

S. Tahoe council delays city attorney evaluation

South Lake Tahoe City Attorney Patrick Enright was supposed to receive his annual evaluation during closed session on Oct. 2. While he was talked to, he was not given an evaluation.

“I don’t want to comment on what the discussion was,” Enright told *Lake Tahoe News*.



Patrick
Enright

Mayor Claire Fortier said because there was no reportable action, she didn’t have anything to say other than she expects the issue to be on a future agenda.

Enright said the review has been postponed until at least after the Nov. 6 election.

His contract expires May 31; which would give him four years on the job.

Enright said he is not worried about the council not extending his contract, but he also said he would not comment on whether he wants it to be extended.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

Santa Rosa man hit while crossing Hwy. 50

A Santa Rosa man was airlifted to a Reno hospital early Sunday morning after being hit by an SUV in Stateline.

The hit-and-run accident occurred Sept. 30 at about 1:23am in front of CVS on Highway 50.

According to the Nevada Highway Patrol, Philip Preston Parsons, 25, was walking south to north in the crosswalk when he was struck. However, he was walking when the light was red.

The driver of the dark colored SUV did not stop, but instead drove into California.

NHP officials say Parsons' injuries were not life threatening.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Luther Pass blaze burns half acre

Firefighters on Tuesday were able to keep a blaze on Luther Pass to about a half acre.

The cause of the fire is under investigation.



Ted King, captain of Engine 41 and firefighter Skylr Penna-Couttenye mop up the Luther Fire. Photo/Steve Burns/USFS

It started south of the Big Meadow trailhead off Highway 89.

U.S. Forest Service crews along Lake Valley Fire Protection District put out the fire.

Study: U.S. travelers looking for recreation destinations

By Scott Kauffman, World Property Channel

While the most popular U.S. states retained their tourist appeal this year (Florida, California, Hawaii, N.Y. and Alaska) among American travelers, the allure of several other domestic destinations has increased.

For example, Louisiana, Michigan, Oregon and Washington, D.C., were the beneficiaries of increased tourism, while states like Alaska, Hawaii, Arizona and Tennessee saw slight decreases in interest. At least that's what travel experts at MMGY Global/Harrison Group learned during their newly released survey, 2012 Portrait of American Travelers.

Meanwhile, many destinations that feature outdoor recreation now enjoy a statistically significant rise in interest – namely mountain areas such as the Utah mountain resorts, Lake Tahoe, Gatlinburg (Tenn.), and Pocono Mountains (Pa.). Coastal spots like the Mississippi and Florida Gulf coasts, Atlantic City, the Outer Banks (N.C.) and South Carolina shoreline also showed rising tourism interest.

According to MMGY/Global Harrison Group, other destinations with rising popularity are those that offer unique visitor experiences such as historic Colonial Williamsburg (Va.) and St. Augustine (Fla.), wine-focused Napa Valley and Sonoma Valley and glitzy hotspot Las Vegas.

International destinations with rising interest in visitation include Africa, the Middle East and Oceania (Australia, New Zealand and Pacific Islands, etc.). However, fewer U.S. travelers are interested in international trips overall, dropping to 9 percent of all leisure travelers today compared with 11 percent last year.

In an interesting juxtaposition of interests, MMGY Global adds, more travelers enjoyed both trips focused on outdoor activities as well as city-based vacations last year, with each type of getaway reflecting a two percentage-point rise since 2011 (46 and 25 percent, respectively). And while trips focused on outdoor activities rose in popularity, less-active general sightseeing vacations declined significantly, dropping from 29 percent in 2011 to just 26 percent today.

Gambling vacations and trips to see sporting events also

declined in popularity.

If you're wondering how technology factors into today's tourist mindset, MMGY Global/Harrison Group reports the usage of tablets has exploded during the past two years.

