

BlueGo routes to change; MV files multiple lawsuits



By Kathryn Reed

Bus routes through the South Shore are expected to change July 14, the day after the South Lake Tahoe City Council votes on the proposal. What happens if the council votes no is not known.

The major changes would be eliminating the Meyers route and the Stateline-Zephyr Cove route, as well as making service along Highway 50 available every 30 minutes.

People without a bus stop would be able to pay the \$4 fee for on-demand service to take them to the nearest transit center. They would be given a free transfer to be able to continue to their final destination.

The one-way fee for a trip on BlueGo is \$2, so this change will cost people more money.

The difference with this route reconfiguration compared to ones brought forward by the former transit operator is these are designed to save money, according to STATA member Kathay Lovell.

Gordon Shaw of LSC Transportation Consultants was at the June 4 STATA meeting to present a plan of action to the board. Besides a few tweaks, much of what was said at that meeting was reiterated June 25. The board chose not to look beyond September. It intends to revisit routes and monetary issues on

a monthly basis.

In a long, somewhat disjointed meeting Friday, the South Tahoe Area Transportation Authority board approved these route changes, a \$4.6 million budget for the fiscal year that begins July 1, and to table where the interim operator will work.

The 10am meeting started in the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency office with Lovell questioning paying \$2,200 a month to lease a building on Elks Point Road. She favors having everyone at the bus garage in the city.

Banter went back and forth about how much space TRC, the consultant/operator needs, plus how secure the bus garage is for STATA's accountant. It will be brought back at a future meeting.

STATA has been paying TRPA \$80,000/year to use office space and for staff time. The reason to move is to save money.

TRC would write that \$2,200 check to the landlord, but the money comes via STATA as a pass through. That figure is part of the total fee STATA pays TRC. The contract between STATA and TRC is for the latter to receive \$460,000 a year, according to STATA spokeswoman Stacy Dingman.

"When we get to a long term, three- to five-year contract, the cost structure will be completely different," Dingman said after the meeting.

Forty minutes into the meeting the board went into closed session for about 2.5 hours. There they discussed litigation, the budget and the operating plan.

MV Transportation, the company that had been operating BlueGo and other components of the transit system since last summer, ceased doing so as of June 20. MV has filed a lawsuit in El Dorado County Superior Court against STATA and all member agencies in an attempt to be paid nearly \$2 million for

services rendered.

MV has also filed a suit in Solano County Superior Court, where it's based, against TRC for intentionally interfering in its contract with STATA.

MV has also filed a writ in Douglas County District Court to freeze STATA's assets. The agency's main bank account is tied to this action. For now, the Douglas County Sheriff's Office has control of it.

Dingman said bills are getting paid and that the action is not hampering operations.

Tahoe's illegals struggle to find purpose of college degree

By Austin Fay

Alejandra Delgado's journey began when she walked to this country.

She walked with her family, carrying only water in the blistering Sonora Desert sun for five days and nights when she was 12 years old.



Arturo Rangel,
LTCC's HOPE
Club adviser,
talks to
members.
Photo/Austin
Fay

She and her three sisters, mother and father were on their long journey from a *colonia* called Golondrinas southwest of Mexico City into the United States to escape the slum they lived in. The 21-year-old's journey continues at Lake Tahoe Community College where next year she will graduate with three associate's degrees – Spanish, psychology, and liberal arts, with a concentration in social Sciences.

(The student's name has been changed to protect the family.)

Delgado is the first person in her family to attend college.

However, any business she might apply to work after graduating cannot legally hire her because of her immigration status.

"I could either give up on my education or look for private scholarships for college. (I have received) a lot of support through teachers and friends pushing me to not give up," Delgado said.

In addition to private scholarships to help pay her way through college, she works at Samurai restaurant on Highway 50 in South Lake Tahoe. That's on top of taking anywhere from 12 to 20 credit hours and being the president of two collegiate clubs.

Her dream was to attend UC Berkeley next year, then pursue a graduate degree in psychology.

“I just found out it’s impossible without the DREAM Act. It’s just not a possibility right now, so I’m settling to go to San Francisco State,” Delgado said.

The difference in tuition between the UC and CSU system is the deciding factor. She doesn’t have the money or access to financial aid that people born in this country have.

For Delgado and thousands of other students across the nation, surviving on private scholarships keeps higher education out of reach because there isn’t enough of those dollars to pay the bills.

Delgado, along with 312 other students at LTCC are Assembly Bill 540 status students. This means they do not have documentation proving their citizenship. They are able to attend public universities with no state or federal financial aid. In California they pay in-state tuition. They are not eligible for federal financial aid like the Pell Grant or FAFSA.

AB540 students are not just undocumented residents. They are students who attended a California high school and moved out of state. They are allowed to go to colleges at in-state tuition rates because of AB540. LTCC has a large number of AB540 students because many have just moved to Nevada and come back to LTCC.

