Sandoval hopes next guv protects education investment

By Noah Glick, KUNR

As Nevada’s gubernatorial race begins to heat up, current Republican Gov. Brian Sandoval says he hopes one key piece of his legacy remains intact for the next administration.

Sandoval says he wants to hear what all the candidates have to say, but there’s one specific issue on his mind.

“Obviously, I’m going to be very protective of particularly my education package and what we did to invest in education, to reform education and to fund education,” he said. “And anything that takes away from any of those would be a great concern to me.”

Read the whole story

SLT mayor highlights staff accomplishments



Mayor Austin Sass on Nov. 21 talks to department heads during a break. Photo/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

It was a bit of a grade-school level civics lesson for those who sat through the South Lake Tahoe mayor's address on Tuesday.

It was not about laying a path for the future. It wasn't about what the council has done in his one year holding the gavel. It wasn't about how the electeds' policy decisions have come to fruition – good or bad; or lessons learned; or any vision.

Then again, Austin Sass on Nov. 21 said his address was not going to be like others. "It's not really a state of the city." And his talk lived up to that introduction.

Normally, the mayor takes the opportunity of his or her last full council meeting to tout what has happened in the last year, with a bit of a nod to what lies ahead. Sass altered that tradition.

Another noticeable difference was the room was not packed as it has been in years past for the annual mayor's address.

Instead, Sass launched into how the most important part of the city is the nearly 200 employees. But in an odd twist he did not speak of the accomplishments of the city manager or city attorney. Those are the only two employees the City Council has any say over. The council hires and fires, disciplines, and give raises to those two employees.

And those two had to have had accomplishments in order for Sass to bestow praise on the department heads.

Two other workers not mentioned were the city clerk and treasurer, and the latter was in the audience. Maybe it's because they are both elected officials and Sass doesn't see them as integral to the operation of the city.

Sass' address was more like that of a boss praising his employees, but these individuals are not his employees.

There is not a single employee the council has any control over other than the city manager and city attorney. In fact, the protocol in City Code is that council members are not allowed to give direction directly to staff outside the city manager or city attorney.

During his talk, Sass walked around to where each department head was sitting. He patted most on the shoulder as he stood over them. He introduced them and then he listed their accomplishments.

Some accomplishments of the city department include:

· Growing the city's social media presence;

· Champions Plaza;

· Responding to more than 3,200 fire incidents in 2017;

· Increased training for firefighters;

· 24,097 airport operations; the highest it’s been since 1992;

· 395 arrests by police officers this year;

· 8,029 miles of roads plowed;

· 1,153 potholes filled;

· Community ball fields built;

· Debt refinancing saves $1 million annually;

· 1,372 building permits issued;

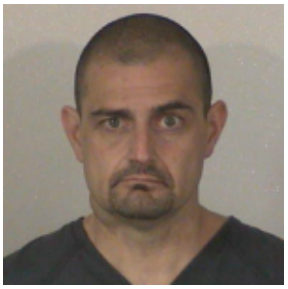
· 7,000 special events in the city;

· 6,400 rounds of golf at Bijou.

At the end of the speech, the audience was left with how much work the various departments do but no sense of what the council does. Sass seemed to paint a picture for how effective and efficient a city manager led government works, what great leaders there are among staff, while reducing the role of the electeds to essentially being figure heads.

At the Dec. 12 council meeting the five electeds will choose among themselves who will be the next mayor and mayor pro tem.

SLT man arrested in Carson Valley on drug charges



Patrick MacRoberts



Clinton Neely

A South Lake Tahoe man was arrested in Gardnerville on a slew of drug charges.

Douglas County deputies stopped a vehicle on Nov. 19 at 7:37pm for alleged traffic violations. The car matched one that was called in that evening as being suspicious by the reporting party.

The passenger, Patrick MacRoberts, 45, from South Lake Tahoe was arrested on two warrants. He also was charged with trafficking in cocaine (more than 4 grams), trafficking in methamphetamine (more than 4 grams), possession of heroin, and possession of drug paraphernalia. MacRoberts was on probation in El Dorado County.

The driver, Clinton Neely, 34, of Gardnerville was arrested on charges of trafficking in methamphetamine (more than 28 grams), possession of a hypodermic needle, possession of drug paraphernalia, driving without tail lights and no driver’s license in possession.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Dems see opportunity in a strongly GOP Tahoe district

By Chris Megerian, Los Angeles Times

Regina Bateson was at home trying to get her young children to fall asleep before they realized Donald Trump would be their next president. Jessica Morse was volunteering in an empty office in Colorado surrounded by the wreckage of Hillary Clinton's failed campaign. Roza Calderon felt like she was living through a nightmare as she watched the results roll in with a friend.