While less than one in 10 leisure travelers accessed the Internet through an iPad or tablet computer in 2011, this has increased nearly four-fold to 27 percent in 2012. When comparing the activities performed by leisure travelers on tablets versus smart phones, travelers now use tablets more frequently when comparing prices, making air travel, lodging reservations, or purchasing tickets to attractions and other activities.

Smartphones are more likely to be used for activities on the go, according to MMGY Global, such as finding nearby restaurants and shops, navigation, scanning QR codes, or using check-in features or apps such as Facebook Places and Foursquare.

Overall, MMGY Global/Harrison Group sees a promising tourism future. After several years of being "cost-conscious" travel consumers, Americans are starting to place greater meaning and emphasis on the value of vacations. In other words, Americans are spending more freely and their starting to travel more freely.

Consequently, leisure travelers are doing less of the things that characterized the economic hardship of recent years and are now adopting more behaviors that confirm the importance of travel in their emerging lifestyles, according to the study of 2,527 U.S. households (respondents had annual household incomes of \$50,000 or more and at least one overnight trip of 75 miles during the previous 12 months).

S. Tahoe council candidates try to differentiate themselves

By Kathryn Reed

The five candidates for the two South Lake Tahoe City Council seats agree a broader approach to best management practices, instead of parcel-by-parcel, is a good idea and local jurisdictions having more say are potential positives of a yet-to-be-approved update of the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency's Regional Plan.



While they liked the idea of changes that may come to the basin if the Regional Plan is updated, none believed this would be a cure-all, assuming it cures anything.

The five – incumbents Hal Cole and Bruce Grego, and newcomers Austin Sass, JoAnn Conner and Clinton Schue – answered a series of questions Oct. 1 in the first forum of the season.

(*Lake Tahoe News*, South Tahoe Association of Realtors and South Lake Tahoe Lodging Association put on this event at Inn by the Lake.)

Each started the event with an intro before the questions were asked and then were given a chance to make a closing statement.

Sass talked about the need for real leadership on the council

and the understanding of multi-million dollar budgets. He added that without a vision, no one would invest in the community.

Cole spoke of his fiscal experience, that the city is in recovery mode and that recreation is key.

Grego touted his backing of Nevada Senate Bill 271 that called for corrective measures to TRPA, that land use control is the No. 1 issue, and how he has always opposed marijuana dispensaries.

Conner spoke of the need to start doing things instead of studying them, the need to promote recreation, and the need to tap the knowledge and insight of local businesspeople.

Schue doesn't understand why Tahoe recreation has not been better marketed and he wants to bring jobs to town.

When it came to discussing the proposed loop road that would re-route Highway 50 traffic in the state line area, consensus was almost found among the five.

Schue would like to investigate pedestrian overpasses and is against the taking of private property.

Grego opposes what the Tahoe Transportation District has brought forward and wonders why a loop road is needed.

While Cole supported a loop road when the Heavenly Village project was going in, he does not want the TTD alternative.

Sass can't figure out why so much time has gone into a project that has no money, let alone no real plan.

Conner likes the loop road that exists and believes until a return on investment can be proved to change what is in place, then it would be harmful to businesses and residents to go forward.

Blame went to previous councilmembers for the hole in the ground at the state line. The one-time convention center-hotel complex is now just bankrupt concrete and rebar that spans 19 parcels because the council never insisted on a consolidated parcel map. (Owens Financial, the largest property owner, has a proposal to build commercial along the highway and leave the rest.) All of that land is private – not city owned.

Sass said without the city having a vision for where it is going it is hard to decide what is best for that plot of land.

Cole believes the land will have more value if the state line area is revitalized and a loop road goes in.

Grego said the hole occurred because previous councils caved to special interest groups. He is not sure what was planned for the site would be appropriate today.

Conner questions the integrity of the rebar and concrete that have endured the elements for several years. She calls it a “dangerous eyesore” that needs to change – even if that is little shops.

Schue says the last thing the town needs is more retail. But he does believe a convention center is a good idea.

