

Tax Commission denies \$31 million refund to Caesars Entertainment

By Cy Ryan, Las Vegas Sun

CARSON CITY – The Nevada Tax Commission has denied the petition of Caesars Entertainment for a refund of \$31 million paid on complimentary meals for gamblers and employees.

The \$31 million is a tentative figure as the commission will decide next month if the state is barred in retaining part of the amount by the statute of limitations.

After an extended hearing Monday, Commissioner David Turner said the decision of the administrative law judge should be upheld, rejecting the petition of Caesars.

Commission Chairman Bob Barengo indicated an appeal to the court would probably be made. After the decision, he told Caesars lawyer Norman Azevedo, “I understand you will want to appeal.” Azevedo declined comment after the hearing.

The Nevada Supreme Court in 2008 said the state could not impose the use tax on the free meals provided by casinos to players. But it said the sales tax could be imposed.

This has opened a controversy, and the first payments of the sales tax are due June 1.

Read the whole story

Average wage for Nevadans increases in 2011

By Northern Nevada Business Weekly

The amount that Nevada workers earned per week showed signs of improvement in 2011, another indication that the state's economy is in on the mend, said Bill Anderson, chief economist for Nevada's Department of Employment, Training and Rehabilitation.

Wages in Nevada averaged \$829 per week in 2011, which represents a gain of 1.3 percent compared to 2010's \$818 average weekly wage. Gains in each of the first three quarters of the year were only partially offset by some sluggishness in the final months of the year.

Average weekly wages declined in both 2009 and 2010 before reversing course last year.

Anderson noted that the rising in wages comes at a time that unemployment is trending down in the state, job growth is slightly positive and initial claims for unemployment insurance are down.

Still, Anderson noted that the 1.3 percent gain in wages last year wasn't enough to keep pace a 3.2 percent increase in consumer prices last year.

El Dorado County judicial

candidates put guns back in holster

By Carlos Alcalá, Sacramento Bee

The high-noon showdown involving guns and El Dorado County judge candidates has been canceled, but not because anyone was chicken and ran for the hills.

The El Dorado Rod and Gun Club, which was to have been the venue for the shooting challenge Saturday, put a stop to it, saying it didn't want to give the impression that it might be endorsing a winner.

"It doesn't really fit in. Our policy is never to endorse anyone," said Rob Charny, club president.

The competition between Superior Court judge candidates Warren Stracener, Joseph Hoffman and Stephen Valentine had been scheduled as part of a "Celebration of the Second Amendment" by the Tea Party in the Hills.

Read the whole story

South Tahoe woman located unharmed

Michaela Vandenberg, the South Lake Tahoe woman who went missing Tuesday morning, has been located.

South Lake Tahoe police officers said no foul play was involved in her disappearance. She was not hurt.

Officers are not releasing any more details.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

El Dorado County sheriff's detectives unhappily reassigned to patrol

By Peter Hecht, Sacramento Bee

Five veteran El Dorado County sheriff's investigators, including a detective who worked on the Jaycee Lee Dugard kidnapping case and the teen lovers' murder saga of Steven Colver and Tylar Witt, have been reassigned to patrol units.

The reassignment of nearly half of the sheriff's detective division has triggered the filing of a contract grievance by the deputy sheriffs' association. And it fueled a media event Tuesday, in which union representatives and some advocates for crime victims blasted El Dorado County Sheriff John D'Agostini as undermining public safety by rotating undertrained officers into the coveted detective positions.

Among those sent to patrol was Detective Rick Fitzgerald, whose 18-year-tenure included the Dugard and Colver/Witt investigations and the cold case of Philip Arthur Thompson, who was convicted in 2008 in the killing of Elizabeth Marie "Betty" Cloe, a 22-year-old Oregon woman whose shot and bludgeoned body was found in Cameron Park in 1971.

Also reassigned was the entire five-member property crimes unit, with four going to patrol. A fifth member was reassigned within the investigative division, the deputy sheriffs'

association said.

Read the whole story

South Lake Tahoe beach concessionaire deal hits snag

By Kathryn Reed

Another South Lake Tahoe City Council meeting, another questionable bid and contract.

With summer having arrived unusually early in Lake Tahoe, people are at the beaches. And these people are hungry. But there is no vendor at El Dorado or Regan beaches because the city again can't get its act together.



