DA: Garrido hearing must be in El Dorado County

By Martha Bellisle, Reno Gazette-Journal

The prosecutor in the Jaycee Dugard kidnapping case said in a motion released Wednesday that a February hearing to determine whether Phillip Garrido is competent to stand trial must be kept in El Dorado County.

Garrido has been evaluated by three mental health experts, and reports from at least two will be the subject of his competency trial before a jury, set to begin Feb. 28.

At Garrido's last hearing on Jan. 6, his lawyer, Susan Gellman, said she had not yet decided whether she will ask the court to move the hearing to another county to ensure a fair and impartial jury will consider the question of competency.

As of Wednesday, Gellman had not filed a change-of-venue motion.

But El Dorado County District Attorney Vern Pierson said during that hearing that he filed his document opposing any proposed change just in case Gellman decides to try to move the trial outside Placerville.

Read the whole story

Obama urges Americans to

unify in wake of Ariz. tragedy

By Michael A. Memoli and Michael Muskal, Los Angeles Times

TUCSON – With a plea to the nation to overcome its divisions, President Obama paid tribute to the victims and heroes of the weekend shooting spree in Arizona and sounded a call for Americans to heal themselves.

Obama came to the University of Arizona, where he spoke to a cheering crowd of more than 26,000 – including 13,000 in an overflow area in Arizona Stadium – all seeking solace after days of tumult in the wake of the attack in Tucson that killed six and injured 13. The president and First Lady Michelle Obama earlier visited Rep. Gabrielle Giffords (D-Ariz.), who was critically injured in the violence that shocked the nation and prompted a debate on civility in politics.



Rep. Gabby Giffords opened her eyes for the first time Wednesday after being shot Saturday.

Most of his speech paid tribute to the victims, especially to 9-year-old Christina Taylor Green, the youngest of the slain.

Christina has become a symbol for those, including her parents, who have called for an end to such violence. She had gone to a Safeway shopping center to meet Giffords, who was holding a meeting there with constituents Saturday morning when the attack began.

Read the whole story

Palin issues statement about Ariz. shooting

By Mark Memmott, NPR

Saying that "after this shocking tragedy, I listened at first puzzled, then with concern, and now with sadness, to the irresponsible statements from people attempting to apportion blame for this terrible event," former Alaska Gov. Sarah Palin has issued her first lengthy statement about the shootings in Tucson on Saturday and the debate afterward about whether the harsh tone of American politics – and things she has said and done in recent years – played any role.

You can read her statement here. The video is here.

Palin has come under the most criticism for putting Rep. Gabrielle Giffords, D-Ariz., who was critically injured on Saturday, and 19 other members of Congress on a list of those whom conservatives would target in last year's elections – and putting crosshairs (a Palin aide has subsequently claimed they were surveyor's markings) on a map of the nation showing the lawmaker's districts.

Read the whole story

LTCC enrollment drops; impact of state budget unknown

By Kathryn Reed

With Gov. Jerry Brown proposing massive cuts to the California Community College system, it's possible even more key courses will be eliminated from Lake Tahoe Community College's schedule.



The need to increase the minimum class size from eight to 12 students in recent years meant the second of a three-segment computer class being cut this quarter. Most community colleges in the state have a minimum class size of 19.

In the past the South Lake Tahoe two-year school could make exceptions for a transfer class that didn't meet the required number of students. Not so anymore.

Officials didn't know if students wanting to take this course will have to wait a year for it to be offered again or if it might be available spring quarter.

Just how slashing $400 million from the state Community College system and $500 million from both the UC and CSU systems will impact students locally and throughout the state remains to be seen.

It's becoming normal for whoever is governor to come out with something in January that doesn't necessarily resemble what is eventually passed by the Legislature. A crystal ball would be needed to know what lawmakers will actually come up with to

deal with the $25 billion deficit.

