

Nevada casinos do well except on the South Shore

For the second month in a row Nevada casinos posted growth in revenues. The same cannot be said for the South Shore.

Statewide revenue was up nearly 16 percent in June compared to the previous year. While the South Shore saw an increase of 15 percent in May, in June the Stateline casinos reported a drop of almost 29 percent.

The monthly Nevada Gaming Control Board report released today shows Nevada casinos won \$885.7 million two months ago; in June 2010 that number was \$763.7 million.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Candidate files for LTCC and LTUSD boards

By Kathryn Reed

Lake Tahoe Unified and Lake Tahoe Community College might share a board member.

This is because Michael Bischoff is running for both boards in the November election. The 59-year-old believes his four years on the Dublin Unified School District board and a desire to give back to his community are reasons he would be successful on both boards.



While he has not attended a meeting of either board, he has spoken with administrators.

"I think a fresh set of eyes and ears might be helpful. I'm not politically connected and do not have a political agenda. I just wish to give back to the community," Bischoff said.

He has lived here a little more than a year, but has been coming to the South Shore for a quarter century.

What Bischoff neglected to share this week in an interview with *Lake Tahoe News* is some of the controversy he got into while serving on the East Bay district's board that made numerous headlines.

His two drunken driving arrests led his colleagues to request he not attend graduation in 1999. The board censured him in 1998 for his actions regarding a petition and the state budget. Also that year he did not heed requests to step down from the board after it was discovered he ran personal errands while driving students on field trips.

Bischoff was on that board from 1996-2000.

In 2002 he ran for the Alameda County Board of Education. He lost with 22.7 percent of the vote in a two-person race. At that time his occupation was listed as certified professional estimator.

For the Tahoe election, Bischoff lists student as his occupation. He is taking classes at LTCC.

Asked why not run for only one position, Bischoff said, "My chances are that much better to get elected. I have two shots instead of one."

El Dorado County elections personnel said it's legal for him to run for both seats. It is up to the school boards to set policy that prevents any conflicts.

One problem Bischoff would face if elected to both is the boards usually meet at the same time on the same Tuesdays. Some boards have attendance requirements as well as conflict of interest policies.

No one besides Bischoff has filed to challenge the incumbents who are all running for both boards. That would be Fritz Wenck and Karen Borges for LTCC; and Sue Novasel, Larry Green and Mike Doyle for LTUSD.

Other races for Nov. 8:

- Dale Rise as of Aug. 9 remained unchallenged for his seat on the South Tahoe Public Utility District board.
- Four people are vying for the STPUD seat being vacated by Marylou Mosbacher. They are retired district employee Claude Gunsch, homemaker Mary Kortge, business owner John Runnels, and engineer Randy Vogelgesang.
- Candidates have until Aug. 12 at 5pm to file. If the incumbent fails to file, the deadline is extended to Aug. 17.

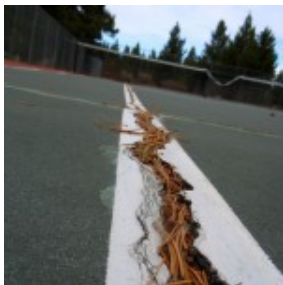
Not all Shore Shore rec measure officials kept in loop

By Kathryn Reed

The treasurer of the board that oversees recreation Measure S on the South Shore just recently found out about the half dozen meetings the board has had this year geared primarily to rewriting the voter approved initiative.

It took a call by an El Dorado County resident to county Auditor Joe Harn in the last few weeks to alert him to what is going on. Harn is also the joint powers authority's treasurer.

"Protocol would be I'd be informed about the meeting. It is unusual that an officer of the JPA would not be informed of the meeting," Harn said.



Pine needles
fill in the
lines at Tahoe
Paradise
tennis courts
in November
2010.

Meetings to discuss changing Measure S to Measure R so the money allocation could be altered have been going on since early spring.

On Aug. 8 Harn was told by county Supervisor Norma Santiago about today's meeting. Santiago is chairwoman of the recreation JPA. Other board members are South Lake Tahoe City Councilman Hal Cole and Tahoe Paradise Park board member Deborah Henderson.

At the last meeting on July 29, John Upton said in writing and

verbally that an audit of the JPA's books is not necessary. South Tahoe resident Tom Wendell asked the lone paid staff member of the JPA: Why?

Upton said with the JPA writing about eight checks a year that Harn's "strong position is it's not necessary."



Courts at Tahoe Paradise have not been safely played on in years.

Harn on Aug. 9 told *Lake Tahoe News*, "I'm not saying one is necessary, but I have not spoken to John Upton about JPA business in a couple years."

An audit in 2006 by Harn uncovered serious accounting deficiencies. He suggested several changes at that time regarding how the 2000 voter approved measure be handled.

