Clean Tahoe rate increase in the works

By Kathryn Reed

Clean Tahoe, the nonprofit that deals with trash incidents beyond the scope of the garbage company, is looking at ways to increase its rates.

All El Dorado County residents in the basin pay $4.80 a year for the service. South Tahoe Refuse collects the fee via its bills. The last increase was in 1999.

While the hope was to increase the rate as STR went through its process, legally this cannot happen.

“It’s up to the county and city what works best for them to fund the program. I think there are lot of different ways,” Tom Bruen, attorney for the South Lake Tahoe Waste Management Authority, told that board.

It’s possible Clean Tahoe could become a subcontractor of STR. This would likely trigger a revision to the franchise agreement.

The rate issue has been a point of discussion for at least 18 months.

The joint powers authority board at its November meeting recommended South Lake Tahoe and El Dorado County electeds come up with a plan to increase Clean Tahoe’s rates.

There was even talk of having Douglas County possibly be part of Clean Tahoe. No one in the room had knowledge as to why at least the lake portion of Douglas was not part of this entity.

The goal for Catherine Cecchi, who heads Clean Tahoe, is to make the program sustainable. She told the board further cuts

aren’t possible. Benefits for employees were eliminated years ago. The income is so lacking that even buying a wheelbarrow is challenging. The budget has been scrutinized at least by the former South Lake Tahoe city attorney.

Clean Tahoe is also on its last legs with one of its two vehicles.

The JPA board, which is made up of a rep from South Lake Tahoe (Wendy David), El Dorado County (Sue Novasel) and Douglas County (Nancy McDermid), told Cecchi to come back to them with particulars – namely a price – for a truck that Clean Tahoe wants to buy. The three at that time will contemplate offering a zero interest loan through the JPA.

U.N. investigating extreme poverty in the U.S.

By Ed Pilkington, Guardian

The United Nations monitor on extreme poverty and human rights has embarked on a coast-to-coast tour of the U.S. to hold the world’s richest nation – and its president – to account for the hardships endured by America’s most vulnerable citizens.

The tour, which kicked off on Friday morning, will make stops in four states as well as Washington, D.C., and the U.S. territory of Puerto Rico. It will focus on several of the social and economic barriers that render the American dream merely a pipe dream to millions – from homelessness in California to racial discrimination in the Deep South, cumulative neglect in Puerto Rico and the decline of industrial jobs in West Virginia.

With 41 million Americans officially in poverty according to the U.S. Census Bureau (other estimates put that figure much higher), one aim of the U.N. mission will be to demonstrate that no country, however wealthy, is immune from human suffering induced by growing inequality. Nor is any nation, however powerful, beyond the reach of human rights law – a message that the U.S. government and Donald Trump might find hard to stomach given their tendency to regard internal affairs as sacrosanct.

Read the whole story

Helicopter crashes during flight training in Truckee

By Marcella Corona, Reno Gazette-Journal

Two pilots were hospitalized and were in stable condition after crashing a helicopter at the Truckee Tahoe Airport on Thursday afternoon.

The commercially rated pilots were flying in a two-seat Robinson R22 helicopter when they crashed at the east end of the airport. The crash was reported at about 3:40pm, according to a statement on the Truckee Tahoe Airport Facebook page.

The pilots were flown to a hospital in Reno. They were being treated in the hospital's intensive care unit.

Read the whole story

The great American single-family home problem

By Conor Dougherty, New York Times

BERKELEY — The house at 1310 Haskell Street does not look worthy of a bitter neighborhood war. The roof is rotting, the paint is chipping, and while the lot is long and spacious, the backyard has little beyond overgrown weeds and a garage sprouting moss.

The owner was known for hoarding junk and feeding cats, and when she died three years ago the neighbors assumed that whoever bought the house would be doing a lot of work. But when the buyer turned out to be a developer, and when that developer floated a proposal to raze the building and replace it with a trio of small homes, the neighborhood erupted in protest.

Most of the complaints were what you might hear about any development. People thought the homes would be too tall and fretted that more residents would mean fewer parking spots.