Danny Chavez will know May 18 if he will be the concessionaire for Lakeview Commons and

Regan Beach. Photo/LTN
file

The number of irregular bids is beginning to mount – from the contractor for Lakeview Commons to the bear box issue that was resolved earlier this month to the current concessionaire for the city owned beaches.

City Attorney Patrick Enright wanted to bring the bid back to the council June 5, but the electeds said no way, this needs to be resolved immediately. Staff has until 3pm Friday to get all of its ducks in a row because that is when a special council meeting has been set to deal with just this issue. (Mayor Claire Fortier will be absent because her son is graduating from college.)

Enright on May 15 told the council he heard from the county Health Department late Monday with issues involving the applicant who staff had recommended the bid be awarded to. He also has issues with the bid saying the venues will be open five days a week, when in fact the city wants them open seven days.

Cronyism was the charge leveled against staff's recommendation to award the contract to Danny Chavez of Lake Taco Catering. While that word was used, the people who spoke at Tuesday's council meeting presented no evidence of cronyism.

Ryan Payne, who owns Energy Drink Outlet in South Lake Tahoe, was the first public speaker. He said on Monday he filed a formal protest against Lake Taco getting the concessionaire because according to a survey he took "the community is not behind this". He questioned how the contract is different than what is in the proposal – saying cronyism was at play.

Jeff Sparrow of Lake Tahoe Catering Company, who was one of the five bidders for the concessionaire, said he believes the process is whom you know, not what you know.

Three South Lake Tahoe employees, including Community Services Director Stan Sherer, evaluated the applications and interviewed the five candidates. All were graded on five criteria:

- Experience, background and qualifications – 20 points
- Proposed concession plan – 50 points
- Compensation schedule – 30 points
- Financial capability – pass/fail
- Completeness and comprehensiveness of proposal – pass/fail.

Sherer said Chavez with Lake Taco was the No. 1 choice of the panel.

“He knows what it takes to provide for a lot of people,” Sherer told the council. “We feel he can increase gross revenue more than all the other respondents. Ultimately he will provide more revenue for the city.”

Sanchez has been operating the Regan Beach concessionaire for a handful of years. This will be the first year for Lakeview Commons to have a vendor now that the boathouse is complete.

Sherer said he did go over financials with Chavez – which is common in a bid like this when the lowest responsible bidder is not the main, overriding criterion.

While Chavez’s bid says he will work five days a week, he told the council that was a typo. He said seven days is what it should say with no changes to any other numbers.

Rick Meyer, El Dorado County public defender, and Delicia Spees, executive director of Lake Tahoe Family Resource Center, were two people who sang Chavez’s praises.

Chavez countered Payne’s allegations that he was irresponsible and left things outside that shouldn’t be by saying he was

remodeling the Regan Beach facility so things had to be placed outside while work was done inside.

Others applying for the concessionaire were Crepes on the Lake and Commons Cafe, Beach Hut Deli, and Bijou Snack Shack.

The contract is slated to be for five years, with the city receiving 10 percent of gross sales in the first year, 11 percent in year two and 12 percent for the remaining years.

In other council action:

- Councilman Tom Davis reported Go Ape would not be building a ropes course this summer at Lake Tahoe Airport. He said the FAA is the hang up, with the hopes those issues will be resolved in the coming weeks.
- The city will be looking for a commercial real estate agent to help get rid of properties once owned by the Redevelopment Agency that are now under the purview of the successor agency since the state dissolved all redevelopment agencies.
- Signs will be put up at Lakeview Commons prohibiting people from using the built environment for use by snowboarders and skateboarders – and others – who want to do tricks and not just pass through the area.
- On a 3-2 vote, with Councilwoman Angela Swanson and Fortier voting no, the majority wants owners of historic signs to be able appeal any Planning Commission decision to the council.
- Swanson and Councilman Bruce Grego were appointed to an ad hoc committee to deal with the Lakeview Commons lease with El Dorado County.

State approves use of pesticides in Lake Tahoe

Pesticides will be allowed to be used in Lake Tahoe.

That was the decision the state Water Resources Control Board made May 15.

While plenty of hoops are in place for anyone wanting to do so, the ruling is ground breaking.

The Lahontan Regional Board in December approved the application of pesticides and herbicides in select circumstances. On Tuesday, this is also what the state board agreed to.

