

South Shore rec measure headed for Nov. ballot

By Kathryn Reed

Righteous, ridiculous, right-on, responsible. Plenty of people have a special way of defining the R in Measure R. The board that on Wednesday voted to put it on the November ballot believes R stands for recreation.

The R is replacing Measure S – which stood for sports when South Shore voters approved it in 2000.



Youths play on the soccer field built with Measure S money.

Photo/Kathryn Reed

The problem with Measure S is that the money collected – \$18 from single-family residences until 2030 – was never going to be enough to build all the things outlined in it. It calls for an ice rink, three ball fields and maintenance of bike trails built after 2000.

The ice rink is in, a soccer field by Lake Tahoe Community College is done and the few miles of bike trails that have been built have money for future maintenance.

The other issue with Measure S is a land's capability assessment was not done. Even if there were money to build fields, the land doesn't exist to do so.

Proponents say Measure S is being tweaked to better address today's needs. That means using money to upgrade established ball fields, and improving bike trails developed pre-2000.

Opponents say the measure is taking the growing pot of money for bike trail maintenance and diverting it to ball fields. Some of these people would like the measure written so all bike trails could use the money – with no money for ball field maintenance per the original language of Measure S.

Fifteen people gave heartfelt, emotional and factual testimony – some twice – during the 2½-hour meeting July 13 of the joint powers authority board at Lake Tahoe Community College.

The board had spent 150 minutes meeting July 1 as well.

Apparently, that's how long it takes for these three to essentially vote on one item. While most boards don't spend the public's time tirelessly going over typos in a document, this one does.

El Dorado County Supervisor Norma Santiago, South Lake Tahoe City Councilman Hal Cole and Tahoe Paradise Park board member Deborah Henderson make up the JPA board.

The substantive changes made to the resolution that had been in circulation include:

- Eliminating specific dates regarding when the ball field or bike entities get money via R.
- Having the ball field and bike advisory committees that will be appointed by the JPA board, if R passes, be made up of three to seven individuals.

This is the Measure R resolution the board adopted. This is

what will appear in ballot documents. Eleven years ago the full resolution of S was not in the ballot document, though it did exist and is known as Resolution 06.

The JPA board will meet July 29 at 9am at Lake Tahoe Airport to work out language for the ballot argument. This is the board's annual meeting as well. Criteria for the advisory commissions will be discussed, too.

Pro and con statements for the ballot must be submitted to the county election's department by Aug. 1. This is why the board has a meeting set for Aug. 10 in case it wants to submit a rebuttal by the Aug. 11 deadline if anyone opposes the measure.

To be on the email list regarding Measure R, send an email to rkupton@aol.com asking to be added.

The board also at one of the next two meetings could decide to not go forward with Measure R. The overriding reason not to go forward would be the cost of the election. While the board has allocated \$35,000 for the election, that amount could go up depending on what other entities are on the ballot. People can start pulling papers July 18 for offices in El Dorado County.

CSU hikes tuition, boost president's salary

Publisher's note: *Find out who the 100 highest paid employees in the CSU system are.*

By Laurel Rosenhall, Sacramento Bee

Minutes after voting to raise student tuition by 12 percent

for the fall, California State University trustees on Tuesday decided the salary for a new campus president should be \$100,000 greater than his predecessor's.

Lt. Gov. Gavin Newsom, a board member who voted against both the tuition increase and the compensation package, told his colleagues that the university would damage its public image by raising salary and tuition on the same day.

"I caution us today with these two decisions and I feel compelled to make this point," Newsom said. "There are plenty of people watching, and people we need as supporters."

The tuition increase adds an additional 12 percent on top of a 10 percent increase approved last year. Combined, the two increases bring undergraduate tuition at CSU's 23 campuses to \$5,472 a year.

That's an increase of about 23 percent compared with last year, and does not include campus-based fees that average \$950 a year.

Read the whole story

El Dorado County supes' redistricting causes discord

By Carlos Alcalá, Sacramento Bee

El Dorado County supervisors picked a map in June to form the basis of new supervisorial districts, but that decision has a hazy future.

