EDC works to curtail Tahoe residential traffic jams

By Kathryn Reed

Starting Sunday El Dorado County will be implementing a traffic diversion strategy with the goal of keeping non-residents on main streets as they head home instead of clogging the side roads.

About 70 people turned out for the Feb. 28 meeting in Meyers hosted by various officials from the county. Transportation, law enforcement and legal staff, along with Supervisor Sue Novasel were on hand to listen to concerns and explain what the future holds.

“We are trying to influence driving patterns,” Rafael Martinez, El Dorado County transportation director, told *Lake Tahoe News.*

Barriers will be placed on Lake Tahoe Boulevard at Sawmill Road with signs on them directing people to turn so they end up back on Highway 50. This is to keep them out of the North Upper Truckee neighborhood.

People like to take the route through the neighborhood because it comes out west of the chain inspection and can be faster.

The problem, though, is those without chains or four-wheel drive are spinning out. Accidents are the norm. Add the increase in vehicles and at times it’s like a parking lot with locals unable to get to where they need to go in a reasonable amount of time.

Martinez says the situation has gotten worse because more people are coming to the Tahoe basin and the advent of phone apps directing motorists around the highway congestion.

He said the county has tried to work with the app developers, but have gotten nowhere. Their stance is that it’s a public road so the public has a right to use it.

The barricade/sign approach is considered a pilot program. The plastic looking devices that are actually made out of wood and metal will be erected starting March 4 at 9am, and will remain up for about 24 hours. They will be out every Sunday for the rest of the winter season, and then on the Monday of Memorial Day weekend.

Between feedback from residents and staff that regularly works those hours (like snowplow drivers), the county will assess if the barricades are working, if something needs to be tweaked or if the program is scrapped.

Summer also brings the unwanted congestion to residential areas, so if this works, the county could continue it. There is also the possibility of trying something similar on Pioneer Trail because visitors are taking side streets there as well with often unpleasant outcomes for all involved.

Martinez said in other places he’s worked this method of influencing traffic has reduced the problem by 60 percent.

There isn’t anything to stop people from going around the barricade. This is good for locals needing to come and go. But it also means other drivers could do the same. Still, Martinez is confident this will improve the current situation.

Just closing roads is not an option because they are public streets.

Californians struggling to pay rising water rates

By Alastair Bland, Water Deeply

California has been blessed with the distinction of being home to some of the richest and the poorest income-earning Americans, according to a 2015 report by the Social Science Research Council. This stark division of wealth between the extravagantly rich and the destitute is displayed vividly in how the state's residents consume water. On the one hand, some estate owners have been publicly shamed for watering their lawns during extreme drought with thousands of gallons per day – sometimes five or 10 times the average household rate. While other Californians live in communities where there isn't enough water or the water isn't safe to drink.

But it's not just access to water that's a problem, it's also the cost. Many California residents, in both small towns and big cities, are struggling to keep up with the rising price of water. The State Water Resources Control Board has been tasked with coming up with a plan to tackle affordability, but it's been slow going.

Read the whole story

Calif. fire officials request $100M to fix mutual-aid

system



South Lake Tahoe Fire Chief Jeff Meston testifying Feb. 27 in Sacramento before legislators. Photo/Provided

By Melody Gutierrez, San Francisco Chronicle

SACRAMENTO — California fire officials asked lawmakers Tuesday for $100 million to improve the state's strained mutual-aid system, which is designed to quickly rally first responders in an emergency, such as the deadly fires that ravaged the North Bay last year.

At a legislative hearing in Sacramento, fire chiefs and emergency officials said wildfires across the state last year exposed shortcomings in the 60-year-old system.

"The system is a little too slow to react sometimes, and you are really starting to see it in these instances where a fire is moving so fast that you can't keep up," said Santa Rosa Fire Chief Tony Gossner, who battled one of the quickest moving and most destructive fires last year, the Tubbs Fire. "The system worked great in the '50s, '60s and '70s. In today's world, the last three or four years have shown it is too slow."

Read the whole story

LTN Book Club: ‘Dying Words’ full of life

By Kathryn Reed

It’s been a long time since I’ve read a book that I didn’t want to end. And for someone who isn’t much of a fan of fiction, that speaks volumes.



“Dying Words” (NaCl Press, 2012) by K. Patrick Conner is a novel that takes readers into the life of an obituary writer at the *San Francisco Chronicle*. Those jobs don’t exist anymore. Newspaper jobs barely exist, let alone such a specialty.

