Brady: Political and law enforcement experience

Publisher's note: ***Four people are running for the position of sheriff of Douglas County Sheriff's Office. Their profiles will run May 4 and May 5.***



Dave Brady

Name: David J. Brady

Age: 62

Occupation: Financial advisor, Brady & Associates, a financial services firm

What groups, nonprofits, other civic involvement are you part of outside of work?: Board member and treasurer, Carson Valley Chamber of Commerce and the Douglas County Community Services Foundation. Board member, Suicide Prevention Network. Rotarian.

What is your opinion about teachers having guns at school?: I believe it is the responsibility of law enforcement Agencies to provide for public safety and the responsibility of teachers to teach. I would strive to increase law enforcement presence in the schools, and add additional school resource

officers where financially feasible.

Vacation rentals are allowed at Lake Tahoe. Should they be allowed everywhere in Douglas County? Why or why not?: Vacation rentals bring a host of problems in the communities in which they are located. (Parking, noise etc.) Should the Douglas County change its position on vacation rentals in the valley, I would involve law enforcement when particular situations become problematic and beyond the scope of the code enforcement officers.

How best to enforce vacation home rental regulations?: Add additional code enforcement officers, and add fines or fees where regulations are not being followed.

Why do you want to be sheriff?: I have long had a passion for public safety and law enforcement in particular. I became a police officer in 1978, and have been involved in different capacities for 25 years. I want to contribute my broad based background, education, and work experience to enhancing and improving the delivery of law enforcement services in Douglas County.

Why should someone vote for you over someone else?: I have the proper education (master of public administration) for the position, as well as extensive executive level leadership and management experience in both the public, as well as the private sector. Having served on the Douglas County school board for nine years, and as your county commissioner for six years, I have a deep commitment and understanding of the community. I will bring a broad range of skill sets to the position that will enhance my leadership ability and lead to successful outcomes.

How are you going to deal with people driving under the influence of marijuana?: I served as a DUI investigator and was responsible for approximately 300 DUI arrests while a police officer in Redondo Beach, I understand that the

marijuana issue is more complex, due to the inability to determine THC levels because of the lack of suitable tests. Valid detection for cannabis is time-consuming, and tests cannot determine an approximate degree of impairment. An objective investigation to determine the extent of intoxication may not lead to a conviction, without an accurate and timely way to determine THC levels. Extensive training will be required of deputies. The most important expectation is to determine objective symptoms of intoxication, and make an arrest if appropriate to protect for the safety of the driver and the public.

What do you believe is needed for a good relationship between the sheriff's department and county commissioners?: Having served as a county commissioner, I believe communication is key in dealing with all the elected officials. I would work to build and maintain positive, constructive and candid dialogue with each commissioner, as well as the county manager.

If the commissioners cut your budget by 10 percent, what program or people would you cut? Please be specific.: A 10 percent cut in the budget would mean a reduction of approximately $1,650,000. Capital expenditures for vehicles would be eliminated, saving $300,000. Additionally, I would conduct an operational audit to determine the appropriate staffing structure of the organization and eliminate positions deemed not critical to the operation of the department. Considering that over 80 percent of the budget is salaries and benefits, personnel would have to be reduced. As an example, I believe the department is top heavy, and would reduce positions through attrition, rather than reduce positions on the street.

What is your relationship with businesses at Lake Tahoe that work with the sheriff's department on various events? If anything, what would you consider changing?: Currently, I do not have a relationship with the businesses, but it would be my expectation as sheriff to work directly with anyone or any

business to make sure their needs are addressed and adequately met.

Deputies use targets to practice marksmanship. Is there a better way to train people so not so many unarmed people are being shot? Please elaborate.: The Sheriffs Advisory Council purchased a Fire Arms Training Simulator (FATS) for the department approximately five years ago, which is an excellent training tool when it comes to "shoot, don't shoot" situations.

If you could make the rules for New Year's Eve at Stateline, what would they be?: Having worked New Year's Eve as a reserve deputy sheriff for approximately 10 years, I believe DCSO has done a great job in their approach to maintaining public safety and order. In light of the recent developments in the Las Vegas shooting, greater coordination with the casino properties regarding access to hotel rooms overlooking the casino corridor might be a consideration. The summer concert series need to have the same consideration, unfortunately.

Douglas County sheriff's deputies make less than South Lake Tahoe police officers and El Dorado County sheriff's deputies. Does this hamper efforts to recruit employees? Do you believe deputies should be paid more? Why or why not? If yes, how would you go about getting them more money?: At present, I am unfamiliar with the compensation and benefits paid by SLT and El Dorado County in relation to DCSO deputies. I would certainly look to pay a competitive wage and benefit package, once an analysis has been completed. It may be that we can't compete with California agencies, but I would expect to work with DCSO Association to clearly identify opportunities that would enhance the ability to recruit and retain employees. I believe our starting pay is low relative to other agencies, but becomes more equitable with time and tenure on the job. Increasing entry level compensation needs to be addressed. Finding ways to reduce turnover saves the county money and cost savings should be redirected where appropriate.

What is lacking in the department right now in terms of personnel or equipment or other resources? How would you address those needs?: Initially, I would conduct an operational audit, as mentioned before, to determine the appropriate structure and staffing of the organization. Staffing ratios for the department are low by national standards. Currently, the ratio is 0.95 deputies/1,000residents for DCSO while the national ratio is 2.5 deputies/1,000 residents. Consider as well, the county is 750 square miles. I would look to reallocate resources to the street, and increase the number of area cars using "predictive policing" to concentrate LE resources where and when the data indicates a need. Additionally, I would engage in "expenditure control budgeting" to look for opportunities to save money within the budget and use these monies to pay for additional deputies to increase the ratios mentioned above.

