Laine: Banking on experience

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.***



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

Name: Brooke Laine

Age: 52

Job/profession: Branch manager, US Bank

What boards, commissions, or other experience, including volunteering, do you have?:

Current: Treasurer, South Tahoe High School Alumni Association, 2004-present

Past president, current parliamentarian, Soroptimist International of South Lake Tahoe, 1990-present

Chair, Citizen’s Oversight Committee, Lake Tahoe Community College, 2015-present

Past: Lake Tahoe Educational Foundation, California Tahoe Conservancy, Waste Management

JPA, Clean Tahoe Program, Tahoe Transportation District, Local Area Formation Committee,

South Lake Tahoe Chamber of Commerce, South Tahoe National Little League, American

Youth Soccer Organization, South Tahoe Babe Ruth.

Why are you running for City Council?: I am and have always been passionate about our community. I want to help bring professional and respectful discourse back to the public process so that we can work together and focus on moving our community forward.

Why should voters vote for you over another candidate?: I have six years experience as a council member. I fully understand the responsibilities and the time commitment. I will listen to all sides of an issue. While I may believe strongly in my position, I am willing to compromise when necessary for the good of the residents and city.

What distinct experience or competency makes you uniquely qualified to lead effectively as an elected official?: I served on the City Council from 1998-2002. During this time, the council oversaw the successful completion of the redevelopment project at Stateline and the creation of the ice arena. The experience that I gained during this term in office was exceptional as we negotiated complex contracts and funding strategies.

I was appointed to serve on the City Council from 2012-14.

During this term, we addressed the unfunded liabilities. Working with our current and former employees, we were able to negotiate a settlement thereby eliminating a huge financial burden that caused many cities throughout our country to file bankruptcy.

Public agencies have been under scrutiny the last few years for lack of transparency and accountability. What will you do to ensure both?: I would recommend that all public agencies videotape their meetings and make their public meetings available on the government channel just like what the city has been doing for years.

What stands out for you in the current budget that you support and that you would change?: During my recent service on the budget subcommittee we altered how we project our revenues which have improved the city's ability to accurately balance our budget. We lay down a baseline, conservative figure for revenues. Then at the midway mark of our fiscal year, we look at our actual revenue and adjust our revenues accordingly. This has allowed us to budget for one-time projects, knowing we have the revenue to support it or not. I would like to see the budget reflect actual projects. Currently, the budget is simply broken down by department. It is impossible to see the current expenses of an actual project. Being able to see these projects reflected in the budget will allow for even greater transparency and will also help to identify the costs of maintenance and operations.

Do you support current legislation for $15 minimum wage? Please explain: The average household income for a family in Tahoe is $36,000. An increase in the minimum wage will greatly assist the average family struggling to keep their head above water. I support an increase to the minimum wage. However, having been a small business owner myself, I understand that this increase has to benefit the employee as well as be affordable to the business owner. If this mandate is too large, businesses will most likely reduce their work force,

which defeats the purpose.

Do you support Proposition 55? Please explain: I do not like this ballot measure. Prop. 30 was to be a temporary tax increase on the wealthiest. Prop 30. included a one-quarter cent sales tax that went toward transportation improvements for the state of California. Prop. 55 proposes to keep the tax on the wealthiest for another 12 years, but does not renew the one-quarter cent sales tax. Prop. 30 was to be a temporary tax and I feel we should honor that.

Describe three attributes for a successful council: Professionalism, respect for the process, and each other, listen and have an open mind

What are your thoughts about public employee defined benefits?: Our defined benefits are appropriate to attract the quality work force, which the city needs in order to fully serve the public.

Please explain your position regarding contracting out work normally done by staff: The city is proud of the work it provides in order to serve our residents. There are times that some labor needs to be contracted out due to understaffing or unexpected increase in demand. Occasionally, the city needs to contract out legal services due to the special nature of a case. These circumstances should not be routine but rather the exception.

What is your 10-year vision for South Lake Tahoe?: I can see a unified Tahoe with lines that used to define us, now joining us. I would like to explore the idea of a Tahoe County with other agencies who could benefit from this realignment. A Tahoe County that could include the city, all of the unincorporated areas perhaps as far up the West Shore to Tahoma, and across the state line to Glenbrook, and why not include Incline. All residents would be eligible to run for election to the county board. We would no longer have a

situation where residents who live in the unincorporated portion of our community feel they do not have a say or a voice. With a Tahoe County in place, we can maintain our fiscal resources for our direct benefit. I believe this is an option worth considering.

What one vote in the last four years that the current council made do you disagree with and why?: I regret that the current council chose to not enforce the fazed in ban on plastic bags as it relates to our restaurant industry.

Regulating plastic bags can mitigate harmful impacts to oceans, rivers, lakes, forests and the wildlife that inhabit them. Reducing bag use can also relieve pressure on landfills and waste management.

How many City Council meetings have you attended this year?: I have attended, in person, two council meetings this year. However, I watch them on TV regularly and fully support continuing the broadcast of meetings as a means to keeping the public involved.

What do you know about the strategic plan, finances, debt, and goals of the city?: As a council member I participated in the development and review of all of these matters. It is important to regularly review and update strategic plans and goals with community input to make sure they keep up with changing times and challenges. Finance and budgets reflect our values, goals, and execution of the strategic plan. We must constantly work on reducing any city debt and unfunded liabilities so we can focus more on planning for the future rather than trying to take care of the past. The city has made excellent progress in these areas over the past few years and my goal is to continue in that positive direction.