Conner was a reporter at the *Chronicle*, so he was able to accurately capture some of the nuances of the paper, and certainly The City. (Since I was an editor there, I can vouch for much of the authenticity.)

“Dying Words” is much more than life at a newspaper. It’s about life itself.

Grayden Hubbell is the main character. Now in his 70s, his sole job at the paper is to write obituaries. The love of his life died decades ago, and yet there is still love to be had even in his dying days.

Conner has a way with words that is poetic, as well as captivating. He makes you care about the characters and connect to them.

It’s hard for me to know if the tears I shed were for the story or the reality about the state of newspapers or both.

No matter your feelings about newspapers, this is a story about people, and the importance of the connections people have in their lifetimes.

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· Please join in the discussion via commenting. Feel free to pose questions.

· **Questions:** If you knew you were dying, would you change your life and how? Should Grayden have been let go when he was given bad information? Have you thought about what you would want your obituary to say?

· The next book is “Tribe: On Homecoming and Belonging” by Sebastian Junger. The review will be posted April 1.

Will cloud seeding reduce droughts?

By Sophie Quinton, Washington Post

Machines that prod clouds to make snow may sound like something out of an old science fiction movie. But worsening water scarcity, combined with new evidence that “cloud seeding” can work, is spurring states, counties, water districts and power companies across the thirsty West to use

the strategy.

Last month, a study funded by the National Science Foundation tracked for the first time how the technology works in nature. The evidence for cloud seeding has been scarce, but recent research has encouraged officials and companies desperate to increase the amount of water in rivers and reservoirs.

Read the whole story

Dry winters cost ski industry $1 billion

By J. Weston Phippen, Outside

It’s been a bad winter for skiing. And more than just being a drag on weekend plans or limiting some resorts to operating with only a few runs (if any), less snow on the mountains is a big hit on the economy. People make fewer trips to the resort, which means resorts hire fewer staff. The local restaurants, bars, and hotels all feel a little empty.

A new report by Protect Our Winters (POW), a climate advocacy group based in Colorado, says a low-snow year can cost the ski resort industry more than $1 billion and 17,400 jobs, compared to an average season. These numbers result from comparing snowfall records with spending habits from 2001 to 2016, so they don’t even account for this winter, which has been the worst along the Rockies since the 1960s, when researchers started keeping detailed snowpack records. POW’s data has serious implications for the snow-sports industry. As climate change worsens and snowfall becomes less reliable, resorts see less business. If it gets too bad, some resorts might close

altogether, which would have economic consequences far beyond the slopes.

Read the whole story

SLT council names vendors for Lakeview Commons

By Kathryn Reed

Tie goes to the local, at least when it comes to awarding bids in South Lake Tahoe.

That was one of the reasons the City Council used this month in voting for which business would get the next three-year contract to operate the boat launch facility at Lakeview Commons.

While Tahoe City Kayak and Paddleboard had 169.17 points, South Tahoe SUP had 168.80. The council voted for the latter. The room was also full of supporters for the South Lake Tahoe business.

Also on the Feb. 20 agenda was the food and beverage concession. That decision was less controversial.

While Lakeview Café had been the operator and bid again, it is Sierra-at-Tahoe that the council elected to be the new concessionaire. Out of a possible 100 points in the staff assessment, Sierra received 92 and Lakeview Café 80.3.

Councilman Tom Davis voted against this decision. It was more of a vote for the current vendor because there was no evidence presented that it had done anything wrong to not to keep

operating.

Sierra-at-Tahoe General Manager John Rice told *Lake Tahoe News*, “While this new venture will be mutually exclusive from the Sierra brand, we are excited to provide the same excellent service and guest experience that is synonymous with our winter offering. We believe in quality recreational experiences and plan to deliver excellent service to the guests that enjoy the Commons Beach area.”

Sierra goes beyond the normal ski resort food as **this story proves**. What the menu at Lakeview Commons will be this summer is still being worked out.

“Sierra-at-Tahoe has primarily been a winter recreational business, and have hosted a few summer events over the 25 years we have been here. We hire a group of very talented individuals, many of whom we can’t offer full time employment to,” Rice said. “We see recreational opportunities in our community as matching the level of talent we have on our team and providing employment opportunities. We plan to have about 12-15 people rotate through the food concession as well, some of us on salary taking a shift or two.”

