

Water, sewer rates going up for STPUD customers

By Kathryn Reed

Sewer and water rates are going up July 1 for South Tahoe Public Utility District customers.



On a 3-2 vote, the board agreed to raise sewer rates 5 percent and water rates 2 percent. Board members Chris Cefalu and Randy Vogelgesang voted against the rate increase. Cefalu has said all along he is against raising rates.

During a break in the May 17 board meeting, Vogelgesang told *Lake Tahoe News*, "I was for a zero percent increase. Everyone I know has had their income go down."

He would like cuts be made in the budget, but would not share his ideas with *Lake Tahoe News*. Vogelgesang said he has spoken to General Manager Richard Solbrig about his ideas, but then added he does not want to micromanage.

Eric Schafer, president of the board, said while he appreciates the financial constraints people are under, to keep services at the level people are used to requires investing in the product. He said smaller rate increases are easier to cope with than going years without an increase and levying a large spike in fees to ratepayers.

The combined rate increase will mean an additional \$27.60 a year for most residential ratepayers.

It was a 5-0 vote to alter the rate for metered water customers.

No members of the public spoke at the Thursday afternoon

meeting.

Information about how the additional money will be spent is outlined in this article.

2 accused of breaking into Truckee residence

Two men are behind bars after allegedly breaking into a house in Tahoe Donner.

The homeowner reported to police officers that when he arrived at his residence Thursday morning he found two unknown individuals inside his garage removing property.

As the homeowner parked his vehicle, the two men fled in blue Dodge truck at a high rate of speed. The homeowner called 911 and attempted to follow the suspect vehicle, but lost sight of the truck.

Truckee police officers located the truck later May 17, which had been reported stolen two weeks earlier, parked in the Ski Bowl Condominiums in the Tahoe Donner subdivision.

The two suspects were inside a residence, where officers took them into custody.

Arrested were David Johnathan Gish, 22, of Reno and Christina McCurtain, 19, of Truckee.

Officers said stolen property from the garage was recovered and returned to the owner. The stolen vehicle was returned to

the registered owner.

Gish was booked on charges of residential burglary, possession of stolen property, stolen vehicle and felon in possession of a deadly weapon.

McCurtain was booked on charges of residential burglary, possession of stolen property and a stolen vehicle.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

1,188 – South Lake Tahoe sets a Guinness cycling record

By Kathryn Reed

South Lake Tahoe is headed for the Guinness Book of World Records because 1,188 bicyclists rode in a single file on Thursday afternoon.

This broke the record of 916 cyclists who did the same thing in Davis.



More than 1,000 cyclists wait to be counted May 17 as they set a world record for the most number of riders in a single file. Photos/Kathryn Reed

Paperwork needs to be reviewed by the Guinness folks, along with the video of the riders, so it's not official until organizers hear back from London.

"It was way more than I expected," Mark Cutright told *Lake Tahoe News* as he watched the cyclists roll through the official counting station near the senior center.

He said about 1,200 tags were printed out that were attached to handlebars. To be counted, a cyclist had to ride through the counting station. Kids in carriers were not counted – just the adult doing the work. Nor were the dogs in carriers and baskets counted.

The Slow Rollers bicycle group put on the event. Cutright credits Steve Barker for coming up with the idea. The city participated by giving a police, fire and ambulance escort. Cutright did the legwork of getting the permits to allow for a lane of traffic to be dedicated to the cyclists from the Y to the senior center parking lot.

Joanne King of South Lake Tahoe was riding through when the record was broken, while it was Jeremy Jensen who was the last rider.

When the fire truck sounded its horn at 4:20pm May 17, the cyclists gathered in the soon to be T.J. Maxx parking lot whooped it up.

Bob Harms with his 18 horns – one even from Brazil – and four dingers had already been adding to the festivities before any pedaling began.

Besides being an event to set a record, it was a costume parade. It was a bit remarkable the footwear people could pedal in – from sandals to cowboy boots to heels.

Goofy hats and helmets that were decorated filled the mass. Full costume suits from bears to Tigger to a bumblebee were on two wheels.

However, some bikes came with three wheels, and at least one was a unicycle. With all the shapes and sizes of bikes, it was a bit like a museum. Bill Yale was on a Coker from the early 1970s.

It was a slow ride – living up to the organizer's name – as it took about an hour for the first cyclist to reach MontBleu.

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Former Tahoe Tribune editor to fill governor's appointment

Former *Tahoe Daily Tribune* Managing Editor Mike Taugher has been picked by Gov. Jerry Brown to be assistant deputy of director communications, education and outreach for the California Department of Fish and Game.

The 49-year-old most recently has been a reporter at the *Contra Costa Times*.

The job pays \$90,000 year. Taugher is registered decline-to-state. This position does not require state Senate confirmation.

Gaines uses taxpayer money on flier, but ignores current constituents

By Jim Sanders, Sacramento Bee

Assemblywoman Beth Gaines has sparked a campaign controversy by spending state funds to send fliers almost exclusively to residents of her redrawn district who can vote for her in June.

