Indoor climbing gym coming to South Tahoe

By Kathryn Reed

A year from now it might not be necessary to go to Pie Shop or Lovers Leap or any of the other iconic climbing locales around Tahoe. That's because an indoor climbing gym in South Lake Tahoe is in the works.

"My husband and I are both rock climbers. When we moved up here about three years ago one of the first things we noticed is South Lake needs a climbing gym," Gianna Leavers told *Lake Tahoe News.*

She and her husband, Brad, are in the planning phase with Blue Granite Climbing Gym. The hope is by the end of the year to have done what is necessary for the city regarding permits, then hire a contractor and break ground in May, with a fall 2017 opening.

One obstacle they must overcome is getting the necessary commercial floor area or CFA. CFA is a commodity that the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency created to curb development, but which is now impeding redevelopment and thwarting a free market economy.

The Leavers bought the parcel on Emerald Bay Road where the Tahoe Budget Inn used to be; it was razed in 2007.



This is a rendering provided by Monarch Architecture of what the gym will look like.

The building – which is intended to be built to LEED criteria – will be about 7,600 square feet. According to Monarch Architecture, it will have metal cladding, vertical glass elements and a heavy timber intermediate roof canopy.

To get around the maximum building height of 35 feet, the plan is to excavate some of the dirt in the back so a taller climbing wall – about 40 feet – can be installed.

The pitches will range from slabs, to vertical to overhangs. A smaller wall will be near the entrance, with the idea this will be used to introduce people to the sport, for kids or even groups.

There will be top ropes, leads, bouldering, a yoga room, free weights and cardio equipment.

“One of the aspects that we are interested in as climbers is that we are interested in building a community for the climbers in Tahoe,” Leavers said.

It will be a place for people to hang out as well as meet like-minded individuals.

But it won’t just be for the hard-core climbers to practice their skills. The goal is to make it appealing to all levels –

where classes are taught, camps are offered, birthdays are celebrated, and after school programs take place.

Collin: Collaborative, positive and optimistic

Publisher's note: ***Lake Tahoe News asked candidates for South Lake Tahoe City Council, Lake Tahoe Community College, Lake Tahoe Unified School District, Douglas County School District, South Tahoe Public Utility District and Lake Valley Fire Protection District a series of questions. We are running the responses in the order received. All profiles may be found under the Special Projects listing and then the 2106 November Candidate Profiles category.***



Jason Collin is running for one of two seats open on the South Lake Tahoe City Council.

Name: Jason Collin

Age: 43

Job/profession: Administrative director of post-acute services at Barton Health, and owner/race director for Epic Tahoe Adventures

What boards, commissions, or other experience, including volunteering, do you have?: Sustainability Commission for city of South Lake Tahoe (2010-2012); Leadership Lake Tahoe (2010); participant Tahoe Prosperity Plan (2010-2011); Athletes United (past president 2010-2015, current secretary); Rotary Club of South Lake Tahoe (2010-2014), past president (2012-2013); Lake Tahoe South Shore Chamber of Commerce board member (2012-present), executive committee member (2014-present), past chair (2015).

Why are you running for City Council?: I want to be actively involved in the projects and initiatives that are moving, and will continue to move our city forward. We are very fortunate to live in such an amazing place and I want to see our city reflect that beauty rather than detract from it.

Why should voters vote for you over another candidate?: I'm extremely collaborative, positive and optimistic – three things I think we need a heck of a lot more of in our community.

What distinct experience or competency makes you uniquely qualified to lead effectively as an elected official?: A sincere interest in listening to all sides of issues and working collaboratively towards meaningful solutions.

Public agencies have been under scrutiny the last few years for lack of transparency and accountability. What will you do to ensure both?: True accountability is a function of culture. We need to establish a culture of open, honest communication, where the officials, and the public, are held to a higher standard of conduct. I believe in adhering to the Brown Act and will hold myself, my fellow council members and the public responsible for conducting ourselves accordingly.

What stands out for you in the current budget that you support and that you would change?: I like the conservative budget approach and the mid-year reflection that allows for prioritized investment. I also support the commitment the city is making in infrastructure improvement. In the future, I would hope to see increased funding for housing programs and economic development. As a council member, bringing quality jobs and quality housing to South Lake Tahoe will be a top priority.

Do you support current legislation for $15 minimum wage? Please explain: Tough one. I'm definitely in favor of promoting living wages for employees. However, I am concerned that with this big jump we may see businesses cut positions or find ways to automate jobs that are currently performed by employees (e.g. ordering food). I need to do more research and talk to business owners and employees before I come to a conclusion on this one.

