Calif.’s ballot could be a blockbuster next November

By John Myers, Los Angeles Times

Call it a dream for California political consultants, a nightmare for voters or an electoral extravaganza: The November 2016 ballot could feature a bigger crop of statewide propositions than at any time in the past decade.

“The voters pamphlet is going to look like the Encyclopaedia Brittanica,” said Steve Maviglio, a Democratic campaign strategist.

The list of measures is very much a work in progress. Most campaigns are still gathering voter signatures or waiting for their proposals to be vetted by state officials.

But political strategists have identified at least 15 — perhaps as many as 19 —measures that all have a shot at going before voters next fall.

Read the whole story

California researchers re-create forest blazes

By Rory Carroll, Guardian

The doors clang shut, casting the laboratory into gloom, and the scientists don goggles, yellow helmets and flame-resistant jackets. Two crouch behind computers, readying measurements.

Another picks up a blowtorch. The rest stand back.

Wood shavings and dry chaparral, which resembles hay, line the bed of a 30ft wind tunnel. Green shrubs, leaves and branches sit on a shelf above. The replica forest is ready for immolation.

“Computers!” shouts Jeanette Cobian, the lead engineer, signalling the start of the experiment. “Ignition!”

The scientists have just simulated a “crown fire”, in which flames leap from treetop to treetop, a spectacle firefighters dread. The computers recorded heat of more than 800C (1,472F).

“We want to know when fire will transition to a crown, and if so, how fast will it spread,” said Cobian, a mechanical engineering PhD student at the UC Riverside.

Read the whole story

South Lake Tahoe glitters as it turns 50



More than 200 people mingle before

the festivities to celebrate South Lake Tahoe's 50th birthday begin Nov. 7. Photos/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

"History is what binds us."

That was just one of the sentiments expressed by South Lake Tahoe Mayor Hal Cole on Saturday night as more than 200 people came together to celebrate the city's 50th birthday.

It was on Nov. 30, 1965, that South Lake Tahoe became an incorporated city.

The milestones – some positive, some sad, all critical to the city being what it is today – were captured through video, personal stories, and the written word.

While the city is bound to have more parties at other significant markers, it is at 50 when many of those who helped establish the city are still here to tell their story. Yesteryear's visionaries aren't likely to be around for the 75th celebration. That is what made Nov. 7 special – the past, present and future were all in one room for a few hours.



A golden anniversary.

It was a night to remember those who had the foresight to strive for incorporation, the recognition that the area would be better off governing itself than being saddled with decisions made 60 miles away in Placerville, and to illustrate what has occurred in these five decades and what is possible going forward.

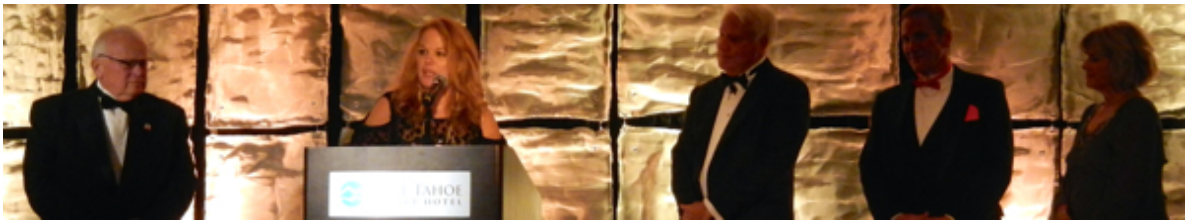
Thirteen former or current councilmembers attended the festivities at Lake Tahoe Resort Hotel. Members of the Brad Murphy (the first mayor) and Norm Woods (councilman) families were in attendance.

The sold-out event included former and current city staff, as well as a who's who list of community members.

It was a night to better understand some of the struggles that have taken place – such as development and redevelopment, finances, the loss of local soldiers, and the Angora Fire.

It was a night to embrace accomplishments – Lakeview Commons, recreation center, environmental stewardship.

