Election numbers change; KGID race undecided

Publisher's note: Updated Nov. 16, 2010, 1:03pm.

El Dorado County elections officials issued a revised count of ballots on Nov. 15 at 4:30pm for the Nov. 2 election.

The numbers for the South Lake Tahoe City Council race:

• Claire Fortier, 1,848 votes, 16.95 percent

• Tom Davis, 1,607 votes, 14.74 percent

• Angela Swanson, 1,374 votes, 12.60 percent

• Alice Jones, 1,238 votes, 11.36 percent

• Joy Curry, 1,229 votes, 11.27 percent

• Elizabeth Hallen, 1,141 votes, 10.47 percent

• Steve Cubby, 1,135 votes, 10.41 percent

• Adrian Gooch, 650 votes, 5.96 percent

• Georg May, 282 votes, 2.59 percent

• Doug Cichowicz, 150 votes, 1.38 percent.

Measure E, the city initiative to change the business license fee, was defeated by 66 votes.

Three positions were also up on the Kingsbury General Improvement District board. Darya Vogt and Dan Norman won their seats without question. After all the votes were counted, Natalie Yanish and Robert McDowell were tied with 373 votes. The tie will be broken Nov. 19 with the county clerk.

– Kathryn Reed

Markleeville shaking with seismic activity

By Channel 4 News

In less than eight hours, 15 small earthquakes rumbled the ground near the mountain town of Markleeville Monday morning, according to the United States Geological Survey.

The temblors struck between 12:41 and 8:21am., and were between 1.5 and 3.5 in magnitude, according to the USGS.

They were all eight to 11 miles east of the town, which is south of Lake Tahoe, and about 72 miles from Reno.

Earthquakes are not uncommon for the area, according to University of Nevada, Reno Seismology Professor Glenn Biasi, but he said, this small swarm is something scientists are keeping their eyes on.

Read the whole story

Report: Climate change will drastically alter Lake Tahoe

In 90 years, the snowpack in the Lake Tahoe Basin is expected to be about 50 percent less than it is today.

This and other facts are detailed in a report released Nov. 15

by UC Davis scientists.

It is being called the most detailed forecast to date of likely climate-change effects at Lake Tahoe.



Lake Tahoe's shoreline may increase more with climate change. Photo/Kathryn Reed

Flooding is expected to increase by mid-century, prolonged droughts will become more common at the end of the century, and “a new threat to the lake’s unique ecology, one that will come from the very bottom of the lake, will become important by the second half of the century.”

The U.S. Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management paid for the study with Southern Nevada Public Lands Management Act funds. The lead authors are Robert Coats, a UC Davis researcher and consulting hydrologist; John Reuter, associate director of the UC Davis Tahoe Environmental Research Center; and Geoff Schladow, the center’s director.

The report combines findings drawn from 100 years of data and computer models to produce detailed local projections out to 2100.

The scientists considered two possible future carbon emission scenarios – one “business as usual” – in which population

growth and national and international policies affecting global climate change remain unchanged – and the other "optimistic," assuming slower growth and aggressive climate action.

– Kathryn Reed

Southwest Gas Corp. narrows loss in third quarter

By Las Vegas Sun

Southwest Gas Corp. of Las Vegas said its third quarter loss narrowed on lower revenue.

Losses, which are normal in the third quarter for the seasonal business, came in at $4.8 million or 11 cents per share in the most recent quarter vs. $8.3 million or 18 cents per share in 2009's third quarter.

Revenue of $307.7 million was down from $317.5 million for the company, which serves Nevada and parts of Arizona and California.

Higher rates in Nevada boosted operating margin by $1 million, while the company added 17,000 customers during the last 12 months, boosting operating margin in the quarter by another $1 million.

Operating margin is defined as operating revenue less the cost of gas sold.

Nevada considering banning driving while holding cell phone

By Martha Bellisle, Reno Gazette-Journal

At least four people in Washoe County were injured in car crashes in the past five years because the driver was busy putting on lipstick or mascara.

Dozens of others were hurt when the driver lost control while messing with the CD player or radio.

Eleven more were injured because a driver was reading. Yes, you read that right.

But the single activity responsible for causing an increasing number automobile crashes in Washoe County since 2005 involves cell phones and texting, according to data collected from law enforcement officers who worked the scene.

For that reason, a group of legislators in the state Assembly, one state senator and the Nevada Office of Public Safety have all submitted requests to change state law to place drivers' hands back on the wheel, and their minds back on the road.

