South Tahoe JPA committee going on field trip

The Fields Advisory Committee of the South Lake Tahoe Recreation Facilities Joint Powers Authority is going on a field trip July 2 at 4pm.

The field trip will convene at the Babe Ruth (lighted) field at South Tahoe Middle School. The committee will also visit, inspect, and discuss the softball field at STMS, the Al Tahoe fields, the field at Sierra House School, the field at the Meyers Magnet School, and the South Tahoe High School softball field.

The committee will then return to its starting point at STMS and adjourn. The committee meeting is open to the public, and public comment is appreciated.

This field trip meeting is being conducted in preparation for making recommendations to the JPA at its regular meeting at Lake Tahoe Airport at 9am July 27.

North Tahoe embracing 4th of July with myriad events

North Lake Tahoe celebrates the Independence Day holiday with multiple fireworks displays.

Kings Beach hosts its annual fireworks display July 3 with a free show just off its sandy shores at 9:30pm, as well as a deck party celebration at the North Tahoe Event Center beginning at 6pm. The deck party, which runs $15/person at the door, includes live music, food vendors and a no host bar.

Tahoe City celebrates 66 years of fireworks at Commons Beach at 9:30pm July 4. This event is free and is also well attended by families, many of whom bring picnic baskets and lawn chairs to make an evening of the festivities. Tahoe City's lakeside restaurants are also popular with those watching the fireworks, with many offering special menus for the night, but book out early. Reservations are recommended.

Incline Village takes things to the next level with their traditional Red, White & Tahoe Blue festivities scheduled for June 30 through July 7, which includes patriotic chalk drawing contest, opening ceremonies with a tribute to veterans, Tahoe Firecracker Trail Trek, flag raising, USAF California Air National Guard Static Display and fireworks July 4 at 9:30pm off Incline Beach.

In Truckee, the free Truckee 4th of July Parade, a kid-friendly hometown event, takes place July 4, 10am, along Donner Pass Road and ending in historic downtown. Before the festivities, visitors can take part in the Truckee Firecracker Mile, perfect for all ages and starting at Tahoe Forest Hospital. The 4th of July Fireworks is scheduled at West End Beach at Donner Lake at dusk.

Chamber music series in July

by TOCCATA

TOCCATA continues its summer season with a chamber music series performed by Trios Las Americas.

The trio consists of Argentians Maria Luciana Gallo, cello and Pablo Rocchietti, piano; and American clarinetist, Karl Busch. They will perform works by Piazzolla, Bruch, Beethoven, and Brahms.

Concerts are July 11 at 7 pm at the TOCCATA Performing Arts Theater in Incline Village and July 12 at 7 pm at the Squaw Valley Chapel in Olympic Valley.

Tickets on July 12 are $20, with those under 12 free and may be purchased in advance by credit card online or at the door by cash or check 30 minutes prior to the concert.

Donations are appreciated at the July 11 concert.

Suspected cockfighting ring on West Slope broken up

By Andrea Gallo, Sacramento Bee

About 75 game birds that appear to have been bred for cockfighting were discovered by El Dorado County Animal Services and the El Dorado County Sheriff’s Office at a Shingle Springs residence Tuesday.

Cockfighting is illegal throughout the country and California

arrests can lead to jail time and fines up to $5,000 for a first offense and $25,000 for a second offense.

After a member of the public tipped them off about the possibility of a breeding ring, animal services and the sheriff’s officials obtained a search warrant and investigated the property, where they found game birds with signs of cockfighting activity. They removed all of them.

“Some of the birds could be saved,” said Henry Brzezinski, Chief of Animal Services, in a news release. “Unfortunately, some of the birds had to be humanely euthanized because their behavior was too aggressive for them to be rehabilitated.”

Read the whole story

Dogs and fireworks often not a good combination

Fourth of July fireworks are no fun for dogs. Historically, Washoe County Regional Animal Services is flooded with calls from pet owners searching for dogs that became lost while trying to flee from the loud noise of the fireworks.

On July 4-5, 2011, Regional Animal Services retrieved 73 lost dogs in a 24-hour period.

Regional Animal Services offers the following safety tips to pet owners for the Fourth of July holiday:

Before the fireworks start, bring and keep your dog inside;

Keep windows and doors closed;

Leave a radio, television, fan, or air conditioner on as these will help to lower the noise from outside

If you know your dog does experience extreme; anxieties to loud noises, it may be worthwhile to contact your veterinarian to see what recommendations they have;

The best way for everyone to get the most enjoyment from a firework display, is to leave your pets at home.