Prior to the meeting a protest to the bid process was submitted by Day Go Adventures regarding the boat launch. The owner claims the current unrest in the city necessitates holding off on awarding a three-year contract to anyone. However, City Manager Nancy Kerry was never directly involved in the process.

Nonetheless, the protest should be on the March 6 council agenda. The electeds will have the choice to stick with their decision, award the contract to the protester or reject all bids.

Also expected at that meeting are the actual contracts for the concessionaires.

The contract for the boat launch could not be awarded at the last meeting because findings needed to be made as to why the council was going with someone other than the high bidder.

Those findings included:

· South Tahoe Stand Up Paddle's experience, proven record, and knowledge of the local area.

· There being less than one point separating South Tahoe SUP from the high bidder, Tahoe City Kayak and Paddleboard.

· Council wanting to support people who reside in the city limits.

· South Tahoe SUP branding of local events like Lake of the Sky race.

The other companies that bid on the boat launch concession contract were Sierra-at-Tahoe, Kayak Tahoe and SUP Tahoe.

Ski towns and their housing issues

By Megan Michelson, Powder

A pervasive housing shortage is afflicting mountain towns from Stowe to Telluride. The issue is not just a question of locals being able to afford million-dollar homes—it's also about availability.

"There is very little vacancy for ownership or rental units, and what is vacant is very unaffordable," says Stacy Stoker, housing manager for Wyoming's Teton County Housing Authority,

which oversees affordable housing in the Jackson Hole area. “Less than three percent of the land in the county is able to be developed. This means that there is not a lot of land for building affordable housing.”

Aspen, Colo., has a vacancy rate of less than 1 percent for rental units; in Steamboat Springs, Colorado, it’s zero; in Mammoth Lakes it’s less than 2 percent.

Breckenridge, Colo., houses 50 percent of its workforce—so half of the town’s employees commute from elsewhere. Vail and Aspen house less than 30 percent. Truckee shelters 41 percent of its employees. Mammoth and Jackson are doing well by comparison, each housing around 63 percent of its workforce.

Read the whole story

Celebrating the worst Hollywood movies of 2017

By Howie Nave

Before the 90th Academy Awards show takes place this Sunday there’s another awards show happening the night before the Oscars that’s been around since 1981. Hollywood doesn’t like to give it much recognition.

Why? Well, unlike the Emmys and the Golden Globes that are a barometer of who might win at the Oscars, the annual Razzie Awards celebrates Hollywood’s worst movies and all those responsible for making it, so Hollywood would rather you skip that show.

But, c’mon, how many times have you gone to see a movie only to find out that it was so bad you wanted your money back? Exactly. Enter John Wilson who majored in film and television at UCLA and after graduation worked on film marketing campaigns so he knows a thing or two about the industry. And yes, he asked himself that same question after seeing a couple of turkeys and realized there were so many bad movies out there that a niche just had to be filled. That laid the foundation what would ultimately become the annual Razzie Awards.

This will be its 38th year. It has become an institution right up there with all those other award shows. But I digress. Let’s go back in time shall we?



Sandra Bullock embraces her Razzie by giving the audience free DVDs of the bad movie. Photo/Provided

The year was 1981, the year “Mommie Dearest” and “Wolfen” were

released. Wilson told me he'd had enough after seeing a double feature of "Xanadu" and "Can't Stop the Music" and the theater owner wouldn't give him his money back when he asked for a refund. Granted it was 99 cents, but it was the principle. While driving home he thought about how bad those movies were and then thought of other equally bad flicks as well such as "Raise the Titanic," "Saturn 5" and Neil Diamond's "The Jazz Singer" among others. Wilson crystallized that idea at his next Oscar after party potluck that he had been having in his living room, but in 1981 this time almost as a goof came up with the idea of creating ballots that he passed out to his friends (who thought it was hysterical) for some of the worst flicks and as simplified as it sounds the very first Golden Raspberry Awards program (Razzie for short) was born.

This marks the 13th or 14th year that Wilson and I have had our annual chat regarding the worst movies that Hollywood turns out each year. We could easily go on for hours taking turkeys a part because some years the bad movies seem to outnumber the good ones. I can't believe how many movies released this past year were either sequels, prequels, re-boots or movies based on old television sitcoms that weren't that great to begin with. Nowadays it's all about creating the franchise, which is why when I reviewed Tom Cruise's "The Mummy" (remade pretty close to the Brendan Fraser franchise which I thought was pretty good) I felt 10 minutes into that turkey it had a forced feel to it wanting, no begging you, the moviegoer to want this to become the latest franchise to join his "Mission: Impossible" and "Jack Reacher" franchises. So, I was not surprised that Cruise's "Mummy" has been nominated at this year's Razzies for worst picture, worst actor (Cruise), worst supporting actor (Russell Crowe), worst supporting actress (Sofia Boutella who is the first female Mummy), worst director (Alex Kurtzman), worst screenplay and my favorite, worst remake, rip-off or sequel.

