More students add up to millions for Nev. colleges

By Siobhan McAndrew, Reno Gazette-Journal

More Nevada students completing college courses could mean millions in additional funds for the state's seven colleges.

Nevada higher education officials said $60 million of its $622 million budget request for state funds is based on the number of students that completed courses in fiscal year 2016.

It is up about $10 million from 2014, the first where the state's colleges faced a new funding formula that no longer funded schools based on enrollment. Colleges, including UNR and Truckee Meadows Community College, receive no funding for students that enroll in courses and drop out.

The Nevada System of Higher Education Board of Regents, the governing body of 13-elected officials over the state's seven colleges and the Desert Research Institute, will hold a special meeting in Lake Tahoe Thursday and Friday.

Read the whole story

SLT-Conner settlement agreement released

By Kathryn Reed

The 11 main items in the settlement agreement between South Lake Tahoe and City Councilwoman JoAnn Conner essentially

return certain policies to what they were prior to the brouhaha that became public last year and then document long-standing protocols.

Six employees brought harassment and bullying allegations against Conner. But Conner is not their boss, so the typical employee-employer rules didn't apply. City Manager Nancy Kerry in trying to protect those employees who work for her took action to stop Conner from being able to interact with them and all employees. This happened a year ago.

Kerry, who has levied bullying accusations against Conner, could sue the councilwoman. Conner is Kerry's boss. But Conner would likely enjoin the city and therefore Kerry would essentially be suing the city, with the taxpayers picking up the bill. At this time Kerry has chosen not to do so, but there is nothing in the agreement that would prevent her from doing so in the future.

After Kerry disabled Conner's card key to city offices and instituted a policy that Conner must only communicate with her or the city attorney, the remaining four councilmembers censured Conner last fall. This is essentially a slap on the wrist saying they don't like her behavior.

When it came time for committee assignments Conner's council colleagues voted to keep her off almost all of them.

Conner soon sued the city and named Kerry in the court filings. Part of what she wanted a judge to rule on was the censure. El Dorado County Superior Court Judge Steve Bailey said no way, the council has a right to make such a decision.

Conner initially said her constitutional rights were jeopardized. This allegation is not addressed in the agreement. (The agreement came out of a mediation session in June.)

Eventually all of the councilmembers turned in their card

keys, so there has been equality for months even though this item is in the settlement.

Also in the agreement is how the mayor runs the meeting. That's been the case for 51 years.

The agreement says Conner can go to pre-agenda meetings. That has always been the case, but for the last year she has chosen not to.

How committee assignments are handled is spelled out in the agreement. Again, this has been the policy for years and is nothing new.

Also not new is how agenda packets are distributed.

The big thing Conner got is to be treated like all the other councilmembers.

In the agreement she is now able to email staff directly. For the last year her emails from her personal and city accounts were routed through the city manager. As with all councilmembers, she now must copy the city manager on the emails.

The major win for the city is Conner agreed to dismiss the lawsuit with prejudice. This means Conner cannot sue the city again on the same grounds.

While Conner signed the eight-page document on Aug. 18, and Mayor Wendy David and Kerry did so Aug. 16, it was not released until Aug. 24.

Part of the agreement is that none of the parties in the suit may talk about it to anyone, nor may they comment about it on social media or blogs. The exclusion did not include commenting on news sites, just that they can't talk directly to a reporter.

Here is a copy of the settlement.

All of this cost Conner about $30,000. It took nearly $100,000 out of the General Fund for the city to defend itself. Conner usually bills herself a defender of the “little people” – that’s her phrase, and she has been fiscally conservative until this case.

Kirkwood faces fine in wetlands contamination

By Drew Bollea, CBS-13

The largest mountain resort company in the country is in violation of the Federal Clean Water Act, according to a California state agency. Now, Kirkwood Mountain Resort staff is in the process of cleaning up a mess made over the winter.

According to public documents from the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board, Kirkwood Ski Resort, which is owned by Colorado-based Vail Resors, is being investigated for contaminating sensitive wetlands and the Kirkwood Creek.

The investigation began in late April after an anonymous complaint made its way to the Central Valley Water Quality Control Board. Investigators surveyed the area and found that over the winter, large piles of asphalt grindings had been dumped onto multiple parking lots at the Kirkwood resort. A common practice to provide traction when the snow piles up.

For 49 days, the Water Board says crews removed snow from parking lots with plows and blowers, thus spreading the asphalt material into places it shouldn’t be.