Being on the council means working as a team. How will you work with the sitting members for the greater good of the community?: My past years on council have demonstrated that

under unusual circumstances, I will remain professional and respectful to my fellow council members and to our staff and residents. Any other working environment is detrimental to the progress and growth of our city.

What should be the three main priorities for the council?: A well thought out strategic plan. A budget that allows for the implementation of the strategic plan. Most important, we need to build the public's confidence that the City council is capable of making decisions that are always in the best interest of protecting our natural resources and growing our economy such that all residents can prosper.

What have you done to make yourself ready to be a council member?: I have served as a council member for six years. I have stayed very active in city politics and events and continue to volunteer when asked.

What role should government have in housing for residents?: Our city should have a strong and supportive role in helping to resolve our current housing dilemma. (See below.)

How can the city partner with the school district to improve high school graduation rates?: I believe students are more successful when they can relate their education to the real world, not just as mandatory time spent with no perceived relevance. The city, the school district, and possibly the community college should consider partnering in community service projects that will give students the opportunity, possibly for credit, to be more involved in their surrounding environment.

How can local government support and expand job creation and small local businesses?: Government must support small businesses that then expand job creation by tearing down the barriers that discourage this growth. We must be open and supportive of new concepts; like turning a single-family residence into a fully-fledged business office. Our sign

ordinance needs to be adjusted to allow temporary signage for start-up businesses that are waiting for permanent signage. Examples like these will encourage business creation and will thereby create better job opportunities for our residents. We must look at everything we do and see if we can do it better.

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 believe strongly in blurring the state line. In fact, my idea would be to support a new county: Tahoe County. Perhaps we could join with the lake portion of Douglas County, and create a bi-state county that would include from Echo Summit, down through the unincorporated portion of the city, the city of South Lake Tahoe up to Tahoma, and finally across the state line to Glenbrook. This is an example of the "outside the box thinking" I hope to bring to our discussions

What are your views on:

a: Vacation home rentals: I believe there needs to be much stronger enforcement of the VHR ordinance that relieves our residents from the current complaint driven process. I would propose a full time staff of enforcement officers that could be funded from an increase in the fees that VHR's currently pay. If all VHRs paid the same TOT tax as hotels and motels in the redevelopment area, this increase could fund multiple officers working to ensure that garbage is being properly managed in addition to all of the other issues including parking, noise, etc.

b: Loop road: The real value of this project is that new affordable housing would replace old and tired housing in the Stateline corridor where many of our residents reside and work. If the loop road project proceeds, it is mandatory that work force housing must be in place prior to the start of the project. I understand that the community wants to have a voice in this process. I look forward to hearing the results of the

November ballot measure.

c: City streets: Many of our streets are in very poor condition. I strongly support the one-half percent increase in sales tax as long as it is specifically directed to fund street replacement. The city's current process of simply repairing cracks, etc. is no longer an option.

d: Relationships with other public agencies: We must all work together. I will listen. I will be respectful and professional. I have experience working with other agencies and have a proven record of moving projects forward.

e: Recreation: This is currently a top priority for the city and I support this position. The city has made some important investments in our recreation infrastructure including Lakeview Commons, the bike park, bike paths, and now the recreation complex. We are moving in the right direction and I will be supportive of the maintenance and expansion of our recreational opportunities.

f. TRPA defined commodities: I would love to do away with them. I understand that they are a tool that helps us control growth. However, they have created an enormous financial investment before you can put a shovel in the ground. We must move away from seeing things as "yes" or "no" and, rather, figure out "how" to get things done

g. Transient occupancy tax measure: I fully support the TOT tax measure.

h. Sales tax measure: I fully support the sales tax measure as long as it is dedicated to street replacement.

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

Tell us something about yourself that people may not know: I was born at Barton Memorial Hospital just three months after

the hospital opened for business.

Voters said no to you two years ago, why should they say yes this year?: Times change and issues change. I would like to contribute to a professional, respectful council and work together to move our city forward. I am passionate, experienced, professional, and respectful. I enjoy the political process and will take the steps necessary to reach the best possible outcome through collaboration and compromise. Our residents deserve no less and I believe I am up to the task.

Rare stonefly only found in Lake Tahoe



This stonefly has only been found living beneath the surface of Lake Tahoe. Photo/UNR

By Emily Benson, New Scientist

Species: *Capnia lacustra*

Habitat: Lake Tahoe, 100 to 280 feet below the lake's surface.

An autumn birthday means one of these rare aquatic insects was born live; but a spring birthday bash means it probably hatched from an egg.

The insect, a species of stonefly called *Capnia lacustra*, is one of 10 invertebrate species found only on the bed of Lake Tahoe.

And it is one of a kind among stoneflies. Most species in this group live in streams or rivers as juveniles, before emerging into the air as winged adults to mate and lay eggs. *C. lacustra* has a different strategy: it's the only known species of stonefly that spends its entire life under water, never developing wings.

The creatures' rarity and difficult-to-reach habitat make them hard to study. A lakewide survey in 2008 and 2009 revealed that *C. lacustra* – and the particular plant it lives on – appears to be much scarcer in Lake Tahoe now than in the 1960s.

Read the whole story

Gratitude – a drug with positive side effects

By Linda Fine Conaboy

INCLINE VILLAGE – Gratitude. The word slides easily off of our tongues. But have you ever thought about what it really means? According to Webster's New World Dictionary, gratitude is a feeling of thankful appreciation for favors or benefits received; thankfulness.

Easy enough definition to digest, but Bob Emmons, a scientific expert on the subject, isn't satisfied to simply feel grateful and move on. Emmons has made gratitude his life's work.