It was a night to look at the future – Lake Tahoe Wildlife Care moving into the city limits, Tahoe Mountain Lab building a hub for the untraditional work force, expanded recreation opportunities and a city that will be vibrant when the 100th celebration takes place.



City Manager Nancy Kerry, second from left, is flanked by the four councilmembers who attended the Nov. 7 party.

Cole touched on four entities that to him have made a profound difference to this area:

· Heavenly – especially singling out how the ski resort was built by locals and had world-class events, and is still integral to the fabric of the city.

· Barton Memorial Hospital – recalling the days before there was a hospital and how it is rare for a community hospital to still be locally owned-operated.

· South Tahoe Public Utility District – for being a pioneer in treating sewage to keep Tahoe blue.

· Edgewood – to the Park family that has been key to Tahoe since the 1800s and is continuing to evolve.

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Notes:

· The commemorative book is available for purchase by emailing Tracy Franklin – tfranklin@cityofslt.us.

· The three-part video shown Saturday night is available on **YouTube**.

Bob Rockwell (Old Long Skiis) – 1953-2015



Bob Rockwell and his dog Lucky. Photos/Provided

“Old Long Skiis” is now making first tracks with his dog Clarity in a secret powder bowl high above Meiss Meadow.

Robert Porter Rockwell Jr. died Nov. 3, 2015. He was 61.



Bob Rockwell loved to tell stories.

Bob was born in San Jose to Mona and Robert P. Rockwell Sr. on Dec. 29, 1953. The family moved to South Lake Tahoe in the early 1960s and began a long history of running motels, shops, and other businesses.

Brought up with a great work ethic, his first job was cleaning up the beach at Ski Run Marina and taking out tourists in an aluminum boat over to Emerald Bay, acting as tour guide. He was only in grade school at the time. Folks loved his enthusiasm and hearing his knowledge of the lake.

He graduated from South Tahoe High School in 1972, where he

earned his “block T” letter on the ski team. Working at the drive-in theater on Glenwood was a blast for Bob. Next he managed the A&W Drive-In for his folks, then later he became the tram operator at Heavenly Valley Ski Area. As an avid skier, this was one of his favorite occupations.

He worked for South Tahoe Refuse next, and was there for over 30 years, starting at the bottom and working his way up to supervisor of the collections crew. One person’s trash is another one’s treasure, and boy, the treasures he would bring home. He had so many hilarious stories of his days with STR.

His contagious laugh and great sense of humor made him an unforgettable person to know. Bob was a kind, caring, generous person who went out of his way to help others, be it snowblowing the neighbors’ driveways, kitty sitting, or sharing the veggies from his garden.

He loved skiing, boating, fishing, duck hunting, camping, and every aspect of living at Tahoe. Bob especially loved boat camping in his Bayliner cabin cruiser; rising early he would troll the tranquil waters of Emerald Bay listening to the ospreys call.

Bob leaves behind his loving father, Robert P. Rockwell Sr. of San Jose; brother Eric Rockwell of New York City; sisters Linda (Del) Sessions of San Jose, Michele (Larry) Mowrey of Sacramento; and loving partner of 25 years Christy A. Prouty of South Lake Tahoe.

Buddy the dog and Ashleigh the cat will miss him as well as everyone else who had the pleasure to know him. He was well known in our community will be dearly missed by many.

In lieu of flowers, donations to the Lake Tahoe Historical Society (P.O. Box 18501, South Lake Tahoe, CA 96151) or American Heart Association would have pleased Bob.

A celebration of life for Bob will be announced at a later

date.

Unintended consequence of Prop. 47 – more crime

By Cindy Chang, Marisa Gerber and Ben Poston, Los Angeles Times

Semisi Sina has kept sheriff's deputies busy in the last year.

The 30-year-old has stolen bicycles from his Hacienda Heights neighborhood. He has skipped out on drug treatment and kept up his meth habit.