Read the whole story

Snowpack ‘double whammy’ may hit streams

By Benjamin Spillman, Reno Gazette-Journal

Changing snowmelt cycles could be more damaging to mountain streams and reservoirs in the Western U.S. than previously thought, according to recently published research.

That’s according to research that shows slow-melting snowpack reduces the amount of water that makes it into streams and reservoirs.

The results have ramifications for everyone from water managers to anglers to kayakers, essentially anyone who values mountain streams.

What’s interesting about the research is that it shows a slower snowmelt results in less water making it into streams and reservoirs. That’s counterintuitive for many who assume, under a climate change scenario, faster snowmelt would be a bigger problem.

Read the whole story

Calif. Supreme Court lets

teacher tenure ruling stand

By Howard Blume and Joy Resmovits, Los Angeles Times

Monday was the end of the line for a landmark California case challenging tenure and other traditional job protections for teachers – and the teachers won.

The outcome left some union opponents looking for a different battlefield in the ongoing wars over public education, while others said they should try the courts again.

The case, Vergara vs. California, was closely watched across the country as a test of whether courts would invalidate employment rights of teachers on the argument that they violate the rights of students.

The assault on these protections is part of a broader approach to reforming education that would make schools more like the private sector, which relies on competition, measurable results and performance incentives.

Read the whole story

Basecamp TC blends indoors and outdoors



Basecamp has hotels in Tahoe City, South Lake Tahoe and Boulder. Photo/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

TAHOE CITY – Rooms are simple, efficient, clean and have what you need. It's a bit minimalist without lacking anything.

Refreshing, unique beers are on tap – perfect after a day exploring Lake Tahoe. Sit inside on a couch or at one of the outside areas, even by a fire pit.

Basecamp Tahoe City, which opened in May, is attracting visitors from near and far and of all ages. It's quieter and smaller than its **sister hotel in South Lake Tahoe**.



Basecamp Hotel Tahoe City is comfortable without frills. Photo/Kathryn Reed

It’s hard to recognize this was once the Aviva Inn. The 24 rooms have been gutted – as well as the lobby and shared spaces. There are five room types, with a couple at the far end having limited views of Lake Tahoe. Rooms range from a spacious king to queen bunk to “great indoors family room”. The latter has a king bed, tent, faux fire pit and stars on the ceiling.

To call the whole hotel glamping with real walls would be selling it short. It feels a bit like camping mostly because of the décor. In the room is a mini Playmate cooler that the front desk will fill with ice. A larger metal cooler acts as a table between two directors chairs that give it a definite campy feel. A lantern on the desk adds to the motif. Other light fixtures are modern and a bit industrial.

It was nice not to have the standard photos of Tahoe in the room. The wall hanging above the bed had key attractions pointed with an outline of the lake in the center. Where Sand Harbor is it says “swim suits galore”, between here and Truckee says “people floating down the river w/beer”, while on the West Shore it says “fancy pants boats”.



The communal space is ideal for relaxing and having a glass of beer or wine that the hotel sells. Photo/Kathryn Reed

There is a television and indoor plumbing – oh, and a ceiling fan, air conditioning and heat – so, it really is far from camping.

The open closet area has ample room for skis and boots.

The bathroom is small, but the point of being here isn’t about spending hours getting pretty. It’s about getting out of the room and playing.

General Manager Robbie Kalinowski was great about suggesting places to go for a dog walk – ones right from the hotel as well as a short drive. Another worker suggested part of the Tahoe Rim Trail in the morning. Hmmm, sleep in or hike? (The super comfy bed won.)

Kalinowski came around the corner to show me a few places on his laptop. I opted for TC Cross Country because I had never been there in any season. He emailed a link to it, which I then texted to myself. Technology is wonderful even for the outdoors.



Plenty of hiking and biking options at Tahoe XC when there isn't snow on the ground. Photo/Kathryn Reed

It was the perfect recommendation for AJ and me. Mostly it was mountain bikers who shared the trails with us. Signage is good for the most part, though we managed to zig when we should have zagged, which had us come out into a neighborhood.

Obviously we figured out how to find the Jeep.

A nice feature for those with dogs were the multiple areas to take her out to do her business.

For people not wanting to spend all their time inside the hotel room, there are places to get away and still be on the property. The Sun Room is at the back of the property. It’s a quiet place to relax. Just outside of there are Adirondack chairs around a fire pit.

There’s another communal outdoor area off the lobby area. And the lobby is much more than that. It’s like a shared family room with big screen televisions and board games.