AB540 benefits less than 1 percent of students attending state universities in California. At LTCC in 2008-09, 313 students were AB540 eligible, which is 10.2 percent of 3,067 (732 full-time, 2,335 part-time) students. The state average is 1 percent. [ngg_shortcode_0_placeholder](#) (Click on graphic to see in full.)

Even with a two- or four-year degree, graduates cannot legally

gain employment in the United States.

"Most of them came to this country through no fault of their own. They've gone through the educational system, they have American values, the only country they know is this country, the only country they respect is this country. It's punishing students for something their parents did. They're the future of the country," Arturo Rangel said.

Rangel is the adviser of LTCC's *Hispanicos Orgullosos Preparándose para la Excelencia* – Proud Hispanics Preparing for Excellence (HOPE) Club.

Delgado is a member of the HOPE Club. It consists of 17 LTCC students, with the mission of community service as well as providing financial and educational support to LTCC students. The group has raised about \$1,000 since its inception a year ago.

The HOPE Club's priority is passage of the 2009 Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act, which would create a path to citizenship using secondary education as leverage. Members of the HOPE Club traveled to Sacramento in February to lobby, network and collaborate with students, legislators, and community leaders from around the state.

Because the DREAM Act will likely be considered along with a comprehensive immigration reform bill, AB540, as well as the federal and California DREAM Acts will dictate the future of undocumented students. Each year it's estimated 65,000 undocumented students graduate from U.S. high schools, with 20,000 of them in California. About 5-10 percent go on to higher education.

The DREAM Act

The idea behind the DREAM Act is relatively simple, but for 10 years, the bill has hit a wall in the California Legislature and Congress.

A central tenet of the bill is granting students who came to the United States years ago the tools of a college degree and steady employment. Currently, the options for a college graduate who is here illegally are minimal. The DREAM Act will open the door to the American Dream for the undocumented college graduate. Through a six-year post-graduation process students will also have the opportunity for U.S. citizenship.

If the DREAM Act passes, criteria to be part of it includes a student must have entered the country before the age of 16, have been in the United States for five years prior to the passage of the bill, and the student must graduate from high school or obtain a GED. Also, the student must have good moral character, meaning no criminal record.

Rangel believes the passage of the DREAM Act will also lower rates of gang violence, teen pregnancy and delinquency in California communities “because people will have a hope, a sense of belonging, a sense of future.”

Last month, the latest congressional version of the bill was referred to the House Subcommittee on Higher Education, Lifelong Learning, and Competitiveness, according to OpenCongress. It is not known when the bill will come out of subcommittee. Democrats will reportedly take up larger immigration reform later this year.

According to a U.S. Census Bureau estimate, of the 309.5 million people in the country, 11.9 million are undocumented immigrants. Although most undocumented migrants are young adults, there is also a sizeable population of children. About one-sixth of the population – 1.7 million people – are under 18.

Looking forward

Students who have gone through the public higher education system in California fall through the cracks. They either continue on the employment path they're on, are hired

illegally or they go back to where they have residency.

Enrique Caro, a member of the HOPE Club, graduates with 64 of his classmates at LTCC tonight. Caro wants to be a clinical technologist and now has his associate's degree in business.

Caro's prospects look as good as any college graduate new to the job market. He is a U.S. citizen.

But still, as immigration reform fervor escalates, many students continue to fall into the opportunity gap.

"It seems like it's getting harder and harder with what's happening in Arizona. It seems like it's going to get better, but before that I think it's going to get a lot worse," Caro said. "I sometimes think the U.S. has 'cool-kid syndrome' where the cool kids choose who can sit at their table and who can't, we think we're better than we actually are."

While they attend school and work to make ends meet, Delgado and Karina Morales, another member of the HOPE Club, plan to live together in San Francisco in a year, envisioning a bachelor's degree in their future.

Seeing her sister make sacrifices for her education, Delgado has inspired her younger sister to pursue higher education and will be attending LTCC this fall.

Vandals have CTC rethinking Upper Truckee Marsh access

By Kathryn Reed

Walking down Lily Avenue, the couple is asked if they know the

entrance they are headed to is private and they aren't supposed to use it.

They both look quizzical and say no signs are up saying as much.

They continue on, saying the trek on this late Wednesday afternoon to the Upper Truckee Marsh is the second time they've accessed the property this way.



Vandals have created an opening in the gate at the end of Lily Avenue.

Photos/Kathryn Reed

If the California Tahoe Conservancy has its way, it will be the last time they do. A new gate was supposed to go up June 23. Signs are coming to explain to people on both sides of the iron fence that the public access point is two blocks down at San Francisco Street.

Though it would seem like a natural gateway to this South Lake Tahoe outdoor splendor that leads to the meadow and Lake Tahoe, the CTC has its hands tied. When it acquired the property it was deed restricted to prevent the public from accessing the parcel from Lily.