Because California recently set new legislative district boundaries, Gaines is running in the 6th Assembly District, which encompasses some but not all of her current 4th Assembly

District.



Beth Gaines

The Rocklin Republican recently spent more than \$18,000 in Assembly funds on a flier soliciting constituents' opinions on state budget priorities, school improvement and dealing with the looming public pension crisis.

"This is your opportunity to be heard in the state Capitol," the flier read. "Elected officials need to hear directly from their constituents on the issues facing California."

But the opinions of more than half of the district were not solicited.

Assembly records show that 67,051 fliers were mailed by Gaines on March 13, almost exclusively to ZIP codes from her current district that were drawn into her new one as well.

Tens of thousands of constituents she represents in her existing district did not receive the flier, including those in Alpine County, South Lake Tahoe and portions of Sacramento County near Elverta, Antelope and Rio Linda, records show.

Read the whole story

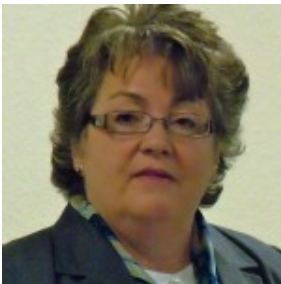
South Tahoe mayor likely won't finish term on council

By Kathryn Reed

Claire Fortier will reportedly not be finishing her term on the South Lake Tahoe City Council. Her partner, Maria Pielaet, has been offered a job in Washington to run the medical clinic for Microsoft.

Fortier did not want to talk much with *Lake Tahoe News* about what this means.

"I'm not comfortable addressing the issue until Maria has a contract signed," Fortier said.



Claire Fortier

While Fortier would not say what her plans are, the buzz at city hall is she wants to stay until her term as mayor is up. She has told people she will be resigning in the middle of her four-year term.

Fortier was elected to the council in November 2010. Her term expires in December 2014. Her term as mayor is over in the fall. The council votes among themselves as to who will be mayor and mayor pro tem, with each being a one-year stint, though people can be voted in consecutive or multiple years.

Mayor Pro Tem Tom Davis said Fortier had not spoken to him about her plans.

As the city ordinance is now, a council member's position is not considered vacated until they actually leave. So, if Fortier were to stay until her term as mayor is up, the council in December would either appoint someone to fill the two remaining years or a special election would be called. The first scenario means the public has no say in 20 percent of the representation on the council, the latter scenario means the taxpayers pay for Fortier's desire to hang onto the title of mayor.

Because the city ordinance mirrors state law the process for appointment or election cannot be changed at the local level.

The process is that the remaining council members must decide within 60 days of a council position being vacated whether to appoint someone or to call for an election. There are three specified dates in 2013 when an election could occur – March 5, June 4, Nov. 5. The election cannot occur less than 114 days from the date it is called. So, if Fortier stays until December, the soonest there could be an election to fill that vacated seat is June 4, 2013.

On the Nov. 6 ballot will be the council positions now held by Hal Cole and Bruce Grego. Cole has not decided if he will be running for another term, while Grego is ready to hit the campaign trail.

Besides the council position, Fortier is the city's rep on the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency Governing Board. That agency is in the midst of approving a Regional Plan update, which is expected to be voted on in December. How having a lame duck member would affect that process is not known.

"There is no impact to the current makeup of the TRPA Governing Board until the city makes a change," Julie Regan, spokeswoman with TRPA, told *Lake Tahoe News*. "Mayor Fortier is very engaged in the Regional Plan update and other matters, and we would not expect any departure from that."

The city is also in the throes of dealing with the need to hire a city manager, so Fortier may be in town making important decisions about issues and people she will not have to be held accountable to or for.

Lame-duck Congress will have plenty of work to do

By Lori Montgomery and Rosalind S. Helderman, Washington Post

Defense contractors have slowed hiring. Tax advisers are warning firms not to count on favorite breaks. And hospitals are scouring their books for ways to cut costs.

Across the U.S. economy, anxiety is rising about the potential for widespread disruptions after the November election, when a lame-duck Congress will have barely two months to resolve a grinding standoff over taxes and spending.

The halls of the U.S. Capitol are already teeming with people warning of disaster if lawmakers fail to defuse a New Year's budget bomb scheduled to raise taxes for every American taxpayer and slash spending at the Pentagon and most other federal agencies.

Last week, hospital executives came to complain about big scheduled cuts in Medicare payments. Next month, university presidents plan to raise the alarm about big scheduled cuts in federal research grants. And the chief executives of Lockheed Martin and other aerospace giants last Wednesday passed out

digital countdown clocks ticking off the seconds until “over 1 million American jobs” will be lost to big scheduled cuts in defense.

“How do you plan for chaos?” Marion Blakey, president of the Aerospace Industries Association, sighed during a break between meetings with lawmakers, who could provide little assurance that the spending cuts would be averted. “It’s almost a unique moment in government because there’s so much at stake. And there’s nothing that inspires confidence that this will get done.”

