

Tourism strategy to rebrand Reno-Tahoe

By Yun Long, Reno Gazette-Journal

A new tourism campaign is moving away from the gaming-centric marketing to redefine the Reno-Tahoe region as a four-season resort destination.

Christopher Baums, Reno-Sparks Convention & Visitors Authority president and CEO, unveiled the “What’s Your Passion?” campaign aimed at visitors who want to explore their passions in Reno-Tahoe.

“It asks people to become involved,” Baum said. “When you ask people ‘What’s Your Passion?’ with a question mark on the end, you are expecting an response. ... Most people will think ‘Gee, what is my passion,’ and very often, it’s something you haven’t done in awhile and isn’t it time to do it in Reno Tahoe USA?”

The campaign is repositioning Reno Tahoe as a “friendly, four-season resort destination – in a spectacular natural setting – that offers world class attraction, activities and events to excite the passions of almost anyone,” according the RSCVA.

The \$1.6 million campaign, targeted at Reno Tahoe’s core market of Northern California, will include 32 billboards from Sacramento to the Bay Area, two radio ads and print advertising in Southwest Airlines’ *Spirit*, AAA’s *Via*, *Sunset*, *Sacramento* and *San Francisco* magazines.

Read the whole story

Bear box battle forces S. Tahoe to bid project for 3rd time

By Kathryn Reed

To avoid another lawsuit when it comes to bids and contracts (like Lakeview Commons), the South Lake Tahoe City Council voted for the safe bet – to start the process all over. When the bids go out again for bear boxes to be installed on public property it will actually be the third time.

This is because the first time the bid documents were released they included a photo of a trademarked bear box. That's a big no-no. Not only that, but it was a box from a company planning to submit a bid.



Bear boxes may be installed in public areas throughout South Lake Tahoe.

Photo/NPS

Then bids went out again, with nine entities responding to that request. One of the respondents commented on the type of material needed for durability reasons, citing the low bid not

being the right standard.

Gary O'Neill, purchaser for the city, told the council on March 20 that he only contacted the low bidder to see if they would upgrade the material to galvanized steel.

"The additional cost did not affect the lowest bidder," O'Neill said at Tuesday's meeting.

The four councilmembers – Mayor Claire Fortier was absent – were not comfortable with bid requirements changing midstream before a contract was awarded and without all applicants weighing in on the change to know how, if at all, it would affect their bids.

"It troubles me how the timing of this happened," Councilwoman Angela Swanson said. "It's an irregularity in the bidding process that I'm uncomfortable with."

What is being bid on is providing the city with 200-plus bear boxes that will be installed throughout town on public property. This was originally supposed to happen a few years ago when the Department of Resources Recycling and Recovery named South Lake Tahoe one of four cities in California to share a \$1.5 million grant. The news came in October 2008 and nearly five months to the day later the money was frozen.

In May 2010, the city got word it could go forward with spending the \$394,000 grant. It wasn't ready to do so and asked for an extension. Now the deadline to spend the money is May 2012.

A primary reason the matter was pulled from the consent agenda is because on March 16 protests were filed by Tahoe Bear Box Co. and BearSaver – two bidders. They believe Carson Valley Welding, the low bidder and whom staff recommended the city contract with, is infringing on their trademark and don't have containers that are bear resistant.

Randy Stanaway of Tahoe Bear Box said, "It was unclear if you wanted the cheapest box or the best value." He said if criteria were strictly the lowest bidder, he would have put in a different bid.

It's customary for public projects to award the bid to the lowest reasonable bid. However, the bid documents didn't mention lowest bidder, just best value.

When questioned by the council, O'Neill said the only criterion staff used was price.

Stanaway admitted to the council he is affiliated with BearSaver as well, saying it's one product, but two distributors. He said two bids are turned in to meet the needs of entities like the U.S. Forest Service that require a minimum of two bids.

Stanaway made accusations that Carson Valley Welding's boxes would not last long.

Don Heldoorn, owner of Carson Valley Welding, took great issue with this statement. He assured the council the hinges and locks on his boxes – what he says get used the most – have a lifetime warranty, the actual boxes have a 10-year warranty, and all come with anti-graffiti powder.