Do you support Proposition 55? Please explain: Another tough one. Although Prop. 55 isn't equitable and it's not fixing the problem of why schools are broke, I do like the idea of increased funding for education and (potentially) health care for low-income families. If we're looking at legislation for the greater good, I think Prop. 55 has more upside than down.

Describe three attributes for a successful council: Thoughtfulness, respect, sincerity.

What are your thoughts about public employee defined benefits?: I support the tough decision our city and public employees made to decrease the unfunded liability of health care and public pensions. Very, very tough thing to do but definitely in the best interest of our community's economic well-being.

Please explain your position regarding contracting out work normally done by staff: I thrive on building teams so I

strongly believe in the value of our staff. Contract work is very appropriate for certain circumstances (e.g., coverage for leaves of absence, temporary fulfillment of positions, variable need of services, specific skills that can't be found otherwise, etc.).

What is your 10-year vision for South Lake Tahoe?: I hope that in 10 years, when my kids are coming back from college to start their careers in the vibrant economy we've established, and have quality options for affordable housing (so they don't move back in with me), they will say: "I can't believe how much progress has occurred! It's so easy to get around now – I may not even need a car. And Highway 50 is amazing. No more run down motels and buildings. People are really taking pride in the community. It still has that laid back Tahoe charm … but now we've got class too. It finally feels like one community. We're so stoked to move back home."

What one vote in the last four years that the current council made do you disagree with and why?: I think the VHR decision may have been a bit hasty. We need to consistently enforce code before we change our policies.

How many City Council meetings have you attended this year?: 4-5

What do you know about the strategic plan, finances, debt, and goals of the city?: The city's strategic plan establishes these priorities: economic development, fiscal sustainability, improve the built environment, partnership development, public trust and accountability, quality core services. The city's budget reflects these priorities within each department to the community's benefit. With regard to finance and debt, I am still reviewing the budget and developing an understanding of its many facets.

Being on a board means working as a team. How will you work with the sitting members for the greater good of the

community?: It all comes back to respectful communication. We don't always need to agree, but we need to respect each other and each other's right to voice their opinions. We also need to avoid belaboring points, move conversations forward and be willing to make, and stand by, decisions.

What should be the three main priorities for the council?: Housing, jobs, infrastructure.

What have you done to make yourself ready to be a council member?: Learning more about people's needs, wants and concerns is one of the most important things I've been doing. I will also be meeting with key city staff and agency partners to become better informed on the issues I will address as a council member.

What role should government have in housing for residents?: We have an important role in being part of the solution. A good starting point is improving our existing house stock through enforcement of residential building codes. Too many properties have been allowed to become run down in our city. If there are grants or programs that are available to public agencies then I feel we have an obligation to pursue those to create quality workforce housing like the Aspens project. The city can also have a profound impact by helping to lower barriers that prevent investors from building affordable housing.

How can the city partner with the school district to improve high school graduation rates?: First, the graduation rates at STHS and Mt. Tallac are actually really good. In 2014-15, 97.1 percent of the senior class graduated. But, getting to the heart of your question, the city can be a better partner to Lake Tahoe USD and our community's families by creating a vibrant economy and affordable housing to reduce our issues of transiency, food insecurity and poverty. Our kids are a reflection of the values of the environment in which they live. We have an obligation to give the children in our community every opportunity we can for them to succeed.

How can local government support and expand job creation and small local businesses?: Let’s start with supporting and growing the businesses that are already here by getting out of the way. Lowering barriers (i.e., permitting) will also attract new businesses, fill vacant commercial properties and create jobs. By supporting innovation and embracing the millennial mindset of the current workforce (e.g., Tahoe Mountain Lab), the city can help pave the way for entrepreneurs and capital workforce investment into our community.

If you believe in the one South Shore concept, what would you do to further make this a reality? If you don’t believe in blurring the state line, why don’t you?: I absolutely believe we are one South Shore community. The us vs. them mentality has to stop. My friends in “the county” are just as much a part of South Lake Tahoe as my friends up on Kingsbury Grade. We all work together, shop together and play together. Let’s keep the focus on what we have in common and how we can bolster the community as a whole and everybody wins.