Approved on a split 3-2 vote, that tentative map is facing

second thoughts and growing discontent – especially from organized groups on the increasingly powerful west side of the county.

The map approved in June is not a final decision, said Mike Applegarth, a spokesman for the county.

However, he said, “it’s significantly narrowed.”

The supervisors looked at five possible options in April.

After that, county staff took input from public sessions and written comments to redraw districts.

The map they drew was probably the least radical of the options.

“I feel the supervisors are trying to keep as much of the old districts as possible,” said John Raslear, with the Four Seasons Civic League in El Dorado Hills.

To activists in El Dorado Hills, the old isn’t a good thing.

Read the whole story

LTCC grant designed to prepare students for college

By Kathryn Reed

Bridging the education divide is what a \$230,000 grant awarded Lake Tahoe Community College is designed to do.



Tom Greene, vice president of Academic Affairs and Student Services, told the college board July 12 about the money that will be coming to the South Lake Tahoe school for the next five years.

The college will hire two employees for this coming school year. One will work at South Tahoe Middle School and the other at South Tahoe High School.

"It's exactly the direction we need to go as a community," Greene told the board.

He said Lake Tahoe Unified officials were in support of the college going after the grant. The idea is to reach 500 students to help them be ready for high school and then college.

"The grant is focused on low-income and first generation college students," Greene said.

Greene anticipates many of those who qualify for the tutoring and specialized help will be Hispanic. College officials at the February strategic planning session identified the need to better reach the Hispanic community. The grant will help achieve that goal.

Parent involvement through workshops is another component of the grant.

Greene believes developing a stronger partnership with LTUSD will help everyone.

In other action:

- It was noted cash will continue to flow because the state passed its budget – which means no need to borrow money.
- This was President Kindred Murillo's first meeting. She

said, "I feel like I'm home."

- The Aug. 23 board meeting has been canceled. In its place is the Aug. 19 board retreat.
 - At a future meeting the board will be asked to develop a policy about alcohol on campus. Now it is allowed for instruction and at fundraisers. Those limitations may hamper the Snowball Festival the college and city officials are trying to plan.
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Feds: Pot has no medicinal benefits

By John Hoeffel, Los Angeles Times

Marijuana has been approved by California, many other states and the nation's capital to treat a range of illnesses, but in a decision announced Friday the federal government ruled that it has no accepted medical use and should remain classified as a highly dangerous drug like heroin.

The decision comes almost nine years after medical marijuana supporters asked the government to reclassify cannabis to take into account a growing body of worldwide research that shows its effectiveness in treating certain diseases, such as glaucoma and multiple sclerosis.

Advocates for the medical use of the drug criticized the ruling but were elated that the Obama administration has finally acted, which allows them to appeal to the federal courts. The decision to deny the request was made by the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration and comes less than two months

after advocates asked the U.S. Court of Appeals to force the administration to respond to their petition.

“We have foiled the government’s strategy of delay, and we can now go head-to-head on the merits,” said Joe Elford, the chief counsel for Americans for Safe Access and the lead attorney on the lawsuit.

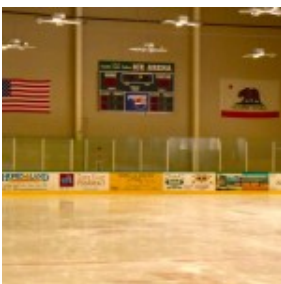
Read the whole story

South Tahoe gives ice rink keys to private operator

By Kathryn Reed

Skating on financial thin ice is exactly what South Lake Tahoe hopes to stop doing by turning over operation of the city’s ice arena to private operators.

The City Council on July 12 awarded Tahoe Sports and Entertainment, a private corporation run by Chris Cefalu of South Lake Tahoe and Van Oleson of Stateline, a 10-year contract to operate the 9-year-old facility.



South Tahoe's ice rink will be operated by

a private firm
starting Aug.
1. Photo/LTN
file

The city recently has been losing about \$100,000 a year on the slab of ice that was built with taxpayer money through the 2000 voter-approved Measure S. It's estimated during the life of the initial contract the city will save \$1.5 million.

