

Amgen bike race blows through South Shore



The women start the four-stage event May 19 at Heavenly Mountain Resort. Photo Copyright 2016 Carolyn E. Wright

By Susan Wood

In two whirlwind finishes Thursday, the Amgen Tour of California women's and men's bike races came down to a sprint at the end. San Francisco rider Megan Guarnier made her move over Sarah Storey and Latvian Toms Skujins barely beat Adam De Vos.

Lake Tahoe served up one of its usual weather-challenging days for the cyclists in this Tour de France-style ride. In 2011, the men's race got snowed out. This year, it was the wind taking center stage – with gusts up to 55 mph.



Women racers approach Emerald Bay area during the 2016 Amgen race. Photo Copyright 2016 Lisa J. Tolda

“We knew it would be windy. We’re just glad it’s not snowing,” Lake Tahoe Visitors Authority Events Director Mike Frye told *Lake Tahoe News*. Executive Director Carol Chaplin agreed – and assured that professional riders know how to work through the elements.

The riders seemed to take it in stride and at times embraced it. Some mentioned relishing being able to use a tailwind.



A lone woman at the end of the pack rounds a curve near Eagle Falls. Photo Copyright 2016 Lisa J. Tolda

The enthusiastic announcer called the wind “brutal” and the women’s finish “a throw down in Lake Tahoe.”

“You won’t win it in 1K, but you could lose it if you go too big,” he yelled over the speakers as the women seesawed into position.

Guarnier gasped as she pulled over the finish.



Megan Guarnier is surrounded by her teammates after winning Stage 1.
Photo/Kathryn Reed

In the middle of the women's race, Storey had a four-minute lead, then Guarnier decided to move in the last few kilometers. She came in at 3:04.57.

"It was a good finish. I got awesome support from my team," Guarnier told *Lake Tahoe News*, as she rolled to a stop in the parking lot.



A field of more than 100 riders line up for the May 19 start at Heavenly. Photo Copyright 2016 Carolyn E. Wright

She admitted the wind “did neutralize” the ride, but she also welcomed tailwind at times. However, it was not her biggest concern at the start.

“It’s my first time riding in Tahoe. It’s beautiful. I was just afraid of the altitude,” Guarnier said. The women rolled up and down Emerald Bay and Spooner Summit, while the men came over Carson and Luther passes.



Lucinda Brand of the Netherlands is used to wind in her home country. Photo Copyright 2016 Carolyn E. Wright

"It's not hard climbing here. The hills are rolling," Rabo LIV Women Cycling Team rider Lucinda Brand told *Lake Tahoe News* at the start line. She said the altitude would be a bigger factor for her because her hometown is flat. One thing that Rotterdam and Tahoe shared May 19 was wind. She said she was riding two days ago here in the wind, where it was everywhere instead of being a distinct head or tail wind.



Toms Skujins, Stage 5 winner, makes his way up Luther Pass on May 19. Photo Copyright 2016 Carolyn E. Wright

In the men's ride, Skujins took full advantage of the wind during this stage in the last five kilometers. He just wished he would have enjoyed the Tahoe scenery more. "I didn't have enough time," he said at the finish.

Skujins said "it wasn't easy," but his strategy in the last stretch worked.



The peloton makes the ascent up Luther Pass. Photo Copyright 2016 Carolyn E. Wright

"I didn't want to start sprinting too early," Skujins said at a press conference. He added that logically he couldn't make his move in the pack because he'd endure "attack on attack" from challengers. He completed the stage in 5:54.45.

Frenchman Julian Alaphilippe is wearing the yellow jersey.

During the men's race, the announcer said the leaders were stretched out from the pack in what might as well be "a different ZIP code."

Renee De Vos almost missed her son cross the finish line less than two bicycle lengths behind the winner.

"As I was walking up the hill I found out he was in third place," the British Columbia resident told *Lake Tahoe News*. De Vos came in second in Stage 5.



It is a tight race for women racers as they turn from Pioneer Trail onto Ski Run Boulevard. Photo Copyright Lisa J. Tolda

Several riders noted how they enjoyed the enthusiasm from hundreds gathered at Heavenly's California Lodge for the start and two finishes. In some instances, spectators numbered about five deep from the barriers to catch a glimpse of 300 top professional cyclists giving it their all.