Bob Emmons

During his lecture to a packed house at Sierra Nevada College last week, the psychology professor at UC Davis, passionately explained his take on gratitude, how it works, why it matters, what it means in the scheme of worldly things and how it can have a most favorable impact on those who practice it daily.

Gratitude, he said, requires a benefactor, a beneficiary, intentionality and appreciation. "There's a moral face to gratitude," he said. "It's very complex. But it's available to anyone from kids to oldsters." He recommends keeping a gratitude journal. "It's a good thing to do, almost like a spiritual exercise."

Emmons described gratitude as a drug without side effects, saying there's a significant difference for those who actually practice it and those who don't. People feel alive and alert; they get along well with others and they notice the good things. Additionally, he said grateful people feel alive—they comprehend what it means to be more connected with others and to life. "You don't want to keep in the good, you want to give it back," he said.

It's hard to believe that a "drug" like gratitude isn't used by everyone. Emmons said there's an impact on physical function. Threatening situations suddenly become less bothersome. Exercise becomes important; leading to lower levels of cortisol, which can lead to less depression.

There definitely is something going on in the grateful brain, there's a pattern of activity, but it's hard to track. To get a handle on the subject, researchers turned to Holocaust survivors, tracking their memories to see what impact gratitude had.

While not conclusive, they found that in the brain gratitude is more than just a pleasant experience. The social impact is tremendous. People began to recognize what others did for them; that the good deeds were amplified. "We begin to notice the good in ourselves and others," Emmons said. "Gratitude connects. It's the moral memory of mankind."

He described gratitude as the new willpower. "If you're depressed, you take it now. There's no gratification delay. If you're in a grateful mood, you can accept delayed gratification."

But why, you may ask? And that is what scientists are attempting to determine. How does gratitude "get under your skin?"

Emmons' website discusses the long-term research he and others are now engaged in. According to his website, his project is

“designed to create and disseminate a large body of novel scientific data on the nature of gratitude, its causes and its potential consequences for human health and well-being.”

Emmons said that much of his team’s recent work focuses on the development of gratitude in children.

Children, he said, are notoriously ungrateful. Gratitude does not emerge early in life, rather it seems to kick in between ages 7 and 10. He said kids can easily be taught the concept. He listed a few ways to heighten grateful attitudes in children:

· Link gratitude to philanthropy. Giving not receiving mobilizes gratitude and establishes your identity.

· Teach that gratitude isn’t something you can just go out and get. It’s the everyday good things that happen to you.

And finally. “Being thankful isn’t just saying thanks, it’s a divine feeling that can’t be hidden. It’s the everyday things that happen to you. It’s an operating system; a way of looking at life.”

Exline: Renewable energy is the future

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Nick Exline is running for one of two open seats on the South Tahoe Public Utility District board.

Name: Nick D. Exline

Age: 35

Job/profession: AICP, senior land use planner, Midkiff and Associates Inc.

What boards, commissions, or other experience, including volunteering, do you have?: Master's of science degree in land use planning, bachelor's of science degree in geography, American Institute of Certified Planners, American Planning Association, Tahoe Chamber Government Affairs Committee, Tahoe Drug Free Coalition board member, Leadership Lake Tahoe. I began a non-partisan, market driven climate change group.

Why are you running for the South Tahoe PUD board?: I believe in developing innovative ideas that support the economy and our community. Through the installation of renewable energy we can stabilize rates and improve/expand fire safety infrastructure. I would also like to create a fair construction fee system.

High construction fees put an undue hardship on middle and lower income households. When a project is halted due to high fees this puts our community members out of work and hurts our

economy. I would like to introduce a sliding scale on fees that will ensure everyone in the community has the opportunity to improve their businesses and homes. I would also like to improve community participation in STPUD board decisions. The STPUD board meetings start at 2pm, which means if you work during the day, you can't participate.

Why should voters vote for you over another candidate?: Every candidate talks about rates and fees, some talk about health and safety and too few talk about how renewable energy is the future. We need to take action on those issues and start making the future happen now. In my role as a solution orientated planner I succeed everyday in getting government, private business and community members working together so that innovative projects become reality. Using my experience and determination I will work extremely hard to ensure my plan to stabilize rates is given top priority, that there is fairness in the fee system and to make certain our homes, businesses and most importantly our families are safe.

Through the installation of renewable energy we can lower STPUD's energy bills and fight climate change. Those savings would be used to improve/expand fire safety infrastructure. As we are all aware fire is the single greatest threat we face and we need to make sure our fire department have the tools they need to ensure our safety.

I'd push for the introduction of a sliding scale for construction fees so lower and middle-income homeowners and businesses are not stopped from improving our community and creating jobs, but are encouraged to do so.

Finally, I understand our community's concerns. My family is a single income household so I can sympathize with anyone that has stayed up at night worrying about money. Our town's thoughts and worries will be with me at all times whenever I am faced with a tough decision.

What distinct experience or competency makes you uniquely qualified to lead effectively as an elected official?: I am currently a solution oriented AICP, senior land use planner with Midkiff & Associates. In this role I work with local businesses, homeowners and with every level of government from the federal to the local level to get innovative projects completed on time and under budget. These projects benefit the economy, create jobs and help the environment. Recently the $18.7 million state loan to complete phases 2-5 of meter installation was changed by the state. This resulted in higher annual debt payments, which negatively impacted the future borrowing capacity of STPUD. My experience will allow me to assist STPUD with any regulatory processes and to negotiate with governmental agencies ensuring the best deal for us as consumers.

