

3 men charged with defrauding Thunder Valley casino owners

By C. Johnson, News 10

SACRAMENTO – Two local men and a developer from San Diego were indicted for allegedly defrauding the United Auburn Indian Community of more than \$18 million in connection with the construction of four buildings in Auburn for the tribe.

The United Auburn Indian Community (UAIC) owns the Thunder Valley Casino Resort in Lincoln.

Greg Scott Baker, 45, of Newcastle; Darrell Patrick Hinz, 47, of Cameron Park; and Bart Wayne Volen of San Diego and Hawaii, were charged with conspiracy to commit mail and wire fraud as well as money laundering, announced the U.S. Attorney's Office, Eastern District of California.

According to court documents, between October 2006 and December 2007, Volen, the building developer, submitted more than 160 false and/or inflated cost invoices to UAIC for his work.

Baker and Hinz, who were employed by UAIC, were responsible for approving all invoices before they were presented to the tribal council for payment. Federal prosecutors allege the two men conspired with Volen and made provisions so their duplicity regarding the false invoices would go unnoticed. In turn, Volen, according to the indictment, paid off Hinz.

Hinz claimed he worked as a consultant to Volen, submitted false invoices to that in effect, and in turn, received approximately \$7.5 million in checks from the developer, the indictment read.

Federal investigators charge Hinz paid off bills for Baker and

bought him a \$70,000 car, a backyard pool, a vacation condominium in Lake Tahoe, a trip to Hawaii, a mobile home, and home improvements for his alleged participation in the scheme. The value of the items was more than \$1.4 million.

If convicted of the charges, each defendant could received a maximum sentence of 20 years in federal prison, a \$250,000 fine and three-years probation for each count of mail and wire fraud.

3 arrests in Douglas County marijuana grow

Three people were arrested in connection with growing marijuana in the James Canyon area of Douglas County.

Rafael Salas-Silva, 28, of Sparks, Martin Urloste-Maciel, 26, of Pasco, Wash., and Alberto Mendez-Arroyo, 23, of Reno face federal and local charges in connection with allegedly growing more than 4,700 marijuana plants.

The three were arrested Aug. 15.

If convicted, they each face 10 years in prison and up to a \$10 million fine.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Negative presidential race has Americans hitting mute button

By Lesley Clark and David Lightman, McClatchy Newspapers

DUBUQUE, Iowa –Americans already hate politics, and the latest ugly spat between the presidential candidates is likely to sour them further.



"We're sick of it," said Donna Stehn, 57, a retired speech pathologist from Peosta, Iowa, who mutes her television when political ads come on. "All this stuff that they're saying, it sounds like a junior high school campaign."

With incendiary rhetoric – from the charge that Mitt Romney's plans for Wall Street would put "y'all back in chains" to the assertion that President Barack Obama's campaign "has disgraced the presidency" – the campaign is knocking on the door of being the ugliest in a generation, and the party conventions haven't even been held yet.

It's unfolding as both sides say the race will be about substance and big issues. Given the stakes, that's unlikely to happen.

The latest round of fighting "reinforces the view of a lot of people" that politicians too often are squabbling and not doing what they were elected to do, said Dennis Goldford, a politics professor at Drake University in Des Moines, Iowa.

Read the whole story

Kerry challenging people to be part of Tahoe's solution

By Kathryn Reed

STATELINE – It could have been the state of the city address, but in actuality was a call to action to the women in the room to get more involved and be part of the change to make South Lake Tahoe the city it can be.

South Lake Tahoe City Manager Nancy Kerry spoke to Soroptimist International South Lake Tahoe on Aug. 15 about getting rid of the roadblocks that plague progress.

When asked if any of them had attended the Lake Tahoe Environmental Summit, not a single hand went up.



Nancy Kerry

She pointed out how at the summit the politicians all talked about what is wrong with Lake Tahoe and not what is right – and how no solutions were presented. Kerry wants the conversation to be about what is working, focus more on whatever that is, stop planning and start doing.

“I think the conversation, the dialogue and the change begin within each of us, and primarily among women. It is our nature to find solutions, agreement and get things done,” Kerry told

the women's organization during their lunch at Harrah's Lake Tahoe.

To get there, Kerry said it is time to find what binds the people and agencies in Tahoe. Then focus on those similarities and find consensus.

"Capital investors don't want to invest in a community that doesn't know what it wants," Kerry said.

Other locations like Livermore and Monterey – places the Lake Tahoe South Shore Chamber of Commerce led so called community leaders to this summer to demonstrate progress – have control over their own destiny. They don't have the regional oversight that Tahoe has; which is really state and federal regulators dictating what can and cannot be done.

Pooled leadership is unique to Tahoe.

That is why consensus needs to be found because the city and five counties that make up the Lake Tahoe Basin must bow to others and not do what they envision without others giving their stamp of approval.