Basecamp Hotel has several areas to relax beyond one’s room. Photo/Kathryn Reed

Even though Basecamp is on the far east side of Tahoe City, it is still walking distance to so many things – like downtown (dining, shopping) and the lake (ample water sports).

The hotel’s recommendation to eat at Blue Agave was perfect. The food and service were wonderful. AJ would have been welcome outside, but I left her behind, opting to sit at the bar where a band was playing.

Breakfast is included in a night’s stay, consisting mostly of waffles, fruit and beverages. This is served in the lobby-main communal area.

While the old hotel had a swimming pool, Basecamp owners opted to conserve water. In its place will be a hot tub that should be open this winter.

Calif. crime measure triggers fewer arrests

By Don Thompson, AP

A 2014 California voter-approved initiative that reduced penalties for certain drug and property crimes has led to the lowest arrest rate in state history as police frequently ignore those illegal activities, experts say.

Proposition 47 lowered criminal sentences by reducing them from felonies that can bring long prison sentences to misdemeanors that instead bring up to a year in jail.

Recent state Department of Justice statistics show the number of felony arrests plummeted 28.5 percent last year, while misdemeanor arrests rose about 9 percent over 2014. That resulted in 52,000 fewer arrests overall and the lowest arrest rate since record-keeping began in 1960.

“It’s really driven by changes in drug and property arrests,”

said Public Policy Institute of California researcher Magnus Lofstrom, who studies the issue. “I think it’s quite clear that Prop. 47 is the major contributor to the changes we’ve seen.”

Last year’s decline in arrests, with the fewest felony arrests since 1969, is part of a long-term decline dating to the 1980s that has been spurred by the law as well as crowded jails and fewer police, Lofstrom said.

It’s too soon to say whether the changes are helping spur rising crime rates, though Lofstrom and other researchers are watching the relationship closely.

Law enforcement officials said drug offenders may now commonly be cited and released, or ignored because there may be little penalty if they are arrested. There were about 22,000 fewer drug arrests last year.

“The de facto decriminalization of drugs may have an impact,” said Kern County Sheriff Donny Youngblood, president of the California State Sheriffs’ Association. “We do know that there’s a lot less arrests being made, which means there are a lot more people on the streets using drugs.”

Multiple courts reported an increase in failures to appear for misdemeanor arraignments since Proposition 47 passed, the Judicial Council of California found in a survey of 40 of the state’s 58 county superior courts.

“If people aren’t showing up in court, if they’re not going to go to drug court, we’re going to see what we’re seeing, which is increased crime rates in our communities,” said Ventura Police Chief Ken Corney, president of the California Police Chiefs Association.

State Department of Justice figures show violent crime jumped 10 percent last year over 2014. Property crimes also increased, including a nearly 12 percent increase in

shoplifting and nearly 11 percent increase in thefts, two crimes affected by Proposition 47.

But participation in drug courts has rebounded as counties adapted to Proposition 47 by including it in sentences for those charged with misdemeanors or drug-related crimes such as stealing to support their addictions, said Santa Clara County Judge Stephen Manley.

“I think it’s been a fairly dramatic response to getting treatment to the people that need it the most,” said Manley, president of the California Association of Drug Court Professionals.

Mel Sargent, 66, and Caroline Sargent, 54, even married on the day they graduated from an 11-month drug court program in March. Sacramento County probation officers bought them wedding rings.

“Before it was always the ‘war against drugs’,” Sargent said. “We got to see the other side, the more human side of the probation department and the judiciary.”

The initiative has also led to fewer plea bargains, probably because suspects have less incentive to accept plea deals without the threat of a felony conviction or prison time, the Judicial Council found.

It reported that prosecutors also seem to be filing more charges for felony drug sales, identity theft and robbery now that drug possession, writing bad checks and check forgery were reduced to misdemeanors.

“Some DA’s offices have tried to charge their way around Prop. 47, no question about it,” said John Abrahams, co-chairman of the California Public Defenders Association’s legislative committee.

But California District Attorneys Association chief executive

Mark Zahner said law enforcement officials may now simply be targeting more serious criminals.

Lenore Anderson, who led the drive to pass Proposition 47, was pleased by reports that there may be an overall improvement in the justice system, even if the initiative is requiring some adjustment.

Law enforcement should accept that drug and property crimes still can bring appropriate punishment, while the changes leave more resources for serious felonies, said Anderson, president and executive director of the reform group Californians for Safety and Justice.

“My highest hope is that we start to really see some innovation that we haven’t seen in the past,” Anderson said.

