

South Lake Tahoe done with putting up with code violators

By Kathryn Reed

Snowmobiles stored across multiple lots in a residential area. Overturned garbage cans with trash strewn about. Boarded up abandoned houses. Businesses moving half their belongings to the outdoors. Junk cluttering yards so it looks like a mini landfill.

This is South Lake Tahoe.

While not every parcel is a visual nightmare, hardly any street is immune from having a lot that could be cited for a code enforcement violation.



Owners of this house on Primrose Road will have a code enforcement hearing in June. Photos/Kathryn Reed

City officials are done putting up with the eyesores. Aesthetics of the situation could be argued by the owners or

renters responsible for violating the law, but the laws governing their actions are what police officials are going after.

In 2011, 200 nuisance cases were processed. That number is expected to increase this year as the city cracks down on offenders and more complaints file in.

It's anticipated there will be some push back from residents as citations and fines start being written and levied. But these are not new rules. What is new is they are being enforced.

"It's a question of what is legal and illegal," Police Chief Brian Uhler said. It doesn't matter if he likes what it looks like or not. He is going by the law.

"If the law is bad, then change the law. If the law is rational and sound, then enforce it."

To make sure the council knows what's about to happen each member is being given a tour of some of the more egregious properties. Councilmembers Tom Davis and Angela Swanson have been on the "scenic" tour with Uhler and Community Services Officer Bob Albertazzi. Albertazzi is the one who is tasked with talking to residents, writing citations and then dealing with council when people appeal the citation.

"My perspective is I think it's time. Some of it is way beyond normal stuff in a yard. What I saw was pretty bad," Davis told *Lake Tahoe News*. "The most important point I want to make is to make sure the city notifies the owner before we abate it. That is critical."

Lake Tahoe News last week was shown some of the same areas the council will become acquainted with.

"Temporary shelters are a major issue of contention," Albertazzi said. "They are not permitted and many do not

comply with set backs and easement requirements in the code.”

He’s talking about the canopies people use as a carport.

Driving through town some of the canopies are tattered. Others look fine. But the condition isn’t the issue. It’s the fact that they are illegal no matter the condition they are in. There is nothing in South Lake Tahoe’s building codes that allow for these canopies.

On Primrose Road is a yard that is best described as a junkyard. It goes beyond clutter. Tires, television, sofa, rolled up carpet, broken furniture, torn mattress against a vehicle, shopping cart full of everything but groceries, empty aquarium – all visible over the fence.

A hearing regarding this particular property is scheduled for June 20.

Another “junk” issue is related to perpetual yard sales. People are starting to tarp their goods, and sell stuff each weekend as a means to make some non-taxable cash.

The problem is nothing in the code addresses these ongoing yard sales. If Albertazzi and Uhler have their way, that will change.

A house on Helen Avenue smells so bad from the mold inside that neighbors one time called thinking a dead body was inside.

Officers are allowed on properties when it comes to health and safety issues.

But resources are limited. For now, most of the violators come to the officers’ attention through complaints from neighbors.

However, a temporary 30-hour week employee is expected to be on the streets in mid-June to handle these types of code violations.

Abandoned structures litter the city. One on South Avenue has had the city's attention for the last three years. It's paid for. But the stairs are rickety, squatters have come and gone from it, and it looks like one strike of a match would bring it all down.

Uhler said safety is the biggest issue with this parcel. But it will take the city's legal team to find a way to solve the problem.

The code says the owners are supposed to make it habitable or be fined \$1,000. The owners can be taken to small claims court and a lien put on the property.

"But it doesn't solve the problem," Uhler said.

Driving down Highway 50 it's easy to spot the businesses violating the outdoor display law. This rule makes is so store owners don't turn their sidewalk or front area into another area to sell their wares.

Temporary activity permits are available for special sidewalk sales and things like that. But just moving stuff out front, well, that's a big no-no that isn't going to be tolerated much longer.

And with the sign ordinance finally passed, those sandwich boards – other than on holiday weekends – will be removed. Same with other non-permitted signs like banners and add-ons. The latter often say "now open" and are plywood additions to what was legally permitted.

Albertazzi said more than 300 businesses along Highway 50 have been given written notice about what the rules are governing signs.

