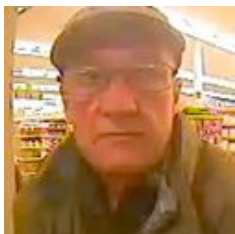


Robber gets away with cash from South Tahoe bank

A man who robbed the Wells Fargo Bank inside a South Lake Tahoe Raley's Monday morning is on the loose.

The amount of cash he stole from the Stateline area bank is not being released.

The incident occurred at 11:25am Jan. 30.



This man is wanted in a Jan. 30 bank robbery in South Lake Tahoe.

Officers said the suspect walked up to the teller and demanded cash. No weapon was seen or mentioned by the suspect.

He was last seen walking east from the shopping center toward the area of Heavenly Village Way and Bellamy Court.

The suspect was described as being a white male, late 50s to early 60s, approximately 6-feet-tall, skinny build, wearing a tan "touring" type hat, tan jacket, and khaki pants. The suspect was wearing prescription glasses.

Anyone with information or knows the identity of the suspect is asked to contact Detective Pierre Herring at the South Lake Tahoe Police Department at (530) 542.6100 or or, to remain

anonymous, contact South Lake Tahoe Secret Witness at (530) 541.6800.

Suit claims well-known Nevada businessman embezzled millions

By Martha Bellisle, Reno Gazette-Journal

The former business partners of Harvey Whittemore – a well-known Nevada lobbyist, land developer, businessman and lawyer – filed a civil lawsuit Friday claiming he embezzled millions of dollars from the Wingfield company they ran together and misappropriated corporate funds and assets.

The suit, filed in Clark County District Court by lawyers for the Wingfield Nevada Group Holding Co., claims that Whittemore's Wingfield partners, Thomas Seeno and Albert Seeno Jr., confronted Whittemore in 2010 about numerous discrepancies they found in the Wingfield financial books and Whittemore "prepared himself a written confession" admitting the alleged crimes.

The suit also names Annette Whittemore, his wife, and the Lakeshore House Limited Partnership.

"Acting as a manager of Wingfield, Whittemore has admitted and confessed to engaging to over 20 different financial transactions designed to deplete Wingfield of its assets for the sole purposes of enhancing and promoting Whittemore's financial condition and to further his standing in the

political community of Nevada,” the suit said.

“These allegations are false,” the Whittemores said in an email. “We will take any and all steps necessary to preserve the reputation for integrity that we have built in this state for over 40 years.”

The company is the developer of Wingfield Springs and Red Hawk Golf Course in Spanish Springs. It also is sole or majority owner of a list of entities, including Coyote Springs Investment, Red Hawk Land Co., Western Electronics, known as Wild West Sound Co., and Wingfield Springs Realty.

Tom and Albert Seeno Jr., of California, are part-owners of Peppermill Casino Inc.

Kent Robison, one of the Wingfield lawyers, said in an email that the allegations have been reported to the Reno Police Department.

Read the whole story

University student dies after fall from Utah chairlift

By Amy Joi O'Donoghue, Deseret News

PARK CITY — A young University of Utah student died Sunday after a fall from a ski lift at Canyons Ski Resort.

Resort spokesman Steve Pastorino said the woman was on the High Meadow chair lift when she fell at 11:49am. Despite quick ski patrol response and on-board care during a medical flight to an area hospital, the woman was pronounced dead less than

an hour later.

Pastorino said a prior medical condition may have contributed to the woman's fall or death.

Read the whole story

S. Tahoe planners talking dogs, bike paths

Dogs and bike paths are two issues the South Lake Tahoe Planning Commission is scheduled to discuss Feb. 9.

Residents in the 900 block of Merced Avenue want to have six dogs at their single-family residence. City law permits no more than four without a special use permit.

While the commission in June approved the bike path on the north side of Highway 50 from El Dorado Beach to Ski Run Boulevard, a revision will be before the commission. Two parcels that were going to be part of California Tahoe Conservancy project could be added to this bike project.

The project plans are available at the city's Engineering Department, 1052 Tata Lane or call Sarah Hussong-Johnson at (530) 542.6033 for more information.

The meeting is at 3pm that Thursday at Lake Tahoe airport.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

South Tahoe parceling out fire marshal responsibilities

By Kathryn Reed

South Lake Tahoe Fire Department is the only agency in the Lake Tahoe Basin without a fire marshal. And there is no plan to have one again anytime soon.

