LTCC picks president with business background

By Kathryn Reed

Whoops of approval and applause followed the announcement this morning that Kindred Murillo will be the next president of Lake Tahoe Community College.

“She has a very strong fiscal background, which is what we need,” board President Fritz Wenck told *Lake Tahoe News*.



Kindred Murillo

He said Murillo was the universal pick among the board, staff and faculty.

It was evident by the reaction by the more than dozen people at the May 19 special board meeting that the board had picked their favorite of the four finalists.

Wenck said one thing that impressed everyone is Murillo’s experience is not limited to academia. She spent 13 years at Southern California Edison in several management positions. She was also on the City Council for Yucca Valley and the town’s first mayor.

Murillo is currently vice chancellor for the Contra Costa Community College District, which has three colleges.

She started her community college career at Desert Community College District as a faculty member. She became vice president of Administrative Services at Pasadena Area Community College.

Murillo will be the fourth full-time president of the two-year college. Steve Maradian has been interim president this school year.

The contract is still being negotiated. It is expected to be voted on at the board's regular May 24 meeting. Murillo is expected to start work July 1.

South Lake Tahoe's finances beginning to stabilize

By Kathryn Reed

Compared to a year ago, South Lake Tahoe is doing better financially.

For the first half of the fiscal year that started Oct. 1, the general fund revenue is up 3.2 percent or $344,936 compared to the same time last year. Expenses are down 4.2 percent or $628,446.

Finance Director Christine Vuletich said the reduction in expenses has to do with fewer people on the pay roll.

While the ski season was good and would be reflected in

transient occupancy taxes, she reminded the City Council on Tuesday the bulk of TOT comes in the busier summer season.

Councilmember Angela Swanson pulled the item from the May 17 consent agenda because she wants more analysis and depth put into the documents given to the council so everyone has a sense of the city's financial health.

Looking at trends is not something South Lake Tahoe's finance department has done in the past, but it is going to have to do going forward – partly because of how the Business Plan is being written, partly because the council wants it.

Swanson also asked how Gov. Jerry Brown's May revise to the state budget would impact South Lake Tahoe. Vuletich said she had not reviewed the governor's numbers so therefore had no idea what it means for the city.

El Dorado County town ripe for massive wildfire

By Phillip Reese, Sacramento Bee

Look down from a hill over Cameron Park, and you mostly see a lush canopy of trees. The trees conceal the 7,600 homes there, homes they shade, cool – and threaten.

"It just looks like a carpet," said Cal Fire Battalion Chief Mike Webb. "When you add up all the conditions and lots, we certainly have a recipe for a bad day."

Cameron Park sits on land that Cal Fire – the state Department of Forestry and Fire Protection – deems highly hazardous for wildfire, and it is a focal point as officials prepare for the

imminent fire season. A plant preserve full of wildfire fuel overlooks the town 35 miles east of Sacramento.

Despite those risks, the number of homes in Cameron Park grew 30 percent during the last decade, largely during the construction boom.

The rest of the region also built heavily in wildfire hazard zones, adding about 17,000 homes to risky areas from 2000 to 2010, according to a Bee analysis of new census figures, housing permits and fire hazard maps.

While much of the growth occurred in suburbs like Cameron Park, homes also went up in the hinterlands. Builders in Grizzly Flats and Happy Valley, two El Dorado County communities far from population areas but close to thick national forest, erected 140 houses during the past decade.

In the North Upper Truckee area near Lake Tahoe, developers added 60 homes just before the Angora Fire ripped through in 2007, causing massive damage.

Read the whole story

South Tahoe registered sex offender back behind bars

While South Tahoe police officers conducted a follow-up investigation to the registered sex offender who was outside the city ice rink Monday, they discovered he had not registered where he is currently residing.

Joseph Scanino was arrested May 18 on a felony charge of violating his mandatory sex registration obligation.

Scanio is a registered sex offender on federal probation for possession of child pornography.



Joseph Scanio

Scanio lives in the 2000 block of Wyoming Avenue. In June 2010 he had reported he was living at a different residence in South Lake Tahoe. At that time Scanio signed an acknowledgement that he was aware of his legal obligation to update his registration within five days of changing his residence address. Scanio failed to comply with this obligation.

This felony charge is separate from, and in addition to, any violation of Scanio's federal probation status. That matter will be pursued by federal probation. It is also separate from the prior request SLTPD has made for the District Attorney's Office to review the matter for a possible violation of a local city ordinance which prohibits registered sex offenders living in restricted areas or from being present at specified locations.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

73 grams of heroin found in South Tahoe house, 2 arrested

By Kathryn Reed

Two people were arrested and 73.3 grams of heroin were confiscated in what law enforcement is calling a substantial bust in South Lake Tahoe.

“This is a very significant amount for this area. We are seeing a lot of heroin coming in from Reno into the area,” said Jeff Catchings, commander with South Lake El Dorado Narcotics Enforcement Team.

Arrested May 11 at their house on Fresno Street were Alberto Vierboom, 36, and Heidi Kanes, 30.

Catchings described the scene as a “heroin den” with needles all over the place.