He has racked up 16 arrests, earning himself a place near the top of the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department's list of repeat offenders picked up for theft or drug use. And he says a new law has made it easier for him to commit crimes.

"Now, you can get away with it because of Proposition 47," Sina said recently in an interview at his parents' home.

One year after voters approved the landmark ballot measure, Proposition 47 has dramatically altered California's criminal justice landscape.

Read the whole story

Lake Tahoe Hard Rock on path to stabilization

By Kathryn Reed

STATELINE – Correct the problems and identify opportunities. Those are the oversimplified tasks the consultants for Lake Tahoe Hard Rock have agreed to tackle.

“Right now we are working to stabilize the operation,” Jim Roets told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Roets and Rick Stevens, two veterans in the Northern Nevada casino industry, have a 90-day contract that began in mid-October that calls for assembling an executive team and assessing the operation to undo the damage of Warner Hospitality. Even after a more permanent management team is in place the plan is the duo will stay on board as advisors as needed.

The Park brothers, owners of the property, **fired Las Vegas-based Warner** last month. The Parks have since sued Warner.

The dysfunction since the Jan. 28 opening was documented in an exclusive *Lake Tahoe News* **story in August**.

Roets and Corinna Osborne, director of non-gaming operations, sat down with *Lake Tahoe News* this week to discuss the future of the property.

“Hard Rock is a good brand in itself. Our goal is to deliver, if not over deliver, on those expectations,” Roets said.

Marketing the property, getting a sales team together and creating a good casino player strategy are some of the immediate goals.



Lake Tahoe Hard Rock consultants are trying to fix problems the previous management firm created. Photo/LTN

“It’s unacceptable the property opened in January and people in the community don’t know we have a steakhouse,” Roets said. Better messaging is part of the immediate plans.

He and Osborne have already noticed improved customer service, which they attribute to workers being happier.

Some employees who lost their job under the old regime are coming back. This includes front line staff and managers like the former director of sales. (The property has 14,000-square-feet of meeting space near the Fire Break restaurant.) There are about 360 employees, with 75 front line positions available. The two big positions yet to be filled are general manager and human resources director.

“It will not be a third party big name that has cooperate offices somewhere else that is at the helm,” Roets said. “The team will have a clear understanding of the market, the work force, and flow of the seasonality; and be involved in the community.”

Last week the employees came together for what was called a town hall. It gave them an opportunity to ask the interim head honchos questions, to learn what can be expected in the coming months and feel appreciated. More of those will occur when

appropriate.

Roets said he and Stevens are listening to staff suggestions and complaints, then explaining why or how things may or may not change. Just being heard is a new concept for these employees.

He said the staff is qualified and just need to be encouraged to do the job they know how to do.

Under the old guard employees were not encouraged to be engaged in the community. Just the opposite is occurring now.

As for the pool, it’s a bigger item that probably won’t fall under the purview of the consultants. Solutions are being sought for the leaks that forced the pool to be drained and closed last summer. It remains an empty vessel.

“The previous management tried things out there that didn’t sell in this market,” Roets said of the Splash pool parties that had a Vegas-esque quality to them. “We aren’t going to continue to do things that don’t work and don’t make sense.”

Osborne said the summer music festivals in the parking lot are not likely to be resurrected.

The focus is doing things at the property that make sense and are profitable.

Vinyl, the small music house, will continue to bring in entertainment. The goal is develop it into a venue with a brand people can count on.

When it was announced in July 2014 that the Horizon was being rebranded as a Hard Rock, Heavenly Mountain Resort was going to be an integral partner. In fact, the launch was at the midway station of the ski resort. When asked if that pairing was still going forward, Roets said, “Any and all partnerships are being looked at.”

Within the next year Roets expects the Hard Rock to be bringing in a sizable piece of the market.

The Stateline casinos collectively bring in about $200 million a year in gaming. Roets would not speak to what share is the Hard Rock's or how much it should be. He only said the goal is to attract its fair share of locals and tourists.