This was the City Council's doing when the five approved the budget last fall that came with reorganization plans in the department. The reorg eliminated the three battalion chief positions, one of whom doubled as fire marshal.

When *Lake Tahoe News* asked the city to provide a job description of the fire marshal position, the response was, "We've never had a fire marshal job description."



The next time there is a fire in South Lake Tahoe, neither Ray Zachau, right, nor any staff fire marshal will be

available for
Chief Brian
Uhler to call.
Photo/LTN file

Even though Ray Zachau has not been fire marshal since the end of 2011, his photo and job are still on the city's website. (Though it's possible the city will take it down when people read this.) No one has the job. That page says the fire marshal's job includes:

- Engine Company Occupancy Inspection Program
- Fire Investigation / Team Leader
- New Construction Inspections
- Occupancy Inspections
- Ordinance Development
- Permitting
- Plan Review
- Revenue Development
- School Curriculum
- State Inspections
- Wildland Fuel Reduction.

"We do not have an officially designated fire marshal," Fire Chief Brian Uhler said. "There are lower levels of certification that allow people to do business inspections and planned inspections. It doesn't require a full-blown fire marshal to do those inspections."

Uhler contends the residents of South Lake Tahoe are safe, that necessary inspections can be done by people in the

department who have specific certifications that are recognized by the state, that others will be trained and that negotiations are under way with Lake Valley Fire Protection District to handle the majority of South Tahoe's fire marshal needs.

Even though the elimination of the fire marshal position has been talked about for months and was known for months after the council voted to do so, a memorandum of understanding has yet to be drawn up between the two agencies.

Once the powers that be work out the language and terms, it will need to be approved by the South Lake Tahoe City Council and the Lake Valley board of directors.

Investigating fires is a large component of a fire marshal's job – something these lower level certifications don't empower an ordinary firefighter to do. This is why the MOU between the departments is necessary.

Lake Valley Fire Chief Gareth Harris is that department's former fire marshal. John Poell, who has been in the fire business for 20 years, is now Lake Valley's fire marshal.

"It's occurring frequently in our business, the consolidation of services," Harris told *Lake Tahoe News*. "The bottom line is we are all in this together to ensure the safety of our community."

Harris and Uhler are confident an agreement for Lake Valley to provide fire marshal services at a yet-to-be released level for a yet to be released price will be in place in the coming months.

"There is nothing that says a department has to have a fire marshal," Daniel Berlant told *Lake Tahoe News*. He works for CalFire – the state fire department that has some jurisdiction over local agencies. "The law says the fire chief will enforce fire and life safety codes. Then the fire chief can appoint a

fire marshal or battalion chief to carry out those duties.”

Berlant would not comment on the specifics of South Lake Tahoe Fire Department having one person who has the title of fire chief and police chief (Uhler has no fire experience), a department with no battalion chiefs, and a department with no fire marshal.

Uhler is working with City Manager Tony O’Rourke on how best to structure the department. Uhler has also been getting input from the firefighters’ union.

Uhler told *Lake Tahoe News*, “I received a letter (last week) from the association that there is a willingness to hire firefighters rather than a higher level administrative position. Maybe we will have two firefighters instead of an administrator to fill in the shifts that are short now. That negotiation process is under way.”

Study: Carson City is metro area hit hardest by recession

By Steve Timko, Reno Gazette-Journal

Carson City is the metropolitan area hardest hit by the recession while Reno-Sparks ranks second hardest hit, a financial website said.

The site 247wallst.com analyzed data in the US Conference of Mayors' 2012 U.S. Metro Economy report and came up with a list it described as The Nine American Cities Nearly Destroyed by the Recession.

Carson City lost 15.1 percent of its jobs in the recession.

"Carson City, Nevada, has the dubious honor to be the only metropolitan area that is not projected to recover any jobs at all this year," the 247wallst.com report said. "The region has lost thousands of jobs during the recession, and will continue to lose them through the end of 2012."

For Reno and Sparks, median home prices dropped 37 percent from 2007 to 2010, the report said. And jobs declined 17 percent from 2007 through the third quarter of 2011, and the report projects only a net job recovery of 600 by the end of 2012.

Local officials disagreed with the report.

