

Olympian takes up cause of vanishing ski trails

By Kendra Pierre-Louis, New York Times

Jessie Diggins fell in love with snow as a child.

Diggins is a member of the U.S. women's cross-country skiing team, which is favored to win a medal at the PyeongChang Olympics. It would be only the second medal in the sport for the United States and the first for the women's team.

Before Diggins was an Olympic skier, before she had even taken her first steps, her parents strapped her into a baby carrier and took her cross-country skiing near her hometown, Afton, Minn.. But she worries that future generations of American children might miss that opportunity.

The risk is real. In the United States, the average time between the last frost of the spring and the first of the winter has expanded by 10 days since the first half of the 20th century.

[Read the whole story](#)

South Lake Tahoe City Council schedules meeting to fire city manager for undisclosed

reasons

By Kathryn Reed

South Lake Tahoe city officials appear to be operating in a vacuum of lawlessness and deceit, and with no transparency.

A special City Council meeting has been scheduled for Feb. 12 at 9am. The only item on the agenda is in closed session: Public employee discipline/dismissal/release.

The council is only in charge of two employees – the city manager and the city attorney.

Until Nira Doherty started sitting in the city attorney chair on a full time basis the council as a whole had not had a problem with City Manager Nancy Kerry. For nearly six years she received glowing reviews, including as recently as June 2017. At that time she was also given a 5 percent raise.

The City Council on Sept. 19 in closed session agreed to hire Burke, Williams & Sorensen out of Oakland to replace City Attorney Tom Watson, who left at the end of September. Doherty, who had been a deputy city attorney for South Lake Tahoe before going to work for that law firm, had been doing work for the city as special counsel.

She is the interim city attorney who keeps spending taxpayer money beyond what is contractually allowed. (The questions in this **Feb. 3 story** still have not been answered.)

Kerry was placed on indefinite paid leave after the Feb. 6 council meeting. There still has been no reason given.

The following day the city sent out a press release stating Fire Chief Jeff Meston would be interim city manager. *Lake Tahoe News* sent an email to Tracy Sheldon, who handles PR for the city, asking what the difference between interim and acting is because Mayor Wendy David had told *LTN* that Meston

was the acting city manager.

Within 10 minutes Sheldon sent a correction to the press release stating acting was the correct word.

Doherty had signed off on the original press release.

In the legal/government world there is a huge difference between acting and interim. And had anyone been made interim city manager, it would have to be announced in open session. Plus, there are protocols to removing a sitting city manager.

There was no item on any council agenda in open or closed session about Kerry between the June review and the Jan. 23 review. That June review was done by consultant Ted Gaebler pro bono, after saying it would cost \$1,500.

An agreement from Mary Egan of Municipal Resource Group is dated Oct. 9. That public document was sent by Egan to Doherty and provided to *LTN* by the city.

Austin Sass was mayor at the time. It is well known Sass and Kerry had their differences; he was also having issues with his council colleagues. Sass, who sits on the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency Governing Board, is not well regarded by his colleagues there or among that agency's staff.

Sass has made it known he would prefer a strong mayor form of government instead of what the city has had for 52 years, which is a city manager led government. It was a contentious year with him in the mayor's seat.

If Egan's company sounds familiar it's because she has done work for El Dorado County.

El Dorado County entered a contract with Municipal Resources Group in 2014 to eliminate the "climate of fear" and create a Climate Action Plan. As was noted in **Larry Weitzman's column on Nov. 3, 2014**, "The purpose of the contract was to address the alleged problems supposedly enumerated in the 'Climate of

Fear' study created by the law firm of Van Dermyden Maddux, a study which cost \$140,000." It was then CEO Terri Daly who kept wanting these studies.

While the City Council agreed to have Egan come do the assessment, no one will say whose idea it was.

For legal/Government Code reasons it could not be called an investigation. The word evaluation isn't even in the agreement. Still, what it amounted to was a witch hunt to find dirt on Kerry. And this came just months after that stellar review done by an outside firm.

