El Dorado County budget session in Tahoe

El Dorado County is having a special budget briefing and discussion on Oct. 25 in South Lake Tahoe.

Staff from the Chief Administrative Office will be at the South Lake Tahoe branch library to present an overview of the county budget and answer questions.

“The county’s budget is currently balanced, but we know there are hard decisions on the horizon to maintain that balance,” Chief Administrative Officer Gayle Erbe-Hamlin said. “We want to provide a convenient opportunity for people to learn about their county’s budget, understand the challenges and offer constructive feedback.”

El Dorado County’s general fund budget is approximately $200 million. The county is projecting an $11 million shortfall for 2011-11.

Similar budget briefings were in Placerville earlier this month.

The meeting will be from 6-8pm, Oct. 25, county library, 1000 Rufus Allen Blvd., South Lake Tahoe.

SLT council defers pot cultivation ordinance until

after Nov. 2

With the room full, the South Lake Tahoe City Council surprised most everyone in attendance this morning when on a 5-0 vote they decided to postpone all discussion of the medical marijuana cultivation ordinance until after the Nov. 2 election.

Councilman Bill Crawford made the motion Oct. 19. His reasons were to see whom California elects as attorney general, see if Proposition 19 – the marijuana initiative – passes, and to gather more information about how the feds intend to handle California laws.

– Kathryn Reed

Poor recordkeeping results in fine for slot machine distributor

By Cy Ryan, Las Vegas Sun

CARSON CITY – A Las Vegas company that has a license to distribute slot machines has agreed to pay a $2,500 fine for violating the regulations of the state Gaming Control Board.

Capado Gaming Corp. has admitted its violation of not keeping adequate slot machine sales records available for inspection by state agents in 2008.

Capado sold five slot machines to a restricted gaming business at Incline Village in the Lake Tahoe area. The complaint,

filed Sept. 30, said Capado failed to maintain any records documenting the serial numbers of the slot machines, as required.

Read the whole story

South Shore public transit changes hands, not players

By Kathryn Reed

STATELINE – In the world of South Shore public transit, this could be one of the most monumental months on record.

On Monday, the Tahoe Transportation District board agreed to take over operation of BlueGo, the public bus system, and withdraw from the South Tahoe Area Transit Authority, which had been the overseer of the system.

STATA filed for bankruptcy this fall. At today's hearing in Reno, TTD attorney Paul Taggart expects to ask the bankruptcy judge to let his client take over the bus system and retain the rights to the handful of buses STATA owns.

Carl Hasty, left, runs the Oct. 18 Tahoe Transporation District meeting. Photo/Kathryn Reed

TTD owns about three-quarters of the buses in the fleet. STATA members own the rest of the fleet. Those members are being asked to sign on to have TTD be the umbrella agency of public transit on the South Shore of Lake Tahoe.

“(Monday) was a big step … one of a few big steps that still need to happen,” Carl Hasty, TTD manager, said after the meeting.

The board voted on a slew of actions Oct. 18 related to the takeover. For the bulk of the votes Will Garner, Placer County’s rep on the TTD board, abstained.

The board’s action was not a surprise. *Lake Tahoe News* first reported the change in leadership Oct. 6 after the South Lake Tahoe City Council agreed to the changes.

Even though City Councilman Bill Crawford earlier this month as reported in that story was critical of STATA, he voted for the changes Monday.

(Bruce Grego is South Lake Tahoe’s rep on the TTD board. Minutes that were approved Monday indicate he was a no-show at the Aug. 31 meeting and arrived late for the Aug. 13 meeting. Normally the primary member to a board asks the alternate to attend, but Grego never did. In fact, it was City Attorney Patrick Enright who had to ask Bill Crawford to attend the Oct. 18 meeting.)

Russ Nygaard, with El Dorado County’s engineering department, was in the audience at the Monday meeting at the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency office. The county had pulled its membership from STATA and taken its two buses off the street. With TTD taking over, Nygaard after the meeting said the county backs this plan.

