# Broc’s Puppy Store owner to be arraigned in May

**By Kathryn Reed**

The owner of the much-maligned and now defunct Broc’s Puppy Store in South Lake Tahoe is scheduled to be arraigned May 16 in El Dorado County Superior Court.

Dennis Franks was in court this month. He was unable to continue to retain John Castellanos as his attorney, so a public defender may be appointed. However, with what may be a six-month trial, the court may pick another option when it comes to legal counsel because the staffing situation is such that one attorney could not devote that much time to one case, according to legal sources.




Franks is charged with 65 felony counts of grand theft by false pretense, 27 felony counts of forgery, one felony count of grand theft and a slew of misdemeanor charges.

During the short time the pet store was open numerous complaints were filed, Animal Control raided the shop, customers complained of buying sick dogs – some of which died, and others called it a puppy mill.

According to El Dorado County Assistant District Attorney Hans Uthe, Franks is blaming his now-deceased father for his problems. The elder Franks died about three weeks ago.

Franks is out on his own recognizance. Uthe said if he thought Franks would set up another store like Broc’s, he would have insisted a bail amount be set before he could have gotten out of jail.

It is possible based on scheduling the case will be moved to Placerville.

The South Lake Tahoe and Carson City Broc's stores closed in April 2010.

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# Lahontan board on road to allow chemicals in Lake Tahoe

**By Kathryn Reed**

Milfoil is a problem weed that will be allowed to continue to flourish in 2011. But 2012 could be a different story.

On Wednesday night the Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board heard a presentation on the Pesticide Basin Plan Amendment that would allow chemicals to be used on a limited basis in Lake Tahoe to eradicate aquatic invasive species.

The rules currently on the books are being violated because the water board knows vector control is spraying for mosquito abatement in the Lake Tahoe Basin. In the southern part of the state, which Lahontan has jurisdiction over, water purveyors are applying chemicals.



Milfoil has been a problem

in Lake Tahoe since the 1980s. Photo/TRCD

Bringing people into compliance is not the driving force behind creating the amendment, but a bonus.

The reason staff believes the amendment is needed is for public health and safety, as well as ecological preservation. Environmental scientists Dan Sussman and Mary Fiore-Wagner made the presentation to the board at the April 13 meeting at Lake Tahoe Community College. (The two-day meeting resumes this morning at 8:30 at LTCC in South Lake Tahoe.)

“The long-term benefits to the environment outweigh the impacts of allowing some degradation to occur,” Fiore-Wagner said.

Ten people spoke during the public hearing – mostly in favor of using pesticides and herbicides. However, most were also from the Tahoe Keys area of South Lake Tahoe, which has had an issue with milfoil clogging the canals for decades.

The Keys contingent said the problem with mechanically getting rid of milfoil is that it keeps growing back – much like mowing a lawn. Plus, the invasive aquatic species grows in warm areas like the Keys (and Emerald Bay).

Jeff Pylman, Nevada County agricultural commissioner, said he liked staff’s proposed tiered approach to the process.

“A lot of pesticides have been so robust they rise to the level you need pesticides to eradicate them,” Pylman said.

The idea is not to universally allow the application of pesticides or herbicides in Lahontan’s jurisdiction, but instead put the applicant through a rigorous process to convince staff and the board that this alternative is the only

way to get ride of the harmful species and that the long-term benefits outweigh living with the status quo.

The Tahoe Area Sierra Club and League to Save Lake Tahoe each wrote letters this week to Lahontan saying what a horrible idea the amendment is.

“The long-term impacts are unknown and the public benefit is unknown. This is an experiment with no limits,” the Sierra Club wrote.

Neither group had a representative at the meeting.

Also in opposition, but who attended the meeting and spoke, was Madonna Dunbar, executive director of the Tahoe Water Suppliers Association.

Her group represents the entities around the lake that use Lake Tahoe as a drinking water source.

She pointed out that of the 160,000 water purveyors in the United States, 60 have received exemptions from the EPA saying they don’t have to filter the water. Six of those are part of her group. Dunbar fears allowing chemicals into the lake will jeopardize that status.