At least Cruise has been spared being nominated or winning the

most Razzie awards for worst actor. That distinction goes to Madonna whose record could stand for quite awhile. The Material Girl has nine wins and 15 Razzie nominations to her credit. She received her first Razzie for 1987's "Shanghai Surprise" and wound up winning in the worst actress category the following year as well for "Who's That Girl." A few more nominations and wins later and Madonna found herself the recipient of the worst actress of the century award beating out Brooke Shields and Elizabeth Berkley, among others.

In the male category Sylvester Stallone has eight wins with an incredible 22 nominations. He received his first nomination and win for the 1985 bomb "Rhinestone" and trust me, that was a tough movie to sit all the way through. I wanted to yell, "Yo, where's Adrian?"



Howie Nave and Razzie founder John Wilson. Photo/Provided

For years Wilson has extended an invite to attend his annual tradition and I finally took him up on his offer a few years

back and had a blast. Like the Oscars there were singers and sketches. Just down the street where I was the red carpet was already rolled out for the stars that would make their way for Hollywood's best movies. Very surreal to say the least. There have been many Razzie highlights over the years; Wilson telling me that at the 24th Razzie Awards actor Ben Affleck was up in the worst actor category for his performances in the movies "Gigi," "Daredevil" and "Paycheck" (which I kinda liked actually because of the time travel significance). Affleck was on "Larry King Live" in 2004 and a perplexing looking Larry King (who seemed to have no idea what a Razzie was) gave Affleck his trophy live on-air.

Wilson has a lot of friends in the business and Affleck's trophy found it's way to King's desk. Affleck commented that the trophy was kinda cheap looking and it fell apart (or he broke it on air ,I forget) and left it there. The very resourceful Wilson was able to get Affleck's trophy back and he put it up on eBay, raising well over a thousand dollars auctioning off this Razzie, enough to rent the Ivar Theater for the 2005 Razzie Awards. But wait, there's more.

The following year actress Halle Berry made a surprise appearance to accept her worst actress Razzie award for "Catwoman" and while holding her "Monster's Ball" Oscar from 2001 with her Razzie trophy in the other gave a speech that would've made a sailor blush. It was all in good fun and gave The Razzie Awards are a ton of good willed credibility.

The biggest had to be at the 2010 Razzie Awards where actress Sandra Bullock showed up accepting her award for worst actress from the movie "All About Steve." Her speech was classic saying she didn't believe that all 700 of the Golden Raspberry Committee's voting members had watched her movie so she wheeled out a Radio Flyer red wagon with DVD copies of "All About Steve" and tossed them out to the very appreciative crowd. OK, that to me shows just how cool Bullock is, and the best part? The following night at the Oscar Awards she won for

best actress in the movie “The Blindside.” Now that is classic folks.

By the way, actress Meryl Streep has never been nominated for a Razzie and Oliver Stone’s “Wall Street” (1987) is still the only film to win both an Oscar and a Razzie. Michael Douglas won best actor at the Oscars for his role in that movie, but his co-star, Daryl Hannah was nominated and won a Razzie for worst supporting actress.

Here’s a list for this year’s lucky contenders:

Worst Picture
“Baywatch”
“The Emoji Movie”
“Fifty Shades Darker”
“The Mummy”
“Transformers XVII: The Last Knight”

Worst Actress
Katherine Heigl – “Unforgettable”
Dakota Johnson – “”Fifty Shades Darker
Jennifer Lawrence – “Mother!”
Tyler Perry – “BOO! 2: A Medea Halloween”
Emma Watson – “The Circle”

Worst Actor

Tom Cruise – “The Mummy”
Johnny Depp – “Pirates of The Caribbean XIII: Dead Men Tell No Tales”
Jamie Dornan – “Fifty Shades Darker”
Zac Efron – Baywatch”
Mark Wahlberg – “Daddy’s Home 2 & Transformers XVII: The Last Knight”