"So there is no excuse why they use temporary signs," Albertazzi said.

On the June 5 council agenda is likely to be an item

recalculating the fines for the various code violations. Uhler would like this item brought back to the council once a year like the fee schedule is so the amounts are kept in check and reviewed for relevancy. Uhler also wants to streamline the process so abatement happens faster.

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U.N. agenda for sustainable growth riles El Dorado County residents

By Carlos Alcalá, Sacramento Bee

The United Nations is haunting El Dorado County.

Critics of a 20-year-old U.N. document called Agenda 21 are becoming more vocal, blaming it for any number of ills in the county.

Agenda 21 came out of a United Nations conference in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. It recommends a framework for nations to develop and grow sustainably – that is, with minimum damage to the environment.

Although it was accepted by presidents George H.W. Bush, Bill Clinton and Barack Obama, it carries no force of law here.

According to local critics, however, Agenda 21 is environmental extremism responsible for U.S. Forest Service road closures, onerous regulations on family farms, high-

density low-income housing projects, a ban on dredge mining, a Highway 50 wildlife crossing, unemployment and maybe even traffic roundabouts.

Those issues resonate with many of El Dorado County's 180,000 residents. The county has growing suburbs near its border with Sacramento County, but is largely rural, and largely federal forestland, as it climbs the Sierra to Lake Tahoe.

Read the whole story

Rogich: Time for Nevada to address collective bargaining

By Sean Whaley, Nevada News Bureau

CARSON CITY — Long-time Republican political consultant Sig Rogich said the 2013 Nevada Legislature has to take a serious look at collective bargaining reforms so that situations like the impending layoff of hundreds of Clark County teachers can be avoided in the future.

"I think we've got to look at collective bargaining in a real way in this legislative session," he said. "We've got to stop some of these nonsensical things that are going on. You can't tell me that it's good government or good policy to lay off 1,200 teachers down here when you've got to stop a pay increase to do so.

"And I don't think their fellow teachers agree that that's the right thing to do as well," Rogich said. "But this teachers union has dug its heels in to the detriment of those they represent."

Rogich, interviewed on the Nevada NewsMakers television program, was referring to the layoffs anticipated in the Clark County School District as a result of a binding arbitration decision requiring the district to provide pay raises to teachers.

The school district lost an arbitration battle worth \$63 million over teacher salary increases for education level and longevity. The district says the decision will force as many as 1,000 teacher layoffs unless money can be found to reduce the number.

Rogich said he believes there is a disconnect between the teachers union and teachers themselves.

Rogich, who was involved in the campaigns of Ronald Reagan and both Bush presidents, also weighed in on the national and Nevada political scenes.

Of presumptive GOP presidential nominee Mitt Romney, Rogich said his campaign needs to do more to tell voters how he would run the presidency differently from President Obama in order to attract independent voters in November.

The average voter might describe Romney as a Mormon, a successful businessman, governor of Massachusetts or mention his work on the Salt Lake City Olympics, he said.

"To get independent voters to look at him seriously they are going to have to offer reasonable alternatives and differences between the way he would run the presidency as president and what President Obama is doing," Rogich said.

Romney will do well in Nevada with a strong turnout expected from the Mormon community on his behalf, he said.

"I think that it's going to be very competitive in Nevada," Rogich said.

He also expressed no objections to the amount of third party

money in the presidential campaign.

“Why shouldn’t people be overwhelmed by TV commercials that have messages that are important for them to know about,” Rogich asked. “What does it harm as long as you disclose it fully and you play by the rules?”

On the race between Sen. Dean Heller, R-Nev., and Rep. Shelley Berkley, D-Nev., Rogich said it is a tight race but that it is Heller’s to lose because Romney should run strong in Nevada.

Rogich was also asked about the state Senate race between Sen. Greg Brower, R-Reno, and former state Sen. Sheila Leslie, a Democrat, in Washoe County. The Senate 15 race is one of five in Nevada expected to determine which party controls the Senate in 2013.

Rogich said Leslie has to be the favorite, given her long track record of successful campaigns.

But Brower is extremely capable and cannot be counted out, he said.

