

Styrofoam ban possible in South Lake Tahoe

By Kathryn Reed

South Lake Tahoe is contemplating regulating the type of to-go containers restaurants use, whether retail outlets can sell Styrofoam and plastic utensils, the packaging of meat in grocery stores, and what egg cartons are made of.

The elected officials on Tuesday gave staff direction to come back with verbiage for a ban on polystyrene. Having the Sustainability Commission do the research was suggested as a way to free up staff time.

The idea to essentially rid the city of Styrofoam was brought to the council by members of the public. The electeds on Oct. 17 supported investigating the idea further, but no formal vote was taken.

"I'm not opposed to a ban on take-out because there are a lot of alternatives for them to use," Councilman Tom Davis said.

What he is worried about is if something like Cup-of-Noodles would be banned. He sits on the board of Christmas Cheer and that food item is a staple for those clients.



Many restaurants in South Lake Tahoe already use environmentally friendly to-go containers. Photo/LTN

Putting in this type of ban was broached when the city was talking about the plastic bag ban in 2013. It never gained traction.

It was pointed out this week that the material is not biodegradable and has no value when it comes to recycling and weighs so little.

The council was curious to know what impact the product has on South Tahoe Refuse.

Jeff Tillman, president of South Tahoe Refuse, would not talk to *Lake Tahoe News* about the issue.

Councilwoman Wendy David, who sits on the Waste Management Authority JPA, said she would like that board to discuss polystyrene so perhaps El Dorado and Douglas counties might be part of the ban.

There are many restaurants in the area that already use a disposable product for leftovers.

Marilee Movius with the League to Save Lake Tahoe spoke in

favor of a ban, citing statistics about how bad the product is for the environment and animals.

About 100 cities in California have some sort of ban on the product.

Locals power LTCC soccer teams to national rankings

By Jim Krajewski, Reno Gazette-Journal

Lake Tahoe Community College has become a soccer powerhouse, thanks to several former local high school standouts.

After 14 years without sports, Lake Tahoe CC brought athletics back in 2014 and is having one of its best seasons in memory, for both the men's and women's soccer teams.

Coach Jeremy Evans has helped the Lake Tahoe CC women's soccer team to a No. 11 national ranking in the NSCAA poll and first place in the Golden Valley Conference. And Lake Tahoe CC men's coach Nick Arbelaez also has his team in the national rankings, at No. 12, and also in first place in the Golden Valley Conference.

Read the whole story

Residents unload VHR frustrations on EDC supes

By Susan Wood

It was like a back-to-the-future flashback on vacation home rentals at Lake Tahoe. Only this time, it was El Dorado County fielding the brunt of fiery opinions – not the city.

On the same day South Lake Tahoe officials hashed out rules on vacation home rentals within their boundaries, El Dorado County supervisors met Tuesday on city turf to open the door to dialogue on the nagging issue. The topic brought out about 30 people for the supervisors' annual gathering at the lake.

Speaker after speaker on Oct. 17 lined up to express their opinions. Most were disgruntled residents. Others were property managers defending the practice that has turned into an economic gain for homeowners and the jurisdiction.



El Dorado County Board of Supervisors on Oct. 17 get an earful about vacation rentals. Photo/Susan Wood

Suggestions differed. But many agreed the process needs expanded law enforcement and to be taken out of the county tax collector's office. Department head C.L. Raffety gave an informational presentation at the urging of Tahoe Supervisor

Sue Novasel.

When all was said and done, the county committee of Novasel and Supervisor Michael Ranalli that was formed Sept. 12 agreed to host community meetings in the next few weeks. Novasel wants to bring stakeholders together in the same room in order to revisit the existing ordinance.

"We need better enforcement," said Novasel.

Within the county jurisdiction of the Lake Tahoe Basin, the tax collector's office reported 575 vacation home rentals in 2015. It has grown to 876 in a few years. Those are just the ones the county knows about. It monitors 15 VHR websites to check for homes listed without a permit. The process takes precious man hours – more than what Raffety's staff can handle.

"We are moving into a shared community. It's an ongoing problem everywhere," Novasel said.