What do you think is the biggest issue facing Douglas County Sheriff's Office and how do you plan to resolve it?: Currently, the biggest issue facing DCSO is the turnover of personnel. In the past 18 months, the department has hired 24 new deputies to replace the deputies that have left the department for various reasons. The turnover is a function of low morale which was documented in the most recent grand jury report. High turnover undermines good service, professionalism and morale. I would have a climate survey conducted which would interview each employee to determine where there might be opportunities for improvement within the organization, and do follow up exit interviews of deputies that have left to best determine the scope of the problem. I would communicate any and all findings to the employees and prepare a plan of action to address the issues identified from the interviews.

Body cameras are about to be required throughout Nevada. What are the pros and cons?: The argument against body cameras centers primarily on cost. Purchase of the equipment, storage of film content, and the training of deputies, as well as the

need to hire additional personnel to maintain the equipment, are requirements to be considered. Body cameras will serve a very useful purpose in that they have the potential to reduce litigation costs or expensive settlements. The cameras provide value information that can be used as evidence, and will benefit the deputies and the individuals the come in contact on the street. False claims by either party can be verified through the use on body cameras.

Tell us something about yourself that people might not already know?: Graduated USC magna-cum-laude, kidney donor, and a twin.

Las Vegas-style public lands bill pitched for N. Nev.

By Benjamin Spillman, Reno Gazette-Journal

Northern Nevada communities could get a taste of Las Vegas-style land management practices if Washoe County officials get their way.

A draft of the proposed Washoe County Economic Development and Conservation Act seeks to replicate the idea behind the Southern Nevada Public Lands Management Act, also known as SNPLMA.

Since Congress passed the southern Nevada version which became law in 1998, sales of federally owned land in the Las Vegas-area generated more than $3 billion, much of which has been used to fund conservation in Clark County and around Nevada, including at Lake Tahoe.

Read the whole story

Coverley: Proud of endorsements for DCSO sheriff

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Dan Coverley

Name: Dan Coverley

Age: 48 years old

Occupation: I am the administration captain with the Douglas County Sheriff's Office. My office is in Stateline in the judicial building.

What groups, nonprofits, other civic involvement are you part of outside of work?: I am a member of the FBI National Academy Associates, I am a member of the Douglas/Carson Chapter of the Nevada Farm Bureau, member of the Nevada Cattleman's Association, member of the Carson Valley Roping Club, soccer

coach with the Carson Valley Soccer Club U-17 girls, member of the Carson Valley Chamber of Commerce, board member of the Family Support Council and board member of the Douglas County Partnership of Community Recourses.

What is your opinion about teachers having guns at school?: I believe that arming teachers is an option, but the level of training that should be required to be armed while at school should be on the level of a sworn law enforcement officer. If the individual teacher and school district is able and willing to participate and provide that level of training, then arming teachers is an option. I believe a better option is to provide sworn officers at the schools to serve as school resource officers. I also believe the relationship between the sheriff's office and the school district needs to be strong and open lines of communication must exist in order to share information to stop violent threats that my occur. Douglas County Sheriff's Office and the Douglas County School District currently have an excellent relationship and I would work to enhance and strengthen that relationship.

Vacation rentals are allowed at Lake Tahoe. Should they be allowed everywhere in Douglas County? Why or why not?: I believe that vacation rentals should be allowed in Douglas County.

How best to enforce vacation home rental regulations?: I also think that there should be an ordinance which would regulate the rentals. The ordinance should address disturbance complaints such as loud parties or excessive noise late at night or early in the morning. Also parking should be addressed to limit the number of vehicles allowed at each rental so as to not obstruct or prevent homeowner's access or emergency vehicles, specifically fire trucks and ambulances.
rental owner who has numerous noise or parking complaints should be subject to a fine. Permanent residence should not have to suffer because their neighbor is a vacation rental.

Why do you want to be sheriff?: Douglas County is a wonderful place to live and raise a family. I want to do everything I can to ensure that Douglas County stays the great place it is. The sheriff's office plays a vital role in the safety and security of the residents and the quality of life we all enjoy. The sheriff is the only local law enforcement office in the Douglas County. As such the sheriff's office must have and maintain the best relationship with the community as it can. The sheriff holds a key position in fostering and maintaining that good relationship. I believe I can continue and improve the good relationship that the sheriff's office currently enjoys with the citizens of Douglas County. I have been a cop for 23 years, 21 years with Douglas County. I have worked in every division and held every rank up to captain. As sheriff I will work hard as I have always done as a deputy to keep the Douglas County safe and provide the best law enforcement service to the citizens.

Why should someone vote for you over someone else?: The current sheriff, Ron Pierini, has endorsed me as his choice to be sheriff. I have received the endorsement of the deputies, South Lake Tahoe Police Department and the Tahoe Douglas Fire District. I believe I have received these endorsements due to the relationships I have developed with the men and women who work for the sheriff's office and those agencies. I will use those collaborative relationships to be effective in enforcing the law and keeping the residents safe, thus ensuring the quality of life we have to come to know and love.