The agreement letter with MRG describes the scope of work as "assessment of the city leadership effectiveness, the culture of the senior management team, succession planning status and related issues." It further states the plan was to interview department heads, Kerry, Doherty and the five council members. That happened later in October.

Egan refused to respond to *Lake Tahoe News'* inquiries about who first contacted her from South Lake Tahoe and why there was no written report.

One has to wonder how this council and future electeds are supposed to know what the succession plan is or anything else. And succession plans are usually handled in-house.

Egan told Doherty her report would be available in early November. The contract was for \$10,000, with another \$1,500 in expenses.

"There are no invoices/payment records that exist," City Clerk Suzie Alessi told *Lake Tahoe News*.

This is because Egan's bill went to Doherty's law firm, who then billed the city via her monthly agreement. That in part accounts for the higher monthly legal bills she submitted in October and November. The city has refused to release itemized

invoices from Doherty's firm.

Paying the consulting firm via the law firm was also a way to hide from the public where taxpayer money is being spent and that Egan was even hired.

There was never any reportable action out of closed session about the firm being hired, which is where it had to be talked about because it was never discussed in open session. A Brown Act violation.

The Brown Act is California's public meeting law that ensures the public's business is conducted in public and not behind closed doors. The only items allowed in closed session are personnel and litigation. And when action is taken in closed session, it has to be reported out in open session.

So the public is left wondering when Egan's services were discussed or if a rogue councilmember or city attorney went on his or her own to hire the firm.

Because the agreement was sent to Doherty and lists her law firm it appears she is the one who at taxpayer expense launched a covert probe of the city manager.

Doherty, David and Meston were asked: How is this contract legal? How is this not a violation of the Brown Act?

The response – silence.

Egan was at the Jan. 23 meeting to talk in closed session about her findings. The department heads reached by *LTN* on Feb. 9 did not want to talk about their sessions with Egan.

One would hope if Egan had found anything egregious about Kerry – which is what the inquiry was focused on – that it would have been brought to council's attention immediately, not three months later.

It's normal in any work environment for co-workers to not all

get along, even for people to not like their boss. People switch jobs all the time for a variety of reasons. Just as there is no perfect employee, there is not a perfect boss.

"In my department we are sad. We are saddened about the anonymous comments by past and current employees (as reported in other media)," Lauren Thomaselli, recreation superintendent, told *Lake Tahoe News*. She was not interviewed by Egan and didn't know about her until this week.

"(Kerry) never intended to hurt or put off anyone. The person I know would never intend to have that impact on somebody, especially a coworker or colleague. She is known to really stick her neck out for employees and support us any way she can," Thomaselli said.

The latest edict from the city as of Feb. 9 is that the public is supposed to go through City Clerk Alessi if they want to contact a member of the council. This has never been the policy in all the years this reporter has covered city government.

Alessi, as an elected official, really has no boss other than the public – just like the council. That is why it might be difficult to reach her since she has been known to not work regular hours, has missed multiple council meetings, and takes off as much time as she wants without being held accountable to anyone. All of that is legal as an elected official.

Per Kerry's contract she is owed nine month's severance unless she is fired for cause. A settlement of some sort could be possible. Kerry could also sue for what appears to be multiple reasons. With the council being her boss, she has rights as an employee that are likely to be proved to have been violated.

David was asked what the process is after next Monday's meeting. No reply.

David as mayor appears to have adopted Sass's way of doing

business with transparency and lawfulness not mattering. After the council meeting earlier this week she said there was no reportable action, but went on to tell **LTN** about Kerry being placed on leave and Meston stepping in. So, she either lied about there being no reportable action or she violated the Brown Act by talking about what went on in that meeting on Feb. 6, or maybe both.

And David, who is mayor and therefore the de facto leader of the council, will not say why she is behind firing the city manager.

Sierra snowpack on pace to shatter record low of 2015



Street sweepers have been more prevalent this winter than snowplows in South Lake Tahoe. Photo/LTN

By Kurtis Alexander, San Francisco Chronicle

As relentless sunshine continued to pound California on Thursday, the Sierra Nevada hit a reckoning point: There's less snowpack now than on the same date three years ago, when

the winter went down as the driest in recorded history and sent shudders through cities, farmlands and the state Capitol.