With the growth of the shared-home industry comes investigations of wrongdoing spun out of complaints that involve an overburdened county sheriff's department. The county has opened 128 investigations this year. Violations numbered 129 in 2015 and 59 a year ago as the permitting process was being addressed.

"It's been incredibly difficult to watch the (city's) process knowing the tsunami is coming our way," Novasel said, adding "an overhaul" of the county's rules is necessary.

El Dorado County's current ordinance mandates two people per bedroom plus four additional visitors per residence; prohibits spa use between 10pm and 8am; dictates when trash can be taken to the curb; regulates the posting of the permit; demands a local contact person within a one-hour's drive from the rental; restricts parking to only the driveway; and requires noise kept to a level not deemed "excessive."

Violators may get a warning on a first offense, but will be fined \$250 on the second. The third complaint may lead to a \$1,000 fine and finally a fourth could result in the permit being revoked.

A citizen's group called the Peaceful Tahoe Coalition formed because neighbors of the vacation home rentals got fed up by outrageous behavior by some visitors.

Among the demands, John Adamski outlined a few suggestions including a cap on the number of units, tighter restrictions and more "teeth" in enforcing the law.

Adamski shared a concern observing the city still doesn't have a final ordinance.

"I don't want to see that happen with the county," he said.

Time is of the essence for some residents.



County residents tell elected officials what they think of VHRs. Photo/Susan Wood

"We're being terrorized in our neighborhoods," Carrie Williams told the board. She described a disruptive street in which she lives where one neighbor's dog was killed "on leash" by a vehicle racing down the road.

In another instance, gun shots were fired into the night.

And yet another, 30 visitors showed up to rent a two-bedroom home.

"This has gotten out of control," Williams said.

Ed Miller of the Meeks Bay Fire Protection District said he wants more order.

"It's a quality of life issue," he said.

Miller shared a story of disrespect when renters on his street blocked plows, prompting the driver to return to no avail because vehicles were still blocking the road.

"The entire neighborhood didn't get plowed," he said.

Miller would like to see the "Good Neighbor" brochure the county uses to say more than South Lake Tahoe. The county seems to have ignored its reach goes to the West Shore.

A 55-year resident on the South Shore, Janet McDougall told the board it should take the ordinance out of the tax collector's office because it's a zoning issue.

"This is a serious problem," the former South Lake Tahoe legal analyst said. "This is completely inappropriate from a land-use perspective."

She also lamented over the practice pitting residents against visitors.

Leona Allen added to the list of unlawful observations. These incidents range from strewn trash to strippers showing up to perform lewd acts to urinating in public to cigarettes tossed

off decks. Extinguishing the latter is critical to Allen considering her involvement with the Lake Valley Fire Protection District.

"Vacation home rentals aren't going anywhere. I get that. But neither are we," she said.

Allen insisted the county set up a community service division within the sheriff's department to enforce the new rules.

"Something's gotta change," Rick Mapes said with a sigh.

Mapes runs a snow removal company and must get up at 4am to conduct his business – a difficult task when neighbors are partying and creating a ruckus into the night.

His wife, Jamie Mapes, attended several community meetings over a decade ago when the city was undergoing the formation of its ordinance.

Still, property managers got up to voice their support of the industry, careful not to condone the types of behavior mentioned. Those who spoke appeared to genuinely care about being a part of the solution.

Kathy Jo Liebhardt not only runs Tahoe Destinations, she owns a vacation home and is "saddened to hear" the stories.

She cautioned the county on placing a limit on the number of them.

"Capping is not going to do anything," she said.

In the meantime, her rules are strict and non-negotiable.

"I have no problem fining and evicting," Liebhardt said, adding she is "not going to put up with that crap."

Another property manager, Josh Priou admitted to feeling sheepish about even stepping up to the podium.

"I feel like crap after hearing everybody's horror stories," he said.

Nonetheless, he reminded the crowd renting homes is still considered residential use, not commercial.

The tourism industry drives Lake Tahoe.

"Lake Tahoe is a huge vacation rental destination," he said.

Priou has been involved in the tourism industry for 24 years – half of that time renting homes in the marketplace. He likes "to provide an experience to the visitor."

Shaken by the homeowners' stories of unruly vacation home renters, Ranalli turned to county Counsel Michael Ciccozzi asking if the board may place a moratorium on permitting new rentals until the county figures out its changes to the ordinance.