Whatever the specifics, what is happening in Berkeley may be coming soon to a neighborhood near you. Around the country, many fast-growing metropolitan areas are facing a brutal shortage of affordable places to live, leading to gentrification, homelessness, even disease. As cities struggle to keep up with demand, they have remade their skylines with condominium and apartment towers — but single-family neighborhoods, where low-density living is treated as sacrosanct, have rarely been part of the equation.

Read the whole story

Telephone scammers pretend to be from IRS

A phone scam is targeting South Lake Tahoe residents.

The caller identifies themselves as an employee of the IRS, then says a warrant has been issued for their arrest or that the person owes taxes. Callers tell intended victims they must pay using a pre-paid debit card, credit cards or wire transfer. The scammers threaten those who refuse to pay with arrest, deportation or loss of a business or driver's license.

The callers who commit this fraud often:

· Use common names and fake IRS badge numbers.

· May know the last four digits of the victim's Social Security number.

· Make caller ID appear as if the IRS is calling.

· Send bogus IRS emails to support their scam.

· Call multiple times claiming to be the police or DMV and caller ID again supports their claim.

The IRS nevers asks for payment using a pre-paid debit card, credit card, or wire transfer.

If you get a call from someone claiming to be with the IRS asking for a payment, call the IRS at 800.829.1040 if you do owe taxes; call Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration at 800.366.4484 if you don't owe taxes.

Do not give the callers any personal information.

AG hints at crackdown on recreational pot

By Kate Irby and Emily Cadei, Sacramento Bee

Attorney General Jeff Sessions hinted Wednesday that the Justice Department may take a tougher stance on recreational marijuana in the near future, a change in policy that would have a significant impact on the five states plus the District of Columbia that already allow the drug to be used for more than medicinal purposes.

California is scheduled to join that group on Jan. 1.

Sessions and other DOJ officials previously indicated they would continue the policy laid out by the department under former President Barack Obama, which in essence allows state officials leeway in how they deal with the drug as long as they meet certain standards, like keeping cannabis out of the hands of minors, keeping it from crossing into states where it isn’t legal and preventing drugged driving.

Read the whole story

Gaming win surges on South Shore

Stateline casinos bucked the statewide trend in October, with gaming revenue up more than 16 percent to $2.29 million

compared to a year ago.

Statewide the numbers released Nov. 30 by the Nevada Gaming Control Board were flat, with a 0.27 percent gain.Las Vegas numbers were down. Officials are attributing this to the massacre at the concert which has curtailed tourist traffic a bit.— *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

International visitors to U.S. down 4 percent

By Beth J. Harpaz, AP

The number of international visitors arriving in the United States declined nearly 4 percent in the first six months of this year compared with the same period in 2016, according to data released Wednesday from the U.S. Department of Commerce National Travel and Tourism Office in Washington.

Many sectors of the travel industry have been warning that President Trump’s anti-foreigner rhetoric and immigration policies would lead to a drop in tourism here.

Fewer visitors came from nearly every region of the world, with declines in arrivals from Western Europe, Eastern Europe, Asia, the Middle East, Africa, South America, Central America and the Caribbean.

Read the whole story

Power outage in Angora burn area

A primary wire belonging to Liberty Utilities is down at Highway 50 and the Angora Creek area of the South Shore.

Crews on site making repairs, with restoration expected by 2:30pm.

Customers are reporting no or partial power. The areas affected include Dixie Mountain Road, Pyramid Court, Pyramid Circle, Mt. Shasta Circle and Snow Mountain.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Ex-Heavenly employee sentenced to 15 years



Stephan DeGraffenreid

A former children's ski instructor at Heavenly Mountain Resort is going to prison for 15 years.

Stephan DeGraffenreid, 26, of Gardnerville was sentenced Nov.

29. In September he pleaded guilty to one count of sexual exploitation of a minor and two counts of attempted sexual exploitation.

Upon release he must be supervised for life. DeGraffenreid faced a maximum of 45 years in prison.

According to court documents, DeGraffenreid had pictures of naked girls on his phone that he had downloaded. Photographs he personally took were of toddlers in a bathroom at a daycare center.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report