When it comes to appeasing those who live in the unincorporated area of El Dorado County in the Lake Tahoe Basin, it was pointed out how it is not legally possible for those residents to vote in city elections and that if the land were to be annexed, the county residents would have to initiate it.

Aggressive search of DiMatteo residence caught on video

By Kathryn Reed

Officers in full SWAT gear with assault rifles using a flash-bang to enter Gino DiMatteo's South Lake Tahoe home was caught on video by his neighbors.

DiMatteo's civil defense attorney, Ted Long, has released the video to *Lake Tahoe News* and KRNV-TV in Reno. The latter is seen here.

"We are expecting the whole thing to blow up in their face. It's been weeks now and we have not seen a lick of evidence," Long told *Lake Tahoe News*.

DiMatteo's residence and business — Push Fitness — were searched on Aug. 31, the same day he was arrested on a variety of drug charges as well as bribery. However, Angela Swanson, the South Lake Tahoe City Council member he is accused of bribing, has yet to be charged. Instead, the El Dorado County District Attorney's Office is letting her name be associated with a crime she has never been charged with.

She remains on the council and is actively participating on the boards she is assigned to. Swanson was not available for comment Oct. 1.



Gino DiMatteo
returns to
court Oct. 3
in
Placerville.

Long doesn't believe Swanson will be charged because he doesn't believe she or DiMatteo did what the DA investigators are alleging.

It has come out that Swanson was the catalyst for a donation from DiMatteo to the Lake Tahoe Educational Foundation, of which Swanson is a board member. This cash donation of more than \$1,000 came on the same day the council agreed to allow DiMatteo to move his medical marijuana dispensary. That decision was later rescinded by the majority of the council.

It is also one of the issues in which Long is representing DiMatteo. Long says his client has a letter from the city attorney that says go ahead and spend money to move. DiMatteo did – \$60,000, according to Long.

Long, who is a former city councilman, said his first course of action is to go to federal court to get the city's decision to ban DiMatteo from moving overturned. He says the odds are 50-50. At a minimum, he wants the city to pay DiMatteo so he can recoup his losses for tenant improvements that were for naught.

Long also wants the DA and El Dorado County Sheriff's Department to pay for the more than \$30,000 in damages to DiMatteo's home when officers stormed it in August.

DiMatteo was already detained when officers ransacked the residence, Long said, so there was no need for the forceful entrance.

“What if his two teenage daughters had been there? It could have caused serious injury, if not death,” Long said of the flash-bang. “It was totally unnecessary. I could have unlocked the door.”

(Rob Wolfel – who was not available Oct. 1 – is DiMatteo’s criminal defense attorney.)

DiMatteo will be in court in Placerville on Oct. 3. He has pleaded not guilty to all charges. He also wants a speedy trial – to which he is entitled to 45 days after being arraigned.

“We want to force them to produce something and then force them to go to trial,” Long said of the prosecution. “If there was some evidence, we would have seen it.”

Long also told *Lake Tahoe News* that at no time has DiMatteo been in the witness protection program, as has been rumored.

Brown vetoes replacement for redevelopment agencies

By Patrick McGreevy, Los Angeles Times

SACAMENTO— Having previously ordered the closure of hundreds

of redevelopment programs throughout California, Gov. Jerry Brown on Saturday vetoed six bills that would have given local governments other economic development powers, saying it is too soon to consider alternatives.

The governor and Legislature had acted earlier this year to close redevelopment agencies and have them begin to unwind their finances to increase money available for the state general fund and eliminate its shortfall.

Among the bills rejected were measures by Assembly Speaker John Pérez, D-Los Angeles, and Senate President Pro Tem Darrell Steinberg, D-Sacramento. Pérez's AB2144 would have allowed local communities to create "infrastructure and revitalization financing districts" if approved by 55 percent of voters.