Robert Huckaby, attorney for Carson Valley Welding, also spoke at the meeting. He said there is no trademark issue and that his client would indemnify the city against any trademark claims.

City Manager Tony O'Rourke after the meeting told *Lake Tahoe News* there is no official can in the industry as some claim. He said when he worked in Beaver Creek a bear box was designed specifically for that community.

Now the process begins all over, with the idea the money will still be available for the boxes to be distributed at city

owned beaches, public buildings like the recreation complex, ball fields and perhaps bus stops.

The remainder of the grant is earmarked for a Chevy Silverado hybrid pickup to replace the current pickup that gets 4 miles to the gallon.

In other action:

- The council heard a presentation from trails planner Garrett Villanueva of the U.S. Forest Service about the proposed bike park at Bijou Community Park. No action was taken.
- The land swap with the California Tahoe Conservancy was unanimously approved.
- An agreement with R0 Anderson Engineering for design, permitting and financial consulting service for the Harrison Avenue project was approved. This includes working on turning the newly acquired property at Modesto and Harrison avenues into a parking lot and possibly expanding the city lot closer to El Dorado Beach. The Planning Commission will review more detailed Harrison Avenue plans on April 12, with the council having the topic on its April 17 agenda.
- It was agreed to proceed with a feasibility study to look at how South Lake Tahoe and Lake Valley fire departments could share or consolidate resources. Councilmembers Tom Davis and Angela Swanson were appointed to that committee because they are the reps on the ambulance JPA that involves the same two agencies.
- Steve Knoll was appointed to the Parks and Recreation Commission.

Tahoe City transit center on course to open in fall

Construction on the Tahoe City Transit Center will resume this spring, with the opening set for fall.

Site work is nearly complete and building construction is well under way.

The opening of the transit center was delayed from its anticipated December 2011 opening due to contractor/supplier issues, combined with the short Lake Tahoe construction season. Construction will resume with roof installation and final building finishes that require higher daytime temperatures.

The Transit Center opens is designed to provide a modern, convenient and comfortable location for Tahoe Area Regional Transit passengers to transfer between buses and to wait for arriving buses. It will include an indoor, heated waiting area with restrooms and a covered outdoor waiting area with bench seating.

In all, 130 parking spaces will be provided. Several enclosed bike lockers with an electronic pay per use system will be available along with more traditional bike racks.

A state-of-the-art display system will be installed in the building to alert passengers to the arrival time of their bus. The system, known as Nextbus, has been implemented on the TART bus system and is now available to the public. The system

provides online real-time location of on-route buses and predicted arrival times of TART buses at all stops on all routes. The information can be accessed via text messaging or smartphone web access.

The Tahoe City Transit Center is a \$4.5 million construction project funded largely by federal and state transportation grants, along with Placer County Transient Occupancy Tax funds.

Petition aims to raise casino tax rate

By Bill O'Driscoll, Reno Gazette-Journal

A petition drive to raise taxes on Nevada's biggest casinos has met swift resistance from the gaming lobby through a lawsuit filed in Carson District Court.

Advocates of the plan want to see the top rate in the multi-tiered tax on gross gaming revenue be raised from 6.75 percent to 9 percent. Rates in other states range from 8 percent in New Jersey and Mississippi to 50 percent in Illinois.



The gaming
lobby is
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But observers say if enacted, the outcome, amid recession that helped Nevada's casinos amass a record \$4 billion loss in fiscal 2011, could be far from bountiful for the state's sparse coffers.

In the past decade, the number of slot machines statewide has gone from 217,000 to 187,000, said David Schwartz, director of the Center for Gaming Research at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas.

"I don't know why you'd want to hitch your wagon to a horse when that horse is shrinking," he said. "We're already seeing casinos default. Even if you raise the tax 100 percent, Nevada's footprint is still shrinking. Adding more to the tax burden isn't going to help them."

If enough signatures are gathered by November, the initiative, launched last month by the Las Vegas-based group Nevadans For a Fair 9 percent Gambling Revenue Tax, would go before the 2013 Legislature. If lawmakers reject it or fail to act, the issue would go before voters in 2014.