South Shore enthusiasts rewarded the athletes with support along the route from Meyers to the ski resort. Cowbells were clanging hard and spectators were beating on the barricades at Heavenly. The noise was accompanied by the commentator who got the crowd geared up with his play-by-play assessment with an education in how altitude makes it more difficult for recovery.

Missy Hansen of Chicago and Karen Pollack of Delaware camped out on the Heavenly Tram loading area steps to see the two finishes.

"You don't have to be a cyclist to get into it," said Hansen, who thoroughly enjoyed her Amgen event.



The last of the pack climb Ski Run Boulevard. Photo Copyright Lisa J. Tolda

Her friend, Pollack, is a regular as a spectator on the professional cycling circuit, having witnessed two Tour de France rides. It was her second Amgen, and she talked Hansen into coming to Tahoe just for this event.

“Our whole trip was to follow this race,” said Pollack, who rides on occasion.

Hansen said she’s learned a lot from Pollack, who even knows what a neutral start is. It’s essentially a warm up until the

race director drops the flag, then “it’s game on,” she explained.

Pollack disagrees with some who call cycling boring to watch.

“It’s a fascinating sport,” she said, adding that it was a good idea to have the men and women finish in the same spot.



The women fly past Eagle Falls on May 19. Photo Copyright Lisa J. Tolda

The women did 72 miles around the lake to launch the UCI World Tour. The men completed the 130-mile route from Lodi, which made history for the Tour of California race with having its highest peak elevation of 8,600 feet.

“It’s so exciting. It’s pretty incredible, this route, because it’s so steep. And the wind was out of control,” Hilary Bailey said, standing near the finish line. She and husband Don make the race their vacation every year from their home in McMinnville, Ore.

Friday's Tour of California race takes the men through Folsom before they hit the rolling, vineyard-lined hills of Sonoma County for Santa Rosa's Stage 7. The women will have a time trial in Folsom for Stage 2.

Kathryn Reed contributed to this story.

Calif. moves to end unprecedented water restrictions

By Kurtis Alexander, San Francisco Chronicle

A greener yard and a more leisurely shower just might be in your future.

State officials, in a policy shift that reflects California's easing drought conditions, decided Wednesday to scrap the emergency conservation mandates that have forced cities and towns to cut water use as much as 36 percent, often by hitting residents with unprecedented restrictions and fines.

Instead, the State Water Resources Control Board will allow urban water providers to set their own water-reduction targets based on their own customers' wants and needs.

Read the whole story

Douglas candidates' forum exposes differences

By Susan Wood

GARDNERVILLE – It's been said: The personal is the political.

When five of the seven candidates running for four seats on the Douglas County School District board of trustees took up the question of transgender access in restrooms at Monday night's forum at the Carson Valley Inn, the usually tame venue got slightly raucous.

Amid the laughter, groans and mumbling of attendees, each candidate tried to delicately express their views on the controversial subject affecting the schools. The federal mandate requires schools to allow students who identify with a gender other than the one they're born with to use the bathroom of choice.

Leading up to that subject, the panel discussion appeared mild and typical of most political forums. But moderator Jerry Evans, who owns KKFT 99.1-FM, baited the candidates with the inquiry at the non-partisan forum sponsored by the Good Governance Group of Douglas County. The primary is June 14. If no one receives 50 percent of the vote plus one, the top two candidates will face each other in November.



Michael Kiger

Retired teacher Michael Eugene Kiger of Zephyr Cove, who's challenging Keith Byer of Glenbrook and Nicholas Shepack of Zephyr Cove in Area 3, said he doesn't support the mandate and added that it's "not something we can decide on immediately." It was difficult to tell whether he was speaking of choosing one's gender or challenging the rule.

(Cindy Trigg, who represents the area now, is being termed out.)

Ambiguity may be a survival mechanism in times like these.