Pérez wanted to expand their powers to more clearly allow them to use property tax money and bond revenue to buy land and build housing and to construct and renovate commercial and industrial buildings.

"Expanding the scope of infrastructure financing districts is premature," Brown wrote in his veto message. "This measure would likely cause cities to focus their efforts on using new tools provided by the measure instead of winding down redevelopment. This would prevent the state from achieving the General Fund savings assumed in this year's budget."

The veto message was similar for Steinberg's measure that would have allowed cities to set up "sustainable communities investment authorities" to help the development of neighborhoods near transit hubs with housing and factories that provide equipment for the clean energy industry. That bill is SB1156.

Brown liked the idea but wrote in his veto message: "I prefer to take a constructive look at implementing this type of program once the winding down of redevelopment is complete and

General Fund savings achieved.”

State transportation agency spending money near South Lake Tahoe

California Transportation Commission has allocated \$4.8 million to construct a water quality and collection and treatment facilities along Highway 50 west of South Lake Tahoe.

The CTC allocated \$236 million last week in new funding to 32 projects that will improve the state’s transportation system and strengthen California’s economy.

The allocations include \$81 million from Proposition 1B, a transportation bond approved by voters in 2006. In total, nearly \$14.5 billion in Proposition 1B funds have been distributed statewide.

The remaining \$155 million in allocations came from assorted transportation accounts funded by state and federal dollars.

California to provide some textbooks digitally to college students

By Megan Garber, Atlantic

Last week, California took a big step forward in open-source education. Gov. Jerry Brown signed into law a proposal to create a website that will allow students to download popular textbooks for free.

The legislation contains two bills: One, a proposal for the state to fund 50 open-source digital textbooks, targeted to lower-division courses, which will be produced by California's universities. Students will be able to download these books for free or to pay \$20 for hard copies. The other bill is a proposal to establish a California Digital Open Source Library to host those books.

On the textbook side, California will ask the California Open Education Resources Council, comprised of school faculty, to develop the list of targeted courses and create and oversee the approval process. The council will create a list of 50 lower-division courses in the public postsecondary segments "for which high-quality, affordable, digital open source textbooks and related materials would be developed or acquired" by the University of California, California State University and California Community College systems. The council will then solicit bids to produce these textbooks in 2013. (The first free books are set to be available for the 2013-14 school year.)

And the bill makes clear that the council has the option to use "existing high-quality digital open source textbooks and related materials" if those materials fit the requirements."

The main idea here, politically and socially, is to lighten the burden – a little bit – for students who have been hit with tuition increases at California's public schools in recent years.

"Many students are paying more than \$1,000 every year on their textbooks, sometimes having to choose between buying the books they need or paying for food and other living expenses," said Senate President Pro Tem Darrell Steinberg, the author of the bills, in a statement.

The new law will also be something of a technological experiment – and an intriguing one, at that. For one thing, it makes a point of extending its impact beyond California's borders. Any digital textbooks created under the council's auspices, the new legislation says, must be placed under a Creative Commons license – which will allow faculty at universities in other states to make use of the textbooks for their own students. And the textbooks, furthermore, must be encoded in XML (or another "appropriate successor format") to facilitate their re-use.

So can government successfully step in to encourage the development textbooks that are both open-source and high-quality? Can Sacramento be its own kind of digital disruptor?

As Ars Technica's Timothy Lee noted, "It seems unlikely that having the government issue an RFP would be a good way to develop, say, an open-source operating system."

Which is very true. Then again, much of our assumptions about education – that it should take place in classrooms, that it should rely on expensive textbooks – is a matter of institutional inertia as much as anything else. Sometimes, change needs to come from the top down rather than vice versa. And California, for all its financial problems, is full of universities whose faculty and staff have expertise in both curriculum-writing and digital technology. So there's a good

chance that this 50-book initiative is the start of a broader overhaul that will find bulky, expensive textbooks replaced by versions that are both digital and free.