Regional Animal Services staff also encourages dog owners to make sure all pets have identification tags and microchips just in case they do get lost. This will expedite getting pets and their families reunited.

Nevada businesses sue to stop 'Education Initiative'

By Sean Whaley, Nevada News Bureau

CARSON CITY – The Committee to Protect Nevada Jobs filed a lawsuit this week against the "Education Initiative" (margin tax initiative) charging that the petition's description of effect is deceptive and incomplete and that it violates the single-subject rule.

The complaint was filed in Carson City District Court.

"From the title on down, the initiative is deeply flawed and misleading," said Josh Hicks, of Brownstein Hyatt Farber Schreck, the attorney for the Committee to Protect Nevada Jobs. "The initiative has nothing to do with education and

includes many aspects that are not mentioned in the initiative's description. We believe that as written, this initiative violates Nevada law."

The complaint notes that the 26-page "Education Initiative" mentions education only once in its description of effect and that it makes no provision for requiring that education funding be increased over current levels by "even a penny."

The complaint also notes that the petition's terms allow for a decrease in classroom funding, which would be an "unpleasant surprise" to Nevadans who sign it.

The Nevada State Education Association filed its petition with Secretary of State Ross Miller on June 6. It would levy a 2 percent tax on companies making gross revenues in excess of $1 million a year.

NSEA President Lynn Warne said at the time the tax would bring in an estimated $800 million a year from large Nevada corporations. She also said the petition is expected to withstand any legal scrutiny.

Hicks said the initiative imposes a margin tax on businesses and increases the size of the Nevada Department of Taxation, a multi-million dollar government agency, to administer and audit the new tax.

"The petition's title and description of effect will confuse Nevada voters and mislead them into signing a petition that does not do what it purports to do and that does do many things that are hidden from view," he said.

As an example, Hicks noted that the description of effect makes no mention that taxpayer information will be posted on the internet in clear violation of taxpayer privacy rights guaranteed by Nevada law since 1979. In addition, the complaint notes that the description does not mention that even unprofitable and failing businesses that are losing money

will still be subject to the tax and that “an increased taxation on failing businesses is certainly not going to improve the unemployment rate.”

“Quite clearly, this initiative is designed solely to increase general tax revenues and to take advantage of citizen’s concerns about education in order to mislead them into signing the petition and, later, into voting for it,” Hicks said. “Nevada law is quite clear in prohibiting such deceptions.”

USFS: Fireworks, alcohol and parking rules for Tahoe

Possession of fireworks of any kind, including sparklers, is illegal in the Lake Tahoe Basin. Campfires are not permitted on U.S. Forest Service beaches or in the general forest.

For July 4 only, personal barbecues are allowed at Nevada, Pope and Baldwin beaches but are not permitted on any other Forest Service beaches or in the general forest.

The annual alcohol ban will be in effect on Nevada Beach and within Zephyr Cove Resort and Zephyr Shoals (the former Dreyfus Estate).

In addition, county and state laws also ban the possession or consumption of alcohol on the Truckee River from Tahoe City to Alpine Meadows and Chamber’s Landing Beach on the West Shore July 1-6. These areas will be patrolled by law enforcement

personnel from the Forest Service, Douglas County, Placer County and Carson City sheriff departments, and by private security staff.

If you're parking on the side of the road to access Forest Service facilities, make sure you're parked completely on gravel or dirt, not on vegetation. Parking on vegetation may result in a citation for resource damage, plus there's a chance your car's catalytic converter could spark a fire. Consider public transportation if you're going to the beach that day. The Nifty Fifty Trolley stops at Forest Service beaches along the south and west shores.

Keep in mind that in developed recreation sites, such as Kiva, Tallac and the Taylor Creek Visitor Center, parking is allowed only in designated parking spaces, not along the roadway.

Day-use fees for the Fourth of July at Pope, Baldwin, and Nevada beaches are $20 and at Zephyr Cove Beach $25 to cover increased security and facility maintenance costs of the holiday.

Respect the rules on where dogs are allowed. Dogs are not allowed at designated swim beaches, including Nevada, Pope, Baldwin, Meeks and William Kent. If you are looking for a place to take your leashed dog, try Kiva Picnic Area from Valhalla Boathouse/Pier to Tallac Point in South Lake Tahoe, Echo Lakes on Echo Summit, Zephyr Shoals on the East Shore (the old Dreyfus Estate located north of Zephyr Cove Resort), Hidden and Chimney beaches on the East Shore, Coon Street Beach (at the boat launch) in King's Beach, Kaspian and 64 Acres in Tahoe City.