This week he agreed the JPA has little money to spend after it pays bond debt, Upton, and disseminates the money per the measure's requirements. He said that is all straight forward. What Harn said would be the true reflection of how Measure S money is spent is for the three entities receiving the money to have their auditors do an independent schedule showing what happens with the JPA money.

At the annual meeting two weeks ago where finances are talked about, the JPA board did not mention this more detailed analysis being a possibility or consideration.



When Tahoe
Paradise
courts will
open is
unknown.
Photos/Kathryn
Reed

Harn doesn't even know what Measure R is designed to do.

"If there is not a lot of transparency, normally the voters don't trust you. I found out (about Measure R) from a member of the public, but it sounds like they are about to go to the voters," Harn said.

And he's right. Today is decision day. The board meets at 9am at Lake Tahoe Airport for its last chance to stop the process of putting Measure R on the Nov. 8 ballot. The potential cost of the election is the main sticking point for the board, otherwise the three have agreed to the resolution and reasons to alter the measure.

R would allow bike trails built pre-2000 to receive maintenance money and funds to be directed to improving existing ball fields.

As it stands now, there is no more money for ball fields and only post-2000 bike trails receive cash for upkeep.

Tahoe Paradise is allocated \$50,000 a year. This summer two of the three tennis courts at the park were supposed to be resurfaced. In Upton's July 29 staff report he said they would be open this month.

Lake Tahoe News spoke with groundskeeper Steve Dunn at the unfinished courts on Tuesday. They won't be ready for play this month. Dunn wouldn't even give a date because he doesn't know when they will be painted and it will be two weeks after they are painted before people can use them.

It used to cost \$5 an hour to play on those courts. The groundskeeper said the Tahoe Paradise board has not set a fee, but he said he has heard it could be \$10.

White voters will dominate redrawn Calif. political districts

By Jim Sanders, Sacramento Bee

Most of California's legislators and congressional representatives will be elected over the next decade from districts dominated by white voters, the state's new political maps show.

Districts drawn by the state's first-ever redistricting commission may bolster the clout of other racial groups – particularly Latinos – but probably not end the longtime political dominance by whites.

Caucasians currently hold nearly two of every three legislative seats, for example, even though California's white population fell to below 50 percent of the state total more than a decade ago.

"The overrepresentation of whites, I think, will continue," said Marqueece Harris-Dawson of the African American

Redistricting Collaborative. “Hopefully, that will be a focal point of the redistricting process (in 2021).”

In six of every 10 new legislative and congressional districts drawn by the California Citizens Redistricting Commission, whites comprise more than 50 percent of the adult citizen population, exceeding the total of all other groups combined, according to statistics by Redistricting Partners, a research and consulting firm.

The imbalance is due largely to population distribution – not racial discrimination – analysts say, adding that candidates of any color are potential contenders in districts dominated by their party.

“Minorities, more and more, are getting the ability to get elected almost anywhere,” said Paul Mitchell, a Democratic strategist and leader of Redistricting Partners.

Read the whole story

Caesars Entertainment narrows loss in second quarter

By Steve Green, Las Vegas Sun

Caesars Entertainment Corp. today joined other big Las Vegas Strip casino operators in reporting stronger business trends.

And thanks in part to cost cutting, the company narrowed its quarterly loss from \$274 million in 2010's second quarter to \$155.5 million in the 2011 second quarter.

Net revenue increased slightly from \$2.22 billion to \$2.229

billion.

In Las Vegas, net revenue for the quarter increased 10.3 percent from the year-ago quarter to \$786.4 million.

EBITDA, a key profitability measure, jumped nearly 32 percent in Las Vegas to \$233.1 million.

EBITDA means earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation and amortization.

Read the whole story

California feeling after shocks of market turmoil

By Dale Kasler, Sacramento Bee

Wall Street's scary losing streak could put a dent in California's fragile economic recovery.

In some ways, it already has.

The huge downturn in the stock market, punctuated by Monday's near-record fall, is costing the state's public pension funds billions of dollars. It's putting a strain on tax revenues – and could throw the just-passed state budget out of whack.

The aftershocks are being felt on the street level, too. Some real estate purchases are being postponed or canceled. Financiers are wondering if they'll be able to fund promising new tech companies.

Even businesses that are expanding are doing a double-take of sorts as they try to fathom Monday's 634.76-point drop in the

Dow Jones average, the worst sell-off in nearly three years. Monday was the first day of trading after Standard & Poor's downgraded the U.S. credit rating.

Read the whole story

Placer County embarking on consolidating community plans in basin

When it adopted the budget last fiscal year, the Placer County Board of Supervisors directed Planning Services staff to begin the process of updating community plans within the Lake Tahoe Basin.