The contract begins Aug. 1. This is the first time the city has turned one of its assets over to a private concessionaire. But it is something that goes on in government all the time. Just look at the U.S. Forest Service using California Land Management to operate some of its venues in the Lake Tahoe Basin.

The ice rink agreement calls for Tahoe Sports and Entertainment to pay the city \$2,000 a month for the first year; \$3,000 month after that. Beginning Oct. 1, 2012, 3 percent of gross revenue above \$600,000 will be the city's; with it capping at 5 percent starting Oct. 1, 2014.

The \$600,000 figure came about because that is what the city has grossed in the past few years, City Manager Tony O'Rourke said.

The operators will also pay all utilities.

Cefalu and Oleson use the rink regularly as hockey players. Their key investor is Shelly Zimbler, a former executive with Procter & Gamble. His wife, Naomi, is involved in the figure skating world.

Oleson told the council what is missing is creating the Tahoe identity when it comes to the ice. The new operators intend to boost all aspects of the rink – hockey, figure skating, and public skate.

"You have a jewel. It just needs to be shined up a bit," Cefalu said.

Oleson pointed to how Lake Placid capitalized on its Olympic miracle on ice. He pointed out how Squaw Valley had the first miracle in 1960. That hockey spirit is what they intend to bring to the South Shore, noting that ice hockey participation in California has grown by 240 percent since the Anaheim Ducks and San Jose Sharks became part of the NHL.

South Tahoe's sheet of ice meets NHL requirements. One day there will likely be another sheet of ice. That addition is in the operators' long-term plans.

Initially, about \$300,000 is intended to be infused into the facility to upgrade the concession stand – which includes having a beer and wine license – and to buy a conversion kit, according to Zimble.

The kit would allow another surface to be put on the ice so the arena could be used for more than ice sports. Indoor soccer is what company officials envision being a big draw.

Soccer is a big sport on the South Shore. Ice hockey is not something Hispanics tend to play, as evidenced by the NHL only having two Hispanic players. Cefalu said he'd like to see soccer players take an interest in hockey.

The length of the contract had some council members squirming, but in the end they all agreed to the deal. One caveat is the city can get out of the deal in 90 days, while the operators must give six months notice.

Part of the reason for the decade-long contract is so the group can make some money and then perhaps midway through start thinking about building another sheet of ice. This is part of the bigger plan for what was originally known as the 56-acre project – which is what Lakeview Commons on the other side of Highway 50 is part of.

The project is likely to cost more than \$4 million. Zimbler was honest with the council in when that might get built.

“We would not build it under the current agreement. We would come back in year four or five before we spend \$4 million,” he said, “because if the lease expires, it’s technically yours.”

With the contract just being signed, immediate changes are not known. However, increasing fees will not be one of them. In fact, to increase use fees, the city must first review, though not approve, them. Cefalu said he could see some rates coming down as a way to get people in the doors.

Before this transaction occurred, city officials said ice areana employees would have other jobs within the city. It is not known how many people Tahoe Sport and Entertainment will hire or for what positions.

Other things from the council meeting:

- Expect the Aug. 2 meeting to be long – the marijuana cultivation ordinance, discussion about being a charter city, and the possibility of asking voters to decide the pension issue – are all slated to be on the agenda.
- Councilmembers Angela Swanson and Claire Fortier are working behind the scenes for the city to have more of a presence at the annual environmental summit next month in Homewood.
- The Aug. 16 meeting was moved to Aug. 23 so councilmembers may attend the summit.
- Two lobbyist firms were hired to give the city more political clout.
- More than 140 properties will have liens put on them to collect nearly \$90,000 in unpaid South Tahoe Refuse fees.

Fatal big-rig accident shuts Hwy. 50 for several hours

Publisher's note: Highway 50 reopened at 11:44pm July 12.

Highway 50 leading to South Lake Tahoe is closed at Sly Park because of a fatal accident involving a big-rig.

The name of the truck driver is not being released until next of kin is notified. He was from Missouri and in his 40s.