For more information, visit the Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit website or call (530) 543.2694.

Zephyr Cove library taking July 4 as holiday

The Douglas County Public Library in Zephyr Cove will be closed July 4 for Independence Day.

The library will reopen July 5 at 9am.

Brown signs budget based on November ballot issues passing

By Kevin Yamamura, Torey Van Oot and Jim Sanders, Sacramento Bee

California state budgets rarely look better than on the day they are signed.

With the fiscal year starting Sunday, revenue has yet to fall short, cuts face no legal challenges and polls show a multibillion-dollar tax initiative clinging to a slim majority of voter support.

Gov. Jerry Brown signed a spending plan Wednesday that he hopes will put California’s budget troubles to bed for good. One of his demands was that Democrats send him a plan that not

only eliminates the current $15.7 billion deficit but maintains a balanced budget in years to come.

But it will take a hefty dose of optimism to believe California will avoid budget struggles hereafter.

For starters, the budget plan relies on voters passing a temporary tax hike on sales and high-income earners to raise $8.5 billion in the current budget cycle.

If that fails, K-12 schools face classroom reductions, while universities and community colleges also stand to lose funding. Few believe education groups would take such cuts lightly, setting up another battle over school funding next spring, if not beforehand.

Read the whole story

Opinion: Time to rethink how government works

By Ted Long

The 2007-08 El Dorado County Grand Jury in reported case No. 07-025 strongly recommended consolidation of the six West Slope fire districts. They found the districts were out of date with current growth and their ability to provide services. The grand jury concluded that the taxpayers of the county would gain better service and would save more than $944,000 in addition to the county's contribution of $1.3 million needed to keep the districts afloat.

Nothing happened. Why? The consolidation, while benefiting the county residents, would eliminate six fire chiefs and their

use of their red car. The chiefs resisted the effort and like most things requiring real effort, time and apathy let the opportunity slip away.



Ted Long

While the effort of that grand jury focused on service and efficiency, in this current time of serious financial shortfall should we bring to the forefront the whole issue of why we have government, what are our priorities and how can they best be served? We need to save money, cut waste and improve efficiency, but also we need to really look and see that we are truly serving the needs of society. After all, isn’t that why we have government?

In its origin government was intended to provide those limited services that we could not do individually. Right up through Herbert Hoover’s administration the emphasis was on individualism. The declared common interest of that time was limited mostly to defense nationally and locally, world commerce, and on the local scene, fire protection and the beginning of a public educational system. Over the years the role of government has grown, not only in the size of the original services intended, but in additional services, most notably beginning with Social Security and unemployment benefits of the Roosevelt administration.

Our world and our nation are in very different places today. Prior to World War I we had a standing army of about 25,000. Today we are the world’s leading peacekeeper with troops all over the world. Perhaps it’s a good time to relook at the

entire system. Have many of our oginal purposes actually disappeared? As we have grown to a more prosperous nation, have our priorities changed? While we allowed people to go hungry in the past, is that tolerable today? I could go on with so many things, that I believe we need to examine our entire system – what is the role of government?

One conversation I hear very little about is the country of Denmark. On one hand it has the highest taxes in the world, yet a recent survey showed that the Danes are the happiest people in the world. How can that be? Well, the basic issues that keep us awake at night have been resolved in that system: health care, education, retirement are no longer issues. Yes, I am sure that they struggle with many things, but like the rest of us, many of those things are not life threatening, they are only issues of preferences.

Let’s make lemonade out of this lemon, let’s set aside out traditional often unquestioned positions and take an honest look at our priorities and where do we want to spend our money on? What laws do we really want to enforce and on what terms? What levels of government do we, can we, should we, eliminate in favor of a healthier, happier society? I’ll bet the first thing we would do is consolidate those outdated fire districts and seriously examine the millions spent to maintain a level of government at the city level. Did you realize, for example, that the City Council, five members, when you take the entire budget cost us over $150,000 a year alone? South Lake Tahoe is protected by the city police, the sheriff, the highway patrol and the FBI, all for 20,000 residents. Could some of this money be used to support a local economy? Egos aside, this is not the Wild West any more.

Ted Long is a former South Lake Tahoe City Council member, planning commissioner and current foreman of the El Dorado County Grand Jury.