Board Chairman Jack Clarke is sensitive to her concerns, but overall believes the amendment “is a step in the right direction.”

Executive Director Harold Singer added, “We wouldn’t want to do something and the EPA pulls the exemption.”

Staff has time to investigate that issue. Another public hearing will be at the May 11 meeting in Victorville. People have until May 13 to comment on the amendment. More information about the amendment can be found online.

The Lahontan board is expected to vote on the amendment at the October meeting. It it’s approved, it would go to the state

board in March 2012, to the Office of Administrative Law the next month, and be before the EPA in June.

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# Fitch Ratings lists LTUSD as stable

Fitch Ratings has affirmed Lake Tahoe Unified School District's general obligation bonds as follows:

• $25.3 million outstanding GOs, Election of 1999, series A and B, and GO refunding bonds, series 2002 and 2005 at 'AA-'.

The rating outlook is stable.

Rating rationale:

• The AA rating reflects the district's currently sound financial operations, exhibited by a good financial cushion, prudent actions to reduce expenditures, projections for balanced financial operations by fiscal 2013, and a good degree of remaining expenditure flexibility.

• These financial strengths are tempered by the expected cessation of one-time federal revenues in fiscal 2012, a challenged state funding environment, somewhat stretched labor relations, and years of significant enrollment declines.

• The tourism-driven local economy shows signs of weakness, including a large 7.2 percent assessed valuation decline, high area unemployment, below average income levels, and a challenged housing market.

• The district's debt profile is good overall, with low debt levels, no OPEB liability, and limited capital needs. However,

amortization is slow.

Key rating drivers:

• The district’s unreserved financial cushion is sound, and Fitch expects management would sufficiently offset potential state revenue declines to maintain its financial cushion at adequate levels.

• The local economy is showing signs of weakness, and could weaken further from current levels in the near term, with potential secondary effects on enrollment and the tax base.

The district’s financial position is sound overall. According to the district’s second interim report, fiscal 2011 general fund operations are projected to produce a $1.2 million deficit, lowering the total and unreserved general fund balances to an adequate $1.8 million (5.1 percent of expenditures and transfers out). However, the district has resources available outside of the general fund that raise the total financial cushion to good levels. As with most school districts in the state, Lake Tahoe USD must contend with the expected cessation of one-time federal revenues in fiscal 2012 and a potentially significant state funding reduction. However, the board has already approved a two-year expenditure reduction plan to offset these declines, which nonetheless relies in part on needed labor concessions, and the district’s multi-year projections include conservative assumptions that could cause actual operations to out-perform current expectations. Further, the district has a good degree of remaining expenditure flexibility, including low class sizes that could be raised, and teaching days well in excess of the legal minimum. As such, the district is well positioned to weather anticipated revenue declines through fiscal 2013.

Additional information is available online.

# Reno air traffic controller asleep on the job; plane lands safely

**By Susan Voyles, Reno Gazette-Journal**

**Updated:** The Federal Aviation Administration has confirmed that a controller at Reno-Tahoe International Airport fell asleep while a medical flight carrying an ill patient was trying to land early Wednesday morning.

The air controller has been suspended while the FAA investigates.

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A medical flight landed safely early today at Reno Tahoe International Airport after the pilot failed to make contact with the air traffic control tower.

Krys Bart, CEO of the Reno-Tahoe Airport Authority, said at a news conference today that the Piper Cheyenne plane twin engine turboprop carrying a sick person landed at about 2 a.m. The plane was out of communication with the tower for about 16 minutes, officials from the Federal Aviation Administration said.

**Read the whole story**

# East West, KSL teaming up in resort real estate ventures

East West Partners and KSL Capital Partners are partnering to pursue resort real estate acquisition and development opportunities throughout the United States. East West and KSL have a 25-year history of working together and developing resort real estate, dating back to their founders' common time in Vail and Beaver Creek Resorts.

East West developed Northstar Village and has other projects in the Truckee area. KSL recently bought Squaw Valley ski resort.