Diesel has reported spilled across all lanes of traffic, with environmental cleanup crews called to the scene.

The California Highway Patrol is expecting the road open about 11pm.

The accident occurred about 4:40pm July 12 when the truck driver, who was headed west, apparently lost his brakes, hit a pickup and both vehicles went into the embankment, authorities report.

The extent of the pickup driver's injuries was not available.

Traffic was being diverted onto Mormon Emigrant Trail and to Highway 88.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

DA's office releasing Dugard-Garrido documents

El Dorado County District Attorney Vern Pierson has released many of the documents and videos used in the Diane Sawyer interview with Jaycee Lee Dugard that aired on ABC July 10.

While various media outlets have sought release of various documents surrounding the investigation through Public Records Acts requests, they have come in bits and pieces. The latest documents pertaining to the kidnap and rape of the South Lake Tahoe youngster – who is now 31 – were released July 12.

They include a video of a parole officer searching Phillip and Nancy Garrido's residence, two video clips showing some of the Garridos' activities videotaping children in public, a map of South Lake Tahoe showing Garrido victims known to law enforcement prior to the abduction of Dugard, and additional documents.

The press release is the easiest way to access all of them.

An Aug. 3 meeting in Sacramento spearheaded by Pierson and state Sen. Ted Gaines is scheduled to work on ways to change the parole system.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Why judges reinstated paroles

for murderers; including one in El Dorado County

By Denny Walsh, Sacramento Bee

There were some raised eyebrows recently when a generally conservative state Court of Appeal in Sacramento reversed former Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger and reinstated paroles for three murderers, one from Butte County, one from Amador County and another from El Dorado County.

But a closer look shows such decisions are now for the most part business as usual in California's appellate courts.

At work is a different legal standard for the release of these so-called "lifers," which was mandated by the California Supreme Court in 2008.

Schwarzenegger did not adhere to that new standard, and scores of appeals that grew out of his intransigence "are now making their way through the courts," said Oakland attorney Keith Wattley.

The state attorney general's office, which defends against these challenges, ignored a request for comment. And the office of Gov. Jerry Brown failed to respond to a request for comment from the governor, who since he came to office in January has deferred to the Board of Parole Hearings in most cases.

"In the old days it would have been a headline," said Wattley, referring to the three decisions within 10 days by the 3rd District Court of Appeal in Sacramento. "It's not unusual any more."

Wattley, whose practice is devoted almost entirely to lifers' bids for parole, said, "The board and the governor used to

decide these cases solely on historical facts, mainly the circumstances of the crime. In 2008, the (state) Supreme Court said, 'Stop making decisions based on factors that have nothing to do with public safety.'

"Now," he said, "there has to be some evidence that the inmate remains dangerous."

Read the whole story

Assistance to pay power bills reduced for Nevadans

By Sean Whaley, Nevada News Bureau

CARSON CITY — Thousands of Nevada residents who rely on financial assistance to pay their power bills likely won't get help this year because of federal funding cuts, a state agency reported Tuesday.

Miki Allard, staff specialist with the Division of Welfare and Supportive Services, said federal funding for Nevada's Energy Assistance Program will amount to \$4 million this year, down from \$15.8 million in the fiscal year that ended June 30.

While the funding provided by Nevada utility customers through the universal energy charge on their bills will remain relatively steady at \$8.7 million, the anticipated decline in federal assistance has forced the agency to reduce both eligibility levels and the amount of assistance that can be provided, she said.

The income threshold for eligibility this year will be 110 percent of poverty levels, compared to 150 percent last year,

Allard said. Thousands of Nevadans will lose eligibility because of this change.

The amount of support will also be reduced to about \$500 this year compared to \$860 a year ago.

The reductions come as demand has increased, from 21,900 households being helped in fiscal year 2009, to 27,500 in fiscal year 2010 and 32,600 households last fiscal year.

“These cuts in federal funding will have a significant effect on Nevada families struggling with the highest unemployment rate in the nation,” Romaine Gilliland, administrator for the Division of Welfare and Supportive Services, said. “For many families the assistance we are able to provide will not be enough to keep the lights on.”