Public agencies have been under scrutiny the last few years for lack of transparency and accountability. What will you do to ensure both?: First, I will work to change the board meeting time from 2pm to a time that works for more people. If someone plans a party when they know you can't attend, you would think they don't want you there and that is how the community feels now. Secondly, I would make myself available. I have publically posted my phone number, address, email and have a Facebook page on which I invite everyone to discuss their thoughts on our water. This level of openness will enable me to be accountable to the community and transparent in all my actions.

What stands out for you in the current budget that you support and that you would change?: I fully support and would like to see increased investment into our fire safety infrastructure. A percentage of the water distribution system is undersized and does not provide appropriate fire protection. Fire is the single greatest threat we face and we need to ensure that when fire comes our fire departments have the correct tools and are fully prepared to fight it.

STPUD’s energy costs are huge. With so much of STPUD’s budget being fixed, we need to find areas in which we can lower costs without sacrificing service. With innovation and technology, and through the installation of renewable energy on STPUD properties we could lower our energy costs, which would allow us to reinvest those savings into fire safety infrastructure, rate stabilization and improved conservation efforts. We need to start looking at how we can make money instead of just spending it.

Do you support current legislation for $15 minimum wage? Please explain.: I would prefer we ask the question, how do we create good paying jobs in our community? We need to begin to diversify our economy because a diversified economy is far more stable. I am very aware that small businesses are concerned about the additional cost a $15 minimum wage would result in, but those costs would be outweighed by more members of our community having money in their pockets to spend locally. We are a community and with so many living in poverty we need to start working to create a brighter future for all.

Do you support Proposition 55? Please explain: I do support proposition 55. In a globally competitive world, education is only going to become increasingly important for both personal and community success. We need to support education, which will ensure our economic survivability.

Describe three attributes for a successful board: Rational: In my experience with boards (from every level of government and regulatory agency) I see decisions being made, not on a rational review of the information provided, but rather to check a bureaucratic box. Often times this box checking poses significant hardships to the people. A board should be a reflection of the people and decisions should be made rationally to the benefit of all of us.

Forward thinking: Boards need to be evaluating plans that extend 10, 50 and 100 years into the future.

Team work: Which not only includes other board members, but also extends to the STPUD staff, local businesses and our community.

What are your thoughts about public employee defined benefits?: Having employee defined benefits allows families to properly plan for the future and enables them to invest in the economy. Unfortunately these sorts of benefits are on the decline. I believe that the future of these plans is one that combines the best features of all those currently available including employer contributions, pooled investments and annuities along with the best parts of 401(k)s, including employee contributions and portability.

Please explain your position on contracting out work normally done by staff: I do not support contracting out work that would result in layoffs or a reduction of critically important staff. If the contracting work is needed to assist staff, to speed up projects or infrastructure improvements (specifically fire safety infrastructure projects) then I am supportive.

What is your 10-year vision for STPUD?: Throughout this questionnaire I have outlined my proposals and vision. Now I want to explain how that vision affects our community. In 10 years we will have installed renewable energy both in Alpine County and up at the lake. This renewable energy will have created good jobs, stabilized our rates and resulted in savings while fighting climate change. These savings will be used to install fire protection infrastructure so that wherever you live, you and your family can feel safe knowing that in the event of a fire you have the proper protection.

As a result of the sliding scale for construction permit fees more of us in the community will be improving our homes and businesses. This will lead to more work for those in the construction field, engineers and landscapers, etc. This additional work will spur economic growth throughout the community as people begin to spend more money locally.

Finally, the board meetings will be held at a time when the community can attend and the transparency I am demonstrating throughout this campaign will become the norm and more people will be involved in the conversation about our water.

What one vote in the last four years that the current board made do you disagree with and why?: STPUD has done many things well over previous years and has kept up with basic needs from a "business as usual" stance. For a time the rates were kept low because of the poorly performing economy but then eventually a rate increase was made. I am concerned that if the board continues working in the same vein we may reach a time when every decision is made from an emergency only perspective.

We should be building for tomorrow and not making decisions from a standpoint that leaves us constantly playing catch-up. I will bring progressive ideas to the board that will keep STPUD at the forefront of innovation and fire infrastructure. I will work to develop a fair construction permit fee system so more of us can improve our homes and businesses.

How many meetings have you attended this year for the board you are running for?: The current STPUD board meeting schedule does not allow for participation. That is why I propose changing the meeting time to when more people can attend. I have always kept up with STPUD board decisions, as it is also a part of my role as a planner to do so. I am up to date with all staff reports and meeting minutes for the year and have been present at two meetings.

What do you know about the strategic plan, finances, debt, goals of the district?: I have been the lead land use planner on projects with comparable budgets, strategic financing and debt mechanisms as STPUD deals with annually. In addition, I have done a thorough review and met with staff regarding all STPUD related plans and budget items.

What concerns me is that with aging infrastructure the speed at which rates will have to increase within the next 10-15 years will begin to accelerate. Today we need to begin to lower long term cost wherever possible. The area of energy is a large, non-fixed cost in which STPUD could begin to realize savings immediately. With the installation of renewable energy (specifically solar) we could lock in low energy rates and fight climate change. With California's cap and trade law all non-renewable energy will become more expensive. What this means is that as time goes on the savings made will only become greater. We can use those savings to ensure that we don't see the "business as usual" massive rate increases in the next decade.

In addition, construction permit fees only comprise 3 percent of STPUD's revenue, but these fees make it difficult for households and small business to redevelop. This has a negative impact throughout the community because when projects can't start, people can't work. We need to create a fee system that incentivizes redevelopment and creates more, good paying jobs.