This entrance is for administrative access only – CTC crews,

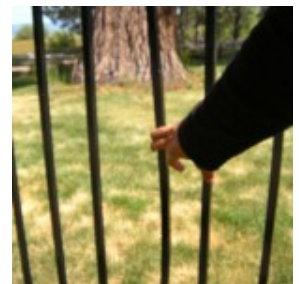
Clean Tahoe, law enforcement and animal control. It's the closest entrance to the beach.

Vandalism has become the big problem – to public and private property – as well as safety and trespassing concerns.

The slats of the gate keep being bent so people can crawl through. Vandals have tried to pry the posts of the resident who lives next to the CTC property. A couple years ago a house was tagged with graffiti. Users have created a visible trail through a private lot that owners and CTC try to cover over at times.

“One thing people don't really get is the right of access doesn't come without responsibility,” said Dana Dapolito, CTC associate environmental planner.

Yes, it's public land on both sides – the street belonging to South Lake Tahoe and Conservancy on the other side. As with any public parcel, there are rules to abide by. Vandalism and trespassing issues will not be tolerated.



Slats on a private fence have been marred.

Dapolito said CTC crews are regularly repairing the fence.

“In times of severe fiscal constraints, this is not the best use of money,” Dapolito said. She did not have a dollar figure for how much money the CTC has spent on fixing the problem at

this area or the personnel hours involved.

The City Council on Tuesday approved another contract for the police department to patrol this area. A no tolerance policy has been established.

Parking on Lily is no longer a problem because the city put up signs a few years ago banning parking on the street. People walk in, though.

Dapolito said a sense of lawlessness can pervade the area. The calm, tranquil meadow with its myriad calls of wildlife and lapping shore give way to parties, illegal fires and loud music. It's party central.

The CTC is conducting a study today to count how many cigarette butts litter the beach. Blue flags will be inserted into the sand to signify where a butt was plucked from.



The entrance to the Upper Truckee Marsh off San Francisco Street is welcoming and well marked.

One only need look at the scar on Heavenly to know what an errant cigarette can do. And one only need remember to three years ago today when an illegal campfire became the Angora Fire in 2007 and destroyed 254 homes.

The CTC is going to clamp down on smokers. It's a form of fire and no fires are allowed on its property anywhere in the basin.

With Fourth of July weekend a week away, policies will be enforced even more. Signs are posted at legal entrance points as well as on the beach about what is not permitted.

The Conservancy wants to keep allowing the public on these public lands, but it wants the rules adhered to ensure the natural state remains protected and people are safe as well. Without cooperation from users, one day the whole Upper Truckee Marsh could be off-limits.

Furlough day for LTUSD, 13% spike in health insurance costs

By Kathryn Reed

To save \$200,000 in the 2010-11 Lake Tahoe Unified School District budget, three classified positions have been axed and 12.5 hours a day of elementary office assistants slashed.

The decision came Tuesday night even though it won't be until this afternoon that the California School Employees Association votes to ratify the one-year agreement.

The school board voted 5-0 to ratify one-year contracts with CSEA and South Tahoe Educators Association.



Lindsey Oakes
tells the
LTUSD board
why Lia Story
should keep
her job.
Photos/Kathryn
Reed

It was a bit of an emotional process. About a dozen South Tahoe High School cheerleaders stood in support of Lia Story, who is their coach and works in the school office.

In the shuffle of positions, as of today she will be out of a job soon. Though the positions are set in stone, the people aren't necessarily locked out of a job. How things work, the most junior on the totem pole of the job classification being eliminated loses their job. On the flip side, that person rises to the top of the re-hire list over people from outside the district. That means people who believe they are out of a job, like Story, could end up with a job by the time the 2010-11 school year starts the week before Labor Day because it's possible others may voluntarily leave the district.

"She is kind of a like a mom to me," Lindsey Oakes said of Story. "She was directly involved in helping me graduate. I'm not sure I would have graduated (last week) without her."

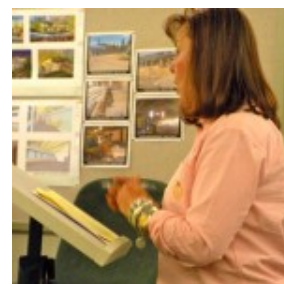
The students' teary pleas clearly moved the five-member board.

"We know if we let someone go in this community, there is no place for them to go," board member Sue Novasel said.

Novasel, Wendy David and Larry Green are expressed regret in having to cut positions.

Finding common ground

Bernadette Santana, representing the classified union and a former school board member, spoke of the amicable process in reaching consensus. STEA President Deb Johnson and Human Resources Director Jim Watson said the same.



Bernadette
Santana, CSEA
president,
praises the
negotiation
process.

This is a huge step forward in harmony among the district office, school board and bargaining units. It was only a few years ago that employees were picketing, filling board meeting with rancor and threatening to strike.

That's not to say everything is peaceful. STHS teacher Derek Allister said he didn't have a chance to vote on the contract and that it wasn't until Tuesday afternoon that he learned about the loss of classified staff. Allister said he and other teachers are willing to endure more cuts if it means saving jobs.