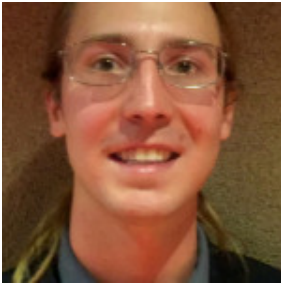


Keith Byer

Shepack, a small businessman who went to the Lake Tahoe schools, said he doesn't like that it's a federal mandate, but was open to further discussion.

Gardnerville resident Linda Gilkerson, who works for Tahoe Youth & Family Services as a mentor coordinator, told listeners that perhaps the conversation should be made with the younger set.

"I can tell you that millennials look at this differently," the first-time office seeker said, suggesting that young people appear more open to diversity



Nicholas
shepack

than older generations.

To that, Evans piped in that it seemed hard to fathom a teenage girl not minding showering with a boy.

But to that, Gilkerson held her own, countering: “That’s not what we’re talking about here,” despite the sneers from the approximately 40 people in the audience.

“Before you pass judgment, ask the children. They’re a lot more open than a lot of people in this room,” she said, while never wavering.

Incumbent Karen Chessell of Minden, who’s running unopposed for the Area 1 seat, came to Gilkerson’s defense. The veteran school board trustee, who also works for the Nevada Department of Education, insisted she agrees that children are not occupied with transgender issues.

The bigger challenge to her is creating policy.

Larry Lippmann, up for the Area 5 seat against Gilkerson, stopped short of covering the policy and politics.

Instead, the Gardnerville resident – who has logged 35 years in education starting out as a bus driver – simply stated he’s “in support of people who are in transition” and that he has sympathy and empathy.

Byer and Gardnerville resident Neal Freitas, the latter running unopposed for the Area 4 seat, were absent.

Other than the small disturbance during the May 16 panel discussion, the night came off as a friendly meet-and-greet gathering, where the candidates mingled with those interested in Douglas County schools.

Four county commissioner candidates also participated in the forum – Greg Lynn, Dave Nelson, Frank Godecke and Larry Walsh. They fielded questions ranging from green energy and flooding to conflicts of interest along with water and growth.

But it was the school board candidates who took center stage first.

The lake as an island of Douglas

When asked by *Lake Tahoe News* how they view school issues at the lake, Lippman declared he sees no separation between the valley and the lake.

“We’re all in this together,” the former mathematics teacher said. Lippman taught at South Tahoe High School in 1986.

Chessell, who said she showed up to hear what the other candidates had to say, said she’s “concerned about the success of all (Douglas County) citizens.” She pointed out how she was on the board during radon mitigation, an issue facing the granite-based mountain area.

She noted the selling of the former Kingsbury Middle School “has been a challenge,” especially since it needs a new roof.

As a teacher and administrator, Chessell may put her 150 hours of specific training in education budget and finance to work in finding a solution there.

“I feel the taxpayers have invested in me,” she said. “I look forward to four more years.”

In respect to Area 3, Shepack has ideas of his own.

"There's a lot we could do with that property," Shepack told *Lake Tahoe News* of the Stateline property. He'd like to see a recreation center or large community space that would generate money for the community. Shepack runs the concessionaire company Friar on the Mountain.

Beyond the business angle, Shepack said he brings a unique perspective – one of being a student. He spent all 12 grades at lake schools.

Gilkerson noted she takes the perspective of a parent and longtime resident of 24 years in the county. She raised two sons in Douglas schools and worked as a substitute teacher, along with working for nonprofits.

"Every job has led me back to our community," she said.

Kiger endorses the idea of giving back to the community and through awareness and greater access being retired wants to avail himself to the citizenry. Like Lippmann, Kiger taught math.

Common ground?

The candidates provided some diversity in the ranks when the question came up of Common Core, the U.S. initiative that details what K-12 students should know in English/language arts and math.

Chessell and Gilkerson offered their support for the consistency standards. Shepack hesitated, saying he's not quite ready "to scrap it." Kiger wants to enhance it, while Lippmann is against it.

"I'm way in favor of local control. I don't know if I want the people in the federal government telling us what to teach," the teacher said. To that, he gained applause from the audience.

Does money rule?