Being on a board means working as a team. How will you work with the other board members for the greater good of the community?: I grew up in the world of sports and the idea of team is fundamental to my very core. Being part of a team means picking your teammates up when they are down, spending the extra time to get something right or running that extra mile. Although there will be disagreements on any board I will never let ego or arrogance get in the way of working with board members to accomplish what is best for the community. Because in the end the team's performance doesn't stop with the board, the team is all of us.

What should be the three main priorities for the board?: 1. Water supply and quality: To provide reliable and safe water distribution, wastewater collection/treatment and recycled water systems.

2. Keeping infrastructure up-to-date and innovative: To make use of any appropriate technology to improve efficiency and ensure infrastructure and other assets are kept up to date/replaced. Renewable energy.

3. Health and safety of our community: To continue to ensure we have appropriate fire protection and the installation of fire hydrants at 500ft intervals.

How do you balance the economic situation of the community with the infrastructure needs of the district?: As a community we have aging infrastructure and a high rate of people living at or below the poverty line. We simply cannot afford to keep raising rates because fewer and fewer people can afford to pay those increased rates. Nor can we simply put off infrastructure improvements or routine maintenance because that will leave a huge unfunded bill for our children resulting in rate increases in excess of 10 percent annually in years to come. If we don't install fire protection infrastructure, we could be putting lives at risk.

To solve these conflicting problems we need to fundamentally change the economic realities of the district. Where possible we need to lower cost and that is why I am proposing the installation of renewable energy on STPUD properties so we can lower our energy bill and use those savings to stabilize rates, accelerate the installation of badly needed fire infrastructure and improve conservation efforts. The business as usual model will eventually result in huge rate increases, but with innovation and forward thinking ideas we can stabilize rate growth, which will not only helps our pocket book, but the environment as well.

STPUD is often criticized for having some of the highest paid public employees on the South Shore. Any comment?: Currently $16.4 million or 32 percent of STPUD's budget goes to employee pay and benefits. In the private sector you would want your payroll to be between 15-30 percent and as you can see STPUD

is slightly above the high end of that threshold. I will work to keep payroll at a reasonable level while taking care to have great staff moral, which will minimize turnover and keep the high standard of service currently in place.

I work with government agencies from the federal to city level. Agencies with a high employee turnover are slower, less responsive and impose many unnecessary and expensive regulations onto a project. This is our water we are talking about and we need to ensure a high level of service.

When it comes to permits for construction, the district has high fees. Do you believe they are fair? Why or why not?: The district fees have a disproportionate impact on middle and lower income individuals. These fees are only 3 percent of STPUD's revenue but pose a significant barrier to improvements. In my role as a land use planner I have seen projects halted or abandoned as a result of high fees. This has a ripple effect throughout the economy. It results in our neighbors who are in the trade fields being out of work, construction equipment not being sold, a reduction in our property tax base and stops the ability for many of us to improve our homes and businesses. I would work to implement a sliding scale for fees so that every one of us in this community, regardless of income level has an opportunity to improve our home or business.

Tell us something about yourself that people may not know: Besides the fact that I like to paddleboard at night with my dog, I love to read. It is enlightening to be able to see things from a different point of view and that really helps in the decision making process.

Nev. sports books going after cheaters

By Richard N. Velotta, Las Vegas Review-Journal

It’s been well-documented that the best people to ferret out sports cheats and game fixes are employed by Nevada’s legal sports books.

After all, they have a financial interest in the outcome of every race, match and meet posted in their books. If the fix is in and a player or players are under the influence of gamblers looking to make a quick score by collaborating with an athlete who doesn’t play up to his ability, the sports books are the ones that would take the financial hit.

Weeks after the NHL announced that it was awarding Las Vegas its first major-league franchise, it also said that it would incorporate Sportradar’s fraud detection system into its game-integrity protection package.

Instead of 64 Southern Nevada race and sports books paying attention to odd wagering patterns in a sport that doesn’t get a whole lot of attention at the betting window, there are 550 sports wagering operations worldwide processing data in real time.

Read the whole story

Dalton: Committed to

education, community

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Nancy Dalton is one of two candidates for the Area 4 seat for Lake Tahoe Community College.

Name: Nancy Dalton

Age: 53

Job/profession: High school teacher, mathematics and AVID. I was the department chair the previous two years.

What boards, commissions, or other experience, including volunteering, do you have?: I've served on several boards in the South Tahoe area including Soroptimist, High Sierra ASA (Amateur Softball Association), and STAT (Saving Tahoe Athletic Teams). Prior to teaching I was a member of Soroptimist where I served on the executive board as well as chaired a couple of committees. Specifically, I was instrumental in procuring the car and producing the video for

A Fighting Chance, the program that teaches our youth about avoiding and escaping abduction. During the 10 years I was on the ASA board we were able to grow the enrollment significantly while improving the fields. The STAT committee was formed to provide funding for the athletic programs at both STHS and STMS when the district had to make budget cuts. This committee lasted roughly two years as the district decided to restore the funding. One last thing, I worked at the college before I began my teaching career and this insight will only enhance my role as a board member.

Why are you running for the college board?: I am completely committed to both this community and education. Serving on the college board is the perfect opportunity for me to demonstrate my passion for public education and the community of South Lake Tahoe.

Why should voters vote for you over another candidate?: For the past 10 years serving on the board for the college has been on my mind. At the end of 2015 I decided to run for the District 4 position and have been attending meetings since the first of 2016. This dedication and my experience in serving this community make me an ideal candidate. Also, I am aware of the time requirements of an LTCC board member and have planned accordingly to be able to meet them.

What distinct experience or competency makes you uniquely qualified to lead effectively as an elected official?: My service on previous boards, a career in education (including department chairperson), and managing a business with my husband for over 28 years give me a solid background to lead effectively.