Vierboom tried to jump out a back window, but was stopped by officers outside. He then struggled with narcotics officers on a floor filled with needles before being apprehended, Catchings said.

Vierboom faces felony counts of possession and sales of narcotics, along with resisting arrest and maintaining a house for drug use. Kanes faces charges stemming from maintaining a house for drug use.

A third arrest is likely, according to Catchings.

The amount of heroin equated to 2,300 hits with a street value of $11,000.

“Drug use is always prevalent in poorer parts of society and Tahoe is not any different,” Catchings said. “It comes in waves and we’re riding the wave of heroin right now.”

Vierboom and Kanes remained in custody May 18.

El Dorado County redistricting likely to impact Tahoe

By Kathryn Reed

El Dorado County residents are being asked to weigh-in on five proposals that would reconfigure how the supervisorial districts are laid out.

This occurs every 10 years when Census data is released. The point is to have equal number of constituents in each district. This is the law. However, El Dorado County circumvented that requirement in 2000 by sticking with the Lake Tahoe portion of the county being a district unto itself.

"The board was very adamant about keeping communities together, e.g. one part of Cameron Park should not be in a different district than another. Residents in Meeks Bay and Fallen Leaf Lake see themselves as part of the Tahoe basin community, not part of Georgetown, Cool, etc., which is what would happen if District V was split," Supervisor Norma Santiago wrote to South Tahoe officials. She is Tahoe's rep on the Board of Supervisors – District V. "Likewise, people from Pollock Pines and Grizzly Flat do not feel that their communities are part of the basin which either both or one or the other is include in the maps as part of District V. In other words, District V would extend to either include Pollock

Pines and/or Grizzly Flat. I am not in favor of either splitting the district nor extending its boundaries to include the aforementioned communities.”

With the population totals swaying more heavily toward the West Slope because more people live there and fewer reside in the basin, it’s possible Tahoe will either be part of a larger district or have two supervisors representing it.

South Lake Tahoe City Council members discussed the issue briefly at the May 17 meeting. Though no vote was taken, the members are split with some thinking one person from Tahoe representing the area is better, and others saying two voices would be better.

The county is sponsoring a redistricting meeting May 19 from 6-8pm at Lake Tahoe Airport.

South Tahoe electeds hope to make a formal recommendation to the Board of Supervisors after hearing what is said Thursday night and then voting at a June meeting.

The county is expected to take action in June.

South Tahoe on course to change how it does business

By Kathryn Reed

South Lake Tahoe is taking a different course of action than ever before. It plans to implement its approved strategic plan.

“If you don’t develop an action plan and then fund it, the

plan sits on the shelf. And that's why so many strategic plans fail," Nancy Kerry, the city's spokeswoman, explained after the May 17 council meeting.

During the City Council's afternoon work session, City Manager Tony O'Rourke went over the business plan. This is the final document for the council to approve in order to get the city on track and functioning better. It's expected to be adopted at the June 7 meeting.

The strategic plan and five-year financial plan were approved earlier this year. They are components of this bigger plan.

"The business plan is the culmination of a comprehensive process undertaken by the city staff at the beginning of 2011 to evaluate community needs and interests and identify the key strategic priorities to move the community and city organization forward," O'Rourke wrote in the introduction to the council.

In the next 18 months the city intends to achieve measurable goals. That is one of the unique aspects to this. Employees – from department head to the bottom rung – will be held accountable.

"What is different with this plan is we identified what we are doing, what our core services are," Kerry told *Lake Tahoe News*. "This links performance measures to every initiative."

It's not that the city intends to implement a ton of new things. Part of the process in developing the business plan included assessing what works, what doesn't, what can be improved upon, what to eliminate and what to initiate.

To create a better business climate the city intends to create a business resource center. O'Rourke called it "one-stop shopping" to get things done "much more expeditiously."

Quarterly reports will be presented to the council starting in October. Each fall the city will present a state of the city report to the community. Progress reports on the strategic and business plans will be included.

When the city's revamped website is up this summer it will include an electronic newsletter to let the public know what is going on – especially in terms of achieving goals in the strategic plan.

One goal of O'Rourke's is to create more events to generate income via hotel room and sales taxes. He mentioned bringing a juried art show to Ski Run Marina in August and working with Heavenly Mountain Resort to host an adventure race Labor Day weekend.

However, Councilman Tom Davis took issue with the city being so proactive, instead wanting to defer to Lake Tahoe Visitors Authority to handle the bulk of the events. Davis is the city's rep to the LTVA board.

But Carol Chaplin, executive director of LTVA, has repeatedly said publicly and to this reporter that her group is about helping with events, not being the lead organization.

"We have more resources," O'Rourke said in response to Davis' contention that LTVA should be in charge of events. "They don't have the staff to do events."

O'Rourke called the LTVA a marketing group.

When it comes to fiscal sustainability, O'Rourke said, "We will develop a financial trend monitoring system. We want more early warning information about our finances."

This is practically revolutionary for a city that has for decades been reactive to the economy instead of in-line or proactive.