"I'm bothered," Ranalli said.

Ultimately, the board shied away from the suggestion but agreed to move on the matter sooner rather than later.

With that, Raffety will host a public meeting Nov. 1 at 2pm in the South Lake Tahoe Library at 1000 Rufus Allen Blvd. to review the vacation home rental policy.

In other action, the Board of Supervisors:

- Heard an economic report on the impact of e-commerce on brick and mortar retail space and how it relates to land-use planning. Chief Administrative Officer Don Ashton requested two outside economic advisors provide the study that highlighted the need for the county to accommodate such a shift.

- Watched a presentation from a land-use planning team providing a glimpse into the county's Economic Development

plan with a new website campaign coined “Elevate to El Dorado, a great place to live, work and play.” The \$14,000 campaign is intended to coincide with the county’s strategic plan.

· Observed a silent protest from the El Dorado County Public Employees union as almost a dozen members sitting a short time in the audience came with signs reading “Fair Contract Now” and “Negotiate.”

SLT about to set moratorium on VHRs

By Kathryn Reed

Data. It’s the four-letter word that could make the difference in the world of vacation home rentals in South Lake Tahoe.

Instead of making arbitrary rules based on emotion, at least three City Council members want facts to guide their decision-making.

Mayor Austin Sass with his pouting, fidgeting and lack of professionalism toward his colleagues on Tuesday showed why the gavel needs to change hands in December.

Sass has been lobbying for substantive change to the rules governing short-term rentals since he was elected three years ago. He was hoping in his one-year stint as mayor to have that change in place. He’s not going to get what he wanted.

While he kept asking if the first reading of the new ordinance would take place Nov. 17, he was repeatedly told by the city attorney the substance of the changes would require a first reading to be down the road. That meant that no matter the

outcome this week, there wasn't time for Sass to get in place everything he wanted while having the title of mayor.

He was beside himself that his peers were changing their minds and others never agreed with him.



City Councilman Austin Sass at the Oct. 17 meeting did not get his way about vacation rentals. Photo/Kathryn Reed

While two weeks ago it appeared there were three votes to implement a density rule where VHRs could not be closer than 150 feet to each other, Sass was the lone backer of that idea this week.

It's hard to know if what's on the books today works because data has been elusive. The council has had a habit of making changes to the ordinance based on the loud chorus of those who don't like VHRs. The problem is the city didn't have facts to corroborate those stories; or evidence to show they had even tried to address the complaints filed.

Nor were those tasked with enforcing the rules seeming to do their job because the same rental houses keep being the subject of public outcry.

Councilman Jason Collin has been harping on the need for data-driven decision making. Councilwoman Brooke Laine is echoing that sentiment. Her main soapbox has been all about enforcement and wanting to prove it is or isn't effective.

Collin repeatedly said it's time to "hit the pause button" with VHRs in order to figure out what is working.

That could come next Tuesday at a special council meeting. The four will meet at 5pm Oct. 24 to vote on an urgency ordinance. (Councilman Tom Davis recuses himself from VHR discussions because of his interest in Tahoe Keys Resort.) It's expected that the number of VHRs on the books as of that night will be the limit for a 45-day period. For the emergency law to take effect, all four must vote for it.

City Attorney Nira Doherty said she will come back with evidence as to why the urgency ordinance is lawful. It's possible the bear box mandate could be wrapped into that ordinance because health and safety issues could be cited.

The council could vote to extend that moratorium for a year or enact something else at the 45-day mark.

At the Nov. 7 regular meeting other aspects of the VHR ordinance will be discussed. This includes the three strikes and the permit is revoked rule, higher fines, increased fees for more enforcement, rules regulating owners using their dwelling and more.

Occupancy was a sticking point. This gets back to Collin wanting data to show the type of residences and the number of people in a unit causing X infraction. He broached the idea of square-footage possibly being a better gauge for the number of people allowed than bedroom counts. That issue will warrant further discussion next month.

Eliminated from the ordinance on Tuesday were all regulations pertaining to those who rent a room while staying on the

premise. Those shared rentals will be the subject of a future ordinance unto themselves.