How are you going to deal with people driving under the influence of marijuana?: Driving while under the influence of any substance which may impair your ability to safely operate a motor vehicle is illegal. Marijuana, while legal in Nevada up to an ounce, will be treated just like alcohol. Drivers who are contacted and based on their driving pattern, physical demeanor and the results of field sobriety tests, and are deemed to be impaired will be arrested in accordance with

Nevada law. The legalization of marijuana just made it legal to use and possess in your home, but it did not make it legal to be under the influence and drive.

What do believe is needed for a good relationship between the sheriff's department and county commissioners?: A good relationship between the sheriff and the county commissioners starts with developing a good relationship with them individually. It is maintained with good communication and an attitude of cooperation. The sheriff is a constitutionally elected official and as such, has autonomy and does not work for the commissioners, but does need to work with them as well as all county departments and other elected officials.

If the commissioners cut your budget by 10 percent, what program or people would you cut? Please be specific.: If the budget was cut by 10 percent, I would have to cut personnel and equipment. I would eliminate the PIO position and one youth services deputy. I would also reduce the vehicle budget and make do with the vehicles we currently have, without replacing old vehicles in the fleet. Any cuts in the budget would almost certainly affect personnel, which is currently 80 percent of our budget.

What is your relationship with businesses at Lake Tahoe that work with the sheriff's department on various events? If anything, what would you consider changing?: As the administration captain and having my office at the lake, I serve as a liaison between the sheriff's office and the Lake Tahoe community. I have worked closely with the LTVA coordinating special events such as Celebrity Golf Tournament, Amgen bike race, Fourth of July and New Year's Eve celebration. I also work closely with individual businesses to include, Harrah's-Harveys, Hard Rock Casino, MontBleu, Zephyr Cove, Lakeside Inn and Edgewood who all host special events each year. I have worked with the Catholic church on Elks Point Road, Presbyterian Conference Center, Heavenly and the Ridge. I work closely with Tahoe Douglas Fire District, TRPA

and all GIDs with any issues that come up. The only change I would make is to strengthen the relationship with lake business and community. The lake is a unique community in Douglas County that depends on tourism to a large extent. People need to feel safe so they will continue to visit and spend their vacation money in Douglas County.

Deputies use targets to practice marksmanship. Is there a better way to train people so not so many unarmed people are being shot? Please elaborate.: As a member of our range staff I feel we have an excellent firearms training program. All deputies qualify with all weapons four times a year. Three of the four qualifications are daytime shoots and one is a nighttime shoot. Non-mandatory firearms training is provided to all members of the sheriff's office in the months between the mandatory qualifications. Force on force training is provided utilizing less lethal munitions to put the individual deputy in a scenario of a shoot, no shoot situation to help them make the correct deadly force decision. We also use a firearms simulator to provide realistic training that requires the deputy to interact with the scenario.

If you could make the rules for New Year's Eve at Stateline, what would they be?: As the incident commander for the last three years at Stateline during New Year's I have worked closely with the Stateline casinos to ensure the event is safe for the celebrants, property owners and deputies. Douglas County prohibits bottles or cans on the street during the event. The casinos and restaurants cooperate by only serving alcohol in plastic containers. The sheriff's office has taken a non-confrontational approach to policing the event, which has led to fewer arrests and less problems with the public. The event itself has changed and is not as well attended as it has been in the past, largely due to the SnowGlobe event in South Lake Tahoe.

Douglas County sheriff's deputies make less than South Lake Tahoe police officers and El Dorado County sheriff's deputies.

Does this hamper efforts to recruit employees? Do you believe deputies should be paid more? Why or why not? If yes, how would you go about getting them more money?: Recruitment in law enforcement is always tough and competing with neighboring agencies that pay more doesn't help. The sheriff does not set the wage or benefits package of the employees. That is done by the employees through their individual bargaining units. I believe the sheriff should be supportive of the deputies as they negotiate for the best contract that they can get. I think deputies should be paid a competitive wage that allows them to afford to live in the area they work.

What is lacking in the department right now in terms of personnel or equipment or other resources? How would you address those needs?: The sheriff's office has done a good job keeping up with the advances in technology utilized in current law enforcement agencies. One item I will work hard at getting is license plate readers in both the valley and the lake. This will assist us in locating wanted persons, persons of interest in local crimes, potential terrorist threats and to locate and identify stolen vehicles. It allows us to know who is entering our community, which will help keep it safe especially during special events that are common at the lake.

What do you think is the biggest issue facing Douglas County Sheriff's Office and how do you plan to resolve it?: The biggest issue facing the sheriff's office is the opioid epidemic. Heroin is much more prevalent in Douglas County than it was even 10 years ago. Heroin is a devastating drug that has a ripple effect with regards to crime in a community. The sheriff's office must aggressively work to keep this drug at a minimum. The issue must be attacked on the patrol level by identifying users and possession, on the investigative level to identify sellers and traffickers and by education of youth to prevent use of the drug.

Body cameras are about to be required throughout Nevada. What are the pros and cons?: I believe the pros of bodycams vastly

outweigh the cons. Bodycams will aid in the prosecution of cases, transparency with the public and protect the deputies from false accusations. The cons are the cost of the program that the department has to absorb and the storage of the data. I believe they are a good thing and are worth the cost and any potential difficulties they may create.

Tell us something about yourself that people might not already know?: I have a twin brother who is an Idaho state trooper.