Roets also didn't want to talk about the debt brothers Jon and David Park have incurred. About $62 million has been spent to remodel what was the tired and dilapidated Horizon. Another $12 million is said to be needed to finish the upgrades – this includes guest rooms and the large showroom where the likes of Elvis Presley once played when the property opened as the Sahara.

The long-range plans – those are not for Roets and Stevens to figure out, but instead for the Parks to worry about. The consultants are striving to make the Hard Rock employees deliver a product locals and tourists want to experience over and over again.

Women's fund designed to benefit South Shore

By Kathryn Reed

In two weeks the Tahoe Women's Community Fund has raised $20,000 to be invested on the South Shore and has signed up 125 members.

This nonprofit entity was launched last month with the goal of securing money from members that will then be doled out to

entities roughly from Glenbrook to Meyers to Camp Richardson. While the members may come from anywhere, the money is staying on the South Shore.

Kathy Haven took the reins to start the fund after hearing a talk last spring by the leader of the El Dorado Community Fund. Bill Roby spoke about the different funds that come under his foundation's umbrella, and told Haven for some time he has wanted to develop a fund specific to this side of the county that would be similar to the women's found in El Dorado Hills.



Women's funds have existed for decades. They were born at a time when women didn't have as much of a voice as they do today. It was a bonding, a way to help one another.

While these types of funds in many ways have the same purpose, today members are also men and boys or men may be the beneficiaries. Businesses may also join, but would still have just one vote.

A big difference from a fund like this compared to a service organization is there aren't regular meetings, no lunches one has to attend and really no work. It's about raising money, deciding where to allocate it and then writing the checks.

The Tahoe Women's Community Fund has three annual membership levels – $100, $250 and $1,000. A percentage of each of these will go into an endowment fund to help sustain the organization. A portion – probably 5 percent – of the endowment will go toward the overall pot that is available each year to be distributed.

The Tahoe Women's Community Fund will have the El Dorado Community Fund be its fiscal agent so it doesn't have to go through the whole process of becoming a 501(c)3, but still has

the benefits of such a nonprofit. There is a 1.5 percent annual fee to El Dorado Community Fund for this agreement.

In addition to Haven, the founding members of the local fund are Wendy David, Anita Eades Castles, Greta Hambsch, Jamie Orr, Sara Pierce, Cynthea Preston, Delicia Spees, Jennifer Stafford and Tere Tibbetts. They are the initial leadership team. The intent was to bring together a diverse group who would represent varied interests.

Everyone who joins has been asked where they think the money should go. There have been 75 responses ranging from focusing on homeless, to children, to poverty. In the next few weeks the founding members will whittle the ideas down to about 10 areas. (Ultimately a grants committee will be formed.) Anyone who is a member by Nov. 15 will have a vote in the first allocation that will be distributed in late spring or early summer.

After the first of the year the community fund will put out a request to nonprofits, including schools, for them to apply for the grants. It will be up to the leadership council to decide how many grants and of what value will be distributed each year. The members get the final vote.

The plan is for the members to gather twice a year – for a dinner like what was convened last month as a celebration and opportunity to build community, and when the money is distributed. Organizers envision people who will benefit from the donation telling their story and not just the leader of the nonprofit. While it's not written in stone yet, there is talk of limiting beneficiaries to every other year.

"It's a collective giving unit. We hope to make a big impact in this community," Haven told *Lake Tahoe News.*

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Notes:

· Tahoe Women's Community Fund has a **website**.

· Here is the membership form. It is possible to pay in monthly installments.

· The email address is: TWCF@eldoradocf.org.

LTCC puts men's soccer coach on paid leave

By Kathryn Reed

Lake Tahoe Community College has placed the men's soccer coach on paid administrative leave.

Ben Wade was escorted off campus on Nov. 5 after a meeting with the director of human resources and dean of students.



