chaired by Segerblom, introduced a similar bill that died in the 2013 session. Segerblom has said election betting could be a boon for state gambling revenues.

Interim committee members were not swayed Tuesday, and state Sen. Greg Brower, R-Reno, said betting on elections was inappropriate.

The effort for the committee’s backing fizzled when no one made a motion for a bill draft request, though the concept could still be resurrected in 2015.

Panel members also beat back urgings by Clark County Commission Chairman Steve Sisolak and Assemblyman William

Horne, D-Las Vegas, to again wade into the ongoing dispute over slot machines in taverns and slot parlors.

Current regulations state restricted licenses for up to 15 slot machines may only be granted “if the operation of slot machines is incidental to the primary business.”

Sisolak said state law needs to more clearly define “incidental,” arguing that some taverns and slot parlors rake in a large percentage of their proceeds from gambling.

Horne, chairman of the interim panel, also urged committee intervention, if anything to define the different between traditional taverns and slot parlors, but a motion on his recommendation died when no one seconded it.

Peter Bernhard, chairman of the Nevada Gaming Commission, said the issue has been vetted several times over the past decade and suggested that local governments can set their own restrictions.

“Traditionally, local governments have determined where local taverns can be located,” he said. “The county commission and city councils should make those decisions.”

Bernhard also dismissed allegations that slot parlors have proliferated in recent years, saying they have emerged as an innovative business model to adapt to a changing market and economic conditions.

“Just because you happen to see them more than you’ve seen them before, it is because people with a competitive interest have brought them to our attention,” he said.

Bernhard suggested that a simpler way to resolve the issue was to delete the word “incidental” from the statute entirely.

Photo contest honors Wilderness Act anniversary

In celebration of the 50th anniversary of the Wilderness Act, the Tahoe Area Sierra Club is sponsoring a photo contest.

Today, there are nearly 110 million acres in the country that have been designated as wilderness. Desolation Wilderness, Mokeulmne, Granite Chief, and Carson-Iceberg are all within a short drive of Lake Tahoe.

All photos submitted for the contest have to be taken in a designated wilderness area. Photos must be submitted by July 10. The winner will announced at the Sierra Club fundraiser on July 16.

First prize is $250 and $50 for two runner-ups. Email photos with contact information to wildernessphotocontest@gmail.com.

Snippets about Lake Tahoe

• Lake Tahoe South Shore Chamber of Commerce's June 3 Tech Tuesday is Pinterest for Business. The 5-7pm class at the chamber's office in Stateline is free for members, $15 for non-members.

• Check out this *Reno Gazette-Journal* story to find out about a public-private property dispute in Incline Village involving

billionaire David Duffield. The old Ponderosa Ranch site and lake access are part of the squabble.

• Placer County Board of Supervisors will consider adopting a $792.5 million proposed budget for the 2014-15 fiscal year during a meeting in Auburn on June 3.

• Truckee Donner Chamber of Commerce's June 10 7-8:30am meeting will focus on Americans with Disabilities Act and health care. Cost is $10 for members, $12 for non-members; it includes a continental breakfast. For more info, call 530.587.2757.

• Big Brothers Big Sisters of El Dorado's 2nd annual Golf for Kids' Sake is July 21 at 10:30am at the Serrano Country Club in El Dorado Hills. For more info, go online.

LTCC putting finishing touches on Nov. bond

By Kathryn Reed

Everything is in place for Lake Tahoe Community College to proceed with a general obligation bond in November – except for the board voting to do so.

That is expected to take place at the June 10 board meeting. At the meeting this week the board approved an agreement with Keygent Advisors to provide bond financial advisory services, approved the contract with Orrick, Herrington and Sutcliffe LLP for bond counsel, and had the first reading of the list of projects the bond would cover.

The college, which will celebrate its 40th anniversary next month, is going to voters for the first time to ask for money that will only be spent on facilities. Some of it will be for upgrades, some for new things.

The exact amount has yet to be determined. In some ways it's a guessing game based on what interest rates and assessed values will be. The college does not want people to pay more than $25 per $100,000 of assessed value on their property.

Joanna Bowes with Keygent went over different scenarios that would bring the college between $28.29 million and $53.729 million.

Her recommendation is to go out for a mix of current interest and capital appreciation bonds that would bring in $47.36 million at interest rates ranging from 1.5 percent to 3.5 percent, the former for this year and the later estimated for 2016-17. (Bonds are traditionally sold over the course of several years.) This scenario also calls for longer-term assessed value to increase 4.25 percent per year.

One issue staff and the board will have to deal with is the price tag for the project list is $55 million.

Jeff DeFranco, vice president of administrative services, told board members they will have to prioritize the projects. It's also possible matching funds could come in higher or that the 3 percent inflation rate that is built into the numbers would not come to fruition.