The uncertainty is already prompting some firms to take action. Many more say they will be forced to contemplate layoffs and other cost-cutting measures long before the end of the year unless the Republican House and the Democratic Senate come up with an alternative path to tame deficits. But with control of the White House and both chambers of Congress in play on Nov. 6, aides say it is impossible to begin mapping a strategy for compromise until they know who wins the election, by how much and on which issues.

Read the whole story

Expert outlines Reno-Tahoe’s good-bad points for attracting businesses

By Jason Hidalgo, Reno Gazette-Journal

Reno-Tahoe is poised to reap the benefits of a resurgent manufacturing industry in the United States, according to a

New Jersey-based site selection expert.

Nevertheless, the region still has some work to do to make it more attractive to companies seeking to relocate or expand their business, said Dennis J. Donovan of Wadley Donovan Gutshaw Consulting, a global site selection firm.

High up on the area's to-do list is a familiar issue – changing perceptions outsiders have of the area, Donovan said.

“I think there are misperceptions out there and a lot of people associate the area just with gaming,” Donovan said. “They don't realize all the quality-of-life features like outdoors and recreation or the green (energy) alternatives available, which fit right in with what tech companies and other people are looking for.”

Donovan was brought in to share his insights about the area today at a breakfast with business people and community leaders.

The event was organized by the Economic Development Authority of Western Nevada (EDAWN) and the Nevada Governor's Office of Economic Development.

Getting an informed outsider's perspective, particularly one who specializes in company site selection, about the region is important for gauging Reno-Tahoe's competitiveness with other areas, said Mike Kazmierski, president and CEO of EDAWN.

“We already have a strategic plan for the region and have an idea of what we need to do from an economic development perspective,” Kazmierski said. “But we still wanted someone from the outside to come in and let us know how we look like through other companies' eyes, and also tell us whether our plan is on track or not.”

Read the whole story

U.S. travelers hitting the road means hotels are hiring

By Anna-Louise Jackson and Anthony Feld, Bloomberg Businessweek

Hotels are hiring. That simple statement is giving hope to many long-unemployed or underemployed Americans who see hotel jobs as a pathway back to full-time work – low-paying, long-hours work, but a job nonetheless.

Hotels and motels are getting busier as Americans feel a little more secure economically and are taking vacations.

“With more people on the road, we’ll need more people working in hotels,” says Jan Freitag, a senior vice president at Smith Travel Research. He cites a 4.1 percent gain in first-quarter hotel bookings as a “very positive sign” that U.S. tourism is rebounding.

The Federal Reserve confirmed the shift in travel in its most recent survey of current economic conditions, with data collected on or before April 2 indicating “strong” trends in several districts. The St. Louis Fed – which oversees all of Arkansas and parts of Missouri, Mississippi, Tennessee, Kentucky, Indiana and Illinois – reported that hotel service companies “announced plans to expand operations and hire new workers.” Business travel, essential to hotel revenue, has rebounded enough to restore hotel occupancy levels to 63.6 percent, close to the historic average.

About 7.6 million people, or 5.7 percent of the U.S. workforce, held tourism-related jobs in March, according to the U.S. Travel Association in Washington. The travel industry

accounted for “a substantial component” – 2.7 percent – of 2010 gross domestic product, according to a Jan. 19 statement from the White House. The number of Americans working at hotels, motels and casino hotels rose 3.2 percent in March from the same month in 2010, to 1.6 million, outpacing a 2.7 percent increase for all employees, data from the Department of Labor show.

Read the whole story

Caltrans starting work on Hwy. 89 between Tahoma and Tahoe City

Caltrans is beginning work on Highway 89 from Tahoma to Tahoe City to upgrade stormwater drainage systems and natural gas pipelines, and improve traffic safety. Motorists are asked to allow a few minutes of extra driving time in some areas. No delays are expected during summer weekends.

Stormwater projects designed to help protect lake water quality include rehabilitating drainage and treatment systems, installing runoff collection and treatment, and adding curb and gutters.

To improve traffic safety, workers will realign the road, lower natural gas pipelines, widen shoulders to allow bicycles and places for cars to pull out of traffic, move the existing bike trail, lengthen existing left-turn pockets and continuous left turn lanes, and construct new left turn lanes at Gray Avenue, Moana Circle, McKinney Rubicon Springs Road, Ward Avenue, Sunnyside Lane, Olympic Drive (north), Granlibakken

Road, and the proposed entrance to Tahoe City Transit Center.

The project will require removing some trees to improve driver visibility and provide wider shoulders. Caltrans worked closely with TRPA, Placer County, the Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board and the California Tahoe Conservancy to develop plans that preserve as many trees as possible while also achieving the necessary environmental and safety improvements.

Construction is funded by stormwater improvement funds, and will last through five construction seasons until October 2016.