"If you take a little out of my paycheck to keep them here, I will write that check," Allister told the board.

(Per state law, teachers must be notified by March 15 of any layoffs. The district cut 5.688 positions at that time.)

The classified cuts include the attendance technician at STHS as of Jan. 30, administrative assistant at the district office, and half a position each of instructional aid tech and pupil services secretary at South Tahoe Middle School.

All employees will have one furlough day, which will be Nov. 24. This brings the number of instructional days to 184.

With health insurance going up 13 percent, that in effect brings the take home pay down for everyone. The district has a cap of \$9,232 that it pays for employee health benefits so it will not be picking up any of the costs associated with the increase. On average it will mean \$1,500 more per employee per year for health insurance.

Part of the contract is classified staff are protected from mid-year cuts, except for bus drivers because routes can change based on enrollment.

Budget issues

Also at the meeting, the board approved the 2010-11 budget.

With this being the sixth time CFO Deb Yates has brought the issue before the board, not much was left to do but vote. Yates said she is hearing that further cuts by the state to education look unlikely. However, Sacramento for the umpteenth year missed its deadline to pass a budget.

Declining enrollment continues to plague the district. The loss of 139 students this year equates to \$720,000 the district won't receive next school year from the state.

The board has kept its commitment to class size reduction for K-3, though the ratio in grades 1-3 will go from 1:20 to 1:22.

Keeping cuts as far from students as possible has been the

board's mantra.

Green said it's better to not have a new book than to make more cuts in staff. Books and supplies have been reduced from \$2.96 million in the 2009-10 budget to \$1.34 million in the 2010-11 budget. Supplies are all inclusive – including things like toilet paper, light bulbs, pencils and paper.

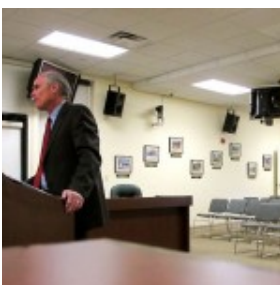
Public, employee panels divided on SLT city manager

By Austin Fay

A community panel reached an informal consensus to recommend Tony O'Rourke to the City Council to be the next city manager of South Lake Tahoe.

Seven community members spent 90 minutes questioning the two finalists Monday morning.

It may have been a waste of time for everyone involved because the City Council interviewed the men on Sunday, with Councilman Bill Crawford choosing not to be part of the process. After they were done with the session they reached the same conclusion – O'Rourke would be better than Mike Segrest.



Tony O'Rourke
delivers
answers at the
public forum
June 21.
Photo/Austin
Fay

O'Rourke has signed the necessary paperwork to start the background and reference check process.

However, that process will not begin immediately because the two other groups interviewing the candidates Monday – employees and department heads – were not as convinced O'Rourke is the man for the job. (Redevelopment Director Gene Palazzo was not an interviewer because he applied for the job and is still technically a candidate.)

It's possible the council will bring in three more candidates to be interviewed in the next week. The council still needs to reach consensus to do this. If more candidates are brought in, the three panels will be asked to reconvene to interview the next group.

If O'Rourke is not in the top two, the background check process will not begin.

About four city employees drifted in and out of the room at Lake Tahoe Airport during the public interviews, but were not available for comment. There was one person attending the meeting who was not a city employee.

A city manager is needed because Dave Jinkens is ending his eight-year stint as city manager on Aug. 7.

Who's on the panel?

The public panel was made up: Claire Fortier, vice chairwoman of the Sustainability Commission; Michael Berg, chairman of

the Planning Commission; Chip Morrow, chairman of the Parks and Recreation Commission and on the Sustainability Commission; Sherry Miller, Airport Commission and the airport director; Hermano Aragon, Latino Affairs Commission; B Gorman, president/CEO Lake Tahoe South Shore Chamber of Commerce; and Ken Sands, representing the South Lake Tahoe seniors.

The South Lake Tahoe Chamber of Commerce and TACCD did not send representatives.

City Attorney Patrick Enright facilitated the process Monday.

Members of the panel were looking for different elements in a new city manager, but a common thread was the city needs an “agent of change.” O’Rourke, in his slate-grey suit and businessman demeanor had “done his homework” the panel agreed, and was the strongest candidate to be that agent of change for South Lake Tahoe.

Questions were similar for the two interviews, with each representative having the opportunity to ask two questions, though some panel members asked more. Each interview lasted 90 minutes.

Questions entailed important issues the new city manager will wrestle with: fiscal policy in tough economic times, utility-related issues, the convention center project, annexation issues, collaboration with government agencies, anecdotal evidence of building consensus among other elected officials, as well as potholes.

The candidates

“He does come from the private sector, but he’s got a wealth of public service as well,” panel member Berg said of O’Rourke.

Segrest has been town manager in Moraga, a tony East Bay community of about 17,000 people, for more than a year. He

also served as city manager of Snowmass, Colo. He is an avid sailor. One of the motives for Segrest's considered relocation to this "very charming community" is his wife's allergies.