Kerry spoke of the 11,000 hotel rooms in the city and how that number far exceeds the room night demand. This in turns means the average daily rate stays low. That in turn means less hotel tax revenue for the city. She pointed out, though, that while people complain about the casinos for myriad reasons, it is Embassy Suites and Marriott in the city limits with the highest ADR on the South Shore.

Kerry also explained how those hotels were environmentally sound projects – not just economic boosters for town.

She said it's disappointing the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency's Regional Plan update doesn't go far enough to help the dilapidated motels that often rent rooms on a weekly or monthly basis to be able to evolve into something more than

what they are.

One Soroptimist asked about South Lake Tahoe becoming a pot capital. To this Kerry pointed out when she took office earlier this summer there were three marijuana collectives, now there is one.

"Fifteen thousand people have (medical marijuana) cards. It's ridiculous to think that many people are sick," Kerry said. She said the city would be keeping an eye on the remaining collective to ensure it follows the rules.

When it comes to any kind of smoking on city property, that could be resolved Aug. 21 at the City Council meeting. On the agenda will be an emergency ordinance to ban smoking of all kinds in city parks.

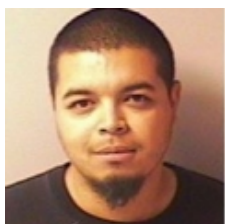
Another controversial item the council is expected to vote on – which was an item brought up at Wednesday's meeting – is SnowGlobe, the three-day music festival that reverberated through the Al Tahoe area and beyond in December. Promoters are asking to bring it back Dec. 29-31. (One of the Soroptimist didn't even know what SnowGlobe was.)

"I'll be there at the plug. It's easier than taking 400 phone calls," Kerry said in case the music goes past 10pm and is louder than allowed. Those were problems with last year's event.

2-hour standoff ends with shooting suspect behind bars

After a two-hour standoff with South Lake Tahoe police officers, the man believed to have fired six shots into a house on Nevada Avenue on Friday night is in custody.

Officers tracked Agustin Bautista, 29, to the Ambassador Motor Lodge on Manzanita Avenue near Stateline after following his girlfriend there Thursday afternoon. Sgt. Shannon Laney told *Lake Tahoe News* that officers saw Bautista in the window so they knew they had the right room.



Agustin
Bautista

He said the suspect then barricaded himself in the room. Bautista was believed to be armed based on prior weapons violation arrests, and that a shotgun and pistol had been confiscated from his house in past six days. However, no additional weapons were found Aug. 16.

After a two-hour standoff involving the SWAT and negotiation teams, Bautista surrendered without incident at 5:30pm.

Bautista faces charges of violating his probation and shooting into an inhabited building.

Sgt. Brad Williams told *Lake Tahoe News* officers are looking

into Bautista's potential gang affiliation.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Dangerous lightning moving toward Kirkwood

A strong isolated thunderstorm has developed along Highway 4 near Ebbetts Pass. This storm may contain small hail, with locally heavy rain and dangerous lightning, according to the National Weather Service in Reno.

The storm is moving to the north, northwest at 5 to 10 mph toward Hope Valley and Kirkwood. It is expected to dissipate after 6:30pm Aug. 16. This cell is part of a larger area of showers and isolated storms east of the Sierra Crest.

On the north end of Lake Tahoe, three fires started Thursday – in Lemon Canyon east of Sierraville; near Haskell Peak east of Sierra Buttes; and near Granite Chief Wilderness.

Thunderstorm activity is expected into the weekend.

Tahoe National Forest has recorded 25 fires in the last few days.

Fires in the American River District

1 north of French Meadows Reservoir – contained

2 farther north of French Meadows Reservoir – north of Sunflower Hill – both out

1 near Robinson Flat – contained

3 in or near the Granite Chief Wilderness – Two are out and one is contained

1 new one near the Wilderness – crews are continuing to work this evening.

Fires in the Sierraville District

1 east of Jackson Meadow Reservoir – controlled

2 more near Jackson Meadow Reservoir – one out and one controlled

1 north of Stampede Reservoir near Kyburz Flat – out

1 more north of Stampede Reservoir – out

2 in the Bear Valley area east of Sierraville – out

1 new fire in Lemon Canyon east of Sierraville – crews working – quarter acre

Fires in the Truckee District

1 near the Cedars – about 5 miles south of Interstate 80 at Norden – half acre – out

1 near Barker Pass – 4 miles from Lake Tahoe – out

1 on south eastern side of TNF – 5 miles from Lake Tahoe – third acre – controlled

1 near Boca Reservoir – out

1 near the entrance of Squaw Valley – controlled

Fires in the Yuba River Ranger District

1 near Old Man Mountain – north of Interstate 80 – controlled

1 north of Interstate 80 near Rainbow off ramp – out

1 near Signal Peak north of Interstate 80 – north of Cisco

Grove –controlled

1 new fire near Haskell Peak east of Sierra Buttes – crews working on it.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

CalFire issues statewide ban on open fires

By KCRA-TV

AUBURN – Increased wildfire activity and concern over the weather forecast led CalFire to suspend all burning permits on open fires throughout California.