The troubling lack of snow during the winter of 2014-15 not only shortchanged the state's drinking-water reservoirs but left the Sierra nearly unrecognizable. Normally white-blanketed forests and meadows remained a springtime green, and mountain roads were free of ice.

The picture has become increasingly similar this year. Tahoe's ski resorts have been forced to close many low-elevation runs while working their snow-making machines overtime, and rangers at Yosemite National Park have had to apologize to guests for the lack of snow powering famed waterfalls.

Read the whole story

Bowman, Wise praise coach as Olympics begin

By Kathryn Reed

Like all athletes, even skiers need coaches. Maddie Bowman and David Wise, who in the next two weeks will try to defend their Olympic gold medals, credit Andy Woods for some of their success.

Woods was first named as a coach to the U.S. Freeskiing Halfpipe Team in 2011. This was in advance of the 2014 Olympic debut of the sport.

Under his tutelage leading up to the last Olympics, Bowman, who grew up in Meyers and still has family there, was on top

of the podium at the Sochi Olympics in halfpipe skiing. Wise, a native of Reno, collected gold in the same contest for the men.



David Wise and Maddie Bowman will represent the Reno-Tahoe area in the Olympics – again. Photo/LTN

Bowman said of Woods that they are very much alike in balancing a “laid back style with an attention to detail.” She told *Lake Tahoe News* she is impressed with how far he’s come, going from “just a skier” to accomplished coach.

Before the 36-year-old was hired, several members of the U.S. team were consulted. This was in part because some knew him so the higher ups wanted to make sure there would be a symbiotic relationship.

Plus, Woods didn’t have any coaching experience prior to then.

“He and I have an amazing relationship. We are both introverted,” Wise told *Lake Tahoe News*. “He and I will obsessively watch video over and over again. We will pick apart different pieces.”

Woods grew up in Vermont, with his home resort being Smugglers’ Notch. He went from moguls, to doing tricks. At age 19 he and some buddies planned to go to the U.S. Open at Vail.

They flaked out, he went. His parents went along, too. What a show they got to see.

He finished in the top 20 in slopestyle, and then competed in the big air event.

“I had the idea in my head of doing a 1260, thinking, ‘Maybe if I do this, I can get past the first couple rounds’,” Woods told *Powder* magazine. He fell. He tried again. This time he landed it. He also landed on top of the podium.

In that same event it was Jon Olsson who placed second and Squaw Valley’s Jonny Moseley in third. (Moseley had won gold at the 1998 Olympics in moguls, he was fourth in 2002.)

Woods continued to compete for several years, winning multiple events. But injuries forced him to stop competing in 2007. He went on to be a judge at various events. Then the call came from the U.S. Ski Team – he’s never looked back.

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Notes:

Opening ceremonies for the PyeongChang, South Korea, Olympics are tonight. Here is a **link** to the entire NBC television schedule.

Calif. wildfire risk is rising; Congress not helping

By Emily Cadei, Sacramento Bee

Washington Forestry experts have a dire warning for

California: the conditions are ripe for more catastrophic fire seasons like the one last fall. And an arcane federal funding arrangement is making it a lot harder for forestry officials to do something about it.

Instead of fixing the problem, however, Congress just punted – again.

Senate leaders announced a two-year budget deal Wednesday afternoon that would lift the federal spending caps instituted under the 2011 Budget Control Act, aka “sequestration.” It is expected to pass in the Senate this week, but could face a fight in the House. Still, Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer called it a “breakthrough” after months of brinkmanship. It “doesn’t have everything Democrats want, it doesn’t have everything the Republicans want, but it has a great deal of what the American people want,” Schumer said.

Read the whole story

When treating sports injuries, does the West do it best?

By Nate Newman, The Conversation

Every two years, billions of people watch athletes at the Olympics compete to be crowned world champion.

