

Thunder Valley casino tribe split on \$1 mil. contribution to Sac Kings

By Peter Hecht, Sacramento Bee

A political rift within the tribe operating the Thunder Valley Casino Resort is fueling acrimony over a \$1 million sponsorship pledge for the Sacramento Kings and triggering a recall drive against tribal council members.

The turmoil within the United Auburn Indian Community, whose Placer County casino is one of the nation's richest tribal resorts, is centered on internal issues that include disputes over distribution of casino income and payments to a tribal attorney.

But an apparent lightning rod in the recall effort – announced Monday against all five members of the United Auburn tribal council – is the tribe's decision to pledge \$1 million to support a community drive to keep the Kings in town.

A tribal faction, including former council chairwoman Jessica Tavares, complained in a news release that the tribal council made the pledge "without first notifying or obtaining approval from the tribe."

The group took issue with the tribal council pledging to support the pro basketball team while apparently denying financial support for a tribal school and drug rehabilitation services for tribal members.

Read the whole story

More cooperation needed from lakes infested with invasive mussels

By Betsy Z. Russell, Spokesman-Review

BOISE – Tens of thousands of boat inspections later, Idaho and Washington have come through another boating season without getting invasive quagga or zebra mussels established in either state's waters – but there were plenty of close calls.

Idaho intercepted 24 mussel-contaminated boats entering the state, and Washington decontaminated 20. Most were coming from the heavily infested Great Lakes region; the rest came from federal waters in Arizona and Nevada.

That has officials in Washington and Idaho concerned.

"Mussel-fouled boats continue to leave infested waters without proper decontamination," Idaho Department of Agriculture Director Celia Gould said. "The federal government needs to do a better job of containing infestations in their waters and preventing the spread of these species to the Pacific Northwest states."

Lake Mead, Lake Havasu and other federal waters in the lower Colorado River system are contaminated with the tiny, invasive mussels that multiply so quickly they can encrust and ruin beaches, pipes, equipment and more.

Washington, Idaho, Utah, Wyoming and Montana all have sent letters in the past three years to the National Park Service, which runs the Lake Mead National Recreation Area, appealing

for help.

The park service at Lake Mead is now sending notifications to invasive species programs when there are boats bound for their states. Idaho invasive species coordinator Amy Ferriter, however, said, “We inspected 65 boats from Lake Mead this season, and we only got a handful of notifications. So we’re still working on it, but we could definitely use some help from down south.”

Read the whole story

Truckee man hurt jumping from national park cliff

By Kate McGinty, Desert Sun

A 23-year-old man was hurt Monday when he jumped from a cliff in Joshua Tree National Park.

William Fleming was attempting “an unauthorized base jump” about 8am in the Oyster Bar area of the park, spokesman Joe Zarki said.

His parachute was blown by the wind into the rocks.

Fleming, who is from Truckee, was treated on the scene and lifted out by helicopter to a nearby parking area.

He was then taken by ambulance to Desert Regional Medical Center in Palm Springs with minor injuries, Joe Zarki said.

Study: Elementary science education in California dismal

By Diana Lambert, Sacramento Bee

Few local educators are surprised by a recent UC Berkeley study that says most California children aren't getting a decent science education.

Gretchen Bly, a first-grade teacher at Rancho Cordova Elementary School, generally teaches about 90 minutes of science a week, integrating it into the curriculum as much as possible.

"If I had my druthers, we'd do it three or four hours a week," said Bly, who coordinates the school's annual Science Night and other science programs.

"With 32 students and less help in the classroom, our focus has to be on reading and writing," she said. "It's harder to address things like science."

The Berkeley research blames the pressure to score well on standardized tests in English and math for the little time spent teaching science. Forty percent of the California elementary teachers surveyed for the study say they spend 60 minutes or less teaching science each week.

Sixty-six percent of elementary teachers surveyed said they feel unprepared to teach science and 85 percent say they haven't received any training in the subject in the last three years.

The result: Only about 10 percent of elementary school classes are offering high-quality science instruction, according to the report.

“The entire landscape is looking relatively bleak,” said Rena Dorph, director of research evaluation and assessment at the Lawrence Hall of Science at UC Berkeley.

Read the whole story

South Tahoe seeking dismissal of most of League's case

By Kathryn Reed

The League to Save Lake Tahoe amended its lawsuit against South Lake Tahoe in regards to the General Plan to state it has a right to contest the documents because the General Plan impacts the nonprofit's members who live within the city limits.

This led to the city having to refile its motion to dismiss the case.

“The city was not contesting their standing, so we did not view the changes as being substantive,” City Attorney Patrick Enright told *Lake Tahoe News*.

A hearing is set for Dec. 5 in U.S. District Court in Sacramento.

