Sheriff, jail commander against release of Dugard documents

By Sam Stanton, Sacramento Bee

The El Dorado County sheriff and jail commander are the latest officials to oppose unsealing documents in the Jaycee Lee Dugard kidnapping case, saying releasing any information about security at the Placerville jail involving Phillip and Nancy Garrido could pose a “serious breach of security.”

The concerns, outlined in court filings dated Thursday, were filed in opposition to an effort by the *Bee* and other media groups to unseal documents in the case, including grand jury transcripts of Dugard’s testimony last month.

El Dorado County District Attorney Vern Pierson earlier this week filed papers opposing the transcripts’ release, and on Thursday Sheriff Manfred Kollar and jail commander Pam Lane filed documents saying the release of other sealed documents could undermine jail security.

Read the whole story

Water – should private companies control it?

By Jeneen Interlandi, Newsweek

Sitka, Alaska, is home to one of the world’s most spectacular

lakes. Nestled into a U-shaped valley of dense forests and majestic peaks, and fed by snowpack and glaciers, the reservoir, named Blue Lake for its deep blue hues, holds trillions of gallons of water so pure it requires no treatment. The city's tiny population—fewer than 10,000 people spread across 5,000 square miles—makes this an embarrassment of riches. Every year, as countries around the world struggle to meet the water needs of their citizens, 6.2 billion gallons of Sitka's reserves go unused. That could soon change. In a few months, if all goes according to plan, 80 million gallons of Blue Lake water will be siphoned into the kind of tankers normally reserved for oil—and shipped to a bulk bottling facility near Mumbai. From there it will be dispersed among several drought-plagued cities throughout the Middle East. The project is the brainchild of two American companies. One, True



Alaska Bottling, has purchased the rights to transfer 3 billion gallons of water a year from Sitka's bountiful reserves. The other, S2C Global, is building the water-processing facility in India. If the companies succeed, they will have brought what Sitka hopes will be a $90 million industry to their city, not to mention a solution to one of the world's most pressing climate conundrums. They will also have turned life's most essential molecule into a global commodity.

Read the whole story

South Tahoe offers deals at

parking garage to entice drivers

By Kathryn Reed

The city-owned parking garage at Heavenly Village has a series of specials going on. One expires in November and the other is a winter special.

Lake Tahoe News just learned about them at a recent parking meeting – and had to ask the city to send the information even though the city contracts with a company to run the garage that has a public information officer on staff.

The South Lake Tahoe parking garage loses close to $60,000 a year. The City Council at the time this redevelopment area was built agreed to own the garage. It has several years left to pay back millions of dollars in bond debt.

The South Tahoe Joint Powers Parking Authority (STJPPA) oversees the garage near Stateline. The board that runs the STJPPA is really the City Council, just like the Redevelopment Agency board is the five City Council members. It is commonly referred to as the Parking Authority.

Standard Parking and High Sierra Patrol have contracts with the Parking Authority. The city in the 2010-11 budget is paying Standard Parking $193,000 to manage the garage. High Sierra Patrol this fiscal year is being paid $104,342 to manage on street parking and the Village Center eight hours a day, seven days a week.

According to Gene Palazzo, who heads the Redevelopment-Housing Department which includes parking, no general fund and no redevelopment money is being used for parking – just money from the Parking Authority.

Temblor felt in South Lake Tahoe

Updated Oct. 30, 2010, 10:32pm.

A 4.6 earthquake struck 13 miles east-southeast of Markleeville on Saturday at 6:02pm.

The South Lake Tahoe Police Department reported two calls from the Tahoe Island area.

According to the U.S. Geological Service, one person in Rancho Cordova (149 miles from the epicenter) felt the shaking.

“First, I thought there was noise and then the next thing I was jolted,” said Cleo Reed, who is in Tahoe visiting from Paradise. Having experienced many quakes during her 30-plus years in the Bay Area, she was close with calling this a 5.0 quake.

Earthquakes have a habit of happening during the World Series when the Giants play – and apparently it doesn’t matter if they are at home.

Another quake in the same area hit at 6:57pm, registering 3.0. A 1.7 shaker was reported at 8:07pm Oct. 30.

– Kathryn Reed

Emergency childcare for youth in Placer County

First 5 Placer Children and Families Commission has approved up to $300,000 in emergency childcare funding for families in crisis for children ages 0-5 until Jan. 31. Additionally, the Placer County Office of Education has approved funding for children between the ages of 6-12.

The reason for this emergency funding arose when Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger signed the 2010-11 state budget and eliminated childcare services for low income working families in the CalWorks Stage 3 program. The low-income working families in this program now face the dilemma of having to leave their jobs or place their children in uncertain childcare situations.

In Placer County, this act will leave approximately 250 children without access to safe quality childcare as of Oct. 31, 40 percent of whom are under age 6. Funding from First 5 and PCOE will help ease the transition from the program.

For more information on First 5 Placer, go online.

TRPA gets earful on river project at golf course, state park

By Maggie Thach

STATELINE – It was hard to know the meeting was about a river

project designed to reduce fine sediment reaching Lake Tahoe.

Most of the 38 people who spoke this week before the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency's Governing Board were concerned about Lake Tahoe Golf Course and Washoe Meadow State Park.

This area of the South Shore on the outskirts of South Lake Tahoe is under the microscope as the next reach of the Upper Truckee River is being studied. The problem is banks are eroding and in turn clouding Lake Tahoe, according to officials.