Nygaard expects the Board of Supervisors to take up the issue this month.

This week the TTD board approved the $4.2 million operating budget even though all the players involved have not agreed to be part of the new entity.

“I think the softest revenue source right now is Harrah’s and Harveys,” Hasty told his board. “We have a fair amount of work to do with them.”

For the fiscal year that began Oct. 1, their combined contribution is $240,000.

Crawford asked what the deadline is to get the public and private partners that were part of STATA to embrace TTD. Hasty said Nov. 1. He said today’s bankruptcy hearing will “have bearing on that.”

Although all parties seem to agree a coordinated public transit system is needed, it has not been made clear how changing the umbrella agency will make it run smoother or be profitable. At the Nov. 12 TTD meeting, the initial draft of a five-year transit plan for the South Shore is expected to be unveiled, which could answer those question.

Gibbons discharged from hospital

By Reno Gazette-Journal

Nevada Gov. Jim Gibbons has been released from a rehabilitation hospital and will continue therapy for a broken pelvis at the governor’s mansion in Carson City.

The 65-year-old Republican governor was bucked from a horse at a private ranch north of Reno on Sept. 21. He broke his pelvis

in two places and underwent surgery. Doctors inserted several screws to repair the damage.

Gibbons' office says he was released from Renown Regional Medical Center's rehabilitation unit over the weekend. He will work from his office at the mansion and attend meetings through teleconference.

His staff says he will be using a wheelchair or walker for several weeks and will continue out-patient therapy.

Leaders near Tahoe basin worry about lack of road money

By Dana M. Nichols, Stockton Record

MURPHYS – In the last decade, Mother Lode counties have spent more than $100 million on key transportation projects, including the $61 million Highway 4 bypass around downtown Angels Camp completed last year.

"If you are not going to borrow the money, and if you are not going to raise taxes, then you won't have



a modern transportation system in America.”

– John Garamendi, D-Walnut Grove

But Mother Lode government officials and transportation planners have more than a few worries about what may happen in the next decade, they said during a public town hall meeting this week with the California Transportation Commission at Kautz Ironstone Winery in Murphys.

They said they already can’t keep up with maintaining local roads and highways, and that state and federal budget deficits combined with bureaucratic hurdles threaten to delay or even derail needed upgrades.

Three of the 10 commissioners were present: Bob Alvarado, James Ghielmetti and Fran Inman. They appeared to listen sympathetically to local leaders’ concerns. But while the commission has historically found ways to meet the needs of the Mother Lode – it gets praise from Lode transportation leaders – there’s little the commission can do to counteract larger forces that are squeezing funds.

Read the whole story

Drug testing puts DCSD students on the sidelines

By Kathryn Reed

ZEPHYR COVE – When it comes to testing positive for drugs,

students in Douglas County School District are about average.



Students in grades 9-12 participating in athletics and other extracurricular activities were subjected to random drug testing for the first time in 2009-10. The results of those tests were presented to the school board last week.

At Whittell High School 5.4 percent of the 186 tests came back positive. With 80 percent of the student body being available to be tested, many had to give multiple urine samples. The nine positive tests are not necessarily nine different students.

No seniors tested positive. Two juniors, three sophomores and four freshmen had positive tests. The two students who refused to take the test are categorized as positive.

At Douglas High, 2.3 percent of the 478 tests given came out positive. The two ninth-grade classes at the middle schools in the Carson Valley had a total of two positive tests for a 2.2 percent ratio.

The national average is 2.3 percent for grades 9-12.

Refusing to take the test resulted in not being able to participate in the sport or activity of choice. A positive test also meant being removed from the sport. Drug counseling through Tahoe Youth & Family Services was also mandatory.

Jeff Evans, dean of students at Douglas High, said, “What isn’t in this is how many kids can use this as an out at a party.” Meaning instead of being teased for saying no to drugs by their peers, others will understand they want clean a test to keep being able to play so there won’t be bulling or ridicule.

The tests cost the district $23,500 last school year. Funding

is in the current budget as well.