There are nine County Community/General Plans within the basin. Most are joint planning documents between the county and Tahoe Regional Planning Agency adopted nearly 20 years ago.

TRPA is in the process of updating its Regional Plan, and all Community Plans within the basin must be consistent with that plan's update. Given the age of most of the county's plans, and the need for consistency between the two jurisdictions, the Planning Services Division believed it the appropriate time to update Placer County's nine Lake Tahoe Basin Community/General Plans, which are:

- * West Shore General Plan;
- * Tahoe City Area General Plan;
- * North Tahoe Area General Plan;

- * Tahoe City Community Plan;
- * Carnelian Bay Community Plan;
- * Tahoe Vista Community Plan;
- * Kings Beach Community Plan;
- * Kings Beach Industrial Community Plan; and
- * North Stateline Community Plan.

Placer County is proposing to consolidate its nine plans into one over-arching Tahoe Basin Community Plan with general policy guidance. As part of the Community Plan, four “Plan Areas” have been identified and delineated. The four Plan Areas will have separate, individually tailored zoning-design guidelines, which will be developed with community input.

Those plans include:

- * West Shore Plan Area, which runs from the El Dorado County line to the Sunnyside area;
- * Tahoe City Plan Area, which includes Tahoe City, Tahoe City Gateway, Lake Forest, and Dollar Hill;
- * North Tahoe West Plan Area, including Carnelian Bay and Tahoe Vista; and
- * North Tahoe East Plan Area, which covers the Kings Beach and Stateline community.

A significant part of the county’s overall work program for the Community Plan Update will be to conduct public outreach so community members and other interested parties have input on the new planning documents.

Burke Creek, Rabe Meadow plans moving forward

By Anne Knowles

MINDEN – Plans to reroute Burke Creek under Highway 50 are getting under way in the first phase of a long-term project to restore Rabe Meadow.

Douglas County Commissioners last week requested \$100,000 from the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency's Stream Environment Zone Fund to design the Burke Creek portion of the project. The request came after the TRPA board approved the money at its July 27 meeting.

The Nevada Tahoe Conservation District, which is overseeing the project, has sent a letter to half a dozen Lake Tahoe Basin environmental consulting firms asking for statements of qualifications, according to Mahmood Azad, principal engineer and fisheries biologist with the conservation district and previously the Douglas County engineer.



Burke Creek in
Stateline
carries tons
of sediment
into Lake

Tahoe.

Photos/Kathryn

Reed

The district will choose a firm from among those contacted and try to negotiate a contract in time to seek approval from its board of directors on Aug. 18, said Azad. The district hopes to have the project design completed by year-end and start work in 2012.

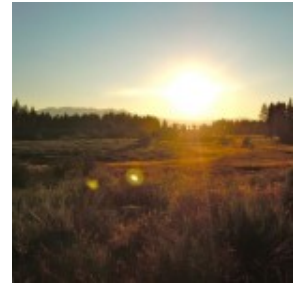
"It could go a long, long way to filtering water that comes off (Highway) 50 and go a long way to improve lake clarity," Azad said.

Currently, Burke Creek, which was relocated when an airport was built in Rabe Meadow in the 1940s, runs over Highway 50, collecting road sediment that ends up in Lake Tahoe.

Azad said the Burke Creek portion of the project is on a fast track, while the overall restoration of Rabe Meadow is on a slow track and could take up to a decade to complete. That will include removing nonnative grasses that were introduced to the meadow when it was used for grazing cattle as well as restoring the many springs that once flowed into the meadow.

"Sagebrush and pine trees are starting to encroach," Azad said. "Rabe Meadow is a filtration system and it is not functioning correctly."

The conservation district is now working with the U.S. Forest Service, which owns Rabe Meadow, to secure a \$300,000 grant for the restoration project, Azad said. Nevada Department of Transportation is also providing \$200,000 in funding. The \$600,000 in funding from the TRPA, NDOT and the USFS will cover the initial design of the project, Azad said. The total cost of the project will not be known until the master plan is completed as part of the design.



Rabe Meadow is part of the long-term restoration plans.

The project could reduce the Burke Creek area's sediment flow into the lake by as much as 85 percent to 95 percent, according to Azad. He added the exact amount is unknown because the project covers what he calls a subwatershed of a larger watershed.

"Wetlands, by their nature, if functioning properly, will take almost all sediment out," Azad said.

The area's restoration will also attract more wetlands avian and the raptors who prey on them as well as becoming a suitable breeding ground for the Lahontan cutthroat trout that are being continually released into the area's waters.

"The biggest positive impacts will be on the fisheries," said Azad.

The Stateline restoration project has been in the works for years, with the TRPA as the lead agency on the project starting in 2007. In 2009, TRPA published a report on Burke Creek restoration, funded with \$500,000 in Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act money. In the last year, Douglas County took over the role of lead agency.