1 in 30 wells in the West failed in recent years

By Emily Benson, High Country News

When their taps began spitting out air instead of water a few years ago, one family in Paso Robles was forced to snake a hose from a neighbor's property into their home for drinking water. They ate from paper plates instead of dishes, could no longer wash their laundry at home and watched their vegetable garden dry up. For households that rely on well water – a common situation across the rural West – the impacts can be severe when a well runs dry.

Stories like that one streamed out of California during the drought that officially ended earlier this year, but the extent of the problem – exactly how many wells were affected – was unclear. Now, new research suggests that one in 30 groundwater wells in the West, wells that supply farms in addition to homes, went dry between 2013 and 2015.

To arrive at that number, California-based researchers Debra Perrone and Scott Jasechko compiled location and depth records for wells constructed between 1950 and 2015 across Western states.

[Read the whole story](#)

Unspoken truth about radon in Tahoe

By Stephen Saturno, Moonshine Ink

How can it be that one of the biggest health concerns in our area goes mostly unnoticed? While most people have barely heard of radon, testing in our area is nearly nonexistent. Even when you buy a home, there's a one-page disclosures section that's buried in a 200-page document somewhere after your final closing cost summary.

Local and federal governments spend little money on education and outreach while radon continues to be one of the leading causes of lung cancer.

Radon is a colorless, odorless, and tasteless gas that comes from the natural breakdown of uranium in rocks and soil. Inhaling radon can lead to DNA damage, which can cause cancer. In fact, the EPA states that it is the No. 2 cause of lung cancer in the United States after cigarette smoking.

Read the whole story

Anderson plows her own path to Olympic gold

Publisher's note: *This is one of a series of stories about Lake Tahoe area athletes who hope to compete in the 2018*

Olympics in South Korea.

By Kathryn Reed

PARK CITY, Utah – Age is not spoiling the free spirit known as Jamie Anderson. She still marches to her own drummer. She is just as unconventional on the snow as she is off.

While her laid back, crystal loving, essential oil using, holistic lifestyle may be more apropos in someplace like Santa Cruz, she is 100 percent homegrown Lake Tahoe.

At 27 she is a veteran in the world of snowboarding competition, having been the youngest woman to win an X Games gold in 2007.



Jamie Anderson knows the competition will be stiffer at the 2018 Olympics. Photo/Kathryn Reed

She acknowledges there is another generation eager to dethrone her. They are practicing tricks on dry ground, something she scoffs at. Anderson is old school. The sport is supposed to be all about the snow and being one with it.

Cheating is what those air bags used to be considered. Now

they are mainstream.

"It takes away from the fear factor," Anderson said. "It's changing the sport; it's progressing faster."

An air bag has been set up at the Olympic training facility in Park City. The idea is to try tricks with a controlled landing – an inflated contraption that takes the pain out of falling. Anderson tried it a couple times last summer but has not been won over by it. She remembers going to the mountain and building jumps or finding natural ones. That's how she still likes to ride, even when she's at her home resort at Sierra-at-Tahoe.

Anderson tries to get back to Tahoe when she can, but it's hard with her travel-competition schedule. She'll be in town this month specifically to work out with her trainer Eufay Wood who owns the Stateline gym Club 100.

"He knows that I don't like a lot of intense work," Anderson said smiling. Maybe so, but Wood's reputation is all about being intense and getting his clients in incredible shape. "I've been so bad at training this year," she admitted.

Anderson intends to be in PyeongChang, South Korea, in February to defend her slopestyle gold medal.

"Qualifying will be the hardest process," Anderson said. She acknowledged once she gets to South Korea, half of her teammates won't be there. There are a series of qualifying competitions, with one having taken place last season, which she won.

Anderson was in Park City in September for the Team USA media summit along with more than 100 other athletes hoping to compete in February's Winter Olympics.

She admits there are more responsibilities with her elevated stature in the snowboarding world. Sponsors take time, her

charity takes times, it's no longer just about snowboarding. But the young competition, well, she knows their No. 1 focus is the sport.

Anderson acknowledged she's not sure if her gold medal run in 2014 would be good enough to get her into the finals in South Korea. Things have changed that much.

But she has a leg up on some of her competition by having already visited South Korea in a test run last season.