What are your views on:

a: Vacation home rentals: VHRs serve a critical role in our community. How many VHRs should be here needs to be figured out. We also need to keep the pressure on code enforcement.

b: Loop road: I think the project has the potential to have a very positive impact on the make-up of our community. I support the vision of a renewed state line area with improved housing, neighborhood parks, well-lit streets and improved walkability for locals and visitors alike.

c: City streets: The street, curb, gutter and sidewalk work that has been done has been great but it’s a drop in the bucket. The council needs to make it a priority to find funding to complete the sidewalks and lighting along Highway 50 that Caltrans removed from its project. It is no

coincidence that private investment has occurred in areas with complete streets. From the highway, we need to move the street investment into our neighborhoods, with an annualized paving program.

d: Relationships with other public agencies: Partnerships with fellow agencies like El Dorado County, LTCC, LTUSD and STPUD are critical to making our city and surrounding areas a more vibrant place. Achieving that vibrancy requires active and good relationships with our regulatory and land partners at TRPA, TTD, Lahontan, the Tahoe Conservancy and Forest Service. Council needs to take a more hands-on approach to forging those relationships than has been done in the past. We are all incredibly interdependent.

e: Recreation: Recreation opportunities are at the core of our quality of life and also our economic sustainability. I'm excited about the Recreation Master Plan and the interest the community is showing in expanding and improving our infrastructure with projects like the renewal of Regan Beach and modernizing the recreational center complex.

f. TRPA defined commodities: I can't claim to understand the complexity of the TRPA commodities. With environmental safeguards in place, I am in favor of decreasing regulatory hurdles.

g. Transient occupancy tax measure: Support.

h. Sales tax measure: Support

i. What do you want the additional sales tax money to go to?: Roads

Tell us something about yourself that people may not know: My ears are totally uneven. Like a centimeter off.

Your quest to stop the loop road failed. Is litigation how you believe issues should be resolved?: No. My goal was to

highlight the fact that the initiative was poorly worded. If the citizens of our city are voting on an issue, we have an obligation to provide clear and accurate information.

Report: Expanding sports betting would generate $11.9B

By Las Vegas Sun

Extending legalized sports betting beyond Nevada and other states where it is currently lawful would create nearly $12 billion in gross gaming revenue in the U.S., says a report from a global gaming analyst.

GamblingCompliance Research Services' report says the U.S. would become the world's largest sports-betting market if a federal prohibition on sports wagering were eliminated. Revenue in the U.S. would be $11.9 billion – more than four times the amount of the United Kingdom, home of current leading market. Gross gaming revenue there is $2.8 billion.

Revenue in California alone would be $1.3 billion if legal sports wagering were expanded to tribal casinos, online and noncasino retail outlets, the report said.

Read the whole story

Tainted soil to be removed from ZC Resort

By Kathryn Reed

In the five years since a fuel leak was detected at Zephyr Cove Resort more than 1,400 tons of petroleum product have been extracted from the soil.

While work to clean up the site has been ongoing since the contamination was discovered in fall 2011, the next step in the process is about to begin. This will include digging a trench about 25-feet deep close to Highway 50 and back to the parking attendant kiosk.

Officials will test the soil throughout this next process, which will begin Sept. 12. The plan is to have this work done by Oct. 15. The goal is to remove even more contaminated dirt – 2,500 tons; all of which is shipped outside the basin. In the process more than a dozen trees had to be felled.

Jonathan Cook-Fisher with the U.S. Forest Service told *Lake Tahoe News*, "We very likely will be monitoring this site for years to come."

The Forest Service owns the land, while Aramark operates the various businesses on site.

The commercial entities will remain open, though parking will be affected.



A sparge unit injects air into the soil to get the vapors out. Photo/LTN file

Even though the underground fuel tanks had been inspected annually, it wasn’t until five years ago that the leak was detected. It is not known how much gasoline actually escaped or how long it had been seeping out.

Cook-Fisher said the tanks were in place before the USFS owned the land. He said situations like this one underscore the hazards of underground tanks and why they are no longer in vogue.

Today the tanks are on the pier. And while this obviously puts them closer to the waters of Lake Tahoe, Cook-Fisher said it’s safer there because of the ability to conduct better tests on the equipment and the safety mechanisms that are in place. Plus, being above ground allows for the opportunity to smell and see the product.

While the plume is good size, it has not reached Lake Tahoe.

It starts near where the tanks used to be (they were removed in 2012), goes under the restaurant parking lot and moves northwest toward the pier.

Monitoring of the test wells shows the extent of the contamination is decreasing, Cook-Fisher said.

Conner: Wants to be voice for average citizen

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JoAnn Conner is running for one of two seats open on the South Lake Tahoe City

Council.