Another component of the business plan that is being finalized

is an asset inventory. This includes land in stream environmental zones owned by the city, tourist accommodation units and commercial floor area.

“We have tangible assets we can sell. We want to make sure we inventory it and treat it as a bank account,” O’Rourke said.

In other action the council:

• Agreed to transfer eight parcels under purview of the Redevelopment Agency to the city to ward off a land grab from the state. The transfer does not include the parking garage, transit center near Stateline, or common areas at Heavenly Village.

• Unanimously passed the medical marijuana ordinance. Enforcement begins at the end of the year. Next up is to devise an ordinance allowing dispensaries to grow the crop.

• Approved the General Plan update and related environmental document.

• Learned four bids have been submitted to operate the South Lake Tahoe Ice Arena. The council is expected to choose one of the four (Robert Perkol, South Lake Tahoe park supervisor; I.C.E. of Alameda; Tahoe Sport and Entertainment; Rink Management Services Corporation) at the June 7 meeting.

• Will consider at its next meeting who will be the representative to the California-based chamber of commerce because Davis is stepping down after having a run-in JoAnn Conner.

Injured motorists in 7-car crash identified

Troopers from the Nevada Highway Patrol are still piecing together the seven-vehicle crash that happened on Highway 395 near Jacks Valley Road in Douglas County on Monday afternoon.

The accident happened shortly after 1pm when a yellow 2001 Freightliner tractor pulling an empty 53-foot trailer, driven by 38-year-old Martin L. Preciado of Barstow failed to stop the commercial motor vehicle safely behind other southbound vehicles that were stopped for the red traffic signal light at Jacks Valley Road.

Preciado applied the brakes and slammed into the rear of a green 1992 Honda Civic two-door that was in the left of the two southbound lanes, driven by 50-year-old Miguel E. Nunez of Reno. Nunez was airlifted from the scene by Care Flight to Renown Regional Medical Center for injuries labeled as critical. His current medical condition was not available.

The big-rig also slammed into the rear of a green 1995 Ford Explorer, driven by 55-year-old Carlin M. Kempton of Gardnerville that was in the right lane adjacent to the Honda Civic. Riding in the SUV with Kempton were her mother and son; 81-year-old Billie M. Hawks of Gardnerville, and 26-year-old Jonathan H. Kempton. Kempton was airlifted to Carson Tahoe Hospital while her mother was flown to Renown Regional Medical Center. Jonathon Kempton was driven by another family member from the scene to Carson Tahoe Hospital.

Kempton and her son have been released from the hospital and her mother has been upgraded to fair condition at Renown.

The other injury reported in the seven-vehicle collision involving a total of eleven motorists was a claimed injury by Judith D. Marek, 71, of Carson City. She was the right front

passenger riding in the silver 2001 Buick four-door sedan driven by her husband, Claude E. Marek. She and her husband were able to drive away from the scene.

The other involved vehicles included a gold colored 2008 BMW X5 driven by Laurel Champlin, 53, of Carson City, a white 2008 International dump truck driven by Terry L. Edis, 56, of Gardnerville, a 2004 black Chevrolet van driven by 30-year-old Ryan McElfish, and his passenger, David P. Candia, 33, both from Carson City.

The collision resulted in both southbound lanes to be closed for more than four hours.

Witnesses to the collision are encouraged to contact Trooper Mike Stapledon at (775) 689.4623 or Trooper Jennifer Stewart at the NHP Carson City substation at (775) 684.7280.

Sex offender outside ice rink raises concerns

A registered sex offender was found loitering near the South Lake Tahoe Ice Arena on May 16 – a place heavily frequented by children.

Officers were alerted to the situation when a citizen called in a report of a suspicious person.

The man was not arrested.

However, officers said they submitted paperwork to the office of federal probation because they believe this to be a violation of the man’s probation conditions. The case has also been delivered to the local District Attorney’s Office with a

request for review regarding a possible violation of a local city ordinance which prohibits registered sex offenders living in restricted areas or from being present at specified locations.

The identity of local sex offenders is available online and then searching by a variety of query options including name, ZIP code, city or county.

The Megan's Law website reveals 33 registered sex offenders living in South Lake Tahoe.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Brown's budget – schools spared, redevelopment agencies out

By Kevin Yamamura, Sacramento Bee

With state revenues rising, Gov. Jerry Brown reframed his call for tax extensions Monday, saying they are still necessary to help the state whittle down an accumulated "wall of debt."

The Democratic governor announced that California can count on $6.6 billion in surprise tax revenues through June 2012, thanks to more money flowing into state coffers this year and a higher growth expectation for next year.

The deficit has shrunk to $9.6 billion against a current $91.6 billion spending plan, thanks to earlier cuts in health and welfare and the new cash.

But Brown still wants to maintain a higher tax rate on sales and vehicles, as well as a smaller income tax credit for dependents over five additional years.

He also wants to reinstate a 0.25 percent income-tax surcharge in 2012 for four years, while eliminating it for 2011. The governor wants all subject to voter approval “as soon as possible.”

Schools, which had been bracing for doomsday cuts, now stand to gain $3 billion more than they are getting this year.

Read the whole story