"South Korea is like nowhere else I've been to," Anderson said. The food, the culture, the people, the hot springs – she loved it all. The mountains reminded her of the East Coast of the United States.

For the first time in a Winter Olympics there will be a big air competition, which has been in the X Games for years. This means Anderson will be vying for two medals. Big air focuses on one trick, while slopestyle is a series of tricks.

For now, Anderson calls Tahoe (she was raised in Meyers, where she was home schooled) and Whistler home. Her boyfriend, also a professional snowboarder, hails from Canada.



Anderson prefers to master her sport on the snow, not on an air bag like this one in Park City. Photo/Kathryn Reed

Anderson has never forgotten where she came from. She didn't come from a family of privilege. She understands the costs involved to be an elite athlete. That is one of the reasons why in 2013 she started the Jamie Anderson Foundation as a way to help youngsters pursue their dreams.

In South Lake Tahoe, Anderson was instrumental in getting the sculpture that will be part of Champions Plaza to not resemble three men. The artist, while clamoring that it was gender neutral, revised it. It should be unveiled this year. Anderson will be one of the inaugural inductees.

"I'd like to do a skate park in Meyers. I'd love to do more in the community," Anderson told *Lake Tahoe News*. "A Tahoe skate park is my next project." Well, maybe right after the Olympics.

Are club teams hurting high school sports?

By Dave Zook, Moonshine Ink

That Tahoe/Truckee kids have a good amount of sporting options would be an understatement. There are the traditional ball sports that most Americans grow up with. And then there are the sports unique to a mountain town, such as mountain bike leagues and skiing – alpine, big mountain, and Nordic, with multiple competitive disciplines each – which all also vie for time with the endless list of recreational outdoor activities.

And if that weren't enough, within the arena of traditional sports there is the increasing role of club sports as an option outside of official school leagues. These associations are organized independently of schools, and are commonly seen in soccer, volleyball, basketball, and baseball. They are available to kids barely out of preschool, and can steer a kid's athletic direction for life.

Clubs draw in parents and kids with the promise of high competition levels, top-tier coaching, and exposure to the eyes of college recruiters, but they also require heavy travel and time commitments, and substantial cost to participate. With the increasing appeal of club teams, is club sports' influence changing the youth sports landscape as we know it?

Read the whole story

NorCal facing wildfires more typically seen in the south



South Lake Tahoe firefighters on mop-up detail in Sonoma County. Photo/SLTFD

By Bettina Boxall, Los Angeles Times

Block after block of tidy housing tracts reduced to heaps of ash. Death counts in the double digits. Homeowners numbly poking through the ruins of domestic life.

California has seen this before.

But the harrowing images of loss and destruction usually come out of the south.

“These kinds of fires and the losses are very uncharacteristic of that part of the world,” University of California fire specialist Max Moritz said of the firestorm that ignited in Northern California last week, killing dozens of people and torching thousands of homes.

Until last week, 13 of the 20 most destructive – and 16 of the 20 deadliest – wildfires in modern state history occurred in

Southern California.

Read the whole story

3 people to replace retiring EDC elections guru



Bill Schultz is an institution within El Dorado County. Photo/Provided

By Susan Wood

When you're a county dealing with record voter turnout as El Dorado did last year, you turn to a career record-keeping shoe-in to maintain order in this unpredictable world of government and politics. That is, until you can't anymore.

El Dorado County Registrar of Voters Bill Schultz, 84, has become a guru in local government since his humble beginnings decades ago with the county. So much so, it's going to take

more than a year and probably more than one person to gear up for his leaving and to fill his shoes.

Schultz, who also serves as the recorder clerk and the Veteran Affairs director, is retiring in January 2019 – but not before leaving his mark as a fixture to county government. Essentially, he's opting out of re-election next year.

"The big thing is I've been working since I was 12 years old. It's going to be interesting to be out of a job," Schultz said, further insisting he's placing "relaxing" on a to-do list. "I've done everything I've wanted to do. It's time to spend some time with my family and friends."

Schultz said he's looking forward to retirement, but the question remains: Will he stay busy enough to satisfy his insatiable need to serve, judging from the long list of accomplishments he's racked up through decades of ambitious programs and forward-thinking projects?