None of these three women, all Democrats, had run for office before. Now they're all vying to unseat Rep. Tom McClintock, a conservative Republican who hasn't faced serious opposition from their party since winning his seat almost a decade ago.

The campaign could prove to be a test of just how far Democrats can reach outside their political comfort zone during next year's midterm elections. Republicans have a 15-point voter registration advantage here. Trump won by more than 14 points.

Read the whole story

Fun in the snow focus of LTVA winter ad campaign

By Kathryn Reed

STATELINE – Snow – and all the things one can do in it will be the thrust of the 2017-18 Lake Tahoe Visitors Authority ad blitz.

They will tie into the "there must be something in the water" mantra that started in summer 2016.

The board of directors this month were shown some of the visuals that will be used in the nearly $400,000 campaign that launches the first week of December. Some are a bit whimsical with snowmen, others show actual skiing and casino scenes.

Duncan/Channon of San Francisco, the firm tasked with developing the ads and figuring out where to place them, had photographers shooting last winter. With the epic snowfall, it provided ample opportunity to highlight snow, snow and more snow.

Some ad banners are designed to run when it's dumping here, with click-throughs going to webcams showing all that powder. Some are specific to various social media sites like Facebook. Others target those who will be flying here.

Skiing, snow play and night clubs are the primary activities that will be highlighted. Olympic references will be thrown in to capture that 2018 is a Winter Olympic year and the fact the South Shore is home to multiple Olympians.



Bob and Scarlett Hart prove even locals like to sled at Lake Tahoe. Photo/LTN file

Videos will have a huge presence. While in many ways they are just snippets of what the South Shore has to offer, they are designed to pique a traveler's interest.

Video is shot every two years, with this being the year to film. That video will be used next winter. The plan is to film snowboarding since skiers are in the current videos. Snowmobiling, nightlife and a polar plunge are other ideas. Drones were used for much of the current footage and will likely be used this time, too.

Many videos are 15 seconds. That's why visuals more than words are used to tell the story of the South Shore.

New this year is specific advertising to attract people here during spring break. That campaign has not been fully developed.

While Northern California is still where most people come

from, LTVA continues to tap into the Los Angeles and San Diego markets.

Coffee tasting stimulates discussion on Nev. water quality

By Yvonne Gonzalez, Las Vegas Sun

Not only does Nevada’s naturally hard water cloud the taste of coffee, experts say – it also requires steady monitoring, even if lawmakers approve cuts to a federal agency that monitors quality.

A coffee tasting at UNLV served as a platform to discuss potential budget cuts to the Environmental Protection Agency while illustrating how Nevada’s hard water can affect flavor. Environmental policy Professor Ted Greenhalgh said the state’s geography adds minerals to the water.

Iron, calcium and calcium carbonate wash out from rocks and into the water supply, Greenhalgh said.

Perchlorate, a chemical compound that often is commercially produced and can affect the thyroid gland, has been found in Nevada water, Greenhalgh said.

Read the whole story

Nev. hot spring may offer clues about life on other planets



UNLV graduate student Scott Thomas collects samples from Great Boiling Spring, about 100 miles northeast of Reno. Photo/UNLV

By Henry Brean, Las Vegas Review-Journal

In Northern Nevada's Great Boiling Spring, strange microscopic creatures thrive in water hot enough to kill you.

Scientists led by UNLV researcher Brian Hedlund are studying the microorganisms in this near-200-degree environment in search of clues about life on Earth and elsewhere.

Using a new $900,000 grant from NASA, the scientists hope to learn how these microbes survive in such an extreme environment.

Read the whole story

Lessons for Nev. from prior attempt to deregulate energy market

By Riley Snyder, Nevada Independent

When Nevada voters head to the polls in 2018, they'll be given the opportunity to fundamentally reshape the state's energy market and end NV Energy's monopoly control of electric service.

But what voters may not know is that Nevada came close to doing the same thing almost 20 years ago.

The state flirted with, but never consummated, a transition away from a standard regulated monopoly structure to a competitive, retail electric market in the late 1990's and early 2000's. Despite thousands of man-hours and countless hearings in front of the Legislature and Public Utilities Commission, state leaders ultimately backed away from the effort after watching California's energy market implode and lead to mass rolling blackouts across the state.

Read the whole story

Math scores fail to impress

ZCES, WHS principals



WHS Principal Crespin Esquivel updates the school board Nov. 14. Photo/Susan Wood

By Susan Wood

STATELINE – There's a memorable scene in the movie "Big" where lead actor Tom Hanks leaves a dinner party table to explain algebra to a boy having trouble with it.