The partnership will be actively looking for existing and new development opportunities in first-class mountain, beach, and second-home resort real estate markets, seeking to capitalize on recent distress in these markets. Specifically, the partnership is targeting projects in need of completion, preferably ones with associated development opportunities.

"Although resort real estate has been negatively impacted by the recent economic downturn, we believe long-term demographics support continued second home ownership growth in unique and memorable destinations. East West has consistently been one of the premier developers of resort real estate for more than two decades. They have a deep and talented team with a proven ability to create and transform resort communities. We are looking forward to an exciting and productive partnership," Eric Resnick, managing director and co-founder of KSL, said in a press release.

# DCSD approves budget that started with $6 mil. hole

**By Kathryn Reed**

STATELINE – The final cuts to close what had been a $6 million budget gap were made Tuesday night by the Douglas County School District board of trustees.

It was a somber mood for much of the five-hour meeting at Kahle Community Center. This venue provided ample room for the more than two dozen people in attendance. Usually the meetings at the lake are at the county library – a much smaller setting.

The significant change the seven-member board made from what Superintendent Lisa Noonan recommended for the $48 million general fund was to slash about $40,000 from the athletic budget. Although at first it was going to be a direct hit to the $261,914 allocation for stipends, in the end the board said the funds could come from anywhere but transportation. Chief Financial Officer Holly Luna advised against touching bus dollars based on the intricacies of how that department works.

“If I have the discretion, I can make it work,” Douglas High School Principal Marty Swisher told *Lake Tahoe News* after the meeting. The school site administrators are tasked with trimming the sports department.



DCSD Superintendent Lisa Noonan makes a point April 12 about the budget. Photos/Kathryn Reed

The savings will be used to restore the student intervention funds that had been cut at the March 30 meeting.

The federally funded one-time EduJobs dollars altered the budget in the last two weeks – in the positive. Noonan's ideas for spending the $526,693 addition to the general fund were approved by the board. It means keeping one trimester each of music, art and physical education at the elementary level. It also restores $156,627 for elementary computer aides.

The tentative budget per Nevada law had to be approved this month, with the final 2011-12 budget coming before the board in May.

With the state not expected to have a budget until June at the earliest, and with some people predicting two special sessions, it could be well into summer before the Silver State has a budget. Until the state passes its budget, in some ways it is a guessing game for all districts as to what level of funding will come from Carson City.

"I'm worried about the students, but also if we add to unemployment – what it does to the overall community," Noonan told *Lake Tahoe News* during a break.

Nevada K-12 districts must notify certificated employees by May 1 if they will not have a job for next year. Classified must be told by mid-May. The exact number of employees losing their job hasn't been tallied based on retirements,

resignations and leaves of absence. But it could be more than four dozen jobs off the payroll, including three security guards. Two of those are from Douglas High. Most of the losses will be teachers as changes to class-size reduction are made.

Noonan is frustrated with the level of funding Gov. Brian Sandoval has proposed. It will be less than $5,000 per pupil. Nevada spends less than half the national average on each student.

For the upcoming school year, the district was faced with a drop of $4.3 million from the state in per pupil funding, a hit of $441,000 based on declining enrollment, and an increase of $1.4 million for salaries-benefits-operational expenditures.



Douglas board members Cindy Trigg, left, and Teri Jamin listen to the budget debate.

Besides the current cuts, DCSD has trimmed $5.3 million from its ledger in the last four years.

Noonan believes in spreading the financial pain by volunteering to cut her salary by $2,500 – the equivalent of five workdays. But Noonan said she'll still be working, it's just a salary cut – not furlough days, so to speak. The CFO and two assistant superintendents are also taking a $2,500 cut, with the expectation they will be compensated with days

off.

Some of the eight people who spoke during the April 12 public hearing wondered why the district office was not cut more. It was then pointed out for the nearly 900 employees there are 24 administrators.

Though it won’t be a cost savings per se, one of the assistant superintendents is slated to take on the duties of principal of ASPIRE, the alternative education site that had been housed in a valley elementary school, but will move to a leased site next school year.