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 adhere to the laws governing public boards and board members and conduct myself in a manner befitting a college board member. I will be open, honest and

candid about the issues the college is dealing with while maintaining compliance with legal regulations.

What stands out for you in the current budget that you support and that you would change?: I support the ISP (Incarcerated Student Program) and Connect (community education). Both these programs serve the college well. I'm not sure what I would change, however the college is in the process of evaluating all of the programs to see which ones are in demand from the students and I would base my decision on the results.

Do you support current legislation for $15 minimum wage? Please explain: Yes, I believe the working class deserves a living wage. Rents in Tahoe have increased substantially over the last few years making it difficult for our residents to find affordable housing and a raise in the minimum wage could make living here more feasible for them.

Do you support Proposition 55? Please explain: Yes, I support extending this tax on the highest wage earners to provide funding for education and health care.

Describe three attributes for a successful board:

1. Passion: One has to believe whole-heartedly in what they are doing to be truly committed and effective.

2. Vision: Serving students and the community is the number one priority for the college and decisions should be based off of this priority. Always planning for the future and how to better serve our population is key.

3. Teamwork: The entire college needs to work together for the betterment of the community. I am a team player and believe everyone benefits when all voices are heard.

What are your thoughts about public employee defined benefits?: If public entities, including the college, want to attract the best employees a solid benefit package is

necessary to entice top applicants. However, the benefits need to be fiscally realistic.

Please explain your position on contracting out work normally done by staff: Sometimes it is necessary to contract work out either because current employees don't have the time to perform the necessary work or the duties needed are temporary. However, I would not advocate contracting out work if it entails reducing current staff.

What is your 10-year vision for LTCC?: In 10 years I would like to see the college working with other colleges and universities to offer several four-year degree programs. Also I believe there is opportunity to expand of both the ISP and ConnectEd. Currently the college is exploring the feasibility of constructing dormitories to attract more students from outside the area and this might be obtainable within 10 years.

What one vote in the last four years that the current board made do you disagree with and why?: I was concerned about the vote on the community fields. While I completely support the fields, I was discouraged to learn that the most recent plan was not the one implemented due to agency approvals that dated back several years.

How many meetings have you attended this year for the board you are running for?: I have attended most meetings since the beginning of the year, approximately 16, and this includes board meetings, study sessions and retreats.

What do you know about the strategic plan, finances, debt, goals of college?: Due to my attendance at board meetings I feel I am up to date and informed on what is happening at the college. Specifically, where the college stands in regards to the budget, what the strategic plan is, and the improvements slated from Measure F. Currently the board is looking at projected budgets, ways to increase FTEs, and offering students the opportunity to enroll in a bachelor degree

program through Sierra Nevada College.

Being on a board means working as a team. How will you work with the sitting members for the greater good of the community?: Coming from an athletic background I am a team player whose focus is on this community. I have great respect for the current board members and look forward to the opportunity to work with them.

What should be the three main priorities for the board?

1. Hire a competent superintendent/president.

2. Fulfill the improvements stated in Measure F.

3. Work within the budget.

What have you done to make yourself ready to be a board member?: I've attended meetings since the beginning of the year and met with current and former board members. Also, in anticipation for the responsibilities of being a board member I have adjusted my workload so I can give the position the necessary time.

What is your opinion about career and technical education at the high school level?: I'm a strong advocate for career and technical education at the high school and believe some programs could be extended to the college in addition to the ones already offered, specifically the dental and culinary programs.

What will you look for in a new college president?: First and foremost, the president should be passionate about public education. They should have ample administrative experience (in all facets) at the community college level and a history of working with the state agencies related to education. Prior experience with supervision of bond measures is necessary as well. I would also like to see a president that has a management style that works well with the community and

employee groups at the college, both certificated and classified.

Tell us something about yourself that people may not know: I've lived in South Lake Tahoe for 35 years and have no plans to live anywhere else, I feel fortunate to have raised my family here and truly appreciate all the beauty and opportunity that Lake Tahoe offers, and I don't like Brussels sprouts.

As a teacher at STHS, how can the public believe you will represent everyone and not just staff?: Both the certificated and classified staffs are the greatest strengths at the college and I will represent them fairly. However, I know that there is more to being a board member than just that. Board members need to be responsible to the community and that means working within the budgets and following the correct policies and procedures that govern community colleges. As a business owner, I know how budgets work and will use this insight while serving as a board member.

Arsonist being sought in spate of SLT fires



A wildland fire burns Sept. 1 in South Lake Tahoe. Photo/Provided

By Kathryn Reed

Someone – or multiple people – are lighting wildland fires in South Lake Tahoe, with crews having put out seven in the last week and a half.

The latest occurred Sunday afternoon in Van Sickle Bi-State Park on the California side.

It was called in at 4:02pm Sept. 4. More than an hour later smoke could still be seen from Saddle Road filtering up between the trees. In all, a swath about 25 feet by 40 feet burned.

“I don’t know,” was CalFire Division Chief Chris Anthony’s response to *Lake Tahoe News* when asked if there is an arsonist on the loose.

Lisa Herron with the U.S. Forest Service when asked about an arsonist told *LTN*, “The only thing I can share is the cause of these fires remains under investigation.”

And, yet, the definition of arson is “the criminal act of deliberately setting fire to property.” And no one is saying that is not what is happening.

Lightning has been non-existent and no power lines have fallen; this leaves humans being responsible for starting them. This spate of fires is also not being blamed on homeless camps.

The fires have been on state and federal property. Together the agencies are working to determine if one or more people are responsible.

All of the fires have been in the same general wooded area, but never in the exact same location.