O'Rourke touted his self-described "passion for the public," while emphasizing his experience in the private sector. O'Rourke has a background in marketing and managing, as he is executive director of Beaver Creek Resort Company based in Avon, Colo., a town of about 6,500 people and a regional population of about 61,700. During Monday's public interview he placed an emphasis on "creating a brand" of South Lake Tahoe combining his experience in private sectors.

"Being a city manager is effectively the same position as being the CEO of a company," O'Rourke said.

Segrest has had much experience in the public sector and was forward in citing his strengths, which were finances and his decisive personality.

Post-interview comments

"If Tony doesn't accept (the position), I would not be happy with Michael, and would like to look at additional people," Gorman said with nods of approval from most of the panel.

Segrest responded to many questions with wandering, non-specific answers, giving way to a veneer of politician-speak; or, textbook answers that didn't reflect a nuanced understanding of the issues facing South Lake Tahoe.

When speaking about budgets and money O'Rourke referred to \$100,000 as "not a small sum," while Segrest thought \$700,000 was "not a lot of money."

Interviewers were given reaction-prompting sheets where they were also able to make comments during the interview. *Lake Tahoe News* was denied access to the documents collected from interviewers at the end of the session because it's a

personnel matter, Enright said.

The City Council does not have a date set to make a decision, but may reconvene in “seven to 10 days” to make a decision, according to Enright.

Property owner getting grief for cutting access to bike path

By Kathryn Reed

A private property sign where one has not existed for at least a decade is causing some unrest on West Way in South Lake Tahoe.

In October, when Paul Lara bought the house that backs to the Pope Meadow he knew a trail skirted the far edge of his property. What he didn't know is how well used it is. With biking season having arrived, he has found out the hard way.

“When I bought the property I could see there was a spot where people could come through. My intention was never to keep it open. My intention was to close it off,” Lara said.



The Laras'

house is on
the far side
of the trail
they blocked
off.

Photo/Kathryn
Reed

But he doesn't want to build a fence. One of the appealing things about the parcel is the openness of it.

To stop people from riding on his land Lara has erected a barrier with wood and posted a "Private Property, No Trespassing" sign. But not everyone is thrilled with not being allowed to pedal or walk through the meadow that leads to Pope Beach and onto Camp Richardson. Nor has it stopped everyone.

Lara called South Lake Tahoe police officers to his residence three times last week because of threats from disgruntled trail users.

"It's amazing the anger coming out of a lot of people. I haven't accosted anyone. I have been calm. I'm trying to be understanding," Lara said.

Lara said one irate user threateningly drove a vehicle toward him.

"Technically if people are on his property (even if it's unfenced), it could be considered trespassing. The fact that it is a well used trail is another issue," police Lt. David Stevenson said. "If he leaves town and there is no fence, I would think people would use the trail again."

Lara and his wife are part-time residents. Their jobs as a firefighter and nurse are in the Central Valley. The 51-year-old has been coming here since he was a kid and intends to live in South Lake full time one day.

"I'm up here a lot. I would like to have some privacy," Lara said. "My main windows point that way."

A significant number of trail users, including this reporter, come from the Tahoe Keys and Tahoe Island area. It provides a scenic, less crowded route to places off Emerald Bay Road. It also means not dealing with the hordes of people on the paved Pope-Baldwin trail.

Lara said farther up West Way, closer to Highway 89, is a California Tahoe Conservancy lot people have begun to use to reach the meadow.

The distinct trail on his property is closer to his neighbor's house than his, but his neighbor has a fence. The Laras own a double lot, with the bike path on the far side of the undeveloped lot. They have chairs sitting in the lush grass. They would rather be watching the aspens quake than cyclists fly by.

He also worries about liability issues if someone were to injure themselves on his land. Plus, next to the dirt trail is a shallow gully that still has water in it.

Even if people get used to not using this trail starting from West Way, it doesn't mean they won't end up on it coming from the other direction. That's because the meadow and the property leading to it is U.S. Forest Service land.

Garrett Villanueva, assistant forest engineer, will be taking a look at the problem soon.

"We don't endorse any trail that goes across private property without the owner's permission," Villanueva said. "But we do sympathize with the users and landowner."

This particular trail through the meadow is unauthorized. Villanueva said closing it and restoring the area could compound the problem.

A potential concern for the Forest Service is if people are leaving the trails near Pope Beach, head across the meadow and then are stuck if Lara and others create a dead-end by preventing people from accessing West Way to get to their final destination.

“As the situation evolves, we will look at the actions we need to take,” Villanueva said.

He is extremely familiar with land use issues like this. Villanueva dealt with the Dundee Circle issue from a few years ago when a new homeowner cut off access to a highly popular mountain bike trail in the Tahoe Mountain area. A Forest Service gate went up, but the owner also eventually sold her place.

Neighbors at the time brought up the issue of prescriptive easements. These easements on private property are acquired by continued use without permission of the owner. Each state has different rules for how these easements are handled.