What the viewer doesn’t see are the athletes’ behind-the-scenes preparation, which includes trying to figure out new ways to give them an edge in the biggest event of their career.

Different treatment methods that may provide an edge always seem to be en vogue. During the Beijing Summer Olympics, volleyballer Kerri Walsh-Jennings introduced viewers to kinesio tape – sticky strips applied to the body that may improve blood flow. At Rio, the large purple dots on the shoulders of swimmer Michael Phelps had fans Googling cupping, an ancient Chinese healing therapy.

Both examples indicate a willingness among athletes to incorporate Eastern treatments with traditional Western training and treatment methods.

As an athletic trainer who has worked with college athletes, I've used many Western training techniques to aid injured athletes. But during my 15 years of practice, I've started to wonder if many of the techniques I've used are truly effective.

With this year's Winter Olympics taking place in PyeongChang, South Korea, it wouldn't be surprising to see athletes talking about other Eastern treatment methods – acupuncture, herbal treatments and Chuna manual therapy – that have become increasingly popular around the world.

Going after the pain

In Western cultures, athletic trainers and therapists who treat injuries have traditionally focused on controlling pain and inflammation.

A common treatment for acute injuries is the RICE method: rest, ice, compression and elevation. The RICE method works by preventing the development of inflammation. With less inflammation present, less pain is felt and less swelling develops, and the athlete will return to normal function more quickly.

Ice, of course, has been used for decades. It is one of the most commonly prescribed treatment methods for acute and

chronic injuries in the United States. But the use of frigid temperatures to treat injuries now includes whole body cryotherapy – chambers that expose the entire body to temperatures ranging from minus 100 to 140 degrees Celsius, with the idea that treating pain and swelling throughout the entire body works better than paying attention to a localized spot.

But even though most Americans probably use ice as their go-to method for controlling pain and swelling, current research doesn't fully back its effectiveness.

Evidence is often mixed or lacking for many other common Western sports medicine treatments. Transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation (TENS) is a form of electrical stimulation therapy that can help reduce pain following an injury. In this treatment, currents are used to stimulate nerves and decrease pain. While some research suggests that it's effective, it, too, needs additional support to truly strengthen this conclusion. Meanwhile, therapeutic ultrasound uses sound waves to generate heat, which is supposed to quicken healing. But again, the research on its effectiveness is inconclusive.

Create more pain?

Korean athletic trainers, on the other hand, tend to utilize traditional Chinese medicine (TCM), though they'll also incorporate treatments from their own culture and from Western medicine.

Unlike ice treatments, most Eastern techniques involve stimulating the body's normal responses to injuries in order to promote natural healing. For example, traditional Chinese acupuncture is based on the idea of stimulating the body's "qi," or energy, to restore balance within the body (what's called the "yin and yang"). Studies have shown that following the insertion of a needle, neurotransmitters do get activated that help alleviate pain.

Meanwhile, cupping therapy – a practice that may be 3,000 years old – involves placing heated cups on the skin, which creates a strong suction force that leads to bruising. The increased blood flow to the affected areas is thought to stimulate healing and muscle relaxation.

Only in the 1990s did researchers start to evaluate the effectiveness of South Korean sports medicine treatments. However, as with studies of Western treatments, their reviews didn't arrive at any definitive conclusions.

This was the dilemma I faced many times in my own practice. The field of sports medicine often incorporates emerging treatments that aren't proven to work. But the fact that Olympic athletes are willing to try them shows that they're willing to tinker with their bodies and take risks that could give them the slightest advantage, physical or mental.

As for the larger question of which treatments – Eastern or Western – are most effective, the research might not be crystal clear, but the medal counts might offer some clues.

Nate Newman is an associate professor of athletic training, director of the masters in Athletic Training Program, College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences at Drake University.

Cook ready to race in her fourth, final Olympics

By Jim Krajewski, Reno Gazette-Journal

She's gone from being the wide-eyed newcomer to the wily veteran on the U.S. Ski Team.