Read the whole story

S. Tahoe real estate group getting involved in TRPA Regional Plan

During the Jan. 17-21 California Association of Realtors business meetings in Indian Wells the South Tahoe Association of Realtors received a \$5,000 state impact grant. It will be used to pay for STAR Governmental Affairs Director Hayley Williamson to attend the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency Regional Plan Update meetings.

In addition, the grant will allow STAR members to learn about laws affecting the region through advocacy and policy education such as zoning ordinances, height restrictions, and community goals TRPA is considering.

TRPA has requirements instructing real estate agents to give out disclosures regarding TRPA regulations to homebuyers and home sellers.

CAR recognizes TRPA could have an effect on the whole state, according to Theresa Souers of STAR.

“If the TRPA passes ordinances mandating point-of-sale issues, it may set a precedent for other point-of-sale mandates across the state,” Souers said in a press release. “Furthermore, since the TRPA must abide by California’s new sustainable communities laws passed in 2010, how the TRPA interprets and implements these California statewide laws will set a statewide precedent. For this reason, CAR has encouraged STAR to seek a similar grant on the national level and offered to assist in the effort to do so.”

Placer County approves 2 questions for June ballot

Placer County Board of Supervisors approved two measures for the June ballot. One asks North Lake Tahoe area residents to renew the transient occupancy tax for the North Lake Tahoe area.

An additional 2 percent TOT is collected on rooms in the area. Since the increase was initially approved in 1996, funds that have been collected have been used for many infrastructure projects.

The TOT funds in North Lake Tahoe have been used for the North Lake Tahoe Tourism Development Master Plan. Since its approval, about \$20 million has been used for capital project and for leveraging \$164 million in federal, state and local funds. An additional \$7 million has been used for improvements to transit systems. Some of the projects that have been funded in whole or part by the TOT include:

Kings Beach Commercial Core Improvement Project;

Tahoe City Transit Center;

Area signage;

Beach, hiking and bicycling trail and park improvements;

Museums and education centers; and

Shoreline cleanup.

Placer County voters who live in the north Auburn, Ophir and Lone Star communities will have the opportunity in the June 5

presidential primary election to decide their level of fire and emergency medical service.

Should voters approve the increase to the special assessment, the fire district would be able to maintain current service levels at least through fiscal year 2020-21.

Both resolutions were approved by a four-fifths vote of the board. The TOT measure requires a simple majority vote for passage. The fire assessment measure requires a two-thirds majority by voters.

TRPA board approves 2012 boat inspection fees

Fees are changing at Lake Tahoe for boats needing to be inspected.

The TRPA Governing Board at its meeting this month voted to not alter the Tahoe Only boat fee, while increasing watercraft inspection fees for boats coming from other water bodies or have never been inspected.

Another change is the addition of a new decontamination charge for those boats not clean, drained, and dry when they arrive at the Lake.

The inspections were implemented a few years ago to prevent anymore aquatic invasive species from entering Tahoe.

Officials want the program to get closer to being self-sustaining. Federal funds help subsidize inspections and that money will be running out in the next couple year.

Fees in 2011 covered 29 percent of the cost of this program. The new fee schedule is estimated to cover 47 percent of the program for the 2012 season, with the remainder coming from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

More information on the Lake Tahoe Watercraft Inspection Program and fees are online.

Reno-Sparks taking new approach to promoting area

By Bill O'Driscoll, Reno Gazette-Journal

Four weeks into his new job, Chris Baum has been a busy CEO at the Reno-Sparks Convention & Visitors Authority.

A new marketing campaign targeting Northern California will be up and running by March 1. The tourism agency's slogan, "Far from expected," is gone. And the word is out to staff: As a destination, Reno-Tahoe will not escape prospective tourists' attention.

"We want people to have Reno-Tahoe tops in their minds, whether they want it or not ... something they can't escape," Baum told the RSCVA board Thursday in his first monthly report. "We are keeping the logo. It's good, solid and competitive. 'Far from expected' is dead. We're not using that anymore.

"I think we can do a lot better, and we will," he said. "We're getting somewhere in my first 27 days. There's a lot more to come. No reason to waste time."

Baum's no-nonsense demeanor in the face of recession impressed board members – just as it did in December when they unanimously approved him after a two-hour interview. “Way to hit the ground running,” said Beth Cooney, executive director of marketing at John Ascuaga's Nugget.

Read the whole story