Conner: Jobs for locals, better transit, bring in businesses

Publisher's note: *This is the fourth of five Q&A profiles of a South Lake Tahoe City Council candidate running in the Nov. 6 election.*

Name: JoAnn Conner

Age: Old enough to have an AARP card; young enough to play hopscotch with my grandgirls.

How long have you lived in South Lake Tahoe?: 31 years.



JoAnn Conner

Work/volunteer experience:

Work: In South Lake Tahoe, I have worked as an educator, a temporary worker, a child care provider, a journalist, director of a learning lab, manager at a retail store, medical

front office staff, catering and food service, director of the Washoe Tribe Head Start Program, director of the Washoe Heritage Information Network, and currently Regional Manager and Independent Associate with Legal Shield/Identity Theft Shield and owner of Golden Bear Events.

Volunteer: Current member of the American Legion Auxiliary, South Tahoe Cancer League, and president of the South Tahoe Chamber of Commerce. In the past, I have been president of the Lake Tahoe Historical Society (when we moved the log cabin and toll house), board member of Tahoe Douglas Rotary, president of South Lake Tahoe American Association of Pen Women, board member of American Business Women, volunteer at Christmas Cheer, Optimist Club, Neighborhood Chairperson for Sierra Nevada Girl Scouts, co-pack master for Boy Scout Pack No. 594, member of South Tahoe Bowmen, president Lake Tahoe Writer's Club, president of Silver State Fiction Writers, and involved in youth sports.

Why are you running for City Council?: I feel I have a unique connection to a large variety of people in the community, and will bring a fresh perspective and new ideas to the council. We need fiscal responsibility; we owe it to the people to use our money wisely. We need to ensure public safety, do everything possible to bring new jobs here, and be more business friendly.

What is your vision for South Lake Tahoe, the South Shore and the entire Lake Tahoe Basin?: We live in an unusual environment that requires the entities in the basin to work closely, both to maximize public services and to attract visitors. My focus would be on South Lake Tahoe and working more closely with the Meyers community. My vision, based on conversations with business and recreation factions, would be to create more jobs by increasing access to recreation, conservation efforts with people in mind, and therefore creating more income to allow for improvements in our infrastructure and dwellings. Appeal to visitors would be

enhanced. I would like to see us become more of a destination for special events, festivals, and family recreation as well.

What are the three best things about South Lake Tahoe?: The giving and caring spirit of the people, the pride in presenting beautiful, recreational surroundings to guests and locals, and having a good place to raise a family.

What three things would you like to change in South Lake Tahoe and how will you go about changing them?: We need more jobs for locals. I would actively seek out compatible business to come here, and work to give incentives for hiring and mentoring locals. I would expand on the neighborhood meeting concept and encourage buy-in from the locals, and help with the volunteer program to improve aesthetics of our neighborhoods. We need a better public transportation system; possibly partially funded by environmental groups.

What would you do to balance the budget?: The budget has improved in the past year, with less of a deficit than we have seen for a while. I would look into better investments for retirement funds and work with public employees to revamp future retirement and benefit policies. More enforcement of vacation rental fees, and possibly a business license fee for people who rent out multi-family dwellings. I think there are some changes we could make to policies that would encourage more revenue and bring efficiency to a higher level.

What would you like to see in a recreation master plan?: We need to upgrade our golf course and keep fees competitive. Be more local friendly. We need more activities at our recreation complex that would attract local youth, especially teens. Our skateboard park needs more work, our playing fields need to be expanded to accommodate more tournaments from other areas coming to Tahoe, in addition to adequate fields for our local youth and adult sports. I would like to explore the idea of "bike sharing" used in other communities to cut down on vehicle usage.