Duffy: Most experience of any sheriff candidate

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Joe Duffy

Name: Joe Duffy

Age: 48

Occupation: Patrol division captain, Douglas County Sheriff's Office

What groups, nonprofits, other civic involvement are you part of outside of work?: I am the first vice president of the FBI National Academy Associates/Nevada Chapter and I am a member of the International Footprint Association-Minden Chapter 72. I am not part of any other service clubs currently, however I have supported them during my career here at the sheriff's office by supporting and/or participating in events they host. I have been a coach in recreation basketball and Carson Valley Little League baseball. I am a member of St. Gall's Catholic Church.

What is your opinion about teachers having guns at school?: The sheriff's office has no say or control over school policies and procedures. However, my personal opinion is that I do not think teachers should be carrying guns in schools. If the school district decided to employ that tactic, I would strongly recommend teachers go through the same annual and quarterly firearms training that a law enforcement officer does.

Vacation rentals are allowed at Lake Tahoe. Should they be allowed everywhere in Douglas County? Why or why not?: This is not in my sphere of responsibility, however as your sheriff, I will make sure no matter what housing exists, the citizens of Douglas County will be protected.

How best to enforce vacation home rental regulations?: If there is a complaint of a crime or excessive noise, residents should always call the sheriff's office to handle those situations. In regards to other non-criminal vacation home regulations, those would be a civil matter in which case a deputy could still respond to write a report or the matter would need to be handled between the owner and the renters.

Why do you want to be sheriff?: I want to be sheriff because

it is a passion of mine and I want to help people who cannot help themselves. As a young boy, I always knew that when I grew up I wanted to be a law enforcement officer. At age 20, I became a deputy with the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department and I have been in law enforcement for all of my adult life, working my way up through the ranks to my current position of captain. With Sheriff [Ron] Pierini retiring, I am taking the opportunity to use my extensive training and experience to advance to the next level in law enforcement. I will continue to bring the best law enforcement services to the citizens in Douglas County and I will ensure our community stays safe and gang and graffiti free. Lastly, I love where I live. I raised my son here, my brother, his family and my parents all live here, and I enjoy being part of this community. I want to be sheriff because I care. I care about our quality of life and I care about the people who live and work here. I want to ensure we keep Douglas County one of the safest communities in the state.

Why should someone vote for you over someone else?: I have the most experience as a full-time law enforcement officer over any other candidate running for the office of sheriff. I have worked for the LA Sheriff's Department for five years and I have been at the Douglas County Sheriff's Office for over 23 years. I have worked every division at DCSO, including: patrol, jail, investigations, administration, plus a wide variety of collateral duties including: K9 handler, SWAT, internal affairs and gang investigations. I have been a captain for the last eight years and have managed three different divisions during that time: Those being, administration, the jail and I am the current patrol captain for the last 2½ years. I am also the captain of our 16-person SWAT team, our six-person K9 unit and our honor guard. I am a graduate of the FBI National Academy in Quantico, Va., and have taught thousands of officers and civilians in my career on the topic of gangs, including military and law enforcement officers overseas. I am the only candidate with my executive

POST certificate. I have managed budgets, handled difficult personnel issues and have a true understanding of what the role of sheriff of Douglas County entails. Two of my opponents don't have POST certificates, so they would have to go to the POST academy. The other opponent, Capt. [Dan] Coverley has less experience at the command level. This is not a popularity contest, this is the highest law enforcement officer responsible for the safety and security of the county and should not be handed to someone who is inexperienced and would not be able to hit the ground running as your sheriff. We need positive, productive change in the sheriff's office, not the same old thing. We must do a better job of serving our community in new and different ways. I will have a great undersheriff in Jim Halsey, a 30-year Navy veteran, who also has almost 30 years in law enforcement experience as well. Jim Halsey is the current jail division captain and we are a great team. Together we will recruit, hire and retain the best deputy sheriff's to serve our community. Douglas County needs leaders to be involved in their communities and be invested in it, not just the title. It takes leadership, accountability and experience to be a successful sheriff, not endorsements.

How are you going to deal with people driving under the influence of marijuana?: Many of the same techniques used in determining if someone is driving under the influence of alcohol are used for driving under the influence of marijuana, or other drugs. The deputy administers a series of field sobriety tests to the driver. If the driver shows impairment during those tests, which the officers are trained to detect, the suspect is placed under arrest and a warrant is requested from a judge to draw two samples of blood to be analyzed. The case is then submitted to the DA's Office for prosecution and the DMV is notified for the suspect's license to be suspended. If someone is impaired while driving, it doesn't matter the substance, impaired is impaired and they are unsafe to operate a motor vehicle.

What do believe is needed for a good relationship between the sheriff's department and county commissioners?: I believe good and consistent communication is needed between the sheriff and the county commissioners. It is vital to keep the commissioners updated on current trends in law enforcement, and what the sheriff's office's needs are to most effectively serve the citizens of Douglas County. We are all working toward a common goal of keeping Douglas County a great place to live and work. We must work together as a team and that starts with good communication.

If the commissioners cut your budget by 10 percent, what program or people would you cut? Please be specific.: A 10 percent cut in the sheriff's budget would be detrimental. Our current yearly budget is approximately $6.5 million. Out of that, approximately 82 percent is in salaries and benefits, leaving 18 percent in services and supplies. A deputy sheriff position with salaries and benefits is approximately $100,000 per year. A 10 percent cut in our budget would mean having to lay off approximately seven deputy positions. I would be forced to eliminate our Street Enforcement Team which is made of up three detectives, plus a fourth narcotic detective assigned to the Tri-Net, and I would eliminate three general investigator positions. This would ensure that our jail division, which we are mandated by law to operate, would continue to function normally and that our patrol division would continue to operate normally enabling us to still respond to calls for service as quickly as possible. Our three remaining investigators would be burdened with many additional cases and we would have no one working undercover narcotics. We would become more reactionary in our law enforcement and less preventative.