“We appreciate the honesty with which the governor approaches the budget. However, while community colleges are prepared for their fair share of cuts, we will vigorously resist the census accounting gimmick tied to the $400 million reduction. This will have the effect of reducing math and science classes, particularly at our colleges serving the most vulnerable students,” Scott Lay, president/CEO of the Community College League of California, told his constituents. “Further, while it may be fair to ask our students to share the pain of this overall budget problem, the fact that funding for their classes and services is being cut by $370 and their fees are being used to enroll more students simply doesn’t make sense.”

For now, students at LTCC are contending with fewer class choices as one of the results of previous budget snafus. Still, enrollment was up in fall quarter compared to 2009. Fall enrollment had a total of 2,950 students – 878 fulltime.

However, the numbers have dropped for winter quarter, with 2,036 total, of which 759 are fulltime.

The college historically sees a dip in winter quarter numbers. Part of this is attributed to more jobs opening up and students wanting to be on the ski slopes.

Judge’s Lakeview Commons ruling may be appealed

By Kathryn Reed

It may not matter what South Lake Tahoe wants regarding

Lakeview Commons. Reeve-Knight Construction has filed notice the company intends to appeal the judge's decision that rendered its contract with the city invalid.

Multiple calls to the Roseville-based company went unreturned. However, City Attorney Patrick Enright confirmed Reeve-Knight has filed a notice to appeal.

Clark & Sullivan Construction in Sparks successfully sued the city over the bid process, which resulted in El Dorado County Superior Court Judge Steve Bailey issuing a decision Nov. 1 that blasted the city for its handling of the bid and rendered the contract null and void.



People may need to get used to this sign near El Dorado Beach. Photo/Kathryn Reed

People close to the issue have told *Lake Tahoe News* if Reeve-Knight goes through with the appeal, it's likely the city will have another stalled construction project on its hands for what could be years with it tied up in legal wrangling.

One difference between this $6 million stalled project and the bankrupt/foreclosed could have been $400 million convention center project is location and functionality.

Lakeview Commons is in the center of town, and a highly

trafficked area that is popular with locals and tourists. Access to El Dorado Beach is now cut off.

This compares to the convention center site near Stateline that impacts the players with money in the site, but does not take away an asset from people.

On Jan. 11 the City Council started their morning at 8 in closed session to discuss Lakeview Commons. Enright said no reportable action was taken, but in the same breath said a public hearing is scheduled for Jan. 25 to decide whether to start the bid process from scratch or to award the bid to Clark & Sullivan.

“Discussion in large part was whether to appeal the decision. We wanted this council to decide it,” Enright said of the closed session.

The city only had 60 days to appeal the decision. Tuesday’s session was 10 days after that deadline. This means it’s possible the council again violated the Brown Act by discussing litigation that isn’t relevant.

South Tahoe is also dealing with angry subcontractors on the project who have not been paid.

Dave Galicia, president of GB Construction in South Lake Tahoe and subcontractor for Reeve-Knight, spoke before the council Tuesday saying he submitted invoices to the city dated more than 120 days ago and has yet to see a dime.

Afterward he told *Lake Tahoe News*, “They are arguing over $35,000.” Galicia said Reeve-Knight billed the city for $140,000 for the work done at the site and the city offered $105,000.

Enright confirmed the city has not paid Reeve-Knight any money.

“We are negotiating with them,” Enright said.

He cited Public Contract Code that requires the city to pay hard costs, but not profits on a contract that has been rendered invalid.

Enright expects that aspect of the issue to be voted on by the council Jan. 25 – the same day it is scheduled to decide how to go forward with the bid. The latter, of course, may be a mute point depending on what Reeve-Knight does.

S. Tahoe commission appointments become personal

By Kathryn Reed

In a thinly veiled attempt to deny Ted Long a seat on the South Lake Tahoe Planning Commission, the City Council on Tuesday delayed appointments to that board for two weeks.

"We can wait so we don't get a candidate by default," Councilman Bruce Grego said in his desire to postpone the Planning Commission selection.

Grego repeatedly cautioned his colleagues that just one vote for a person is good enough to get them appointed. It doesn't take a majority of the council. That rule may be revisited in the future.

Five people applied for the five-member Planning Commission.

Long, a controversial ex-councilman, filed for six commission seats. He was appointed to two on Jan. 11 – the Latino Affairs Commission and Delinquent Refuse Hearing Board.