Judge: CalPERS can offer long-term care insurance to gay couples

By Dale Kasler, Sacramento Bee

In a major case involving gay rights at CalPERS, the nation’s largest public pension fund has been ordered to offer its long-term care insurance program to same-sex partners of California workers.

A federal judge in Oakland struck down portions of the federal Defense of Marriage Act that have prevented the California Public Employees' Retirement System from extending the insurance to gay spouses and domestic partners.

In a ruling released Thursday, U.S. District Judge Claudia Wilken said the ban served no "legitimate governmental interest" and was apparently "motivated by anti-gay animus."

CalPERS hailed the ruling, saying it had wanted to make the insurance plan available to gay couples but its hands were tied by federal law and regulations. About 160,000 state workers have bought long-term care coverage from the agency.

"We have been strongly advocating for the ability to administer our program for same-sex spouses and domestic partners," said CalPERS Chief Executive Officer Anne Stausboll in a prepared statement.

It's not clear how soon CalPERS could start offering the insurance to same-sex couples. The Alliance Defense Fund, an Arizona group that opposes gay marriage, said Friday that the ruling will surely be appealed. That would keep the existing policy in place for months if not years.

Read the whole story

Fox Gas in S. Tahoe may sell station to Safeway

By Kathryn Reed

Talks are under way for another grocery store in South Lake Tahoe to have a gas station associated with it.

Owners of the Fox Gas Station and Safeway are talking about the Bay Area-based grocery store chain buying the locally owned station on Highway 50.



Fox Gas and Safeway, seen in the back left, may have one owner in the future. Photo/LTN

Officials with South Lake Tahoe told *Lake Tahoe News* they have been consulted and that preliminary discussions are under way.

The two businesses are next to each other. What isn't known is if the slight slope that creates a barrier between the two would be reconfigured so shoppers could stay in the same parking lot to get gas and food.

John Cefalu, who owns the gas station, did not return phone calls.

Wendy Gutshall, with the PR arm of Safeway in San Ramon, said, "There's nothing to report. We don't comment on rumors."

If the deal goes through, it would mean the second grocery store chain in the city to have a gas station. Raley's gas station opened earlier this month at the Y.

California lawmaker proposes limiting out-of-state, foreign students at UCs

By Tanya Caldwell, New York Times

A California lawmaker is proposing to limit the number of international and out-of-state students who can enroll at University of California campuses.

The 10 campuses that make up the U.C. system – including selective universities like Berkeley and the University of California, Los Angeles – would be prohibited from enrolling more than 10 percent of non-Californians as members of the freshman class. The proposed California Students First Act, which was introduced by Senator Michael J. Rubio, a Democrat from Shafter, Calif., would also cap undergraduate enrollment of nonresidents at 10 percent.

The measure, which was introduced last week, would ensure that California students had a “fair shot” at attending the public universities, Mr. Rubio said, “and not be turned away simply because a wealthy student from the East Coast or abroad shows up with a checkbook in hand.”

In the fall of 2012, international and out-of-state students made up more than 23 percent of the freshman class on U.C. campuses, more than double the 11.5 percent of non-Californians who enrolled in 2009. In contrast, more California students are applying to these state universities, competing for seats on the U.C. system campuses.

[Read the whole story](#)

Official start to summer fire season starts Monday

By Cathy Locke, Sacramento Bee

The 2012 “fire season” will officially begin at 8am Monday, and fire officials urge residents, especially those living or recreating in rural areas, to use caution.

The state’s final snow survey May 1 found the snowpack water content is only 40 percent of normal. From January through April, California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection crews responded to more than 800 wildfires, more than 2 1/2 times the approximately 300 the agency responded to during the same period in 2011. This year’s number also exceeds the five-year average of more than 600 wildfires for January through April, said Terri Mizuhara, spokeswoman for CalFire’s Amador-El Dorado Unit.

So far this month, she said, Cal Fire crews have responded to numerous small fires; several in Amador and El Dorado counties have been escaped-debris fires, Mizuhara said.

In response to the increased fire risk, CalFire’s Nevada-Yuba-Placer Unit announced that it will increase staffing levels and is staffing many of its fire stations around the clock.