What is your relationship with businesses at Lake Tahoe that work with the sheriff's department on various events? If anything, what would you consider changing?: We currently work with the Tahoe Chamber of Commerce and the Tahoe Visitor

Authority on events like the Amgen bike race and other race events that come to Tahoe every year. We also work with the Lake Tahoe casinos for the annual concert events, 4th of July, and New Year's celebrations and also the annual Edgewood Celebrity Golf Tournament. Our deputies provide the security for these events and we currently enjoy a very good working relationship with these businesses. I think we do a very good job and I would ensure we keep ourselves and our business partners up to date on current trends in law enforcement and use best practices to ensure we provide the best law enforcement services possible to the public. When I was the patrol captain at the lake, I was very involved in the chamber and with all the casinos and local businesses. Since leaving that position, I believe the sheriff's office has not been as actively involved or invested in the lake. I would ensure that the lake has a sheriff's office presence and we would become re-invested in the lake and all its activities and businesses.

Deputies use targets to practice marksmanship. Is there a better way to train people so not so many unarmed people are being shot? Please elaborate.: We currently utilize the Virtra Force Simulator that all deputies here at the sheriff's office attend on a regular basis. The Virtra system is a state-of-the-art video simulator, enabling officers to train for the most difficult real-world situations, including ambushes, active shooters, and maintaining full situational awareness during extreme stress. Officer presence, communication skills training, tactical de-escalation training, Taser, and deadly force, are all available for simulation using standard-issue weapons.

If you could make the rules for New Year's Eve at Stateline, what would they be?: As sheriff, I would continue with what we currently do now. Our goal is to protect the citizens and tourists in Douglas County year-round. My rule would be for the public to celebrate the New Year peacefully, respect one another, and not drink and drive. I would assist in helping to

acquire free transportation “dial-a-ride” so we can help prevent drunken drivers. We are there to work with our partners the casinos and I would be open to any new and different suggestions they might have that would help them and their businesses be successful on New Year’s.

Douglas County sheriff’s deputies make less than South Lake Tahoe police officers and El Dorado County sheriff’s deputies. Does this hamper efforts to recruit employees?: No.

Do you believe deputies should be paid more? Why or why not? If yes, how would you go about getting them more money?: Nevada has no state income tax which helps to offset the higher pay in California, that does have an income tax. I believe the deputy pay scale is competitive, and our officers top out at a very similar rate as our neighboring agencies. The problem is the initial pay that we offer to new officers is $2-$3 less than neighboring jurisdictions. I would like to see our deputies starting wages be more competitive. The collective bargaining unit needs to negotiate these terms. As sheriff, I would do everything in my power to support that.

What is lacking in the department right now in terms of personnel or equipment or other resources? How would you address those needs?: With the ever increasing mental health population in Douglas County, I would have the Mobile Outreach Safety Team (MOST), increase its services from one day a week to three-five days a week to keep up with the demand. The MOST Team is made up of a specially trained deputy in dealing with the mentally ill, a paramedic and a social worker. They currently work one day a week and visit with a case load of mentally ill people in Douglas County. The MOST team is currently funded under a grant and I would seek to increase funding through additional grants to keep the MOST team available more often.

What do you think is the biggest issue facing Douglas County Sheriff’s Office and how do you plan to resolve it?: I think

our mentally ill population is our biggest concern. The mentally ill population is on the rise in Douglas County and I believe in order to stay proactive in addressing that issue, our MOST Team is our greatest tool.

Body cameras are about to be required throughout Nevada. What are the pros and cons?: The pros are that they bring accountability and transparency to incidents where force is used and have shown to have a reduction in complaints from citizens. The cons are that the upfront costs are very expensive and the videos are expensive to store. There are also privacy concerns. The public is now on film and may be less likely to come forward to give information for fear of being on film.

Tell us something about yourself that people might not already know?: I am an artist. I draw, airbrush and paint and I also am an avid wood-worker. I also enjoy, running, jet skiing, fly fishing, snowboarding, camping and hiking. I am also an abalone diver, spear fisherman and scuba diver.

Nev. gaming regulations to address sexual harassment

By Richard N. Velotta, Las Vegas Review-Journal

A comprehensive written plan to prevent sexual harassment may soon be required of Nevada's gaming licensees.

The state Gaming Control Board will conduct a public regulation workshop Thursday at 1:30 p.m., to consider a 2½-

page amendment to Regulation 5. The regulation encompasses the rules that spell out operations in gaming establishments and disciplinary actions that can be taken against licensees, including license suspensions, revocations and fines.

The amendment would take effect upon passage by the five-member Nevada Gaming Commission. It’s unclear how long it would be before commissioners take up final adoption of the amendment since more workshop meetings could be scheduled.

Read the whole story

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3 people vie for SLT interim city manager

By Kathryn Reed

While the interim city manager position was on two agendas of the South Lake Tahoe City Council this week, no one has been hired to do the job.

Six people initially applied for the position, with three backing out before there were interviews on April 30 during the special council meeting.

At that meeting each of the three gave a brief overview about themselves before being interviewed in closed session. That item was then continued to the regularly scheduled meeting the following day. No reportable action was taken in closed session May 1.