ZCES, WHS standardized test score results a bit lackluster

By Kathryn Reed

ZEPHYR COVE – It was a mixed bag of news as principals from Zephyr Cove Elementary and Whittell High schools gave the board of education an update this month on test scores.

ZCES Principal Nancy Cauley didn't have concrete reasons to give why her K-6 school went from being classified as "high achieving" to being on the "watch" list.

Board member Cindy Trigg questioned whether the death of a student just before the December holidays could have had a lasting impact on students' ability to learn or stay focused during the mandatory state and federal tests.

Cauley said counseling resumed for students, teachers and parents after the break.

"There was a cluster of students who could not move forward," Cauley said at the Oct. 12 meeting. "It was probably last April for three children before they were no longer breaking down. It was a difficult time. I do think we are stronger for it. We sent a message to the kids that that choice is not acceptable."

The death was a suicide.

To address the academic issue, flexible math groupings have been expanded from the primary grades to the whole school. Teachers will be receiving professional development in Math Investigations.

Districtwide fifth-graders are having difficulty mastering the curriculum, Cauley said, not just at her school.

She wants a more blended teaching strategy to take place so it’s not just 50 minutes of reading, 50 minutes of math, 50 minutes of science. Cauley told the board it would be better for students to have those components integrated throughout the curriculum, throughout the day.

Crespin Esquivel had the unenviable task of presenting stats to the board from tests when he was not an employee of the district. He took over as principal of Whittell this school year.

Although many of the test areas saw arrows reflecting a decrease in percentages from the prior year, Whittell High remains a high achieving school. With it being a 7-12 school, the would-be middle school grades came in at adequate.

Better addressing the needs of students whose first language is not English is being looked at.

Both principals pointed to the transient rate as contributing to problems for some students who come mid-year.

Esquivel also said he will be looking at the master schedule to see how best to meet the needs of his students.

Douglas County SO trains officers from other agencies

Eleven law enforcement officers from five Nevada law enforcement agencies graduated from a 40-hour Field Training Officer (FTO) program taught at the Douglas County Sheriff's Office.

This Peace Officer Standards and Training (P.O.S.T.) approved course, required by most Nevada law enforcement agencies for veteran officers to train rookie officers, is key for educating and preparing FTOs for their new role as a law enforcement trainer.

Students received instruction on topics such as:

Elements of a successful FTO program

Duties and Responsibilities of Trainers

Effective Communication and Teaching Methods

Fundamentals of Learning

Effective Supervision

Ethical Leadership/Role Modeling

Standardized Evaluation Guidelines and Evaluation Process

Practical Exercises.

Graduates of the class included:

Douglas County Sheriff's Office:

Deputies Bill Coleman, Bethany Love, Doug Midkiff, Stuart Shipley and Steve Velez

Elko County Sheriff's Office:

Deputies David Hicks, Valerie Steinfeld and Lenwood VanNatter

Storey County Sheriff’s Office:

Senior Deputy Frank Valdez

Winnemucca Police Department:

Officer Matthew Haylett

Reno/Tahoe Airport Authority:

Officer Keith Bobko

MontBleu hires GM with marketing background

Jef Bauer is MontBleu casino’s new general manager.

Before taking the job at the Stateline casino, Bauer was vice president and general manager of Golden Casino Group in Black Hawk, Colo., where he was responsible for overseeing all three of Golden’s casinos – Golden Mardi Gras, Golden Gates and Golden Gulch. The combined enterprise operated 1,200 slot machines, 25 table games, a 20-table poker room, three restaurants, six bars and 450 employees.

Prior to joining Golden Casino Group, Bauer worked for Majestic Star Casinos, LLC and as executive director of marketing for Hyatt Regency Lake Tahoe Casino. Bauer began his career at Harrah’s Reno in 1987 and worked his way from operations positions into corporate leadership roles for Harrah’s Entertainment, working as the company’s marketing communications director and opening several riverboat and

tribal gaming casinos throughout the 1990s.