It was standing-room-only at the Oct. 28 TRPA meeting. Photo/Laurie Brazil

The river runs through the golf course that is on state land and is contiguous with the state park. To make substantive changes to the river may require changes to the course and park.

The river at this section is owned by the California State Parks. This body as well as TRPA will decide which alternative in the environmental impact study and environmental impact report will be chosen.

No action was taken at the Oct. 28 meeting, but much input was given. People have until Nov. 8 to comment on the five

proposals for the project.

The meeting room quickly filled to near the maximum capacity of 100. Concerned patrons ranged in age from middle school students to residents who have lived in the Lake Tahoe Basin for more than 30 years.

Before the meeting was open to the public, staff gave an overview of the project and of the five alternatives. The alternatives are:

1. No action.

2. Restore the river ecosystem and reconfigure the 18-hole golf course, removing several holes from the east side of the river to higher capability lands.

3. Restore the river ecosystem and reduce the area of the golf course by making it a nine-hole golf course, keeping all nine holes on the east side of the river.

4. Stabilize the river ecosystem and make no changes to the golf course.

5. Restore the river and meadow ecosystem and remove the golf course.

There was strong support for Alternative 2. The people who back Alternative 2 said the golf course plays an important role in the community's tourism industry, bringing in $6 million into the local economy. There are 33,000 rounds of golf played annually on the course, which employs a 76-member staff and generates 92 jobs related to tourism. It pays the state park system an average of $880,000 a year and is among the top five revenue makers of all California State Park units.

"Alternative 2 is a win-win situation. It's a win for wildlife, it's a win for water clarity. It's a win for the community of South Lake Tahoe," said Kathy Strain, laboratory

specialist in the Science Department at Lake Tahoe Community College. “It will increase outdoor recreation with new hiking and biking trails. This can become a model for how golf courses can be integrated with environmental restoration.”

Interestingly, Strain has been giving presentations about the Upper Truckee River project throughout the South Shore. At those meetings she always says there is no preferred alternative, but would still slant her talks to tout Alternative 2.

State Parks employees have taken the same approach.

Local business owners and avid golfers at the meeting argued Alternative 2 is a fair compromise, making restoration a priority, while keeping the local economy in mind.

Although it got most of the support, there was opposition to Alternative 2. Patricia Handal, whose house borders Washoe Meadow State Park, believes restoring the environment should be the top priority.

“We want to focus on wildlife. If Alternative 2 is implemented, wildlife will be fragmented,” Handal said. “We are a close-knit community and we support restoration of the river. We don’t want something with unintended consequences. We want something that does not increase the footprint of the golf course.”

The League to Save Lake Tahoe and Tahoe Area Sierra Club favor Alternative 3.

After public comment is closed, the TRPA will review and respond to those comments through November and December. A decision on a preferred alternative is set for January and February and action on the project is set to start in September.

SLT council candidates keep collecting cash

Campaign contributions continue to roll in for people seeking one of three seats on the South Lake Tahoe City Council.

Click on the person’s last name to see the latest filing.

Joy Curry

Tom Davis

Claire Fortier

Steve Kubby

Angela Swanson.

Funding cuts force agency to disenroll kids from insurance

By Matt Kawahara, Sacramento Bee

Heavy cuts in funding are forcing an insurance program for local low-income children to disenroll 680 youths ages 6 to 18 from coverage by Sunday.

The Healthy Kids Healthy Future program, which insures children to age 18 in Sacramento, Colusa, El Dorado, Placer and Yuba counties, is losing funding from the California

Endowment and Blue Shield Foundation, said executive director Jennifer Kwan.

That funding paid the premiums on the health insurance plans for children in the program, Kwan said. None of the rest of the program's funding goes toward premiums for that age group, she said.

Read the whole story

Storm system headed toward Lake Tahoe

The National Weather Service says the low pressure system moving toward Northern California and Western Nevada will bring cooler temperatures, increasing ridge winds and a chance for rain and snow showers starting Friday night and continuing into Saturday above 7,000 feet.

Snow levels will start about 8,000 feet and drop to between 5,500 and 6,500 feet by early Saturday. Light snow showers are expected Saturday morning in areas south of Lake Tahoe and into Mono County with mainly rain showers elsewhere.

The storm is not expected to have a significant impact on travel.

Harrah’s tied to Bay Area mega-Indian casino proposal

By John Simerman, Contra Costa Times

Nearly lost amid the shouting of a high-volume campaign season, 42,000 Richmond voters may do more to change the region’s environment than in any election in decades.

They will vote on a gambling resort, right on the Bay, with more slot machines than all the casinos on Lake Tahoe’s South Shore – the first Vegas-style casino in a California urban area. And if its magnitude is not well understood, its origins are even less so.

The resort’s journey to the ballot – which, if voters agree, could prod federal approval – is a seven-year saga with an uncommon cast, from a figure with alleged criminal ties who spurred a small band of American Indians to pursue casino riches, to a development team that includes a former U.S. senator and Clinton-era defense secretary, a major Chicago real estate financier and a former governor’s land czar.

Along with the Guidiville Band of Pomo Indians, a tribe with 112 members and roots in Mendocino County, they’ve pushed ahead with the help of, among others, a former top aide to U.S. Sen. John McCain, and financing first from Harrah’s and now from the tribe that runs Cache Creek Casino Resort in Yolo County.

Read the whole story