No one is saying what the delay is – whether background checks are being conducted, or maybe a decision was really made in closed session and negotiations are under way with that person

and the council doesn’t want to let the others know they weren’t the first choice in case they eventually get selected, or maybe the council is divided on who to select since only four were debating the matter. (Councilman Jason Collin was only at the Tuesday meeting until about noon.)

The process has been a bit awkward. On Monday’s agenda was a proposed salary and cost of benefits that the council had never discussed and therefore never approved. It was much like what the previous city manager was making and her benefits.

It wasn’t until Councilwoman Brooke Laine asked for the council to discuss the whole thing in closed session on April 30 that the council then decided to have some of the interview process in closed session – which is normal.

While it’s not known what was discussed in that initial session, based on the fact that at the May 1 meeting the salary and other benefits had been changed, the compensation package was likely a topic on Monday. One would think there was reportable action from Monday’s closed session based on what transpired in open session Tuesday.

Tom Stuart, human resources chief for the city, on Tuesday said he had researched city manager salaries from about a dozen California cities and came up with a range South Lake Tahoe should offer the interim – between $14,583 and $15,833 a month. (The previous day the recommendation was for a monthly salary of $14,616.70.)

Direction from council was for the top amount to also include a housing allowance if one is negotiated. The car allowance is likely not to exceed an additional $400/month.

It’s possible the city could be out more than $20,000/month for the interim city manager once other benefits/costs that are routine for most employees are factored in. This will then require an adjustment to the budget because what was proposed at the mid-year budget review said there would be no

additional expenses for city manager.

Where that money comes also has not ever been discussed in open session. The city has a healthy pot of cash in excess reserves, so it could come from there as a one-time expense.

Interim city manager candidates are:

· Dirk Brazil – recently retired Davis city manager

· Bob Perrault – most recently was interim city manager for Willits, prior to that was city manager of Grover Beach for 10 years

· James Hock – (interviewed via Skype) – city manager of Joliet, Ill.

The hope of the council is that whomever is selected will be able to assume the role quickly.

The city is in need of the top executive because the council for reasons that have never been disclosed paid the previous city manager nine month's salary for her to not have the job. Fire Chief Jeff Meston then assumed the role of acting city manager. He told the council he wanted out.

EDC takes slow, methodical approach to VHRs



El Dorado County supervisors and staff hear from Tahoe residents on May 2 about vacation rentals. Photo/LTN

By Kathryn Reed

When it comes to vacation home rentals, baby steps by El Dorado County officials are not enough for many who for years have been annoyed by visitors making a raucous in their neighborhoods. At the same time, several others don't want to follow in the steps of South Lake Tahoe where $2,000 fines for parking and horrific national media attention have followed its latest ordinance.

The Board of Supervisors on the evening of May 2 spent a couple hours talking VHRs to a crowd at South Tahoe Middle School.

While the electeds had wanted people to talk specifically to the proposed ordinance changes, the 23 people who spoke were all over the board. It was much of the same that has been said meeting after meeting.

CAO Don Ashton admitted the first step is to go after the "low hanging fruit," with more substantive changes to take more time.

On Wednesday the board voted 4-0 for staff to make basic changes to the existing ordinance, with the expectation it will be ready for a first reading on May 22. (Supervisor John Hidahl was absent.) If everything goes forward, the changes could be in effect in July.

Proposed ordinance changes from the 2004 document include:

· Increasing penalties to $500, $1,000, and $1,500 within an 18-month period.

· Revoking permits based on nuisance behavior.

· Clarifying language throughout the document, including reducing subjectivity by eliminating phrases like “best efforts.”

· Requiring exterior signage that includes local contact information.

· Capping the number of occupants between 10pm and 8am; in other words, only occupants of the dwelling may be there between those hours, no guests of the renters’.

· The ordinance would be for the entire county, not just the Tahoe basin.

· Inspections would be required before a permit is issued, with health and safety being the overriding concerns.

· Have code enforcement handle VHRs.

· Bear-proof trash receptacles will be required.

“We as the ad hoc committee will still be looking at everything,” Supervisor Sue Novasel said. She and Supervisor Mike Ranalli are the duo on that committee. They will be at the magnet school in Meyers on May 9 starting at 5:30pm to hash out more VHR details.

Another change that was agreed to this week at the urging of

Supervisor Brian Veerkamp was to make the response time to complaints be 30 minutes instead of an hour.

Exact fees, such as for inspections, have not been determined. The price will be whatever it costs Lake Valley Fire to do the job. No profit will be made.

Supervisor Shiva Frentzen wanted to know how the city's VHR ordinance that took effect in late December has impacted the county. Novasel said it does not appear there has been a huge jump in permits being sought.

However, tax collector Cherie Raffety, whose department is responsible for VHRs, said as of mid-April there was a 13 percent increase in VHR permits compared to 2017.

There is no time line to implement further changes, or address the No. 1 issue of residents – noise.

More than once audience members brought up the desire for a VHR moratorium. On the flip side, VHR proponents said it's critical to base decisions on facts, citing how during the winter only eight noise complaints were filed South Lake Tahoe. Plus, there is the economic component, with jobs being what was talked about the most at the meeting.

In the county's proposed budget for 2018-19 is $350,000 for code enforcement, an area El Dorado has skimped on in the past. Short-term rentals would get a chunk of that cash, as well as other county programs.

Nitrogen from rock could fuel

more plant growth

By Benjamin Z. Houlton, The Conversation

Nitrogen is one of the most important resources for people, ecosystems and the planet. It's found in all sorts of essential molecules, including DNA, protein and cell walls. Life – and humanity – cannot exist without adequate access to this precious nutrient.

