Upgrades coming to SLT affordable housing

Residents in the 76-unit Sierra Garden Apartment complex are having the interior of the dwellings upgraded.

Property owners St. Joseph Community Land Trust, a local nonprofit organization, and Pacific Development Group, a Lodi-based affordable housing developer, are infusing $15 million into the South Lake Tahoe affordable housing complex on Lake Tahoe Boulevard. The renovation is being funded through low-income housing tax credits and tax-exempt bonds.

The remodel includes kitchens, bathrooms, floor coverings, fresh paint, new wall heaters and LED lighting fixtures. Eight units will become 100 percent ADA-accessible.

All buildings will be painted and a new roof overlay.

The boiler system will be replaced with high-recovery hot water heaters. This should result in a10 percent energy cost savings.

In 2018, a resident activity center with computer stations, upgrades to the properties BMPs, drought-resistant landscaping, and new barbecue areas will be built.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Nevada pot sales reach $32.4M

in August

By Jenny Kane, Reno Gazette-Journal

Nevada’s marijuana sales are getting higher in its second month of sales.

Nevada dispensaries raked in $32.4 million in recreational and medical marijuana sales altogether in August, the state Department of Taxation reported late Monday.

The department, which oversees the state’s marijuana programs, made $4.86 million from the sales statewide.

Read the whole story

SLT limits VHRs; issue may go to voters



A few dozen people listen to the VHR discussion Oct. 24 at Lake Tahoe Airport. Photo/Susan Wood

By Susan Wood

After intense deliberation and public pleading on both sides, the South Lake Tahoe City Council on Tuesday night temporarily closed the door on new vacation home rentals.

The 4-0 vote, with Councilman Tom Davis having to recuse himself, came on the same day an intent to petition for a ballot measure against VHRs made its way to the city clerk's office.

The council wants to return on Nov. 7 for a first reading on a new ordinance the members can all agree on and the public can stomach. A second reading that would enact the law would take place the following month.

The new ordinance would go over points in need of addressing from bear boxes and allowable caps to limits on distance between them and three-strike warnings to violators.

Vacation home rentals have become a hot topic since 2002, with councils talking about and tweaking regulations in order to keep the peace and keep an industry rolling in a tourism-based economy. The City Council alone has hosted 42 public meetings on the issue.

Vacation home rentals are divisive and contentious.

To prove that point, two citizens – Ken Weitzman and Daniel Browne – delivered their intent to circulate a petition outlawing VHRs in residential neighborhoods. The document encourages "the expansion of vacation rentals in our tourist and commercial zoned areas." The bold petition could make its way to the November 2018 ballot Mayor Austin Sass announced during council and staff reports at the end of the meeting. Most of the 35 people in attendance had already cleared out.

Naysayers to the practice of renting homes for income claim it changes the profile of their neighborhoods and creates a

nuisance. Those in favor of them insist there are but a few bad seeds, and the level of enforcement needs to rise.

To that, city Police Chief Brian Uhler retorted his department conducts a good job in “difficult circumstances.” When Uhler arrived in 2010, he “hardly ever heard of vacation home rentals being an issue,” he told the council. But that changed in the last few years as it’s “demonstrated a serious issue.”

Granted, complaints called in because of unruly behavior from properties do not necessarily end up as citations on vacation home rentals, City Manager Nancy Kerry pointed out.

VHR advocates dominated the public comment period Oct. 24 by quadrupling those who support the moratorium. Property managers, private homeowners and even a ski resort employee seeking housing for her international workers lined up to speak in favor of VHRs, hoping the council members would change their minds about stopping the permitting process for now.

Currently, there are 3,398 VHR listings representing 2,067 rental properties in South Lake Tahoe, according to a consultant that made a presentation to the council last month. Like statistics on complaints and citations, these numbers show growth but fluidity. Meanwhile, the city shows 1,847 have secured permits, with 1,397 being outside the tourist core areas. The tourist area not affected by the VHR ordinance changes.

The urgency ordinance freezes the number of VHRs for 45 days. It can be changed between now and then or extended at that time for a year.

Time and time again, Councilwoman Brooke Laine returned to the fairness issue while attempting to find a way to exempt those with scheduled hearings from the moratorium. But City Attorney Nira Doherty noted that type of change constitutes a “substantive” change that would require a rewrite of the

rules.

Marlena Freitus appealed to the council's sense of fairness. She had a hearing slated for next week on her vacation home rental she uses for necessary income. It will go on hold until the moratorium is repealed.

"I've already invested $1,200, and it's been three months," she told the council.

Sierra-at-Tahoe ski instructor Victoria Lynn turned her plea to others.