There are currently 16 active wildfires throughout the state, according to CalFire's website.

"Over 8,000 CalFire, local and federal firefighters are on the front lines. ... With conditions being so dry, we need to take every step possible to prevent new wildfires from starting," said Ken Pimlott, the state fire director.

The burn ban suspends all residential burn permits, forest management, hazard abatement and other industrial-type permitted burning within the 31 million acres of State Responsibility Area, read a CalFire news release.

"We are seeing increased fire activity earlier in the season. Historically, the next few months are when we experience our biggest fires," said Daniel Berlant, a CalFire spokesman.

Campfires within organized campgrounds or on private property are allowed if they are in a designated campfire site that prevents fire spreading outside the site, the release said.

Incumbent El Dorado County judge changes ballot statement

By Cole Mayer, Mountain Democrat

Chuck Holland, local bail bondsman and political activist, was prepared to enter into litigation against El Dorado County Superior Court Judge Warren "Curt" Stracener. Stracener, Holland alleged, misrepresented himself to voters on a candidate statement. But, as of Aug. 13, changes have been made.

"Holland has had repeated contact through his lawyers with Stracener's legal representatives over the past months encouraging Stracener to come clean and tell the truth about his record," a press release states. "Holland believes Stracener's candidate statement misled voters in the June primary."

The press release goes on to state that the mistruths were in three areas: Stracener's appearance before the California and United States Supreme Courts and the number of cases he had

heard in juvenile court.

But, Holland said Tuesday, changes were made to the Aug. 13 statement, available for review at the county Elections Office on Fairlane Court until Aug. 17. Viewing the statement is free and a copy can be purchased for 10 cents.

Wording was changed from "I have handled thousands of emotionally charged Dependency and Delinquency cases..." to "I hear emotionally charged Dependency and Delinquency cases..." The statement also changes "I have appeared before the U.S. and California Supreme Courts..." to "As an attorney, I have over 20 years experience including matters before the U.S. and California Supreme Courts..."

Both had been points of contention in the June primary race, which ended in a runoff between Stracener, the incumbent, and attorney Joseph Hoffman. Holland, the press release states, contacted the U.S. Supreme Court and received written confirmation that Stracener had not "argued a case before the court." For the California Supreme Court, "Stracener has had his name attached to eight petitions for review, all subsequently denied at the review stage," the press release states.

"It's critically important that the voters receive truthful information about a candidate's credentials, qualifications and experience," Holland was quoted in the press release. "He never appeared before either the United States Supreme Court or the California Supreme Court and shouldn't be allowed to lie about it."

Stracener, regarding the changes to his candidate statement, said he had "No comment on that at all."

Severe thunderhead over Truckee; flash flooding possible

At 4:58pm Aug. 15, trained weather spotters reported a severe thunderstorm capable of producing quarter size hail four miles south of Boca Reservoir.

Locations affected include Interstate 80 near the reservoir, Truckee Airport, Alpine Meadows and Boca campgrounds, Glenshire-Devonshire and Hirschdale.

This storm is producing heavy rainfall. Watch for ponding of water on roads.

Hail up to one inch in diameter and heavy rainfall of up to two-thirds of an inch in 20 minutes was recently reported in Glenshire-Devonshire, according to the National Weather Service in Reno.

Officials are warning people to seek safe shelter and stay away from windows.

Expect isolated thunderstorms into the evening Wednesday throughout the Lake Tahoe Region and farther into western Nevada.

“Main concerns with thunderstorms will be strong outflow wind gusts, locally heavy rainfall, and a potential for flash flooding,” the Weather Service said.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Marijuana grow found in Douglas County; suspects wanted

A substantial grow of mature marijuana plants were discovered in the Toiyabe National Forest the northeast sector of Douglas County near Jacks Valley.

No arrests have been made, however it is believed the suspects involved in cultivating the plants are hiding in the nearby forest. The suspects are described as three adult male Hispanics.

U.S. Forest Service rangers and Douglas County sheriff's investigators are eradicating the grow. Washoe County sheriff's helicopter crew and K9 units are assisting.

The suspects may emerge at any of the surrounding residential areas of Alpine View Estates, Jacks Valley, Genoa, Clear Creek Road or Glenbrook; or anywhere along Highway 50 between Carson City and Spooner Summit.

The Douglas County Sheriff's Office is asking anyone who sees any suspicious people or vehicles in these areas to call (775) 782.5126.

Deputies said more information would be provided when it's available.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report