For many years, researchers believed that essentially all of the nitrogen in the world's natural plants and soils originated from the atmosphere, where it makes up about 78 percent of the air we breathe. But in a recent study, my colleagues Scott Morford, Randy Dahlgren and I discovered that up to a quarter of the planet's terrestrial nitrogen originates from weathering of bedrock.

As a global environmental scientist who has been studying nitrogen, climate and ecosystems for over a decade, I found this result surprising. And it has big implications for people and the planet. If there is more nitrogen available in Earth's system than scientists have thought, it could fuel extra photosynthesis by plants, increasing the rate at which they pull carbon pollution out of the atmosphere.

But this isn't a solution to climate change, contrary to what some prominent pundits have contended. Rock weathering is no magic answer: It simply does not supply nitrogen fast enough to radically slow warming over the next 100 years.

Calculating Earth's nitrogen budget

Geologists have long known that there's a lot of nitrogen in rocks, but our study was the first to show that this nitrogen is released quickly enough to influence plant and soil nutrient cycling on a global scale. Nitrogen inputs are critical to maintaining ecosystems because they lose a bit of

nitrogen every year. Rain washes it out of soil, and bacteria convert it to gaseous forms that escape to the atmosphere. Without ongoing access to new nitrogen sources, plants eventually would stop growing and pulling carbon dioxide out of the air.

Our study used several different techniques to show that rocks are an important component of the planet's nitrogen cycle. In cases where weathering rates are high and sedimentary rocks contain a decent quantity of nitrogen, they actually provide more nitrogen than the atmosphere. We pulled together decades of data on where nitrogen exists – in the atmosphere, rocks, the ocean and Earth's mantle (the rock between its crust and its core), and used this information to build a picture of the planet's nitrogen budget.

This work revealed a critical role played by rock weathering. Many processes gradually break rocks down over time, including freezing and thawing, chemical reactions, and impacts of living organisms such as lichens and tree roots. Weathering releases nitrogen, replenishing nitrogen that continental erosion carries to the ocean over millions of years.

This initial finding was supported by a suite of classic geochemical models, evidence built from our global rock nitrogen inventory, and a new global computer model that we created for this study.

Until now researchers had assumed that the atmosphere was the main source of nitrogen for Earth's ecosystems. But they also had trouble explaining how so much nitrogen accumulated in ecosystems if it came solely from the atmosphere.

We identified bedrock as the source of this "missing nitrogen" by showing that rock weathering could help to meet nitrogen demand from plants and animals. In mountainous regions and areas with moist climates, where rocks are exposed and tend to weather quickly, we estimate that rock weathering doubles the

amount of nitrogen that enters natural ecosystems.

Nourishing the carbon cycle

What does this mean for the carbon cycle and global climate change? Several computer simulations have shown that nitrogen affects carbon storage in a way that could substantially alter the amount of global warming that occurs in this century. Our past work showed that ecosystems living on nitrogen-rich bedrock contained twice as much carbon in their soils and trees as those on nitrogen-poor bedrock. The nitrogen in the rock was feeding the ecosystem, allowing plants to accumulate more biomass than sites without much rock nitrogen weathering.

But rock nitrogen has always been a part of the planet, even if we weren't terribly mindful of it. Our study makes explicit a process that is already affecting the planet's carbon cycle. And it helps explain how plants and soils have absorbed roughly 30 percent of carbon emissions from human activities, even though nutrient constraints on plant growth are widespread.

Globally, ecosystems still derive more nitrogen from the air than from rocks. Nonetheless, our findings may help make global climate models more precise and resolve some puzzling observations at higher latitudes, which tend to hold more nitrogen in rocks. For example, boreal forest zones in northern Canada and Eurasia are storing carbon at a level higher than many scientists would have predicted, and are greening in response to climate change. We expect these regions may have high levels of nitrogen from rock weathering.

Rock nitrogen won't save us from climate change

Some pundits have argued that our work shows scientists don't have a firm grasp of such issues as global climate change. This view is wrong.

Our study highlights a role for rocks in supplying nitrogen to

terrestrial ecosystems. It challenges a paradigm that was established as far back as the late 1800s, but this doesn't make us doubt the scientific process. Instead, we recognize that questions must always drive our thinking – for example, "I wonder whether rock nitrogen matters to the planet?"

Others have misinterpreted our work as evidence that the risk of extreme climate change has been overblown. For example, conservative commentator Rush Limbaugh opined, "It's a scientific report that carbon dioxide, CO2, that which causes the greenhouse effect, is much, much, much less impactful than anybody knew."

Wrong again. Our study said no such thing, and it does not imply that curbing global climate change is less urgent. Rock nitrogen can help fertilize the carbon cycle, but there is not enough of it to stop the rapid pace of global climate change. That will require aggressively cutting greenhouse gas emissions and creating technologies that can remove carbon from the atmosphere at a large scale over the next few decades.

Climate models consistently show that nature will not save us. We have to save ourselves – although rocks may provide us with a bit more cushion than we previously knew.

Benjamin Z. Houlton is a professor of global environmental studies, chancellor's fellow and director, John Muir Institute of the Environment, UC Davis.

Sierra meadow restoration:

Where to start?

By Julie Fair, American Rivers

Over the last decade, momentum for restoring Sierra Nevada meadows has been building. The State of California and the U.S. Forest Service have both increasingly recognized the benefits of meadow restoration for California watersheds and are now committed to meadow restoration. Healthy meadows provide a suite of benefits including improved groundwater storage, enhanced water quality, reduced peak flood flows, and critical habitat.