But now, Stacey Cook knows her competitive ski racing career is nearing the end and she is cherishing each moment.

Cook, who was born in Truckee and lives in Reno part-time, will compete in her fourth Winter Olympics this month in PyeongChang, South Korea, as part of the U.S. Alpine ski team.

Read the whole story

BLM contemplating moving headquarters west

By Dan Elliott, AP

From its headquarters in Washington, D.C., the U.S. Bureau of Land Management oversees some of the nation's most prized natural resources: vast expanses of public lands rich in oil, gas, coal, grazing for livestock, habitat for wildlife, hunting ranges, fishing streams and hiking trails.

But more than 99 percent of that land is in 12 Western states, hundreds of miles from the nation's capital. Some Western politicians – both Republicans and Democrats – are asking why the bureau's headquarters isn't in the West as well.

"You're dealing with an agency that basically has no business in Washington, D.C.," said Colorado Republican Sen. Cory Gardner, who introduced a bill to move the headquarters to any of those dozen states: Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, Washington or Wyoming. The Bureau of Land Management manages a combined 385,000 square miles in those states.

Read the whole story

S. Lake Tahoe city manager taking time off

By Kathryn Reed

After a marathon closed session Tuesday, it was decided South Lake Tahoe City Manager Nancy Kerry would take some time off.

Kerry told *LTN* she was planning to take a couple weeks off.



South Lake Tahoe Mayor Wendy David and City Manager Nancy Kerry Photo/LTN

Mayor Wendy David would not say whose choice it was for the time off – the council's or Kerry's. This means it is not known if the entire council is in favor of this or a select few who have been gunning for her to leave. None of the other council members would speak with *Lake Tahoe News*.

"They did their evaluation and there was no reportable action," Kerry said.

David also said there was no reportable action regarding the evaluation. This, though, contradicts saying Kerry is on paid leave. David said she did not know how long the leave would

be.

The irony about the time off is that at **Kerry's June review** the council said one of Kerry's biggest downfalls was that she did not take enough time off. It was at that review that Kerry received a glowing review and salary increase.

The biggest change since then is Councilman Austin Sass and interim City Attorney Nira Doherty targeting Kerry for reasons that have not been publicly disclosed.

David would not speak to the mystery closed session item that was listed as "pending litigation." Nor would she speak to the mystery woman who was in closed session at the Jan. 23 meeting.

David said the council decided Fire Chief Jeff Meston would be the acting city manager. At this point he will not be receiving any extra pay for the added responsibilities.

"I was called by the mayor and asked on behalf of the City Council to fill the roll," Meston told *Lake Tahoe News*.

In the past Meston and Police Chief Brian Uhler have filled in for Kerry when she has been out of town.

"I've been told it's indefinite. I don't know the definition of indefinite yet. I'm still trying to wrap my head around it," Meston said.

Feb. 6 marked the second meeting in a row that Kerry's performance evaluation was on the agenda.

Until now, every council Kerry has worked with has been ebullient about her performance in the more than five years she's been city manager. This has been during reviews and at council meetings.

Kerry is responsible for saving the city more than \$60 million in her short tenure. Forty million of that came in retiree

health benefits, \$10 million in refinancing debt, about \$7 million through redevelopment and then money in other areas.

She has also been asked by cities inside and outside the state to speak about health care reform, having become an expert of sorts. More than once she has been a speaker at the League of Cities conference.

When Kerry took over from Tony O'Rourke, who was known at the hatchet man, she turned the morale around to where people actually like working for the city, services have been restored and the city is in good shape financially.

Global warming makes Winter Olympics risky bet

By Benjamin Spillman, Reno Gazette-Journal

Human-induced climate change could make future winter Olympics risky business for some of the world's likeliest host venues.

That's according to published research by scientists who studied 21 former and potential future winter Olympics venues.

They found that by mid-century, as many as 10 former venues, including Lake Tahoe and Vancouver, B.C., in North America, would be considered risky or unreliable bets for delivering the cold and snow necessary for winter sports.

Read the whole story