Noonan reasons that moving it off-site allows the program to grow, which ideally will provide a revenue stream for the district.

Three public meetings were conducted earlier this month to gain ideas from the community about where cuts should be made. Staff members dominated these meetings, with only a few parents in attendance.

Nancy Hamlett, secretary with special services, told the board Tuesday that as hours are cut for classified staff it could mean also mean not qualifying for benefits. Their contract is different than the teachers who can work part time and receive full benefits.

From the community meetings several ideas were brought forward the board could not take immediate action on. Many involve opening negotiations with the unions, which appears likely to happen.

During the board member comments portion of the meeting it was noted what items they would like to delve into at future meetings in regards to future budgets. Topics include:

• Sick time policy

• Creating endowments

• Kindergarten transportation

• Field trips

• Pay-to-play for sports.

The board is slated to vote on the final budget May 18 at Douglas High School.

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# Wet weather blowing into Lake Tahoe Basin

Expect slushy weather with high winds on Wednesday.

Temperatures are expected to be 10 degrees cooler than normal. And the National Weather Service in Reno has issued a wind advisory for Lake Tahoe from sunrise to sunset.



Windshield wipers are likely to be needed Wednesday in Tahoe. Photo/Kathryn Reed

The fast moving lower pressure system is expected to bring snow to the lake, though predictions are it will melt fast based on how how warm it has been.

The sun is expected to pop out Thursday, with rain likely on Friday. By Saturday the mercury is expected to reach the low 60s in the basin – a 25-degree swing from Wednesday.

*– Lake Tahoe News staff report*

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# Reno man arrested in Bay Area murders may be tied N.Y. homicides

**By Jaclyn O'Malley, Reno Gazette-Journal**

In the years before a 77-year-old Reno man was charged with the serial killing of four women over nearly three decades in California, he was challenging Nevada on behalf of his mentally incompetent middle-aged son.

Prosecutors in Marin County announced Tuesday they were seeking the death penalty against Joseph Naso, who declined a jail interview. The self-employed commercial photographer was being held without bail in Marin County, Calif., on suspicion of four counts of murder. The victims were killed in 1977, 1978, 1993 and 1994 in Northern California, and in areas where Naso lived or previously lived.

Now, law enforcement agencies as far away as Rochester, N.Y., are looking at unsolved murders from decades past to see if Naso is their mystery suspect.

According to the Rochester Democrat and Chronicle, Naso lived in Rochester in the 1960s and traveled there in the early 1970s – and three young girls were abducted and killed in Rochester between 1971 and 1974.

**Read the whole story**

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# Year-round residents at Serene Lakes not evacuating

**By Cathy Locke, Sacramento Bee**

More than 20 propane tanks were still leaking Monday evening, and a voluntary evacuation initiated over the weekend remained in effect for Placer County's Serene Lakes subdivision.

But year-round residents said they were staying put, despite concerns about explosions like one that leveled a three-story home in the mountain enclave near Soda Springs on Friday night.

"The main issue is for people who are not (year-round) residents," said Malinda Caven, a six-year resident of Serene Lakes who said she makes a point of keeping snow from piling up on her propane tank and lines leading to her house.

Richard Simmons, program manager for the Placer County Office of Emergency Services, said 28 leaks have been reported on the county's east slope, and as of late Monday afternoon, six of those had been repaired.

**Read the whole story**

# Wage gap in Nevada – women make $7K less than men

**By Reno Gazette-Journal**

New research shows that on average, full-time working women in Nevada are paid $7,734 less per year than their male counterparts.

In Nevada, on average, a woman working full time is paid $35,691 per year, while a man working full time is paid $43,425 per year.

The study was released Monday, the day before Equal Pay Day. Today marks how far into the new year women must work to catch up with what men were paid the year before.

Unequal wages are harming both families and the state economy, according to the National Partnership for Women & Families and the American Association of University Women, the two entities that jointly produced the research.

**Read the whole story**