The 4-mile creek runs through several private properties, including Sierra Colina, the single- and multi-residential project, which has been involved in the restoration work from

the start. The League to Save Lake Tahoe has stalled the project by filing a lawsuit.

In 2006, the developers undertook their own study, done by Northwest Hydraulic Consultants, to evaluate their parcel but also to give the TRPA, USFS and Douglas County engineering ideas, said Steve Kenninger who, with Gail Jaquish, owns the 18-acre Sierra Colina site.

Kenninger said he's not aware of the details of the conservation district's plans, but that he was fully supportive of the plans laid out in the design drawn up by Winzler & Kelly in the original TRPA study.

"Therefore, we are unaware of the nature or proposed design of the 'new' Burke Creek Restoration Project and are unable to specifically comment on that design, or whether any anticipated changes could conflict with the Sierra Colina project," Kenninger said in an email to *Lake Tahoe News*. "However, we reiterate Sierra Colina's support for a Burke Creek Restoration project being implemented, and Sierra Colina's continued desire to cooperate with the county."

Sierra Colina donated 10.7 acres of its parcel to Douglas County for public recreation and open space, and 2.4 acres of that is the area needed to conduct creek restoration on the property.

The creek also runs through Tahoe Beach Club, a 20-acre site for estate homes and condominiums at the end of Kahle Drive that is still a mobile home park.

"We're doing 2 acres of stream zone restoration ourselves, hopefully in cooperation with the agencies," said Tom Castaneda, vice president of Tahoe Beach Club. "We've spoken to the Forest Service, although we haven't talked to anyone in six or seven months. But we're very willing to be cooperative."

The restoration work was part of its environmental impact statement filed to gain approval from the TRPA for the development.

Approved three years ago, the Tahoe Beach Club is working to raise financing for the \$200 million project from private equity interests who are more prepared to invest in it than are the banks, Castaneda told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Burke Creek also runs through the property where the Nugget Building is located, but owner Chuck Bluth said he was unaware of the project and had not been contacted by anyone about it.

Nevada green businesses look to connect with schools

By Michael Martinez, Reno Gazette-Journal

The Washoe County School District is facing a \$50 million budget deficit this year. Will greening the operations of the school district erode that revenue shortfall? Probably not.

But what a handful of projects might do is jump-start the district's mandate to get students prepared for green jobs that the region is eager to develop.

One of the engines to this effort is Envirolution Inc., a company that said it wants to grow green job training and related community outreach programs, develop leadership academies and K-12 education programs with a focus on STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) and develop green economy professional curricula for those who will teach it.

“Our whole angle is, we look to empower students to pursue green jobs and want to be green business leaders,” said Alex Gamboa, founder/CEO of Envirolution. “So, we educate students about energy efficiency, sustainability and energy auditing as it pertains to any building. That’s what it pertains to: the fundamental basic about conserving energy, whether it be in your home, your small business or your school. On a very fundamental level, all these buildings are very similar: They all use energy in the same way.”

The conduit for schools is called Project Recharge and thus far, Envirolution has worked with Rainshadow Charter School, Hug High School and Dilworth Middle School, which is one of Washoe County’s STEM academies.

Read the whole story

Geothermal cluster growth in N. Nevada

By Jason Hidalgo, Reno Gazette-Journal

When Ormat Technologies Inc. first set up shop in Northern Nevada in 1984, geothermal development activity was about as hot as a lukewarm glass of tap water.

“I think we maybe had one or two more geothermal developers back then,” said Paul Thomsen, Ormat’s director of policy and business development. “Today, the number is something like 11 operators and developers in the area. It’s the largest concentration in the nation by far.”

Incidentally, having a concentration of businesses in one

location is the first prerequisite in the formation of the prized business cluster.

Advantages from clusters include faster sector growth due to the easier exchange of information, expertise and talent. Many geothermal companies in the area, for example, count former Ormat employees among their executive ranks and resource teams. Clusters also lead to the creation of a strong support system that includes suppliers, vendors, trade associations and even academia – further accelerating growth.

With international geothermal players such as Ormat and Geothermal Development Associates calling the area home – along with the arrival of aspiring up-and-comers such as Gradient Resources – Northern Nevada is now ground zero for arguably the most dynamic geothermal cluster in the nation. In addition to major developers, Northern Nevada also has a diverse supporting cast that includes equipment manufacturers, material suppliers, surveyors and researchers.

Northern Nevada's geothermal cluster was highlighted by the Geothermal Energy Association's (GEA) selection of Reno as the site for its first ever National Geothermal Summit, which occurs later this month.

Add the University of Nevada, Reno's selection as the host of the first-ever National Geothermal Academy program in the country this summer and Northern Nevada's steamy clout appears even more impressive.

Read the whole story