Environmental groups and some water purveyors had asked the state to consider a five-year moratorium on pesticide applications.

Lahontan wants the leeway to approve the use to help eradicate various aquatic invasive species in the lake.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

South Lake Tahoe council praises Kerry, but wants full

search for next city manager

By Kathryn Reed

Spending more than \$20,000 to find a city manager is clearly what the South Lake Tahoe City Council wants to do, even though the electeds agree an internal candidate is more than qualified to do the job.

The five sent conflicting messages to the public during the Tuesday afternoon presentation by four individuals who represent companies that could be hired as the headhunter to find the permanent replacement for Tony O'Rourke. (O'Rourke told the council he will be around for the two June meetings. Then he is off to do the same job in Yakima, Wash., having fulfilled less than two years of his three-year contract in South Lake Tahoe.)



The South Lake Tahoe City Council on May 15 appointed Nancy Kerry to be interim city manager when Tony O'Rourke leaves in a month.

Photo/LTN

The mixed message is how they praised the internal candidate,

saying how strong and qualified she is; then saying they want to look elsewhere – just in case someone better is out there. This all came after a presentation on the five-year budget that included how horrible the local economy is and how revenues for the city are stagnant at best.

Where the money will come from to pay the headhunter was not discussed.

The council is slated to pick one of the firms at a special May 29 5pm council meeting

The council on May 15 agreed to appoint Nancy Kerry interim city manager effective July 1. With the appointment comes a \$2,000 month raise, which brings her annual salary to \$141,240. Police-Fire Chief Brian Uhler, who will report to Kerry, makes a few thousand dollars more than her per year. O'Rourke makes \$175,000 a year.

In the contract with Kerry, the council agreed if the electeds pick someone else for the job, she would return to the assistant city manager position with a contract of at least one year.

Kerry told *Lake Tahoe News* she definitely intends to apply for the city manager position.

When it came to the headhunters, all were asked how the process would go with an internal candidate in the mix who is respected and that day was appointed to be interim city manager.

First up was Bob Murray of Bob Murray & Associates. He is the man who recruited the last three city managers.

Second was Phil McKenny of Peckham & McKenney.

"If you have a strong internal candidate, hire her," McKenney advised the council. "If it doesn't work, call me in six months."

Bob Neher, with Neher & Associates, told the council that while most searches take three to four months, he would strive to do it sooner so there was not much lag time between O'Rourke's departure and the hiring of the next city manager.

Heather Renschler of Ralph Andersen & Associates said having a strong internal candidate "could change the composition of the pool."

No matter who is hired as city manager, that person will not be hiring the finance director. O'Rourke is expected to choose one of the two out-of-town finalists before he leaves. That person will replace Christine Vuletich, who left earlier this year for Douglas County.

3-car crash ties up traffic on Highway 50 in S. Tahoe

A three-car accident in South Lake Tahoe on Tuesday afternoon that included one vehicle being flipped on its side resulted in no injuries and one arrest.

Traffic was backed up for a bit as officers cleared the scene, which included sweeping up lots of glass.

Sharon Nolanmaloff, 53, of El Dorado Hills was arrested on suspicion of driving under the influence after the May 15 2:43pm crash.

South Lake Tahoe police Lt. David Stevenson told *Lake Tahoe News* the suspect was pulling out of the Grocery Outlet parking lot onto Highway 50 when she her vehicle struck a van

traveling east in the rear of the vehicle. This caused the van to roll and end up on the side of the road.

A passing motorist traveling west witnessed the collision and pulled into the store's parking lot.

Stevenson said the suspect tried to back up after hitting the van and in doing so hit the witness' vehicle.

Had there been any injuries, Nolanmaloff would be facing felony DUI charges.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

South Lake Tahoe woman mysteriously disappears

A 23-year-old South Lake Tahoe woman has been missing since she went on break from work Tuesday morning. Michaela Vandenberg, is white, with brown hair, 5-foot-7, 140 pounds.

Vandenberg was last seen at work in the area of Takela Drive and 3300 block of Lake Tahoe Boulevard.



Michaela
Vandenberg

She was wearing black pants, blue shirt, black blazer, with black high heel shoes.

She was last seen when she went on a break at about 10:20am May 15. She has not been seen or heard from since. She left behind personal property.

Anyone with information on Vandenberg is asked to call the South Lake Tahoe Police Department at (530) 542.6100.