When Evans posed a question from the audience about whether money helps education, most of the candidates affirmed the almighty dollar is necessary.

“Money does make a difference,” a stern Lippmann insisted.

Kiger explained how a small ratio of students to teachers brings better results. Chessell declared the state’s support of the dollars also provides “better results.”

Shepack would like to see more funding go to the arts, while Gilkerson leans toward improvements in technology.

Byer, who was in Chicago on the night of the forum, specifically told *Lake Tahoe News* that our investment in technology will help shape students’ futures since they “will face a dynamic work environment.” He added: “Every career will be intertwined with technology.”

Byer pledged to be diligent about making up for reduced student enrollment factors as a businessman eager to find creative solutions.

Freitas did not respond to an inquiry from *LTN*.

Elite cyclists ready to tame Tahoe’s roads



This is the second year South Lake Tahoe is hosting the women's Tour of California. Photo Copyright 2016 Carolyn E. Wright

By Kathryn Reed

STATELINE – The National Weather Service in Reno has issued an advisory today for boats on Lake Tahoe. However, meteorologists aren't warning cyclists about the gusts that may reach 50 mph.

Tahoe continues to present the Amgen Tour of California bike race officials and riders a challenge when it comes to weather. In 2011, the men's race was snowed out; last year it was touch and go for the women. The good thing for today – no precipitation is in the forecast.

This is the first U.S. event on the inaugural UCI world tour for the women. Eighteen teams with 108 riders will start and end at Heavenly's California Lodge today – with a ride around the lake in between.

The men finish their fifth stage this afternoon at the Cal

Lodge.



Women's Stage 1

Heavenly California Lodge, South Lake Tahoe

Start: 10:50am

Estimated finish: 2pm

Men's Stage 5

Lodi to South Lake Tahoe (Cal Lodge)

Start: 9:45am

Estimated finish: 3:46pm

Lifestyle Festival

Cal Lodge

10am-4:30pm

Television coverage

Amgen Tour of California is live on NBC Sports Network.

Photo Copyright 2016 Carolyn E. Wright

The women cyclists were introduced Wednesday night at a special reception at Harrah's Lake Tahoe. Many expressed an appreciation for what Amgen has done to bring the women's sport more prominence. Even in Europe, where road bike riding is much more of a spectator sport than in the United States, this particular race has been generating a buzz.

World, national and Amgen champs, along with Olympians will be racing. Kristin Armstrong, who won Olympic gold in 2008 and 2012 for the United States, is racing for Rally Cycling. Eight of the 10 Olympic hopefuls for the U.S. are here.

Evelyn Stevens with Roels Dolan's Cycling Team said she expects an all-round cyclist to win the women's four-stage race. Stevens earlier this year set the hour record, going 47.98 kilometers.

Canyon Sram Racing is hoping to defend its title.

Mara Abbott with the Wiggle High5 team has a reputation as a climber. She said, "There are medium sized climbs here." The hometown, obviously biased crowd seemed to disagree with her description.

Is drought new norm for water use?

By Denis Cuff, Bay Area News Group

With the drought fading and temperatures heating up, it's no wonder more sprinklers are popping up. But is it too soon?

Some homeowners and environmentalists worry water restrictions are coming off too fast in a state struggling to have enough water for people, businesses, fish and wildlife.

Water industry officials, however, say Californians have proved that once they learn to conserve, they don't forget those habits.

Officials say new technology with more efficient sprinkler

controls, toilets, and clothes and dish washing machines also factor in. Landscaping changes also made a difference in holding down water use as homeowners replaced thirsty lawns with drought resistant plants, officials said.

Read the whole story

SLT council tightens screws on VHR owners

By Kathryn Reed

It seems like every time the South Lake Tahoe City Council makes some change to the vacation rental ordinance, another group of people becomes disenfranchised.

On Tuesday it was those who have the tourist rentals in a multi-family dwelling.

The staff report says, "There will be no VHR permits for multi-family properties one year from the effective date of this ordinance."

Eleven people spoke at the meeting; most not happy with the changes – and certainly not understanding of them.