Name: JoAnn Conner

Age: 67

Job/profession: Small business owner

What boards, commissions, or other experience, including volunteering, do you have?: Currently serve as City Council representative to the League of California Cities, City Council representative to the lodging association, council subcommittee representative for the Senior Center and the Tahoe Coalition for the Homeless. Served on Airport Master Plan Committee, Recreation JPA, Solid Waste JPA, served on the fields subcommittee from the City Council, represented the City Council on the Bicycle Coalition. Currently serve on the board of directors for the South Lake Tahoe Cancer League, regularly attend the Tahoe Area Coordinating Council for the Disabled, am a member of the American Legion Auxiliary, member of the Tahoe Art League, member of Friends of the Library, a lifetime member of the Lake Tahoe Historical Society, past president of the South Tahoe Chamber of Commerce, past board member of Tahoe Douglas Rotary, past Neighborhood Chairperson for Girl Scouts, past co-pack master of Boy Scout Pack 594. I have done fundraisers for the Lake Tahoe Humane Society, American Legion, VFW, and Christmas Cheer, and regularly help with the beach clean up on the 5th of July organized by the League to Save Lake Tahoe.

Why are you seeking re-election?: There are a lot of projects to complete and work to be done in our community; I have met with many community members and organizations that have initiated good beginnings for our town. Many citizens asked me to run again as they feel there needs to be at least one voice that speaks for the average citizen and business owner. Many are supporting me in this race.

Why should voters vote for you over another candidate?: I have four years of diverse experience and a real understanding of the personalities involved in running the city. I would like to see the city revamp their fees and permit structure to benefit small businesses and simplify processes to encourage good growth and improvements.

What distinct experience or competency makes you uniquely qualified to lead effectively as an elected official?: I listen to the average citizen and business owner, as well as larger entities. I connect with the average citizen and respond to their needs. As a small business owner, I understand those concerns.

Public agencies have been under scrutiny the last few years for lack of transparency and accountability. What will you do to ensure both?: I will continue to speak up for greater transparency and citizen voices to be heard.

What stands out for you in the current budget that you support and that you would change?: Not enough money allocated for roads. There are several areas where I would like to see the taxpayer money spent with more care and accountability.

Do you support current legislation for $15 minimum wage? Please explain: No, across the board mandates do not work. The biggest employers in our town and nation are small business owners. Requiring a small business owner to adhere to the same standards as multi-million dollar companies is not logical. If you force them to pay more when they cannot afford it, they will lay off workers or drop benefits. For example, an unintended consequence of mandatory health insurance resulted in a number of small businesses in our town dropping the health coverage they had previously given to their employees because the mandate created higher premiums for these businesses. They increased the wages, in many cases, but it still was not sufficient to allow the employee to buy insurance on their own. How did that help? It would be

interesting to explore incentives for the bigger businesses to provide housing and better wages. Bear in mind, many of the employees in our community who do not work for small business work for a government entity. That means the taxpayers fund the raise. Typically, when a mandate of this nature is issued, the prices for rent, food, goods, and services also go up, so that is not the answer to help people financially. We need to work on better wages in our community, but this is not the solution.

Do you support Proposition 55? Please explain: Our schools continue to need funding, and that is important. The sales tax portion is due to expire, so on the surface, it looks like those who make more will pay more. The battle may come in the form of people wanting their government to be more fiscally conservative instead of spending more. The issue of health care for lower income may also be muddied by the implementation of Obamacare.

Describe three attributes for a successful council: A willingness to work for the people, being willing to set personal differences aside and honor all views, dedication of time for all council members to share the responsibilities of council, without a concentration of power.

What are your thoughts about public employee defined benefits?: This is a growing concern, as the system itself may be beginning to erode as far as stability. Public employees pay into this system, as do their employers. Many times this is a trade off in lieu of raises, just as it is in the private sector. However, since it does not appear to be sustainable in the long run, looking at options now would seem wise.

Please explain your position on contracting out work normally done by staff: That depends on the work and the staff available and qualified to do the work. If we don’t have enough or qualified staff, it is necessary. Sometimes impartiality plays a role, and it is in the best interest of

the citizens to use an independent firm.

What is your 10-year vision for the council?: I would like to see term limits on council service. The vision is too limited and the possibility to shut out new ideas is more likely when people have served more than two terms. Likewise, the mayor position should be rotated to allow for more diversity. Protocols should be adjusted to prohibit the concentration of power we currently have. The appearance is one or two council members are making major decisions for the majority of the council and the people. That is not healthy.

What as an elected official are the three things you are most proud of during your tenure?: Building, maintaining, and voting to keep the bike paths clear all year for our citizens who do not drive. Working with the Recreation JPA and surrounding entities to rebuild the fields at Al Tahoe School (adding one there as well) and Sierra House School, starting the new field at the LTCC site. Helping to complete the Harrison Avenue project.