Whether that issue would gain traction on West Way remains to be seen.

One thing Villanueva said is with his agency looking at all the bike trails in that area, many changes are likely to be forth coming in the near future for cyclists and pedestrians.

Convolutd process for 2 SLT city manager candidates



By Kathryn Reed

It could be a matter of days before the next city manager of South Lake Tahoe is named. The City Council is interviewing two candidates today and a quasi-public panel will interview the men Monday.

Councilman Bill Crawford is declining to be part of today's process.

"I'm not participating in the selection because I don't feel I have anything to contribute because I'm leaving office at the end of November," Crawford told *Lake Tahoe News*.

He is in favor of the council that will be seated at the end of the year hiring the next city manager and having an interim after Dave Jinkens' last day on Aug. 7. At least one new member will be on the council – the person taking Crawford's seat. Mayor Kathay Lovell is seeking a third term and Councilman Jerry Birdwell is on the fence regarding re-election.

Crawford does not intend to vote for any city manager his colleagues deem suitable.

Who are the candidates?

The candidates before the council today are Mike Segrest and Tony O'Rourke.

Although the council has been presented with Segrest being the current town manager of Moraga, a small town in the East Bay of San Francisco, he has given the town his resignation letter. A May 28 article in the *Contra Costa Times* says

Segrest is resigning after being on the job since February 2009 because of his wife's health issues.

Segrest was manager of the town of Snowmass Village, Colo., for five years before moving to California. Last month he was one of three finalists for the town manager job in Telluride, but didn't make the final cut.

O'Rourke has been the executive director of Beaver Creek Resort Company in Colorado since 1996. This is not the ski resort owned by Vail Resorts.

According to the company's website, it is "a very special hybrid, combining a homeowners' association, a resort association, with some municipal services added. The Resort Company, a Colorado nonprofit corporation incorporated on April 30, 1979, was designed to help Beaver Creek become and remain a unique resort community."

O'Rourke was in city government mostly in Florida and Texas before taking the job in the Rockies.

The council had wanted to interview four candidates, but two backed out.

Lovell said it's possible the council could choose other candidates to interview if Segrest and O'Rourke don't pass muster with them or Monday's interviewers.

Some recognizable names applied for the position but were not chosen to be interviewed – the current redevelopment director, a former assistant city manager now with Reno, a former housing employee, and the manager of Heidi's restaurant.

Where is the public input?

On Monday, each candidate will have a 90-minute interview before a panel made up of representatives from the five city commissions (Planning, Parks and Recreation, Airport, Latino Affairs, Sustainability), both chambers of commerce, a

disabled advocate and senior citizen representative.

No one from tourism, the city's major sector, is involved; the minimum wage worker isn't represented; the largest landowner – the U.S. Forest Service wasn't invited; the largest employer – Barton Healthcare, is not involved. John Q. Public is also not part of the process.

People have told *Lake Tahoe News* it seems like special interest groups are making the decision about the city manager job, which is the highest position in South Lake Tahoe city government.

When the Governing Board of the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency hired now former Executive Director John Singlaub, a broader public panel was involved, which included this reporter. When now former Executive Director Patrick Kahler was hired on at the Lake Tahoe Visitors Authority, the board interviewed the finalists in public.

Birdwell had proposed having a social at his bed and breakfast for the public to mingle with the candidates, but Lovell didn't like the idea. She also didn't like the idea of having them stay at the Black Bear Inn, fearing the perception it would create. However, the council as a whole didn't have a problem with now City Attorney Patrick Enright staying there when he interviewed. Both city manager candidates are at the Black Bear – staying for free. The city was not going to pay for their overnight accommodations no matter where they slept.

The public may attend the sessions that start at 8:30am Monday at Lake Tahoe Airport, but they will not be able to ask questions. Each panelist may ask two questions and the same questions must be asked of both candidates.

"Each panel will have a scorecard and we will be provided the total score from each group," Lovell said of the process.

It is up to each councilmember as to what weight he or she

gives that scorecard when it comes to making a hiring decision. The council will discuss the matter in closed session on Tuesday at the regular council meeting, but Lovell said it's likely a final decision will require a special meeting.

The council would like to have someone on board before Jinkens leaves.

Lovell said it would be the incoming city manager who hires the next police chief even though Jinkens has started the process and applications are due by the end of the month.

The process

It has been the city attorney, Enright, who doesn't have human resources experience, who the council asked to spearhead the hiring process once consultant Bob Murray culled together the list of names.

The council's lack of confidence in the HR manager is why Enright was brought in.

Enright and Murray have provided the council with possible questions to ask the candidates.

But what the council wants in the next city manager has not been discussed. Nor has it been a collaborative process with staff.

It didn't have to be this way. An entity that wants to discuss the vision for its next leader is Lake Tahoe Community College. That board has agreed to work with faculty and classified staff to outline what it is everyone wants in the next president.