Hanks tells the youngster to forget the X's and Y's.

"Let's imagine Larry Bird is going to score 10 points in the first quarter. How many is he going to score in the whole game?" Hanks asks.

"That's easy – 40 points," the boy answers in a "aha" moment.

"OK, and that's algebra," Hanks says.

With the advent of Common Core, this is where teachers are heading with their math lessons – trying to find new ways to reach children. It's one thing to know the answer. Now, students need to explain how they got there.

The topic came up at last week's Douglas County School District meeting in which two principals – Nancy Cauley of

Zephyr Cove Elementary School and Crespin Esquivel at Whittell High School – provided their school performance goals.

Both principals painted a pleasant picture on the Nevada side of the South Shore.

Cauley shared her enthusiasm over milestones ranging from the hiring of a reading tutor to the funding of a native plant walk created with 15 species of trees. Esquivel expressed glee over the restoration of the ballfield and with the popularity of the culinary arts classes.

Both praised their programs in which teachers drop in the classrooms of other instructors to share ideas and gain insight of what works and what doesn't. Cauley calls hers "peer classroom visits." Esquivel labels his as the "pineapple board," named for its hospitality inference.

"It's helpful for us to get into each other's classrooms and learn from each other," Esquivel told the board.

Whatever one calls it, the program has been deemed a success to school head honchos seeking any way to improve scores and livability at school.

What the principals admitted they can't live with are math scores.

At Zephyr Cove Elementary, math SBAC (Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium) assessments reveal that 38.2 percent of students in third- to sixth-grade are proficient in the subject. This means most are not proficient.

The older students fared better but didn't meet their target goals. In 2017, a little less than 77 percent of students met the advanced placement goals outlining college-level curricula. In a five-year summary, Esquivel took solace in the fact his school's scores are higher than the state's at 52.5 percent. Plus, there's an upward trend at Whittell. In 2013,

those scores showed 52.5 percent of WHS students got it.

Still, board President Tom Moore warned Esquivel he would "have to get a grip" on declining scores.

Esquivel nodded and insisted "we're working on it."

And that's the challenge of Common Core.

"It's a different mindset. Now, there's a formula," Cauley told *Lake Tahoe News*, standing with Esquivel after the session. *LTN* asked them if math is harder these days.

"We have to start them in kindergarten. There's a multi-step process in which they have to give the rationale to their answer. It's not enough to have the answer. And that's Common Core," Cauley said. "We're asking students to do more with what they know."

The U.S. educational standards starting in 2009 define what K-12 students should know in English, language arts and math at the end of each grade.

Here's an elementary school example comparing a pre-Common Core question with a post.

Pre: "Each shirt costs $4. How much do three shirts cost?"

The answer "12" can be submitted without knowing multiplication tables.

Post: "Each shirt has six buttons. How many buttons are needed to make seven shirts."

The answer of 42 relies on a quick recollection of the multiplication tables.

Think of it this way. Remember those math word problems from days gone by that start with "two trains were traveling in opposite directions…"?

Back then, teachers and tests were seeking one answer. Now, students must explain the process used without derailing the answer.

This is the subjective problem some students have and parents notice.

“Everyone describes things differently and in a different way. Much depends on how it’s taught,” said Kim Felton, a parent whose son Aubrey attended all Nevada South Shore schools. Aubrey, who graduated from Whittell High a few years ago, learned enough about math to get him into college, but it wasn’t his favorite, his mother said.

Felton laid out the difference in the two teaching styles by declaring traditional math covers one subject at a time. First grade might highlight addition and gradually work up from there in each grade. Common Core demonstrates an integrated method that blends the subjects and jumps ahead before some students grasp it.

Word problems may muddy the process because there’s room for error in interpretation.

“Math is the language of numbers. What Common Core does is make it a language of words,” Felton told *Lake Tahoe News.*

Trump’s environmental rollbacks hit Calif. hard

By Evan Halper, Los Angeles Times

When 50,000 acre-feet of water went gushing out of the

Sacramento River last month, it fast became a test of California’s ability to protect its environmental policies from an increasingly hostile Trump administration.

The episode proved humbling.

Heeding the calls of big agriculture interests and area congressional Republicans, the administration pumped federally controlled water to Central Valley farms despite protest from the state that the move imperiled the endangered delta smelt. All California could do was temporarily shut its own pumps, which came at the expense of the state’s mostly urban water customers.

It was perceived by some in California as the kind of big agriculture water grab that the state had not seen in years. And it flouted a longstanding water-management partnership between California and Washington, D.C.

Read the whole story