Which votes would you change and why?: Paid Parking. The people did not want it.

Being on the council means working as a team. How will you work with the next council for the greater good of the community?: "Greater good of the community" should be defined by the majority of the citizens, and then the council should work for what the people want. The "power" on the council should be distributed more evenly to maximize the contributions and talents of all.

What should be the three main priorities for the council?: Maintain the roads; be the catalyst for affordable and workforce housing; be fiscally responsible while addressing the three main points for forming the city: police, fire, snow removal.

What role should government have in housing for residents?: A

healthy town has a diverse workforce and housing is a huge issue. I believe there is some state money we could pursue for housing for veterans. We could offer incentives by decreasing fees for businesses that will add housing to their building projects. I believe we should open serious dialogue with the larger employers in the region and work to have them provide better employee housing. In other areas, they do this successfully.

How can the city partner with the school district to improve high school graduation rates?: We could look at an apprentice type program to help students try out different jobs and careers. Not all students will excel at academics, some are gifted in arts, mechanics, recreation. My experience teaching at-risk students showed that you will not keep them if they are frustrated or feel what they are required to learn is irrelevant to their life. We have a variety of jobs and could offer sampling of work situations.

How can local government support and expand job creation and small local businesses?: Stop over regulating and decrease fees. The sign fee was a perfect example. The sign makers could do in two or three hours what it took city staff 10 or 12 hours to do because the city added more steps and repetition to reach the same end. Involve the business owners more to actually develop the most efficient program and policy, which would be better for business and save employee time.

If you believe in the one South Shore concept, what would you do to further make this a reality? If you don't believe in blurring the state line, why don't you?: The one South Shore idea is great in theory, but too often, that has equated to the citizens and businesses in South Lake Tahoe and Meyers bearing more of the negative impact than the Stateline area. The conversation and planning needs to be fair and the "anti-Nevada" labels need to stop.

What are your views on:

a: Vacation home rentals: Both sides of this issue are growing more agitated and want firm guidelines. I propose a moratorium on mega houses in residential neighborhoods. The danger in not taking this step is that the residents may very well push for residential zoning laws to be enforced, which would devastate the VHR community. There has to be a strong compromise in the near future.

b: Loop road: It is still full of uncertainty and unanswered questions. Would you start to build a house without a full set of plans? It does not appear to be fully thought out, for example, where is the funding for the affordable housing? That is a huge issue. It is also unfortunate that in the effort to get the area declared urban instead of rural, the funding for bus service to Carson City has been jeopardized.

c: City streets: The city needs to direct more of the budget to the repair and maintenance of our roads before they require the much more expensive mandate of complete replacement.

d: Relationships with other public agencies: Often, it is an adversarial relationship aggravated by one of the agencies attempting power over another. Perfect example was the issue with STPUD. More communication would likely have been more effective. Everything isn’t about who can gain the most money, it is about serving the people in the best manner possible.

e. TRPA defined commodities: In my opinion, this needs to be dissolved.

f. Transient occupancy tax measure: It seems like it would help fund a better recreation complex, at the expense of the visitors. I am concerned about securing the funding to build the center. If this passes, it could bring millions to the city to fund a new complex, but our debt ratio is already high.

g. Sales tax measure: If the people wish to pay a little more, it could be designated to fix the roads or help secure more workforce housing.

h. Where do you want the additional sales tax money to go to?: Where the citizens want it to go. I suspect that will be roads and/or affordable housing, but they need to decide, not the council.

Tell us something about yourself that people may not know: My "mind matters" too.

You brought a lawsuit against your four colleagues and one of two employees you manage which cost the taxpayers about $100,000, how do defend these actions? What did you get out of this action that you didn't have before the lawsuit?: I was not present to vote on that expenditure. The agreement answers the rest of the questions.

Uphill battle to keep Mt. Rose locally owned

By Benjamin Spillman, Reno Gazette-Journal

A series of Facebook posts under the name One Reno make a locavore pitch for the future of Mt. Rose Ski Tahoe, the longtime Reno-area ski resort.

"KEEP MOUNT ROSE LOCALLY OWNED," one all caps post screams.

In the comments under another post announcing a crowdfunding effort One Reno makes a pledge aimed at local skiers and riders who like the down-home feeling of the resort overlooking Reno which management announced in January was for

sale.

“We will keep the Mountain locally owned, and never allow it to become McSki-Resort,” One Reno posted in response to a commenter who asked about development plans.

One Reno is the brainchild of Govind Davis, a Reno resident with a background in technology who co-founded a consulting firm called MCF Technology before moving to Nevada.