While it was acknowledged the general consensus is the campus is fairly new, the truth is many of the buildings are aging as are the parts inside. The main building was built in 1988, Child Development Center 1993, four garden trailers 1996, two garden trailers 1999, student center/culinary and physical education 2002, and the library in 2005.

The campus includes 164 acres. The idea is to try to cluster

buildings and avoid sprawl.

Per Tahoe Regional Planning Agency definitions, the college has 696,723 square feet of coverage. The proposed projects would bring that total to 485,864 square feet. The unallocated coverage would be 110,059 square feet.

Five projects the college hopes will receive state money to supplement the bond dollars include:

• Remodeling the science lab so it is efficient and has 21st century equipment;

• Building a public safety training center;

• Modernizing the main building, which includes enhancing the commons;

• Creating an environmental studies and sustainability center;

• Erecting a multipurpose building.

This last project was originally going to be an expansion of the phys ed facility, but has morphed into more than that. It would provide classrooms when the garden trailers are removed, storage and meeting space, and physical education rooms.

Money just from the bond would go to:

• Expanding the early learning center, which includes having room for Tahoe Parents Nursery School.

• Solar generating storage facility to house vehicles and equipment. It could be a demonstration site for sustainable studies related to solar generation.

Opinion: Collaboration emerges from ashes

By William Wade Keye

Disaster sometimes comes with a silver lining. Last summer's 257,000-acre Rim Fire torched more than trees. The enormous blaze, which incinerated a large swath of the Stanislaus National Forest near Yosemite National Park, knocked out power transmission and threatened San Francisco's water supply. It also cleared away some of the toxic social underbrush that has stymied federal forest management efforts for many years. This could lead to more fire-adapted, resilient and carbon-rich public forests across vast stretches of Northern California.

A Tuolumne County group, which includes timber industry and environmental representatives, had been meeting prior to the Rim Fire, searching for – and finding – common ground on previously deadlocked issues of forest management. Formed under the auspices of a 2009 law promoting ecological restoration, the Yosemite-Stanislaus Solutions collaborative is at the forefront of a new approach that is bringing people together to heal broken landscapes. The old "spotted owl versus logger" polarities have given way to fresh consensus, with fire ecology at its core.

Collaborative participants agreed on a mission "to restore and maintain healthy forests and watersheds, fire-safe communities and sustainable local economies using a science-based approach." Since the Rim Fire, the collaborative has been aggressively pushing recovery efforts, which will include clearing dead trees from roadsides and replanting some of the most damaged sites. These restoration treatments begin with salvage logging, and this is where the story gets interesting.

Environmental members of the collaborative are sending a

message to fellow conservationists that the days of routinely demonizing timber harvest on public lands may be coming to an end. An April letter from the group to Regional Forester Randy Moore, who oversees all the national forests in California, explained, “While individual members in YSS may prefer one or another of the possible salvage treatment alternatives, we all agree that prompt implementation of the hazard tree and salvage logging projects is essential to move the restoration process forward. Once salvage plans are completed, reforestation, watershed restoration, fuel reduction, and habitat enhancement plans can be given priority attention.”

This kind of consensus has been a long time coming, but it reflects growing concerns about the sustainability of our national forests in a time of climate change and increasingly destructive wildfires. California’s national forests are racking up ever-greater acreages of what the U.S. Forest Service terms “deforested conditions” following extreme wildfires such as the Rim Fire. These are situations where most, if not all, of the existing trees have been killed. Without replanting with trees, many of these burned acres will become choked with brush species, which store much less carbon than healthy timber stands.

The trend is now so firmly established that the Forest Service projects that by mid-century, our national forests will emit more greenhouse gases than they absorb. In other words, federal lands set aside for broad conservation purposes are on track to becoming major carbon polluters.

Yet this outcome is entirely avoidable.

Besides tree planting, forest restoration work requires an increased use of tools proven to reduce wildfire risks; thinning, chipping and prescribed fire. In some cases, selective timber harvest may be ecologically desirable, especially to improve site-growing conditions for long-lived and drought-tolerant Sierra Nevada pine species.

In addition to wildfire concerns, there is renewed focus on watershed health. This is especially important in California where most of our fresh water supply originates in our mountainous national forests.

Some organizations will continue to fight the old timber wars from the 1990s, raising alarms, fundraising and litigating to maintain their prestige and power over public land policies. Others, like the Yosemite collaborative members Central Sierra Environmental Resource Center and Tuolumne Group of the Sierra Club, are helping to move the forest management debate forward. Similar collaboratives have formed throughout the West to begin the process of revitalizing depressed rural economies.