Mayor Wendy David said, "We have a housing crisis. As the City Council we need to think of the community. We are facing a substantial crisis with those who want to live here and can't find adequate housing."

The change means people who have a second dwelling on their property, own a duplex, or larger multi-family dwelling will no longer be able to rent them to tourists.

These people believe they are being discriminated against. Those who voiced their opinions said they ought to be grandfathered in, spoke of how their properties had no violations, and that the money pays their bills and helps with retirement income.

The council didn't budge.

While the staff report from the May 17 meeting said the ordinance was designed to be more user friendly and easier to follow, that wasn't the case for everyone reading along.

Councilman Austin Sass, who with David, was on the subcommittee to come up with the changes. He said at the get-go only three things changed. The staff report had 11 significant bullet items, and the actual ordinance is full of lined-out language and additional verbiage.

It used to be that owners could pay a reduced permit fee if they opted to rent to fewer people than the maximum allowed. Not so going forward. The VHR permit will be for the top number, thus further increasing the city's bottom line.

One item that didn't get any attention is that all types of vacation rentals will now have to collect/pay transient occupancy tax.

The staff report says, "... TOT payment is required for all rentals of 30 days or less and it is collected through an issued VHR permit." This includes people renting a room and staying on the premise. A chart in the actual ordinance says as much, too.

However, to add to the confusion, City Attorney Tom Watson told *Lake Tahoe News* those types of rentals don't require a VHR permit, but instead people will need a business license. Further clarification was sought early today, but no answer has arrived.

The second reading of the ordinance is expected at the June 7 meeting. The ordinance would be effective 30 days later.

One thing that could ease the housing crunch is that on Monday the California Senate passed SB1069, which would allow people to add a second dwelling to their property. Watson said this would have no bearing on South Lake Tahoe's VHR ordinance.

The Tahoe Regional Planning Agency normally says no to such units.

"As far as how this state legislation would affect TRPA rules, we would have to wait and see what if anything passes at the end of the day, how that compares with our rules and our policies and goals for the region, and update things accordingly," Tom Lotshaw, spokesman for the bi-state regulatory agency, told

2 tax measures before SLT voters in Nov.

By Kathryn Reed

South Lake Tahoe voters in November will decide if the hotel and sales taxes should be increased.

The City Council on May 17 agreed to go forward with the ballot measures. What to spend the added revenue on remains to be decided.

The current transient occupancy tax is 10 percent throughout much of South Lake Tahoe, 12 percent in the redevelopment area. The former goes into the city's General Fund, the latter mostly to pay off the bond debt. The Tourism Improvement

District, which was formed in 2006, tacks on another \$3.50 or \$4 per night. TID uses that money for marketing.

The city briefly raised the hotel tax via Measure Z in November 2002. This added \$1 to every hotel room. It was in place from Feb. 1, 2004, to Oct. 31, 2006. It brought in about \$1.1 million a year.

Raising the current TOT by 2 percent is projected to generate \$2 million annually.



Privacy is lacking at the South Lake Tahoe Recreation Center. Photo/LTN file

The plan is to have the money go toward recreation. It will require a two-thirds majority to pass this tax because the money is earmarked for something in particular.

Defining recreation, though, is what could be a hiccup in the process. Two members of the South Lake Tahoe Lodging Association spoke Tuesday, saying they want the ballot language to dictate a state-of-the-art recreation complex will be built. A member of the public who could not stay for the whole meeting earlier that day told *Lake Tahoe News* she wants bike trails to be the priority.

The ballot language is bound to be broad. The resolution

supporting it can get into more details.

The city also sees renovations to Regan Beach being part of the bigger recreation improvement picture.

As for the sales tax, the plan is to ask voters to raise it by one-half percent, with the hope it will generate \$2.5 million annually. This would make it 8.5 percent.

Raising the sales tax was already done once. It went from 7.25 percent to 7.75 percent after voters gave the go-ahead in November 2004. All of this "extra" revenue goes right to South Lake Tahoe, whereas the bulk goes to the state.