Davis, who has no ski industry experience, is nonetheless seeking to put together a deal he says would put locals in control of charting a future for Mt. Rose.

Read the whole story

Calstar merger brings changes for members

By Susan Wood

Dan Gross of Roseville knows just how critical his Calstar air ambulance annual membership is when he recalls his snowmobiling adventure in April 2009.

Gross was riding around Highland Lakes in the Bear Valley area backcountry when he slipped off his sled, crashed and landed in a pile of rocks. Although injured, he was forced to drive the snowmobile for nearly 30 miles back to the Bear Valley fire station where Calstar picked him up. The math was against him – three people, three snowmobiles.

He could only drive it 10mph because of the pain.

“I didn’t break any bones, but I tore muscles in my lower abdomen. It was causing so much pain, I thought I was bleeding internally,” said the Bay Area former emergency medical technician, who did a mini assessment of himself at the time.

“It was pretty scary,” he told *Lake Tahoe News.*

It would have taken almost two hours to get him by ground to Sutter Hospital in Roseville.

Calstar, which awaits a finalized purchase in the coming weeks by Air Medical Group Holdings, got him there in 33 minutes.



Calstar pilot Heiko Kafton is enjoying the new helicopters that are more technologically advanced. Photo Copyright 2016 Carolyn E. Wright

His $50 annual household membership for the air ambulance service picked up $18,000 of the $38,000 bill – with his Blue Cross health care plan absorbing the remaining $20,000. It is not required for Calstar members to have insurance.

“I don’t know many people who could write a check for $18,000 for an ambulance ride. I think everybody should be a member,” Gross said.

So when presented with the prospect of a different corporation owning Calstar, he carefully considered the impact of the parent company change.

“I don’t see it as a big deal,” he said, adding it appears the coverage area will be expanded through the West Plains, Mo., conglomerate.

The decade-old Air Medical Group provides access to more than 240 air ambulance locations across 32 states.

AirMed’s for-profit organization, Reach Air Medical, served as a quasi competitor to Calstar in some areas. The merger means Calstar – which locally operates out of Lake Tahoe Airport – loses its nonprofit tax status and can’t accept any donations.

Calstar members received a letter announcing the merger. Household membership is expected to rise to $65 under the expansive AirMedCare Network.

The crew will remain intact on the operations side affecting pilots, mechanics and flight nurses.

“I believe that the acquisition by AMGH will actually be beneficial for Calstar as an organization in that we will now be part of a larger company focused on air medical transport and the resources that come with it,” Tahoe’s chief flight nurse Bryan Pond told *Lake Tahoe News.*

Layoffs will occur at Calstar’s McClellan Park headquarters in Sacramento in mainly the development and outreach department. Director of Development and Outreach Mike Nichols is among the group receiving a pink slip.

“We don’t need a satellite membership office. But overall, it’s going to be better. Services will be more efficient and

effective with Calstar and Reach as partners, not competitors," Nichols insisted. "We hear from folks that Calstar has made a difference in saving their life or making the recovery better."

Such is the case for Gross, who lives in the greater Sacramento area but often recreates in the Sierra Nevada Mountain Range.



Medical helicopters are like being on a flying hospital. Photo Copyright 2016 Carolyn E. Wright

Calstar also operates bases in Auburn, Ukiah, Gilroy, Concord, Salinas and Santa Maria. It’s been stationed on the South Shore since October 2001. On any given day, the choppers can be seen flying over the lake, in and out of the wilderness as well as landing at Barton Memorial Hospital’s helipad.

Each county operates under its own guidelines for emergency air medical transports. First responders determine if an air ambulance is necessary.

In respect to specifically having an air ambulance membership at Lake Tahoe, Nichols mentioned that one might consider buying two club cards with Calstar and the Care Flight service – which operates out of the Truckee Airport and the Minden Airport and is based in Reno. That’s because at this moment the merger does not include the reciprocal agreement with Care Flight.

The understanding between the two providers, which is not a formal contract, results in the two ambulance services picking up each other’s patients when the other is busy.

Memberships for Care Flight – which also operates out of Chico, Boise and Spokane – run $55 – which means having both could cost more than $100.

Nonetheless, Nichols noted there’s a good chance a comparable reciprocal agreement will be made with Care Flight before the buyout takes place. The companies are in negotiations.



The fleet was going to change even without the merger. Calstar now uses an Airbus H135/P3, with colors that make it look like its the Miami Dolphins charter helicopter. Photo Copyright 2016 Carolyn E. Wright

“There are a lot of unknowns,” Care Flight spokesman J.W. Hodge said.