For instance, this year’s state budget includes $15 million for police to experiment with using case managers and diversion programs to help prostitutes and low-level drug dealers instead of putting them in jail.

Without help, “they’re released in a short period of time and go right back to the same situation,” said Sen. Loni Hancock, D-Berkeley, who pushed for the funding.

Realtors in Tahoe seek out Las Vegas buyers

By Buck Wargo, Las Vegas Review-Journal

Call it the northern invasion.

Northern Nevada Realtors in the Lake Tahoe and Reno area are

aggressively reaching out to their counterparts in Las Vegas with marketing in Southern Nevada to find buyers for luxury vacation properties.

One of the newest properties on the market on the Nevada portion of Lake Tahoe is a $35 million home of Mark Mastrov, the founder of 24 Hour Fitness and co-owner of the Sacramento Kings in the NBA.

The 13-acre property known as the Pines has 13,000 square feet with five bedrooms, a guest house, a caretaker house, lake frontage, a boathouse, and three-hole golf course, said Cheryl Luther, a Realtor with Chase International, which is listing the property. The land was developed in the mid-1930s as a summer retreat for the Scripps Howard newspaper family and is one of the largest privately held estates in Lake Tahoe, she said.

With an elevation of more than 6,000 feet, Lake Tahoe cooler and easier to get to than other destinations such as Big Bear and Mammoth.

Read the whole story

STPUD has enough water for

next 3 decades

By Kathryn Reed

South Tahoe Public Utility District has enough water for the next 31 years.

This is according to a stress test the agency did in the groundwater basin below the 20,500-acre service area.

“With the demand from 2013, 2014 and 2015 averaging 6,173 acre-feet per year, we have over 31 years of water supply in storage,” STPUD General Manager Richard Solbrig told *Lake Tahoe News.*

The results mean the state removed the defined conservation percentage South Tahoe PUD was supposed to meet.

The State Water Resources Control Board asked water districts to conduct the test in order to assess the state’s overall water supply in the wake of four years of drought. Agencies passing the test will not face a state-mandated conservation standard through January 2017. Even so, officials are hoping districts would continue to not be wasteful.

That’s happening locally.

“Even though we are not under a defined conservation order, our customers have still reduced demand over the March through July period this year by 16 percent compared to 2013, the base year used by the SWRCB for conservation calculations,” Solbrig said.

This comes even though it has been a record dry summer for the entire Lake Tahoe Basin. The South Shore has also experienced record heat at times.

Of the 379 suppliers that submitted stress tests, 36 said they would face a supply shortage in 2019. Those districts will be

required to meet a conservation standard equal to the shortage amount. Thirty-two suppliers did not submit stress tests. This means they will retain their March 2016 conservation standards through January 2017.

“Last year, with the lowest snowpack in 500 years after three terrible drought years, and less than impressive response to our earlier calls for conservation, we needed to step in and mandate specific conservation targets to prepare in case we had yet another record bad year in a row,” State Water Board Chair Felicia Marcus said in a statement.

The state is still refining water policies. Various entities are working on standards with the goal of improving water conservation and efficiency in the years ahead based on climate, population, and business types, rather than percentage reductions off a given baseline. The new standards would also likely include permanent prohibitions on wasteful water use, improved drought planning, and enhanced leak detection and repair requirements.

Still in place are the regulations that prohibit hosing down a sidewalk, overwatering a landscape to where water is running off the lawn, and requiring restaurants to not automatically serve water.

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2 Olympics viewers watch with Nev.’s interests at heart



Brian Krolicki continues to support a Lake Tahoe bid for the Winter Games. Photo/LTN file

By Richard N. Velotta, Las Vegas Review-Journal

It’s easy to understand why Jon Killoran and Brian Krolicki are watching Sunday’s closing ceremonies of the 2016 Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro a little differently than the average viewer.

Every beauty shot of the Ipanema and Copacabana beaches, every view of Sugarloaf Mountain and the Christ the Redeemer statue are tributes to the destination that make viewers say, “Yes, I’d like to be there someday.”

Killoran and Krolicki have that same attitude for Nevada.

Over the past two decades Krolicki, the former lieutenant governor who headed the Nevada Commission on Tourism for eight years, has beat the drum for hosting the Winter Olympic Games at Lake Tahoe.

Killoran, since 2009, has been the CEO of the Reno Tahoe Winter Games Coalition, an organization that has led the charge for Nevada and California to bring the Winter Olympics back to the region.

Read the whole story