The League contends the General Plan that was adopted in May is out of compliance with the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency's Regional Plan. The city at the time of adoption of the plan

and during the years of planning always intended to create a forward-looking plan that would ideally be in compliance with the updated Regional Plan that is slated for adoption in December 2012.

The city also knew it could not approve any projects that did not comply with the current TRPA Regional Plan.

Carl Young, interim executive director of the League, did not return a call. No one at the League would confirm or deny if Amanda Royal is employed as the spokeswoman for the conservation group. It is not known who now speaks for the League other than its attorneys.

Enright said if portions of the case the city wants dismissed are granted, it's possible the CEQA elements of the League's case could be heard in El Dorado County Superior Court in South Lake Tahoe. The city claims the federal court has no jurisdiction over most of the claims brought forth by the League.

In court documents, the city says, "... while Plaintiff claims that its members will be impacted by 'increased traffic, aesthetic impacts, increased pollution in Lake Tahoe's shore zone, increased air pollution, and increased urbanization and building heights', nowhere in its Complaint does Plaintiff explain how the General Plan's alleged violation of the Compact will result in such injuries."

Code enforcement becoming a

priority for South Tahoe

By Kathryn Reed

Inconsistent code enforcement in South Lake Tahoe may be rectified soon.

The City Council at a workshop last week was given an update by staff on where the city stands in streamlining this issue.



Hilary Roverud, Development Services director, told the electeds developing a dedicated code enforcement division will help bring consistency to enforcement. It's too soon to say what that division would look like.

But the problem today is community service officers, the building division, engineering and streets divisions, planning, fire, and finance all are required to enforce various city codes. Therein lies the inconsistency with when things are enforced and the consequences associated with infractions.

Another reason to have staff dedicated to enforcement is that with fewer people working for the city, enforcement is often driven by complaints.

"When you have inconsistent enforcement, you tend to have more violations," Roverud said.

Right now many people violating some policy have multiple avenues to keep appealing the process and never paying a dime to tie up staff time.

To put some teeth into various codes staff is recommending fines be upfront, with the violators able to be refunded the payment if they win their case.

"It would be modeled after parking where they are fined. They can have a hearing. There is one single appeal," Roverud said. "The idea here is to have one appeal opportunity. Who that appeal would go to is open for discussion."

Mayor Hal Cole said he would like to look into hiring a part-time employee dedicated to making sure vacation rentals are paying their transient occupancy tax and other city fees, with the rationale that the income collected would more than pay that person's wages.

"It's a priority to me because of the lost revenue," Cole said.

Roverud said while finding the properties online is one thing; it is catching people violating the rules that can be more problematic and time consuming.

On a side note, Police Chief Brian Uhler said 38 locations have been identified since March and are now paying up. But he admitted it is an "involved process."

City Attorney Patrick Enright said, "We do need seed money to start the process." The process being a dedicated enforcement division.

The theory is the pot of cash would be a revolving fund that would constantly fund itself via fines not currently being collected, paying for the work not currently being done.

"The idea is to take a few key priorities and simplify things," Uhler said. As the program evolves more codes could be added to the list for the team to enforce.

City Manager Tony O'Rourke said public safety issues should be No. 1 on the list of enforcement issues.

Uhler, who is also the fire chief this fiscal year, said it's a priority for him to have a fire code officer. A report released earlier this fall was highly critical of South Lake

Tahoe's fire code enforcement.

Staff will refine some of its ideas, with possible changes to how enforcement is done and potential creation of a separate division to be on a future council agenda.

Raley's scraps health coverage for some retirees

By Darrell Smith, Sacramento Bee

Raley's will stop providing health coverage to its retired hourly employees 65 and older in July 2012, the supermarket chain said in a letter to retirees.

The letter, dated Oct. 24 and signed by Michael Teel, Raley's president and chief executive officer, said the chain is struggling to maintain profitability amid a down economy, increased competition and escalating health costs.

"Unfortunately, due to the economic downturn and increased competition we are struggling to sustain our business," the letter read. "We have ... determined that Raley's can no longer cover the cost of this benefit."

Raley's declined to comment Friday, but Jerry Landers, its senior director of human resources, issued a written statement reiterating the reasons for the change given in the letter.

The statement also noted, "We are continuing to provide generous medical coverage for our retirees under the age of 65, which is the most expensive time for individuals to purchase their own plans."

But retired hourly workers over age 65, like Shirley Kinnett, 75, of Sacramento will have to pay for the coverage out of pocket starting July 1, 2012, carving out cash from a fixed income.

"I know retirees are going to be distraught by this. They've got to be," Kinnett said.

Read the whole story

El Dorado County late to the game to support Measure R

By Kathryn Reed

El Dorado County Board of Supervisors waited until the last possible date to give its blessing to Measure R, and even then the discussion nearly spun out of control.



The board – whose approval is necessary for R to be valid if approved by voters on Tuesday – voted 5-0 Nov. 1 to agree to amend the original Measure S recreation initiative approved in 2000.