Read the whole story

High unemployment threatens region

By Jason Hildago, Reno Gazette-Journal

When David Dunham moved to Northern Nevada and started looking for work about seven years ago, it didn't feel as if companies were interviewing him. Instead, it felt like he was interviewing them. "Things were really good back then," Dunham said. "I basically had my pick of jobs to choose from."

With the job market as his proverbial oyster, Dunham decided to take a project manager position at Q&D Construction. It was a great job, Dunham said. Then, real estate's high-flying joyride crashed.

Five years after he started working for Q&D, the area's economic meltdown reduced Dunham to just another statistic. Dunham joined the growing ranks of Northern Nevada's unemployed in September 2009, as the private sector shed 1,500 jobs during that month alone in Reno-Sparks.

With construction continuing to hemorrhage jobs, and Dunham's prospects for employment growing dimmer, the former Fernley resident made a difficult decision. On December 2009, Dunham left for a job 1,700 miles away – in Austin, Texas.

"I really would have stayed if I could find a job there," a wistful-sounding Dunham said by phone. "But it was basically impossible. There really was no hope for me."

Read the whole story

Red Hawk Casino revenue up slightly

By Dale Kasler, Sacramento Bee

The company that manages Red Hawk Casino reported this week a "slight increase" in business at the Shingle Springs casino.

Lakes Entertainment Inc. of Minneapolis, reporting its third-quarter results, said profits and revenue increased from a year ago. The company's revenue jumped to $8.2 million from $6.6 million. That was due mainly to an increase in management fees from its Michigan casino, but also due to a "slight increase" in the fees earned at Red Hawk.

Read the whole story

Whistler hopes IPO will financially save Olympic resort

By Doug Alexander, Bloomberg News

Whistler Blackcomb Holdings, owner of the Canadian ski resort that hosted the 2010 Winter Olympics, raised $297 million in an initial public offering after cutting the share price twice, said two people familiar with the sale.

The company sold 25 million shares, or a 66 percent stake, for $11.88, with a dividend yield of about 8.1 percent, according to the people, who asked not to be identified because the

plans aren’t public. The company had planned to sell shares for as much as $14.85 each.



Whistler-Blackcomb averts bankruptcy with IPO. Photo/Kathryn Reed

The proceeds will be used to repay debt owed to Intrawest, the selling shareholder and a unit of New York-based buyout firm Fortress Investment Group. Whistler Blackcomb will list on the Toronto Stock Exchange under the symbol WB and start trading Nov. 9. A message left with Intrawest spokeswoman Tabetha Boot wasn’t immediately returned.

The sale values the ski resort at $448.5 million, based on 37.8 million shares outstanding. The banks arranging the sale, led by CIBC world Markets and RBC Dominion Securities, have an option to sell an additional 15 percent of the offering after the deal closes, raising proceeds to $341.6 million and the stake to 76 percent.

Read the whole story

California unemployment fund running $10 bil. deficit

By Dale Kasler, Sacramento Bee

California businesses already pay some of the highest unemployment taxes in the country – and the tab is likely to increase.

The recession and the Legislature's decision years ago to raise benefits have drained the state unemployment insurance fund, which now has a estimated $10.3 billion deficit.

The nonpartisan Legislative Analyst's Office, in a recent report titled "California's Other Budget Deficit," said the state will probably need to raise unemployment taxes on employers as well as reduce benefits to bring the fund back in balance.

Raising the tax would require a two-thirds vote in both houses of the Legislature and might be politically impossible. Gov.-elect Jerry Brown has promised not to raise taxes without voter approval.

But pressure is growing on Sacramento to fix the system soon – whether it wants to or not. California has borrowed about $8.5 billion from the federal government to keep benefits flowing, and the repayment obligations are coming due.

Read the whole story

California budget deficit projected to top $25 bil.

By Kevin Yamamura, Sacramento Bee

In what has become a somber November tradition, the nonpartisan Legislative Analyst's Office projected Wednesday that California must close a $25.4 billion shortfall next year, twice as large as legislative leaders predicted.

California faces another major budget problem because tax rates are slated to drop, the federal government will provide less relief and state leaders enacted a flimsy fiscal plan last month, the analyst's office found. The economy is recovering, but not fast enough to overcome the state's budgetary obstacles.

The latest projections suggest a difficult road ahead for Gov.-elect Jerry Brown, who will likely spend much of the next four years wrestling with budget problems. The LAO report forecasts annual budget deficits of about $20 billion through 2015-16 without permanent changes.

The new deficit is larger than last year's $19 billion gap, which took legislators and Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger until Oct. 8 to resolve, the latest budget enactment date in state history.

Read the whole story