"The housing market is already tough enough for permanent residents," she said. Sierra needs to find homes for its ski season workforce.

Many who spoke in opposition to the moratorium wondered "why the urgency?" The discussion turned philosophical in trying to define and constitute the "public health, safety and well-being" of a community.

The issue was even debated in the non-agenda item portion of public commentary. It included an adversarial longtime property manager Jim Morris claiming not "everyone is breaking the law" and Weitzman suggesting the police department use a volunteer enforcement division like El Dorado County's STAR force.

By the end of the evening, Councilwoman Wendy David admitted to feeling sad over "the loss of community" in testimony she's heard from residents complaining about their "quality of life."

"We want to be fair. But maybe we should take a break. It's a good reason to pause till we figure this out," David said.

Landmark Calif. plan puts floodplains back in business

By Matt Weiser, Water Deeply

Something monumental happened on Aug. 25 in California water management that received almost no media attention: It became official policy to reconnect the state's major rivers with their floodplains.

The action by the Central Valley Flood Protection Board, an obscure panel appointed by the governor, clears the way for the state to embrace projects that allow floods to recharge groundwater. This could include projects like breaching levees, building setback levees and creating flood bypass structures so rivers can inundate historic floodplains for the first time in a century.

In short, it means rivers must no longer be confined within levees as a standard practice.

Read the whole story

Raley's-owned stores recall vegetable products

By Molly Sullivan, Sacramento Bee

Raley's, Nob Hill and Bel Air stores have joined the ranks of

grocery stores recalling prepackaged and frozen vegetable products from Mann Packing that may be contaminated with listeria. So far, health officials have not confirmed any listeria cases in Sacramento County.

Customers who purchased products included in the recall are being notified through emails and phone calls, said Raley's spokesperson Chelsea Minor.

Read the whole story

Tech billionaire Ellison buying Cal Neva

By Dale Kasler, Sacramento Bee

Larry Ellison has made billions in high technology and has a knack for buying glitzy real estate properties. Can the founder of Oracle Corp. bring his Midas touch to a faded Lake Tahoe resort once owned by Frank Sinatra?

Ellison's Lawrence Investments has been cleared to buy the Cal Neva Resort & Casino for $35.8 million, according to U.S. Bankruptcy Court records. A federal bankruptcy judge approved the sale on Oct. 16 after no other bidder surfaced for the fabled property.

The Cal Neva has gone through a succession of owners over the years and has been unable to regain its Sinatra-era luster. The resort, which straddles the California-Nevada border and includes a 10-story hotel tower and a small casino, has sat idle since 2013.

Read the whole story

Police looking for man in connection to Stateline murder



Jose DeJesus Rodriguez Quezada

Douglas County sheriff's investigators want to question Jose DeJesus Rodriguez Quezada in regards to a murder this month at Hard Rock in Stateline.

Kevin Leroy Edwards, 56, of Reno was found dead in a hotel room on Oct. 3.

Authorities are not saying how the two knew each other or how Edwards died.

Quezada, 44, is being called "a person of interest." Officers are considering him armed and dangerous. He could be traveling in Northern Nevada. They added that he frequents homeless shelters and truck stops, and is friendly with the transgender community.

Edwards' BMW had been missing, but has since been found in Wadsworth.

— Lake Tahoe News staff report

Nev. students denied diplomas get shot at redemption

By Meghin Delaney, Las Vegas Review-Journal

Former Nevada students who failed to earn a high school diploma because they couldn’t pass the state’s proficiency exam now have a shot at redemption.

In 2013, the state Legislature approved phasing out the proficiency exam graduation requirement in favor of four end-of-course tests. But before the end-of-course exam requirement went into effect, legislation removed that requirement in 2017.

That created a situation where students who didn’t pass the proficiency exam were being held to a different standard than more recent students.

Read the whole story

DCSD receives state money for reading

Douglas County School District is getting $655,182.08 from the state for a reading program.

The money is to be used this school year.

The Nevada Department of Education the month announced which districts would be sharing in the $20.5 million for the Read by Grade 3 program.

The goal is to improve literary for early primary students by giving them added reading programs starting in kindergarten.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Nev. agencies hide names, salaries of workers

By Arthur Kane, Las Vegas Review-Journal

The names and salaries of 349 state employees, including park rangers and game wardens, have not been made public to taxpayers who spent $30.1 million last year in wages and benefits for those staffers.

State officials said the positions are sensitive and the names must be protected, but several workers voluntarily identify themselves and pose for photographs in news reports.

Open government advocates contend that names of public employees should only be withheld in rare instances, such as for undercover police officers.

Read the whole story