Promoting recreation was touted two years as a means to stimulate the local economy. Nothing has been done in that time. What will you do so that same sentence can't be said two years from now?: The city manager and the JPA are looking at developing more fields. Our advertising efforts should promote hiking, biking, camping, and marathon activities more, in addition to skiing and snowboarding. Work more closely with bicycle coalitions and groups that can be resources for bringing people here. Two years in a row, the 401K Cyclists for Cancer have been through our town. Where's our publicity? Encourage and help businesses that are working to get more events here, like the snowball baseball tournament and CUFA soccer.

What types of recreation do you enjoy in Lake Tahoe?: Hiking, walking, bike riding, snowshoeing, camping, boating, disc golf.

How will South Lake Tahoe be different in four years after the end of your term?: I am only one person, one vote, and I don't own a magic wand, but I would hope my energy could be used to bring together a more cohesive faction of locals working together with agencies and each other to look for, and expand upon, the positive aspects we can use to build our town.

Being on the council requires working with four others. Give readers an example of how you work well others in difficult situations with differing opinions: I taught rival gang factions in the same classroom at the same time and never had a fight in my room. That took some leadership and diplomacy skills. Often just posing questions to get others to think from another point of view can be helpful in conflict resolution. Then, work on compromise. This isn't about the five people on the council; it is about the people of South Lake Tahoe. I would hope that would be a common interest that would generate compatibility in most cases.

What are your opinions about the following issues and/or

entities?:

- **Loop road** – Not in favor of the current configuration being proposed by the TTD. Harming or obliterating existing business and dislodging residents who rely on low cost housing for a dubious benefit to South Lake Tahoe is not a winning proposition.
- **Hole at Stateline** – Currently, there is another developer looking at the property. If this is a win, great. If not, we need to actively pursue a positive resolution for this dangerous eyesore.
- **Tahoe Valley Plan** – Hopefully, can move forward. This area of our city is in need of revamping.
- **Giving money to any chamber or tourism bureau** – Not in favor.
- **Benefits, including pensions, for city staff** – Look for better return on investment, but also restructuring to a sustainable system, targeting new hires first.
- **Tahoe Regional Planning Agency** – Continue to develop better communication. Seems to be a move on their part to be perceived as more amenable to people and solutions instead of enforcement.
- **Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board** – I would like to find out more information on this topic; the relationship appears to work, but could be fine-tuned to a better partnership.
- **South Shore Vision Plan** – I think this, in its current state, is more beneficial to Nevada than South Lake Tahoe. More local input from those who live and work in our town should be considered.
- **Lake Tahoe Airport** – Not an easy answer to this one. Lawsuits have plagued this site in the past, but it is my

understanding we are still liable for a large debt if we close this. The closure would be problematic in regards to safety issues and, if we are to rebuild a tourist economy, this is a key component. Neighbors are not happy about the noise it would bring, but newer technology cuts down on this.

Why should voters vote for you over someone else?: I believe I have proven myself to have integrity that addresses the needs of the people, not a personal agenda. I do not have any ties to big business support, nor does my income rely on any support from the casinos, ski resorts, city, county, state, or any other special interest group. I am a “little guy” who can truly identify with the needs and feelings of most of the people in our town. Yet, my background with big business and communication with same, also allows me to see their perspective.

Is being president of a chamber of commerce a conflict of interest?: I don't believe so; I feel it has given me three years of interaction with business owners and the public on an intense level. I have a good grasp of what the “little guy” on the street thinks and their concerns. Being president means I have been at nearly every council meeting for over a year, so also understand a lot of what the city is facing. I will not be the current president by the time of the election.

Is there a person or business you would not take a campaign contribution from?: Yes. I will not take any contribution or support from any business or individual that expects me to advance their personal agenda if I am elected. I support legitimate business with a focus on South Lake Tahoe and Meyers and I will serve the residents, doing my best for the city as a whole.

Tell readers something about yourself that they may not already know: I was so shy when I started high school I couldn't even walk to the front of the class and say my name. By the time I got to college, I was voted best speaker in my

class and delivered singing telegrams to make extra money.