Perhaps the kind of service he'll provide is on the tennis courts – another passion beyond work and family. Schultz received a gold medal in the sport at the Northern California Senior Olympics.



Tennis is one of Bill Schultz's passions – so is winning. Photo/Provided

If county government could hand out medals for overachievement in the area of employee ingenuity, Schultz would probably get one.

He began employment with El Dorado County in 1974 in a post called the service unit supervisor, which meant overseeing functions such as micrographics, printing and communications.

From that post, he became a jack of all trades as the county purchasing agent, general services director, interim welfare director, sheriff's administrative assistant, communications director, 911 installation coordinator and even the airport director to the three regional airports in Placerville, South Lake Tahoe and Georgetown.

Knowledge of so many disciplines in county government came in handy when he worked as the records management coordinator. It took him more than a year to sort through all of the county's records in storage and converted space underneath the library into an organized facility capable of holding 17,000 boxes of records. He modeled the program after the state's.

In between, he took a break from the county from 1980 to 1990 when he became an operations manager for XeneX Computer Systems, a data processing firm for the financial industry. After all, he had a background in banking upon moving to Placerville in 1972 after serving in the Navy.

Dedication to service is engrained in Schultz. He served four terms during the Vietnam War from 1962 to 1969.

His dedication to the military, which was embedded as a child since his father was also in the Navy, stayed with him during his tenure starting at 2004 as the county registrar – the chief of the elections department.

It was in this role Schultz admits he performed an accomplishment he's most proud of. In 2012, he applied for and received a \$1 million grant from the Federal Voting Commission to better assist military voters overseas.

Still, Schultz has not rested in his ambitious goals. He volunteered the county as one to help the state implement a statewide Voter Registration System before 2017. The prior year, the deadline was met. His meticulous record-keeping skills netted \$87,000 to the county for its participation.

And timing is everything, depending on one's perspective.

As it turns out, the 2016 presidential election churned out more registered voters than ever in El Dorado County. It's one of the first in the state to start online electronic recording due to Schultz's efforts. Voter turnout was a record 83 percent last November.

This year, Schultz and his staff are busy preparing for yet another election. South Lake Tahoe, in particular, has a key roads initiative on the ballot – Measure C.

Next year, the elections cycles continue. To replace Schultz would seem like an insurmountable task. For one thing, it may

take three people to fill his three jobs. The next recorder-clerk will be elected either in June or November of 2018. The registrar position will be appointed by the El Dorado County Board of Supervisors.

“OK, so what are we going to do? Our superman is leaving,” county Supervisor Sue Novasel said, recalling her reaction to the news.



□Bill Schultz is a 40-year member of the Fleet Reserve Association.
Photo/Provided

The county is currently trying to figure out constitutionally how to separate the recorder-clerk and registrar positions, along with the Veteran Affairs chief, because “it would be very difficult to fill all three positions with one person,”

Novasel told *Lake Tahoe News*.

"He's done an amazing job for the county and is really going to be missed," she said, calling Schultz "a wealth of information."

One of the aspects to Schultz's personality that Novasel mentioned as being refreshing to those who work with him is his soft, cool-as-a-cucumber demeanor.

Linda Webster, the registrar's assistant for four years, knows firsthand what it's like to work for Schultz, whom she commended for taking the elections department from hand-stamping to computer electronics.

First, Webster noted she'll miss his passion about his responsibilities as well as his management style.

"He's not a micromanager. He very much recognizes employees' abilities and strong points. He clears obstacles to allow us to do our jobs and makes sure we have all the tools to conduct our business," she told *Lake Tahoe News*.

The end result amounted to a close-knit elections department.

"I've known Bill for a long time. He really turned this department around in several ways. He'll be well-missed by the county in general and hard to replace," elections systems coordinator Joe Zitzelberger said.

The data-crunching guru added that unlike other department managers Schultz provides an office atmosphere absent of stress – a notable feat considering the fast-paced elections environment.

But most of all, it's Schultz's folksy, even-keel, respectful temperament that those familiar with his work ethics and management style say are rare in the working world.

"I don't feel like I'm working for him, I'm working with him,"

Zitzelberger said.