For now, when one air ambulance service covering Lake Tahoe is not available, “we call on the next closest resources,” Hodge added.

In respect to the Calstar merger with Reach through the AirMedCare Network, Care Flight joins Calstar in wanting to make the change as seamless as possible, Hodge insisted.

That’s comforting to longtime active South Shore residents Paul and Lisa Huard.

“I’d still do it in a heartbeat,” Lisa Huard said of joining Calstar’s membership.

She recalled the time when her husband suffered from a heart condition in November 2012. He passed out and hit his chest on the granite tile.

“When he came to he didn’t know what was going on,” she said.

A crew took him to Barton where tests were run before a recommendation was made to transport him via air ambulance to Reno – a $35,000 ride that took 20 minutes.

“In Paul’s case, he would have been fine (to transport by other means). But in other cases, every minute counts,” she said. “Calstar was so thorough. They told me what to expect, and I felt safer.”

Huard insisted she would pay more for membership.

“There shouldn’t be any question. Look, we pay $10 for a Tylenol at the hospital – no problem,” she said.

Jarrett: South Tahoe needs clear vision

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Patrick Jarrett is running for one of two seats open on the South Lake Tahoe City Council.

Name: Patrick Jarrett

Age: 45

Job/profession: retail sales

What boards, commissions, or other experience, including volunteering, do you have?: 2016 South Lake Tahoe Citizens Academy participant

Why are you running for City Council?: I care about this city, and the current council doesn't seem to have any clear direction. They are too busy with all the infighting to listen to the people's wants and needs.

Why should voters vote for you over another candidate?: I have a vested interest in this city. I attended school here from third grade at Tahoe Valley Elementary all the way to STHS graduation in 1989. My son is currently in eighth grade at STMS. I care about this city and its people and I want us all to succeed and be happy and prosperous. This city needs to accept change and adapt, not just stick our heads in the sand and keep the "old guard" in place.

What distinct experience or competency makes you uniquely qualified to lead effectively as an elected official?: I

served in the U.S. Army during Operation Desert Shield/Storm where I learned responsibility, teamwork and leadership skills and I have also been assistant manager and store manager at a few businesses here in town.

Public agencies have been under scrutiny the last few years for lack of transparency and accountability. What will you do to ensure both?: A lot of people know me in this town. I tell it like it is, shoot straight and don't pull punches. I'm not afraid to tell the truth or to speak up when things are out of line.

What stands out for you in the current budget that you support and that you would change?: We as a city are spending too much and seeing very little return. We need to find a dedicated way to fix and support our infrastructure.

Do you support current legislation for $15 minimum wage? Please explain: No – $15 an hour not only cuts full-time employment in favor of part time, it eliminates employers' desire to reward hard working employees with bonuses.

Do you support Proposition 55? Please explain: *(Did not respond.*)

Describe three attributes for a successful council: Listening to the citizens, fair and just treatment of codes and laws, and clear, concise communication.

What are your thoughts about public employee defined benefits?: If a person is capable of accomplishing their job, benefits are part of the reward.

Please explain your position regarding contracting out work normally done by staff: In this economy, you must ask why we are hiring someone to do a job that we have clearly been capable of doing in the past? Did all of the city employees quit working?

What is your 10-year vision for South Lake Tahoe?: Tahoe needs to accept change. We need to grow together more. More community events with more community participation and involvement.

What one vote in the last four years that the current council made do you disagree with and why?: The vote to censure Councilwoman [JoAnn] Conner. This whole matter has become so convoluted, I wonder if the parties concerned even remember what started it. And we spent how much taxpayer money on this?

How many City Council meetings have you attended this year?: 2

What do you know about the strategic plan, finances, debt, and goals of the city?: I learned a lot on all these subjects at the Citizens Academy. I think more people should attend the academy and learn about the inner workings of this city we all call home.

Being on the council means working as a team. How will you work with the sitting members for the greater good of the community?: Through teamwork, communication with the council and the citizens, and fresh new ideas.

What should be the three main priorities for the council?: Repairing our infrastructure, finding some affordable housing solutions and bringing in more business to create more jobs.

What have you done to make yourself ready to be a council member?: I've spoken with a lot of people in town who both agree and disagree with me. One of the traits I've been recognized for is that I am a good listener.

What role should government have in housing for residents?: Almost none.

How can the city partner with the school district to improve high school graduation rates?: We could have some incentives for good grades, attendance, and graduation.

How can local government support and expand job creation and small local businesses?: By lowering business fees and taxes in order to attract more businesses.