However, with an estimated 50 percent of the 191,000 acres of meadow in the Sierra (Sierra Meadows Strategy, 2016) degraded by human impacts, it is difficult to know where to start. To address this, in 2010, American Rivers partnered with UC Davis and the U.S. Forest Service to develop the Meadow Condition Scorecard, a rapid assessment method to quickly assess overall meadow condition and help identify meadows in need of restoration.

Read the whole story

Report on controversial inquiry divides SLT council



The South Lake Tahoe City Council is doing a lot of talking behind closed doors. Photo/LTN

By Kathryn Reed

It's as though the South Lake Tahoe City Council is unraveling one thread at a time, with the holes of incompetency and distrust exposing themselves a little bit more each time the electeds meet.

Tuesday was the latest episode of "Dysfunction at 6,200 feet." On the May 1 agenda was the MRG contract. This is the firm led by Mary Egan that was hired last fall to do a cultural assessment of the city. The contract, though, until this week had never been brought before the council in open session.

By the time the agenda item came up for discussion Councilman Jason Collin had left the meeting, citing a work obligation.

It was impossible for the remaining four to have an honest, open conversation because the contract was first OK'd in closed session and those discussions must remain confidential.

In reality what the council was being asked was to approve

paying an invoice. Even interim City Attorney Nira Doherty said it wasn't really a contract, instead she called it an agreement. The first agreement sent by Egan to Doherty stated the work would not exceed $10,000, with another $1,500 for expenses. The Nov. 16 amended agreement asked for another $2,500 based on additional work.

Only the November agreement was in the council packet on Tuesday. Councilmembers Wendy David and Austin appeared flummoxed when Councilmembers Tom Davis and Brooke Laine knew about the October document and had a copy of it.

The first agreement said, "All participations (sic) will be told that their comments will be included in a summary written report that identifies important themes, and not include information attributable to any individual."

That report has never materialized. That is one argument Laine and Davis cited in not voting to authorize payment of the bill; they said the scope of work was not completed. David and Sass voted to approve payment of the original agreement. That motion failed on a 2-2 vote.

Ultimately it was decided that the mayor (David) and mayor pro tem (Davis) would work as a subcommittee of sorts to decide whether a written report should be provided by the firm as was stated would be done in the original agreement.

Doherty or someone from her law firm will provide the pros and cons of asking for the written report. Then the council as a whole will decide how to proceed.

Doherty told the council Egan's written report is likely to be a public document.

Depending on what is in the report, it's possible sections would be redacted based on it being a personnel issue.

Sass raised the specter of a lawsuit by former City Manager

Nancy Kerry if information were released. This is based on a threat made by her attorney Jacqueline Mittelstadt regarding Sass potentially breaking the city's settlement agreement with Kerry with his comments at an April council meeting. Neither side is supposed to disparage the other.

Still, the report would be based on information gathered before Kerry's separation with the city earlier this year, so it would not likely be protected by the settlement agreement. It could just fall under normal personnel privacy.

One of the glaring things about this agreement is that the council agreed to hire MRG in closed session under an agenda item that had nothing to do with Kerry or the city in general.

The Sept. 5, Sept. 19 and Oct. 3 closed session items each stated: "(b) Public employee appointment and employment pursuant to Government Code Section 54957(b)(1) Title: City Attorney." At the Sept. 19 meeting it was announced that Doherty had been hired as interim city attorney to replace Tom Watson. On Oct. 3 the contract was approved and Doherty began her job.

It was at her first meeting that she learned of the directive by the council in one of those September closed sessions to hire MRG. The council did this with Watson in the room; Doherty was not there.

Doherty told the council on May 1 she had issues with how all of this went down. After the meeting, though, she would not elaborate other than to tell *Lake Tahoe News*, "I think it is best practice to have contracts approved in open session."

She would not say why the topic was not brought out into the open until now.

Sass was mayor at the time and in a battle with Kerry because he wanted more power than what comes with the ceremonial position.

Watson in a farewell salvo was in cahoots with Sass to have MRG evaluate Kerry. However, it was sold to the other council members as a cultural assessment of the whole city and to study a succession plan. That didn't happen.

Per Kerry's contract she had the right to know when she was being evaluated or investigated, and there were protocols in place to inform her. That didn't happen and it's something she could have sued the city over. In June 2017 she received a glowing review by this very council that voted to oust her.

Ultimately the Egan debacle became a witch hunt that resulted in Kerry being shown the door.

It was on Jan. 23, after Egan's work was completed, that a closed session item pertaining to Kerry's evaluation was placed on the agenda.

After weeks of turmoil, the council agreed to pay Kerry the nine month's severance in her contract based on there being no actual cause for the separation.

Beyond taxpayers' dollars being used to pay Kerry, the city is now in talks to hire an interim city manager who will make about $100 an hour.

Still, though, what was uncovered by Egan has never been disclosed to the public. Nor were the allegations alleged ever substantiated by anyone. The council received a verbal report from Egan, that's it.

There are public records that might shed light on what happened, but the city is withholding those documents as was illustrated in this **April 30** *Lake Tahoe News* column.

On a related note, the council was to discuss **Laine's allegations** about Brown Act violations that were first brought to light on *Lake Tahoe News*. The council agreed to table that item until the **District Attorney's Office** completes its

investigation.