[Read the whole story](#)

Clean energy companies thrive

By Melanie Turner, Sacramento Business Journal

Clean-energy markets continued to expand last year, even with a tough economic and political climate, increased industry consolidation and downward pricing pressures on manufacturers, according to a new report.

Combined global revenue for solar, wind and biofuels rose 31 percent over the prior year, growing to \$246 billion in 2011 from \$188 billion in 2010, according to the Clean Energy Trends 2012 report released by clean-tech research and advisory firm Clean Edge Inc.

Double-digit growth rates for both wind and solar globally drove much of the expansion.

Still, the report says it's less likely 2011 will be remembered for the industry's robust growth and more likely it will be remembered for the Solyndra bankruptcy. Solar, wind and biofuels all reached new market records in 2011.

[Read the whole story](#)

Snowboarder who died at Sugar Bowl identified

Justin McCollum, 20, of Roseville, has been identified as the snowboarder who died March 19 at Sugar Bowl.

He was an employee of the Lake Tahoe area resort.

Placer county sheriff's officials said McCollum was snowboarding with a group of friends on the double black diamond Strawberry Fields run. When he didn't meet them at the bottom, they took the lift back up to look for him. Deputies said the friends found McCollum's snowboard protruding from a

tree well.

Life-saving techniques were unsuccessful.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

El Dorado County Grand Jury budget more than doubles

The El Dorado County Grand Jury's budget has more than doubled from what supervisors originally approved.



The 2011-12 budget was for \$40,422. But halfway through the fiscal year the jury spent the allocation that was supposed to last through June 30.

In January per court orders the Board of Supervisors added \$12,000 to the grand jury budget.

Since then another \$41,398 has been allocated for the grand jury to complete its job.

“The money comes out of our contingency, our set aside for economic uncertainties,” Mike Applegarth, the county's principal administrative analyst, said.

Applegarth told *Lake Tahoe News* a budget of about \$90,000 for the grand jury is likely to be put into the 2012-13 budget.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

Study: Nevada one of the most corruptable states

By Anjeanette Damon, Las Vegas Sun

Evil doers looking for public officials to corrupt should put Nevada on their list of hunting grounds.

The Silver State emerged as the ninth most corruptible state in the nation, according to an exhaustive \$1.5 million yearlong investigation by a partnership of public integrity organizations.

Investigators rated states on 15 indicators of public accountability and transparency in an effort to gauge the risk of corruption in the three branches of state government.

Nevada failed on nearly every indicator, including ethics enforcement, lobbying transparency, internal auditing and pension fund management.

Nevada's overall grade: a dismal D-minus.

Read the whole story

Snowboarder dies at Sugar Bowl

A snowboarder died at Sugar Bowl Resort on Monday.

No personal information about the victim has been released.

The boarder was in the Crow's Peak area of the Lake Tahoe area resort.

"Ski Patrol performed first aid and transported the individual to the base area, where a helicopter and paramedics were standing by to provide emergency transport to the hospital. The snowboarder was pronounced dead before transport," a resort spokesman said in a statement.

Placer County sheriff's deputies are investigating the cause of the March 19 fatality.

– Lake Tahoe News staff reporter

California, Nevada lead in job recovery

By Steve Matthews, Bloomberg

Arizona, California, Florida and Nevada – the states that were most hurt in the real estate collapse over the past five years – are now leading the U.S. labor market expansion.

The four states added 222,100 jobs from August through December, accounting for 28 percent of the increase in U.S. employment in that period, according to Labor Department figures. Their outperformance may continue, say economists at Moody's Analytics Inc. and IHS Global Insight.

Households in the "sand states," whose homes have lost on average half of their value since the 2006 peak in the housing bubble, are healing after cutting debt and bolstering their

net worth, said Jan Hatzius, chief economist at Goldman Sachs Group Inc., yesterday in an interview in New York. Their stabilization may signal a broader improvement by U.S. consumers that supports a faster expansion in employment growth.

“There has been a whole lot of balance sheet improvement,” said James Paulsen, who helps oversee more than \$330 billion as chief investment strategist in Minneapolis for Wells Capital Management. “Even the places that were ground zero for the 2008 financial crisis are coming back to life. Things are starting to pop a little again.”

[Read the whole story](#)