If you believe in the one South Shore concept, what would you do to further make this a reality? If you don't believe in blurring the state line, why don't you?: We are two different townships with different laws and regulations. Stateline is a 24-hour party community with their own interests. South Lake Tahoe should be more family friendly and family oriented.

What are your views on:

a: Vacation home rentals: If we were to enforce the laws already on the books, we wouldn't need to debate this.

b: Loop road: It was unsuccessful back in the late '70s/early '80s and it's really not necessary now. If you want to fix the traffic problem, do what myself and countless people have been saying for years: synchronize the stoplights.

c: City streets: We need to find a dedicated revenue stream for our streets and equipment.

d: Relationships with other public agencies: We can't have this us vs. them attitude. We need more communication on all sides.

e: Recreation: We can do so much more.

f. TRPA defined commodities: The TRPA is great at their original job, but they do take some things a little too far.

g. Transient occupancy tax measure: We need TOT to support city services and other things the TOT pays for. Our TOT is a drop in the bucket when you look at TOT in places like San Francisco.

h. Sales tax measure: Everybody pays taxes one way or another. If the city needs more money, put it to the voters. Most

people won’t mind .0025 percent raise in sales tax if they feel they get an equal say in the matter.

i. What do you want the additional sales tax money to go to?: We badly need to fix our infrastructure (roads, equipment, facilities).

Tell us something about yourself that people may not know: I’m proud to have been all around the world. From the time I was born in West Virginia, lived in Tucson, Ariz., for six years, grew up in Tahoe, joined the Army, lived in Germany for two years and came back to Tahoe only to meet the love of my life; and she’s from New Zealand.

USFS may buy disputed campground site

Updated 3:29pm

By Kathryn Reed

Plans are in the works to permanently stop all development on a 120-acre site off Highway 267.

What was to become the controversial **Brockway Campground** may remain undisturbed forestland.

Sierra Pacific Industries owns the ridegtop parcel off Fibreboard Freeway. If a deal goes through, the U.S. Forest Service will be the owners.

In a proposal that was announced Sept. 7, the Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit plans to buy the property from the timber company. Money to do so would come from the Santini-

Burton Purchase Program via the Southern Nevada Public Lands Management Act. This funding source limits what can then be done with the land.

“The reason for buying is to protect it from development,” Bob Rodman Jr., lands program manager with LTBMU, told *Lake Tahoe News*. “We will not develop it. It will be managed for diversified recreation.”

The local USFS branch has already submitted the paperwork requesting the regional office in Vallejo to do an appraisal. The goal is to have all of that done next year, along with completing the purchase.

However, it will be up to SPI to accept whatever offer the feds make. The company could say no and the 282 sites on the resort-like campground could become a reality – pending approval by regulators.

While Mark Pawlicki with SPI said in the long run the campground was likely to make more money for the company, it was going to be years before it became a reality, assuming the permits were granted.

He said the appraisal will be based on the fact that a campground could go there, and does not anticipate the number coming in too low. Pawlicki told *Lake Tahoe News* if a price can’t be agreed upon, the campground idea could be resurrected.

An appraisal was done by the California Tahoe Conservancy, which helped bring the two parties to the table. Aimee Rutledge with CTC told *Lake Tahoe News* the appraisal, while paid for with taxpayer dollars, is a confidential document.

Mountainside Partners out of Truckee had wanted to turn the barren land into a high-end campground. This was met with a tremendous amount of **opposition**. That backlash led to this latest turn of events.

“The construction of the Brockway camping resort complex would have set a terrible precedent, as it would have added significant traffic and related pollution to the Tahoe basin. This announcement is also a win for Tahoe’s regional plan, which calls for the concentration of development in the basin’s already existing town centers,” Darcie Goodman Collins, the League to Save Lake Tahoe’s executive director, said in a statement.

While the land has been logged in the past, there are no permanent structures. The Tahoe Rim Trail goes through the parcel. There are also mountain bike and cross country ski trails that tie into Northstar ski resort.

Nev. controller releases wish list for legislative session

By Sean Whaley, Las Vegas Review-Journal

CARSON CITY – State Controller Ron Knecht last week released a list of bills he has requested be drafted for the 2017 legislative session, including a measure that would create a hybrid retirement plan for state and local government employees.

Employees would have the option to move into this plan, which Knecht said would diversify their risks and provide them greater freedom and control in their retirement financial planning. They would not be required to participate in this program, but could not return to the existing programs once they opt into it.

Members of the Nevada’s Public Employees Retirement System

would have the option to move into this plan. The plan covers nearly all state and local government employees, including educational personnel.

Read the whole story