Read the whole story

\$25 mil. up for grabs from U.S. Department of Education

By Richard Perez-Pena, New York Times

School districts will be able to submit proposals for innovative educational programs this year to compete for federal grants of up to \$25 million under a new national contest, part of the three-year-old Race to the Top program. Rules for the competition were to be announced on Tuesday by the Department of Education.

Like the department's state-level competition for federal grants that preceded it, the program will require systems for measuring student progress and assessing teachers and administrators and will target low-income communities. Under the department's rules, the schools included in each application must have at least 40 percent of students qualify for federally subsidized school lunches.

A spokesman for the department said it would look for programs that provide ways to tailor instruction to individual students.

"We need to take classroom learning beyond a one-size-fits-all model and bring it into the 21st century," Arne Duncan, the education secretary, said in a statement.

The rules require districts to show how they will focus resources on "students facing significant challenges, such as students with disabilities, English learners and students affected by impacts of poverty or family instability."

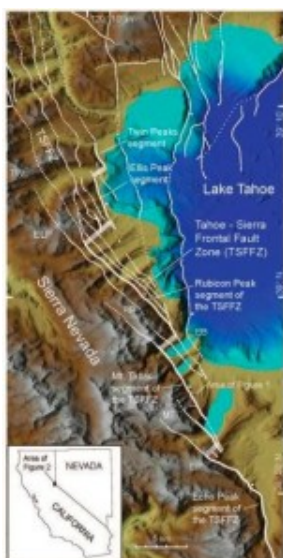
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Study shows a 6.9 quake possible in Lake Tahoe

By ScienceDaily

Results of a new U.S. Geological Survey study conclude that faults west of Lake Tahoe, referred to as the Tahoe-Sierra frontal fault zone, pose a substantial increase in the seismic hazard assessment for the Lake Tahoe region of California and Nevada, and could potentially generate earthquakes with magnitudes ranging from 6.3 to 6.9.

A close association of landslide deposits and active faults also suggests that there is an earthquake-induced landslide hazard along the steep fault-formed range front west of Lake Tahoe.



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Map/James
Howle-USGS

Using a new high-resolution imaging technology, known as bare-earth airborne LiDAR (Light Detection And Ranging), combined with field observations and modern geochronology, USGS scientists, and their colleagues from UNR; UC Berkeley; and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, have confirmed the existence of previously suspected faults. LiDAR imagery allows scientists to “see” through dense forest cover and recognize earthquake faults that are not detectable with conventional aerial photography.

“This study is yet one more stunning example of how the availability of LiDAR information to precisely and accurately

map the shape of the solid Earth surface beneath vegetation is revolutionizing the geosciences,” said USGS Director Marcia McNutt. “From investigations of geologic hazards to calculations of carbon stored in the forest canopy to simply making the most accurate maps possible, LiDAR returns its investment many times over.”

Motion on the faults has offset linear moraines (the boulders, cobbles, gravel, and sand deposited by an advancing glacier) providing a record of tectonic deformation since the moraines were deposited. The authors developed new three-dimensional techniques to measure the amount of tectonic displacement of moraine crests caused by repeated earthquakes. Dating of the moraines from the last two glaciations in the Tahoe basin, around 21 thousand and 70 thousand years ago, allowed the study authors to calculate the rates of tectonic displacement.

Read the whole story

Raley’s union, management at impasse

By Dale Kasler, Sacramento Bee

Raley’s declared an impasse in its labor negotiations Friday, ratcheting up tensions with its unionized workforce.

The move could push the West Sacramento supermarket chain to its first-ever strike. But employees will continue to work under terms of their current contract at least through June 6, when the contract expires.

By declaring an impasse, Raley’s could implement its “best and

final” contract offer when the current pact runs out. The United Food and Commercial Workers could either go along with the offer or strike. It’s also possible that negotiations could resume.

The United Food and Commercial Workers union, though, said it was “baffled” by Raley’s announcement, saying additional negotiating sessions are already set.

“We are not at an impasse,” the union said in a prepared statement. “Unfortunately, this is just another example of the completely erratic behavior of the Raley’s bargaining committee. ... Raley’s must stop posturing and focus on bargaining.”

Read the whole story