Environmentalists who support forest restoration and ecosystem resilience are leading the way. Those clinging to past misgivings and ideological purity are being moved toward the exits.

Will some interest groups litigate to try to put a stop to the Forest Service's recovery plans? Probably, but I hope not.

Even if the federal government, with the support of the collaborative, authorizes salvage logging, there will be plenty of dead trees left to decay naturally. The state's wood-processing industry isn't what it used to be. Even if the Forest Service wanted to clear all the dead trees – which it doesn't – California sawmills couldn't possibly absorb that much timber before it decays and loses commercial value.

There is something for everybody in the Rim Fire's aftermath, most particularly the prospect of a healing, and not just for the land, but for the people who dearly want to see that land nurtured and sustained.

William Wade Keye is a registered professional forester and a past chair of the Northern California Society of American Foresters.

USFS finalizing plans for Tallac improvements

The U.S. Forest Service wants to make improvements to the Tallac Historic Site based on what the public believes should happen at the South Shore facility.

An alternative that was developed in response to public comment was chosen as the preferred alternative. People who previously commented have until mid-July to make more comments on the draft Historic Facilities Best Management Practices Retrofit project.

The project is designed to improve water quality and improve recreation opportunities at the site. Improvements would include infiltration basins, planted swales, and slope stabilization along the shoreline. Other work calls for the installation of barriers to prevent off-pavement parking, configuring better pedestrian routes, planting native plants, and repairing existing fences.

At Kiva Point informational signs would be installed, the pathway from the parking area to the beach would be upgraded to meet disability accessibility standards, and some user-created trails would be removed. A restroom would be built at the parking area, 20 additional parking spaces would be constructed, and a fence would be installed between the beach area and Taylor Creek Marsh.

The proposed project is designed to improve traffic by reconfiguring the three entrances along Highway 89 (Valhalla, Tallac, and Taylor Creek) into two entrances located at the existing Taylor Creek Visitor Center intersection and across from the Camp Richardson corral entrance. An internal road

would connect the intersections.

The Tallac Site parking area would be expanded to include an additional 90 parking spaces. The Valhalla parking area would be expanded to include an additional 45 spaces. And the existing unimproved parking area near the Valhalla entrance would be paved.

The volunteer campground at the Baldwin Trailer Park site would be upgraded and reconfigured to include 15 additional campsites that meet accessibility guidelines.

If funding comes through, work on the 10-year project could begin next May.

For more information, go online.

Expect delays on Mt. Rose Highway

Road work will take place on Mount Rose Highway beginning June 2.

The approximately $10 million project by Granite Construction will repave and improve roadside drainage on from the highway's base in south Reno to the Mount Rose summit. Rumble strips will be installed to enhance driving safety in residential areas at the base of the highway. Safety enhancements such as nearly 18,000 linear feet of guardrail, as well as rock removal and mesh cover to reduce erosion-caused rock fall on one roadside slope, will also be included.

Construction work will take place with single lane closures. Construction in the residential area at the base of the highway will take place largely during night, with minimal daytime work. Work will take place both night and day from the tree line up to the summit. Construction for this season will complete in the fall.

Prescription drug use in U.S. keeps climbing

By Dennis Thompson, HealthDay

Prescription drugs are playing an increasingly larger role in U.S. life, with nearly half of all Americans taking one or more medications.

Among adults, the most common prescription drugs are for cardiovascular disease and high cholesterol.

Those are two of several key findings in the federal government's annual comprehensive report on the nation's health that was released Wednesday.

The relationship between Americans and their prescriptions is complex, according to the report produced by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

On the one hand, more people than ever are receiving effective treatment for chronic conditions like diabetes, high blood pressure, elevated cholesterol levels and depression.

But doctors and pharmacists also find themselves struggling with unintended consequences of drug use, such as prescription narcotics abuse and the advent of antibiotic-resistant germs.

Read the whole story

Boys & Girls Club selling bricks as fundraiser

Lake Tahoe Boys & Girls Club of is changing the entryway to make way to install Bricks for Kids.

This is also a fundraiser to raise funds to keep the club operational.

Since 1991 the program has grown to two sites with 800 registered members ages 5-18.

To order a brick for a business, individual or family, go online.

Stories and brick building at DC library

Stories and brick building take place at the Zephyr Cove library on June 13.

All ages are welcome; children 5 and younger must be accompanied by an adult.

The brick builders will listen to a story and create something

from Duplo blocks or Lego bricks from 11am-noon. From noon-1pm children may use their imaginations to build their own creation.

Bring a sack lunch for an indoor picnic.

The Douglas County Public Library Lake Tahoe branch is located at 233 Warrior Way in Zephyr Cove. For more info, call 775.588.6411.