One of the problems with the application process is the person does not have an opportunity to rank which seats he or she would prefer to be on or how many. It’s possible Long or anyone else has an interest in serving their community in various ways, but not necessarily for all seats applied for.

For those who are interested in serving on the Planning Commission, contact City Clerk Suzie Alessi at salessi@cityofslt.us. Those who applied in the initial round need not reapply.

The Parks and Recreation, and Airport commissions received the most number of candidates, while some received the minimum, and the General Plan Advisory Commission is short a member.

Much discussion centered on a potential conflict of interest Claudio Bellotto may have by being appointed to the Airport Commission because he operates a helicopter business out of Lake Tahoe Airport. While this was ruled to not be a conflict, nothing was brought up about the fact he is dating the airport’s senior administrative assistant.

The council put him on the commission.

Appointments made Tuesday include:

• Airport Commission – Bellotto, Kris Keesling, Ike Marr.

• Building Board of Appeals – Keith Cloutier, David Huber, Dale Rise, Randy Vogelgesang, Robert Wirth.

• Delinquent Refuse Hearing Board – Long, David Kelly, David Newell.

• General Plan Advisory Commission – Richard Belli.

• Latino Affairs Commission – Long, Pedro Lopez, Paul Moniot, Mary Rodriquez, Liliana Sanchez Ruvalcaba.

• Parks and Recreation Commission – Seth Martin, Jonathan

Moore, Chip Morrill, Jennifer Scanio, Les Wright.

• Sustainability Commission – Newell, Morrill, Jason Collin, Joy Curry, Juliana Prosperi, Kay Ogden, Tom Wendell.

El Dorado, Sacramento sheriffs eager to loosen weapons permit rules

By Hudson Sangree, Sacramento Bee

New sheriffs in Sacramento and El Dorado counties say they are preparing to fulfill their campaign pledges to make it easier for residents to obtain concealed weapons permits.

El Dorado County Sheriff John D'Agostini and Sacramento County Sheriff Scott Jones said the attack on U.S. Rep. Gabrielle Giffords, which left six dead and 14 others wounded in Arizona, hasn't dissuaded them from fulfilling their campaign promises. Arizona does not require concealed weapons permits.

Both Jones and D'Agostini won runoff elections in which concealed gun permits were a major issue.

As the suspect in Saturday's mass shooting, Jared Lee Loughner, 22, made his first court appearance Monday, Jones said the shooting in Tucson had reinforced his faith in California's concealed weapons law.

Read the whole story

El Dorado sheriff keeps No. 2 position in the family

By Carlos Alcalá, Sacramento Bee

New El Dorado County Sheriff John D'Agostini has picked his brother-in-law to be undersheriff, a position re-established today by the Board of Supervisors.

Yolo County Sheriff's Captain Rich Williams, selected for the second-in-command position, is the brother of D'Agostini's wife, according to a release from the Sheriff's Office.

Read the whole story

Giffords breathing on her own, moving both arms

By Thomas H. Maugh II and Seema Mehta, Los Angeles Times

TUCSON – U.S. Rep. Gabrielle Giffords is breathing on her own and is moving both arms, both very encouraging signs of recovery, physicians at University Medical Center in Tucson said Tuesday.

In an interview, Dr. Peter Rhee, the chief of trauma at the medical center, said Giffords was moving both arms, although her left arm was more active than her right, and moving her eyes. Previously, doctors had said that she was moving only

her left arm, which is controlled by the right hemisphere of her brain – the side that was not penetrated by the bullet.

The fact that she was able to move her right arm, which is controlled by the injured hemisphere, suggested that the damage was not as bad as surgeons had initially feared.

Read the whole story

Gaming win down throughout most of Nevada

Stateline's gaming intake followed the state's trend by sliding in November compared to the previous year.

On the South Shore the revenues fell 6.42 percent compared to a 5.9 decrease throughout Nevada. On Jan. 11 state regulators said casinos in Nevada won $822 million in November.

North Las Vegas and the Carson Valley were the only places to report gains.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report