Ben Wade

"There is absolutely no cause to let me go at this time in the season," Wade told *Lake Tahoe News*. "I have never seen a coach let go unless he has stolen money from the college or something egregious. I stand by my actions. I've been sorely misrepresented by players I have cut or disciplined. I have not been asked for my side of the story."

LTCC President Kindred Murillo had no comment other than to

say, “Nick Arbelaez has been named as the Lake Tahoe Community College head coach.” Arbelaez had been the assistant coach for the men’s team.

Athletic Director Mike Spina would not comment on the issue and would not say if he had anything to do with the decision.

Wade has five days to respond in writing to the actions taken on Thursday, which he told *Lake Tahoe News* he intends to do. The paid administrative leave is in effect until Nov. 30.

Besides being the coach, Wade is director of Outreach and Equity for LTCC, and teaches music and soccer. The director job has him reaching out to the Hispanic community and international students – two areas of enrollment that have increased since his hire.

Wade said he isn’t worried about his future, but he is concerned about that of his players. Last year all the LTCC men’s sophomore soccer players were placed at a four-year college. He is no longer in a position to help players on this team with future goals.

He said he received text messages last night from all the players showing support and saying they would be talking to the college administration.

When the South Lake Tahoe two-year college started the soccer program two years ago Wade was recruited because of his ability to put together a winning team as well as his ability to bring students into the program.

This year’s team is 12-4-2 overall, and in league is 5-1-1. Two games remain – today at College of the Redwoods and Nov. 13 at home against Shasta College. Playoffs begin Nov. 21. Last year’s team was ranked 16th in the nation. Wade is the second winningest coach at any college level.

The displaced coach believes this year’s team is a

championship team. Wade hasn’t given up hope the college will allow him to return as coach and then discuss his employment after the season.

EDC superintendent arrested on DUI – again

By Kathryn Reed

Jeremy Meyers, El Dorado County superintendent of schools, was arrested Nov. 5 on charges of driving under the influence.

This is the second time in five months that the 45-year-old has been arrested on these same charges by the California Highway Patrol. Both times were in the middle of a workday.



Jeremy Meyers when he was booked this summer.

He was arrested about 2:50pm after being involved in a single-vehicle accident. The CHP would provide no information Thursday night.

Meyers was booked into the El Dorado County Jail in Placerville about 5pm after first having been taken to

Marshall Hospital in Placerville. Meyers as of Thursday evening had not posted the $17,500 bail.

The first incident on June 9 occurred about the same time of day. A California Highway Patrol officer found Meyers asleep in a construction zone on Highway 49 at 2:45pm. He had attended a board meeting earlier that Tuesday that lasted about 15 minutes and ended at 11:59am. People who were at the meeting said he did not appear to be impaired.

Meyers' blood alcohol level, according the CHP report, was 0.15 percent – nearly twice the legal limit. Instead of being taken directly to jail, Meyers was released to the custody of his wife. He was sentenced to five days on house arrest. During that time he was earning all of his nearly $200,000 salary.

Because Meyers is an elected official the board of education does not have a great deal of say in what can happen to him. However, the county office of ed could be liable if Meyers were to hurt someone or cause property damage. If the board were to discuss Meyers' latest run-in with the law, the soonest a special meeting could be called would be this weekend.

Nev. grappling with severe teacher shortage

By Neal Morton, Las Vegas Review-Journal

A formidable list of who's who in Nevada education circles soon will start meeting with state lawmakers and business leaders in an attempt to solve the chronic shortage of public

school teachers in the Silver State.

Starting in January, more than three dozen officials from the state’s largest school districts, labor unions, Nevada Legislature, gaming industry and nonprofit sector will spend five months drafting solutions to the alarming number of classrooms vacancies in schools across Clark County and Nevada.

The independent group plans to present the proposals publicly in May, with a focus on drafting legislation before lawmakers return to Carson City in 2017. The group also will recommend regulations that state agencies can adopt sooner and changes that school districts could make before the next school year starts in August.

Read the whole story