What the council could not decide on is whether to go for a 50 percent, plus one vote where the money raised goes to the General Fund, or have it dedicated to something like roads, which requires a 66 percent vote. The five discussed the merits of requiring the lesser vote total and putting an advisory vote with it asking people to choose among two or three areas of where to spend the money. Most likely roads, facilities and housing would be the options. Those priorities came out of a survey the city did earlier this year.

However, the city would not be obligated to follow the wishes of voters. To better ensure the electeds comply with voters' wishes, the idea was floated of passing a resolution stating that to deviate from the voters' desires would take a 5-0 vote of the council.

Everything regarding the sales tax will be back before the council on June 7. To qualify for the Nov. 8 ballot, the council must have the resolution done by June 21.

The council is confident about asking voters to approve both tax measures because the survey showed only 5 percent of respondents saying no to any tax, with 8 percent undecided. Forty-five percent said they would support both taxes.

Recreation and roads are the two main areas on which people want money to be spent, according to survey results.

While an amusement tax had been bandied about, the dismal survey results removed that from the discussion.

The council members admitted they have their work cut out to convince voters to say yes to both taxes even though it will be tourists who are most impacted.

Immigration agents arrest 87 in 5-day Nev. operation

By Anjeanette Damon, Reno Gazette-Journal

Immigration enforcement agents have arrested 87 immigrants in Reno and Las Vegas during a five-day operation they said targeted individuals who pose a threat to public safety.

Of those arrested, 22 were picked up in Reno, including a 33-year-old Mexican national with prior drug trafficking, DUI and domestic violence convictions and a 19-year-old Mexican national with a prior conviction for robbery and resisting arrest.

Immigration and Customs Enforcement officials, however, refused to release the identifications of those arrested, citing Privacy Act restrictions on "administrative arrests."

Read the whole story

Can Congress pass a California water bill?

By Michael Doyle, Sacramento Bee

California's two Democratic senators remain somewhat out of sync over proposed water legislation, underscoring its ambiguous future on the eve of a big hearing.

Four months after Sen. Dianne Feinstein's introduction of her latest California water package, Sen. Barbara Boxer is still evaluating the 185-page bill. Her wait-and-see attitude hints at complex undercurrents, as she supports some parts of Feinstein's bill while seeking more feedback about other parts.

"I think many of us feel the same way as Sen. Boxer," said Rep. Jared Huffman, D-San Rafael. "We appreciate that Sen. Feinstein has reached out and taken some new ideas that she's rolled into that bill . . . but it still contains this very problematic Delta operations piece."

Feinstein's legislation will be one of five Western water bills considered today by the Senate Water and Power Subcommittee. It's the first Senate hearing since last October on a drought-inspired California water bill.

Read the whole story

Housing crisis – a regional

problem in Tahoe

By Moonshine Ink

As Tahoe delves into a rabid housing crisis, the real question is: What solutions can we tap into to solve this issue? There are myriad options being explored by the community at large. The Tahoe Truckee Community Foundation, which is spearheading a regional housing needs assessment, just wrapped up a series of housing forums aimed at tackling solutions to this multi-pronged topic.

“What strikes me is there is no single solution,” said Truckee Town Manager Tony Lashbrook. “We have to pursue them all.”

Indeed, there are several options to explore in solving the #TahoeHousingCrisis, including regulatory approaches, tapping into local and regional agencies, a plethora of funding strategies, alternative housing, and even how we as a community look at this issue. While the solutions may not be clear, it is imperative that we get creative to harbor viable, alternative solutions to tackle the housing behemoth. Sustainable solutions will require passionate and involved community members willing to try anything.

“The success of this issue is going to hinge on the community commitment to solving this issue,” said Aaron Nousaine, senior associate for BAE Urban Economics, which is working on the Truckee North Tahoe Regional Housing Study. “We need to build support around solutions.”

It really is the culture of a community that drives changes in affordable housing. Communities need to be willing to be flexible to change what is already in place and get behind new policies. Aspen has some of the most onerous development standards – including housing mitigation for new construction and deed restricted units – but the community has backed the regulations and is committed to fixing its own housing crisis,

according to Aaron Nousaine, senior associate for BAE Urban Economics.

Read the whole story