That approach has not been taken by this City Council.

Instead, at the last-minute the council decided to have the candidates interview with eight members of the labor groups

and the eight department heads – separately. This means a time consuming, inefficient four sets of interviews for the candidates.

Gene Palazzo is one of the directors on the panel even though he applied for the job of city manager.

There has been no coordinated effort to ensure the candidates won't keep being asked the same questions. Nor is there a format to share the answers with each panel.

Animals, children steal show at El Dorado County Fair

By Kathryn Reed

PLACERVILLE – Brooks & Dunn are right, cowgirls don't cry.

With bodies flying, sheep stomping on or near them, and the crowd whopping it up, it was the young girls who got up, dusted themselves off and looked like they were ready to ride the bulls in the pen behind the arena. The boys, well, a few of them left in tears.

Mutton bustin' can be a rough sport.



Megan Ehle, 7,

of Placerville
is off to a
fast start in
mutton
bustin'.

Photos/Kathryn
Reed

The announcer assured everyone at the El Dorado County Fair on Friday that every child was there because he or she wanted to be – not because their Wrangler-Roper-Stetson clad parent wanted them to be.

Broken into age groups 4-5 and 6-7, girls and boys compete together. Several of the little ones didn't look quite old enough to be riding. It didn't appear much would have stopped them.

Megan Ehle, 7, had a big grin on her face after her first mutton bustin' contest. A little scratch near her elbow will be a reminder of the day's fun.

Across the fairgrounds the animals are the ones being judged.

When Jennifer Weber, 16, first started raising swine it was difficult when auction day would come. Even though she knows she'll be in tears today when 6-month-old Sammy is sold, the paycheck will be welcome.

She and her Hampshire took first place on Friday in senior showmanship. Weber would take the pig for walks on her family's 6 acres in Shingle Springs. Some of its favorite foods include blackberries and Jelly Bellies.

To those who didn't grow up on a farm or don't live on one now, the judging for the goat milking champion was eye opening. Mammaries are the big deal in this competition.

Plenty of farm animals are on display – beef cattle, swine,

turkeys, chickens, rabbits, guinea pigs and goats.

For those who don't want to mess with animals, there is the mechanical bull. Plus, there's a ton of meat to eat.

Aromas of all sorts fill the grounds, ranging from sizzling beef to kettle corn.

The four-day event that wraps up Sunday is worth going to multiple days because there is so much going on. Music genres run the gamut – some professional, some competitive.

Demonstration halls are filled with baked items, photographs, knitting, quilts, canned goods and more that were entered by county residents to be judged. Some of the amateur photographs look like the shooter should consider switching professions, they are that good.

At the games of chance and carnival rides is where most of the teenagers could be found.

To find out what is going on at the fair on Saturday and Sunday, click on schedule.

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USFS, El Dorado County settle Meyers Landfill lawsuit

By Kathryn Reed

The 19-year-old Meyers Landfill lawsuit is over. Final approval is expected today or Monday, with all parties signing the agreement by June 23.

“Needless to say, I am happy to see that this day has finally arrived,” El Dorado County Supervisor Norma Santiago told *Lake Tahoe News*.



Access to the old Meyers Landfill will be fenced off soon.

Photo/Kathryn Reed

The 26-acre site off Pioneer Trail that is easily accessed directly across from Elks Club Road has been sitting idle since it ceased being a landfill in 1971. Garbage from El Dorado and Douglas counties, and South Lake Tahoe were dumped on this parcel of U.S. Forest Service land beginning in 1947.

In 1991, after vinyl chloride was discovered oozing into the ground and threatening Saxon Creek, the Forest Service sued El Dorado County.

Vinyl chloride is a carcinogen created after household waste breaks down. Methane and other gases are also issues. The Environmental Protection Agency has deemed it a SuperFund site.

The county has been the main defendant all these years.

“At this point I can say we have negotiated a consent decree with the U.S. Forest Service and the Department of Justice,” Tom Bruen, special counsel to El Dorado County, told *Lake*

Tahoe News on Thursday. "It is being reviewed by top managers of the EPA and the Department of Justice. We are hoping for approval sometime next week."

Third party defendants have included South Lake Tahoe, Douglas County, South Tahoe Public Utility District, Lake Tahoe Unified School District, Raley's, South Tahoe Refuse, Harrah's, Harveys, Heavenly, Safeway, Hertz, Barton Healthcare, Tahoe Valley Pharmacy and Sierra Pacific Power Co. Most have settled.

But, still, South Tahoe PUD had a closed session item Thursday about the lawsuit. Spokesman Dennis Cocking said the June 17 meeting was likely to be the last time it's on an agenda.

Main sticking points, during what at times has been a highly contentious battle, are who would pay for what. Because everything is not yet a public record, specific dollar amounts are not available.

But millions have been spent on lawyers, a cap that was put on in 1975 that didn't work, studies, monitoring and re-use proposals. Millions more will be spent on a cap and continued monitoring.