They are about the same size – this has to do with crews getting a jump on the blazes and a cooling trend. The Forest Service’s Super Scooper was deployed Sunday to drop water on the fire, and on Thursday, too.

The fires have started at all times of day and night, with one being at 2 in the morning. And it’s not like the suspect had the aid of a full moon to assist him or her with a walk in the woods at that hour.

One day there were three fires.

Even if an incendiary device is found, it can be difficult to isolate who may have been lighting the fires. Still, the state and federal investigators have myriad tools to employ to ferret out the culprit.

The Forest Service expects to increase staffing in light of the rash of fires.

South Lake Tahoe firefighters have responded to all of the fires, with pictures often posted to the department’s Facebook page. Those are now gone.

“Due to the joint investigation between CalFire and the U.S. Forest Service, South Lake Tahoe Fire and Rescue was asked not to post any of the fire activity that could get in the way of the joint investigation,” Fire Chief Jeff Meston told *Lake Tahoe News.*

He would not comment any further about the fires.

Study: Extreme-weather winters more common

By Rob Jordan, Standford

This past July was the hottest single month in Earth’s recorded history, but warming isn’t the only danger climate change holds in store.

Recent years have seen a dramatic increase in the simultaneous occurrence of extremely cold winter days in the Eastern United States and extremely warm winter days in the West, according to a Stanford-led study published in Journal of Geophysical Research Atmospheres. Human-caused emissions of greenhouse gases are likely driving this trend, the researchers report.

“There’s this idea that the past few winters were more extreme than usual, particularly since the conditions in the East and West were so different,” said senior author Noah Diffenbaugh, an associate professor of Earth system science at the School of Earth, Energy & Environmental Sciences and a senior fellow at the Stanford Woods Institute for the Environment. “Looking back at temperature data from the past 35 years, we’ve found that in fact 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 did have the biggest difference in winter temperature between the East and West.”

Read the whole story

Nev. silver history comes to life in backcountry



The bullwheel from the Comstock era is still near Incline Village. Photo/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

INCLINE VILLAGE – Listen closely; echoes of the past seem to whisper through the pines. Is it the call of men hauling up

timber from below? Or perhaps the sound of lumber splashing into the flumes?

Tucked in a remote area above Incline Village are remnants of Lake Tahoe's storied Comstock era.

Nevada State Parks Ranger Jay Howard last month led a group of about 20 people on a excursion that was part 4-wheel drive, part hiking to see what remains of life during the mid- to late 1800s. This was when the trees of Tahoe were felled to build the mines of Virginia City.



The V flume took logs through the mountains for the mines in Virginia City. Photo/Kathryn Reed

Conservation and environmentalism weren't part of the vernacular. Clear cutting and greed were the norm. But so were innovation and entrepreneurship.

Where the old Ponderosa Ranch was, next to Tunnel Creek Café and where the parking lot for new bike trail is being built was a mill. This is where the logs were cut into appropriate lengths that would be used in the silver mines, some of which were 3,000-feet deep.

This process started before railroads were in the basin and long before motor vehicles.

While the timber and water companies were separately owned, they worked in conjunction. An elaborate flume system transported the wood to the Washoe Valley, which was then hauled first by oxen to Virginia City and then by the V&T rail line.



Views in the area are stunning. Photo/Kathryn Reed

Virginia City was bustling with 30,000 people; today the population is less than 1,000. It didn’t have water until Aug. 1, 1973, when the flume system brought it.

Through ingenuity the whole process became industrialized – at

least as much as it could for the time period and location.

From the Incline mill two sets of tracks were laid going straight up, nearly 1,400 feet. A bullwheel built by Sierra Nevada Lumber Company in 1880 at the top spun the cable to bring up the carts of wood that could each hold about a half a cord.

Wood and steel from the 12-foot bullwheel are still in the forest. The wheel, while rusted, looks like it might still work.



Debris from the logging operation is scattered in the woods. Photo/Kathryn Reed

Until recently this was on private land owned by David Duffield. Now the U.S. Forest Service owns it. Duffield paid for a study to be done on the bullwheel so when the government has money it can be properly restored. Only a handful of photos exist of what it looked like during operation.

Just below this, at an elevation of 7,670 feet, is where the V flume started. This is where the wood was unloaded.

Water for the flumes was diverted from nearby creeks and natural springs. Between 4 and 6 inches of water was needed to float the logs. The V shape was used so if there were a jam, the water would rise and naturally free the logs. (Box flumes

were used just to carry water.)

Gravity allowed the logs to float to and through a tunnel that had been built not too far away.

Part of the tour was seeing where this nearly three-quarter mile long tunnel once was. It collapsed in 1957. Today it would be hard to know it was there without a guide to point to it.

While Howard touched on the Marlette and Hobart water systems, state park rangers give separate tours specifically about water.

Throughout the trek Howard was throwing out dates, names and locations, plus he had old black and white photos from the era. It’s a fairly thorough lesson in Nevada history that he delivers in a matter of a few hours.

Shearer: Wants to encourage progress in SLT

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.***



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

Name: John Shearer

Age: 49

Job/profession: Owner/operator of local businesses, boat captain

What boards, commissions, or other experience, including volunteering, do you have?: President of nonprofit, Marine Research and Education

Why are you running for City Council?: The number one reason I am running for City Council is to encourage progress in our city. I want to help preserve the community and ensure its future. I am not doing this for the money, the status, or the title. I am running for City Council to help make a difference in our community, which I have worked so hard to be a part of and that has given my family and I so much. I believe there is no better place to live and raise your family than Lake Tahoe.