Because Board of Supervisors meetings are not available to be seen except in person, *Lake Tahoe News* did not receive a copy of the meeting to review until Nov. 7 – thus the reason for the timing of the story.

Supervisor Jack Sweeney brought up the issue of refinancing the bonds. Supervisor Norma Santiago was adamant, and correct, when she said refinancing and Measure R have nothing to do

with one another.

Still, tied to the motion to approve support of Measure R was that a letter needs to be sent to the JPA board that oversees Measure R (of which Santiago chairs) to let it be known the county wants input on any refinancing.

Santiago said the South Lake Tahoe Recreation Facilities Joint Powers Authority has not received a letter from the city indicating its desire to refinance the bonds.

County Auditor-Controller Joe Harn at the meeting said instead of finding another way to spend the taxpayers money going from S to R, the money in the kitty could be used to pay off the debt early. He also said this would not help property owners until years down the road.

Then Supervisor Ron Briggs took the conversation on another tangent by saying he believes the Tahoe Paradise Resort Improvement District should become a community services district. The Tahoe Paradise park is the third party to the recreation JPA along with the county and city. But he didn't have an reasons to back up his thoughts.

Santiago said the Tahoe Paradise people have no problem being one of four resort districts in the state.

Supervisor Ray Nutting said for eight years he was the county's rep to the Tahoe Paradise board and that he sees no reason to twist that board's arms to be something it doesn't want to be.

Finally, the discussion came back to the actual agenda item – supporting an amendment to Measure S to make Measure R viable.

Sweeney said, "I think it's righteous to put money in the ground."

Sandoval to revive Gaming Policy Committee

By Richard N. Velotta, Las Vegas Sun

Gov. Brian Sandoval said last week he would revive the 11-member Gaming Policy Committee to advise regulators, legislators and him on how Nevada can maintain its edge as the leader of gaming regulatory policy at a time when technology is expanding industry boundaries.

Sandoval told the State Bar of Nevada's Gaming Law Conference that the committee would have discussions that could lead to policy decisions, legislation and regulations overseeing the rapidly changing gaming industry landscape.

"I hope to sketch a new road map for the journey ahead," Sandoval said. "We will preserve our position as the gold standard in gaming regulation and in the provision of gaming entertainment. We will be second to none on the globe."

The Gaming Policy Committee was created by the Legislature in 1961, meeting at the call of the governor to discuss gaming policy matters. Sandoval said a subcommittee of the review committee last met in 2007, but that the full committee hasn't met since Richard Bryan was governor in the 1980s.

The committee is chaired by the governor and includes one member of the state Senate, one member of the state Assembly, one gaming commissioner, one member of the state Gaming Control Board, one member of a Native American tribe in Nevada and five appointees. Of the appointees, two would be non-restricted gaming licensees, one would be a restricted gaming licensee and two would be from the public.

Read the whole story

Officers not tolerating parking violators

By Kathryn Reed

With two part-time employees needing to make their job pay for itself, more parking tickets are being issued in South Lake Tahoe.

“Absolutely, we are writing more tickets because we are going from nonexistent to a full blown program,” Police Chief Brian Uhler told *Lake Tahoe News*.

The city has parking restrictions in various locations that go beyond the rule of not parking on the street during snowy conditions so plows can clear the road. And those “no parking” signs are now the law.



Parking meters are new to South Lake Tahoe and more are coming.

Photo/LTN

No warnings are issued. No outreach to residents or businesses in affected areas is part of the program. Enforcement – that's the new rule of the road, so to speak.

"I can understand how some people feel this is a crackdown because this is something where there wasn't any (enforcement) before," Uhler said.

The idea is the employees working 30 hours a week will enforce parking to pay for their jobs and then some. South Tahoe for years has lost money on its parking program – which includes the garage at Heavenly Village. The loss was an anomaly among cities across the country.

Mike Keck is one of those people who has gotten a ticket. Ironically, he and neighbors lobbied for the city to post signs along their streets a few years ago so the overflow from Heavenly Mountain Resort would not be a problem.

"The point is no one can stop by the house without getting a ticket at this point," Keck said. "It has now made our neighborhood unusable."

He understands rules are rules, but he doesn't understand why the city wouldn't work with residents.

The city is using parking as a revenue source – with \$300,000 expected to be collected in 2011-12. Tickets will add to that figure.

Earlier this year parking meters were installed near Heavenly Village. Nearly \$14,000 was collected from them from June 24-Sept. 30.

More meters are expected to up in the beach areas – Venice Drive, the Al Tahoe neighborhood. A residential permit program is still being developed. It might need to be expanded to areas with no parking signs like the Heavenly neighborhood.

From June 1-Sept. 30 there were 857 citations issued in the

city, with 61 being disabled parking violations and 173 paid parking infractions. Basic parking violations are \$55.