Worst Supporting Actor

Javier Bardem – “Mother” and “Pirates of The Caribbean: Dead

Men Tell No Tales”
Russell Crowe – “The Mummy”
Josh Duhamel – “Transformers XVII: Last Knight”
Mel Gibson – “Daddy’s Home 2”
Anthony Hopkins – “Collide”and “Transformers XVII: Last Knight”

Worst Supporting Actress

Kim Basinger – “Fifty Shades Darker”
Sofia Boutella – “The Mummy”
Laura Haddock – “Transformers XVII: Last Knight”
Goldie Hawn – “Snatched”
Susan Sarandon – “A Bad Moms Christmas”

Worst Screen Combo

Any Combination of Two Characters, Two Sex Toys or Two Sexual Positions – “Fifty Shades Darker”
Any Combination of Two Humans, Two Robots or Two Explosions – “Transformers XVII: Last Knight”
Any Two Obnoxious Emojis – “The Emoji Movie”
Johnny Depp & His Worn Out Drunk Routine – “Pirates of the Caribbean XIII: Dead Careers Tell No Tales”
Tyler Perry and Either The Ratty Old Dress or Worn Out Wig – “BOO! 2: A Madea Halloween”

Worst Remake, Rip-off or Sequel

“Baywatch”
“BOO 2: A Medea Halloween”
“Fifty Shades Darker”
“The Mummy”
“Transformers XVII: Last Knight”

Worst Director

Darren Aronofsky – “Mother!”
Michael Bay – “Transformers XVII: Last Knight”

James Foley – “Fifty Shades Darker”
Alex Kurtzman – “The Mummy”
Anthony (Tony) Leonidis – “The Emoji Movie”

Worst Screenplay

“Baywatch”
“The Emoji Movie”
“Fifty Shades Darker”
“The Mummy”
“Transformers XVII: The Last Knight”

In case you skipped it, go back and check out the Worst Screen Combo category and chuckle along with me at some of the items nominated? If you’d like to become a voting member of the Razzies, go **online**. If you’d like to hear my chat with Razzie founder John Wilson, tune in this Friday on my morning radio show, Howie’s Morning Rush here in South Lake Tahoe on 93-9 KRLT The Lake or listen in the online worldwide (starting at 6:45am PST). To hear our annual conversation uncensored, check out my podcast Friday afternoon where the entire one hour chat will be uploaded. Where? At Howie’s High Sierra Comedy Vault Podcast @ Howienave.com.

SnowGlobe tops residents’ concerns at mayor’s talk



South Lake Tahoe council members Brooke Laine and Wendy David, center, listen Feb. 21 to people's concerns. Photo/LTN

By Kathryn Reed

While the mayor wants a discussion, the people of South Lake Tahoe want answers. And those answers were not always forthcoming because usually it's staff who has them, not the electeds.

Resident William Dickert attended last week's gathering organized by Mayor Wendy David at the senior center. He told her that facts are what's needed and she ought to have the people there who can answer the questions.

Police Chief Brian Uhler and PIO Tracy Sheldon were in the back scrambling to text/email other staff for the answers. Some they got, other questions went unanswered.

This was somewhat of the same frustration at David's **inaugural gathering** in January. Lots of questions, few answers.

This is in part because South Lake Tahoe has a city manager-led government, not a strong mayor form of leadership. It means the electeds, while they are in office to set policy, seldom actually retain the minutia of detail staff does. This is because it is staff who is doing the work and is intimately familiar with what is going on. These sessions are often done

in election years, such as this. David’s term is about to expire.

SnowGlobe dominated much of the conversation, with many complaining about the noise, and believing the economy at New Year’s would be just fine without the three-day music festival.

Dickert, though, pointed out that with SnowGlobe and anything the city is involved with has trade-offs. Eliminating a revenue source means having to get rid of an expense. That line item could be public safety personnel or snow removal or something of importance to people.

Scott Blasser, president of the South Lake Tahoe Firefighters Association, spoke of how SnowGlobe is an improvement for first responders compared to the chaos at Stateline in years past.

“Yes, it’s a drug event. All concerts are. It’s on the safer end,” Blasser said. “The drugs being used there don’t kill people unless it’s egregious. It’s not like heroin.”

Councilwoman Brooke Laine was David’s guest at the conversation. They both said the damage to the field is not acceptable.

Blasser assured those with concerns about the fireworks that the fire chief would not let them be shot off if there were a threat to a forest fire.