Why should voters vote for you over another candidate?: I am businessman, a family man, and invested in the roots of this community. Owning four separate businesses in different industries gives me a broad knowledge of management.

What distinct experience or competency makes you uniquely qualified to lead effectively as an elected official?: I understand how to run multiple types of successful businesses and the city is essentially one very large business with many separate entities. Being able to effectively run my businesses gives me an understanding of how to manage separate entities and be able to forecast the future and adapt to change at a quicker pace.

Public agencies have been under scrutiny the last few years for lack of transparency and accountability. What will you do to ensure both?: I would treat this position as I operate my businesses, with dignity and respect toward others. I am very straightforward and very honest. I believe in fulfilling obligations that I have committed to and seeing them through in the most honest way possible.

What stands out for you in the current budget that you support and that you would change?: I support the transient occupancy tax percentage increase, which will directly fund the recreational sport complex. I strongly believe that recreation is one of our primary focuses in this city and bringing in a complex will allow increased tourism throughout the year.

Do you support current legislation for $15 minimum wage? Please explain: I think it is worthy of discussion, however I don’t believe putting all the expenses for an individual’s prosperity solely on the backs of the business owners. You have to work hard to earn more.

Do you support Proposition 55? Please explain: I oppose Proposition 55 because it is a premature forecast of change with two years still left in the original Proposition 30, which was written to be temporary. Extending this will affect small businesses and without a defined plan of where the allocated money will actually go. I oppose the extension of Proposition 30.

Describe three attributes for a successful council: Honesty, integrity, transparency

What are your thoughts about public employee defined benefits?: I believe that if you do a duty to the city, you deserve compensation; however long-term extended benefits after a person has left their employment with the city should be up for discussion based on their time and effort invested.

Please explain your position regarding contracting out work normally done by staff: If workflow exceeds my team's abilities or time constraints, I think it is important to seek professional assistance (under specific guidance) from an outside contractor to ensure the achievement of the goal.

What is your 10-year vision for South Lake Tahoe?: I would like to see the recreational sports complex built and fully operational. I would like to see overall progress for current projects within the city such as Heavenly's plans, better parking, and better flow of traffic throughout the city. I would also like to see outdoor sign guidelines so the city is more aesthetically pleasing when driving through it.

What one vote in the last four years that the current council made do you disagree with and why?: Vacation rental proposal; I would have liked to see the existing legislation in place actually being enforced versus creating new ones.

How many City Council meetings have you attended this year?: None this year.

What do you know about the strategic plan, finances, debt, and goals of the city?: Fiscal conservancy, pay attention to current trends and be aware of what may come in the future. Debt is sometimes necessary to achieve goals and increase growth, and refinancing that debt when necessary.

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

community?: I will practice the same values that I do with my businesses. We all need each other's expertise in order to ensure the best end result possible.

What should be the three main priorities for the council?: Economic prosperity, transparency, and accountability.

What have you done to make yourself ready to be a council member?: I have worked every single day for the past 30 years in this community and I know what it takes to make things happen and how to make a living.

What role should government have in housing for residents?: Providing legislation to regulate aesthetics, sound ordinances, and hold homeowners responsible for overall property maintenances.

How can the city partner with the school district to improve high school graduation rates?: The city is always open to new partnerships and is addressing the current needs. Schools are our city's future, and I believe that we have a wonderful school system.

How can local government support and expand job creation and small local businesses?: Work in alliance with our community and the Tahoe Prosperity Center. Provide transportation for people to commute in and out of the basin. Provide an online forum or posting page for local businesses to have one location to post jobs, share jobs and employees, and that is accessible to anyone who is in need of a job.

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 one community, where our services frequently cross both lines, if we incorporate the separate entities into one, we could prosper together. One high school. One community from Zephyr Cove to Meyers. I like to think outside of the box and feel that we can find a solution that works best for the community and the

states.

What are your views on:

a: Vacation home rentals: I believe in vacation rentals and the rules that are currently in place need to be enforced. Three strikes rule, if you can’t manage your property within the current legislation, you shouldn’t have the privilege of operating a vacation rental property.

b: Loop road: I believe in it – to increase the synergy, traffic flow, and events so local families and tourists can enjoy the area in safety.

c: City streets: City streets are definitely the less glamorous side of government but nonetheless, extremely important. We need to have better maintained roadways with reasonable time-lines for repairs and improvements and not in our peak season of tourism. New street lights should be considered in the heavily traveled back streets for safety purposes.

d: Relationships with other public agencies: Collaboration is necessary, but so is accountability. We cannot move forward while everyone is finger pointing.

e: Recreation: Increasing recreation with the recreation center complex. Bring back the basics of our city and the history of Lake Tahoe to have a place to host outdoor family recreation.

f. TRPA defined commodities: I think it is very helpful to have an agency that is dedicated to preserving Lake Tahoe and its environment, as long it is in collaboration with the best interests of the community.

g. Transient occupancy tax measure: I support the increase of 2 percent TOT if the funds are directly funding the new recreation center complex in town.

h. Sales tax measure: I support the sales tax increase by one-half percent if it directly addresses the city's "less glamorous" needs.

i. What do you want the additional sales tax money to go to?: I support that money be allocated toward road and street improvements, however I support our community and whatever the majority votes on.

Tell us something about yourself that people may not know: I own a fishing company, I am a fishing captain, and I don't enjoy eating fish. I would much rather have steak and potatoes.

As someone who owns multiple businesses on both sides of the state line involving fishing and snowmobiling, what are your priorities – the environment, fair wages, tourism, the consumer or something else? Why?: All the above. I believe all of these priorities are a recipe for success and they are defined within all of my businesses. We cannot have one without the other.