Officials are estimating the cap will cost upward of \$4 million. Three contracts are in place for the cap project: contractor, quality insurance agent, and remedial engineer to prepare the CERLA (Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act) reports for the Environmental Protection Agency.

Money will come from some of the third party defendants, some from the Forest Service, and the bulk from the insurance companies representing the defendants.

The county Board of Supervisors hired a contractor earlier this year to do the work. The Forest Service is having a meeting today to talk about the construction.

The cap will be on 10 acres of the site. Work will likely begin this month and take all summer.

"As a result, we will do closures of the landfill area and the road leading to it," Forest Service spokeswoman Cheva Heck said. "This is not punitive in any way. It will not be safe to be back there."

A fence will be put up around the perimeter of the work area. It will remain up for a couple years to allow for vegetation to take hold.

The Forest Service will release details next week of the exact area to be shut-off from the public.

Heck would not comment on specifics about the lawsuit.

"It's still a legal issue," she said.

But this is just the first phase.

"While we are pleased with this settlement, we have yet one step to go which relates to Operating Unit 2," Santiago said. "This covers the area where the plume is currently traveling. Once the cap is on, there will be ongoing monitoring of this area to help determine how well the cap is working."

How to deal with the groundwater will depend on how well the cap works. If the plume is leaving the site post-cap, then more will have to be done. What that "more" might be, is unknown. It's possible a French drain could be installed to divert groundwater. Mother Nature might have other designs.

One day the site will be able to be used by hikers, mountain bikers and maybe snowmobilers. Talk of El Dorado County taking over the land have long been taken off the table. This means the many meetings and dollars spent on a feasibility study to relocate Lake Tahoe Wildlife Care to the site were for naught.

But Santiago isn't quite ready to give up the fight. And with

another four-year term starting later this year, she has a platform to work from.

“Regarding the land going to the county, I am still optimistic – perhaps the only one. However, any discussion would be premature at this point,” Santiago said. “Based upon my information, the process required to go down this path is very complicated and requires the patience of a saint. As always, I am up for the challenge.”

Mobile businesses under scrutiny on South Shore

By Kathryn Reed

Even though South Lake Tahoe adopted a resolution in July 2004 authorizing mobile vending services to operate in town, no regulations came with it. That is likely to change next week when the City Council is expected to discuss an ordinance regulating these businesses.

There was a short discussion during the first reading of the ordinance last week. The conversation bounced from businesses like Schwan's that can legally deliver food to people to unmarked trucks selling goods to people using pushcarts to sell food to people selling seafood door-to-door.



Schwan's is legal, but other mobile businesses are suspect on the South Shore.
Photo/Kathryn Reed

The ordinance would clarify the requirements to own/operate a mobile vending service in the city, specify locations of operation, and establish health-safety regulations for the product and equipment.

El Dorado County has had a strict policy for a number of years. Sheriff's Lt. Les Lovell said his department has a zero tolerance policy for people operating businesses illegally out of their vehicles. No business license means a trip to jail.

Two repeat offenders were caught in May selling stereo equipment out of a white Suburban. The two men from out of town were arrested, the goods confiscated and \$4,000 in cash seized. Sheriff's deputies made the arrest at the Rockwater restaurant in the city limits.

It's possible from the cash seized that victims could get restitution.

"Persons wishing to make a report should be prepared to show that they were victimized. Although these transactions are almost always in cash, that should not be hard at all (to prove) as they will probably have the equipment and possibly even have some paperwork," said Hans Uthe, El Dorado County assistant district attorney. "People who get taken in by the scam should not feel bad. These guys are very, very slick and highly persuasive."

Although the May incident involved a Suburban, the "White Van

Scam" is occurring throughout the country. It almost seems to be organized or perhaps it's just copycat criminals.

It's a typical bait and switch crime. The seller sets up shop out of the vehicle on a street corner or in a parking lot with goods for sale at extremely reduced prices. They claim their store is overstocked or have some other story for wanting to get rid of the goods. The product might appear to be in the original packaging. A second seller distracts the buyer and that's where the switch often occurs. What ends up in their hands isn't what they thought they were buying.

Sometimes the equipment is so shoddy it causes complementary components to short out.

"Buyer beware," is how Lovell describes it. "You get what you pay for."

Lt. David Stevenson with the South Lake Tahoe Police Department wasn't familiar with the "White Van Scam" and said these types of crimes come and go, though he hasn't noticed an increase in them.

Lovell said one of his detectives or deputies will work undercover when a suspicious vehicle is selling goods.

"They see where the (suspect) is keeping the money, where they keep the receipt books so we know what to look for when we grab them," Lovell said.

People selling produce from the side of the road often don't have a business license and therefore are not regulated by the city or county. People selling firewood without a phone number posted are not always on the up and up either.

Lovell said he welcomes calls (530.577.3000) about people operating suspicious businesses in the county.

"It's not fair to hardworking locals who pay taxes," Lovell said of the illegal vendors/businesses.