

Garrido returning to court today

By Sam Stanton, Sacramento Bee

In the latest twist in the Jaycee Lee Dugard case, kidnap suspect Phillip Garrido is set to return to court today, where his attorney may say she doubts his mental competence.

A closed hearing on the matter was held Thursday morning in El Dorado Superior Court, followed by an order that Garrido return to court today at 1 p.m.



The order did not specify what action may be taken, but at the last hearing for Garrido and his wife, Nancy, the judge noted that the issue of Phillip Garrido's mental competence might come up.

The development comes a day after word leaked that the couple had been indicted by an El Dorado County grand jury in a maneuver that may lead to the cancellation of a planned preliminary hearing set for Oct. 7.

[Read the whole story](#)

Real estate brings Vail Resorts' quarterly profits

down

By Ed Sealover, Denver Business Journal

Vail Resorts Inc. ended fiscal year 2010 with increased revenue year-over-year from its mountain segment, but decreased net revenue from its lodging and real estate segments, leading to an overall 11.1 percent decrease in revenues, according to fiscal results released Thursday.

Net income for the Broomfield-based company (NYSE: MTN) was \$30.4 million, or 83 cents per diluted share, in the fiscal year that ended on July 31, compared to \$49 million, or \$1.33 per diluted share, in the prior year.

Vail Resorts CEO Rob Katz lauded the performance, noting that net revenue increased 3.9 percent for the important mountain segment that covers the company's four Colorado ski resorts and one on the California-Nevada border.

The overall 37.9 percent net income decline was due primarily to the timing of real estate closings at the company's newly opened properties in Breckenridge and Vail – closings that he expects to increase in the current fiscal year.

Read the whole story

South Tahoe housing prices keep dropping

By Ron Trujillo, Sacramento Business Journal

Sacramento-area home prices dropped last month compared to a

year ago, as the four-county region remains one of the most sluggish markets for a recovery in the state.



The region's median home price – meaning half the homes sold for more, the other half for less – dipped 2.8 percent to \$186,750, compared to August 2009. Home sales have plummeted 11.3 percent from a year ago, largely because home-buying incentives stopped, according to a California Association of Realtors report released Wednesday.

There is some gain with home prices in the region, but it's modest compared to other markets in the Golden State.

The four-county region's current price is 11.6 percent higher from the trough price of \$167,340 in April 2009, the third-worst performance in the state – and 18 percentage points lower than the current price-to-trough price recovery statewide, according to the association.

And the region's current home price remains 53 percent lower than the peak of \$394,450 in August 2005, though only slightly worse than the peak of the market-to-current price statewide.

A county-by-county look:

- El Dorado – Homeowners here endured the most pain in the region, with home prices tumbling 7.2 percent to \$290,000, from \$312,500 in August 2009, according to a California Association of Realtors report released Wednesday. Placerville accounted for much of the decline, with home prices falling 19.6 percent from a year ago. However, El Dorado Hills and South Lake Tahoe home prices also fell.

Read the whole story

O'Connor backs changing how Nevada selects judges

By Ray Hagar, Reno Gazette-Journal

Retired U.S. Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor continued her push Wednesday to change the way Nevada selects its district judges and Supreme Court justices.

O'Connor, the first woman appointed to the U.S. Supreme Court, is backing Ballot Question 1, which would end Nevada's system of electing judges and replace it with a system where judges would first be appointed by the governor after a review by a judicial committee.



Sandra Day
O'Connor

Those appointed judges, however, would face voters in a retention election within two years of their appointment and would remain on the job if 55 percent of Nevada's voters approve of them. After their initial retention vote, judges would then face the voters every six years in an election where they would run against their record – not an opponent.

O'Connor spoke to the editorial board of the Reno Gazette-Journal on Wednesday, saying the proposed system would do away with the election of unqualified candidates and would remove

politics and cash contributions from judicial election campaigns.

Read the whole story

Tallac Association struggles to be financially solvent

By Kathryn Reed

CAMP RICHARDSON – Negative numbers fill the ledger of the Tahoe Tallac Association – putting the board in the awkward position this week of offering the executive director a contract extension with little or no money to pay her.

Staff (high season has three full time and four part time) has been cut, though it is a bit normal to make cuts as the season winds down; Executive Director Lori Cramer and Director Carl Wooland are essentially working as volunteers despite the fact they should be paid staff; rates on weddings have been cut in an attempt to lure brides and grooms; grants are being sought; and an advisory committee is in place to help right the unstable ship.



Carl Wooland
and Lori
Cramer are

almost working
for free for
the Tahoe
Tallac
Association.
Photo/Kathryn
Reed

As of Sept. 20 the TTA had \$2,617.19 in the bank.

"I'm having a hard time selling the site (for weddings) without the lawn," Cramer told the board Monday.

In the past, the association has rented out the Grand Hall at Valhalla for weddings, with receptions often on the adjacent grassy area. But the U.S. Forest Service, which owns the property on the outside of the South Lake Tahoe city limits on Highway 89, recently nixed that practice.

The decision resulted in needing to refund \$9,000 worth of deposits for the 2009 season.

Rental income, which is wedding and the holiday faire, raised \$53,215 for the fiscal year ending Sept. 30. For 2008-09 that figure was \$118,451. That's a difference of 55.1 percent.

One of the problems is the Forest Service doesn't usually manage buildings. That's one reason why the agency was going to burn all the buildings down when it took ownership of the historic sites that were once home to wealthy San Franciscans.

Jonathan Cook-Fisher, special uses program manager for the Forest Service, has been in the position for less than a year. He isn't familiar with the 30-plus year history of his agency's contentious relationship with the Tahoe Tallac Association.

Cook-Fisher wants to work with the TTA so its annual Valhalla Arts and Music Festival thrives. The summer-fall festival

season is the purpose of the TTA. It's just that weddings came along and helped keep the nonprofit afloat.

The Forest Service has a financial interest in ensuring TTA is financially solvent. The Granger-Thye permit sends about 15 percent of gross profits to the USFS to be used solely for restoration at the site.

Cook-Fisher said he doesn't know why the lawn was once allowed to be used for weddings and now isn't.

The TTA board says other Forest Service staff has reinterpreted the environmental impact statement and special use permit that it works under.

The association claims it lost between \$5,500 and \$11,000 by not being able to stage outdoor culture events on the lawn. What irks the board even more is that it pays to maintain the lush green expanse to the tune of \$7,000 year.

When the two sides do meet, another issue the TTA will bring up is the gate not being open and the parking spaces it believes are theirs that the USFS keeps for itself.

Again, these are issues Cook-Fisher said he is not well versed in.

The TTA is crafting a letter to send to Terri Marceron, forest supervisor, and hoping for a meeting before she heads to Alaska.

Cook-Fisher said he is ready to talk to TTA now.

"I would like to move from emails and informal discussions to a formalized proposal (from them) that this is what (they) want to do and why. We are not quite there, but I think we will get there," Cook-Fisher said. "We like to see (from all permittees) some sophistication of how folks develop a business plan, what service they provide to the public and how it all works together."

The Tallac Association has a plan, but believes the Forest Service changes the rules. TTA has done some number crunching, extrapolating what the loss of use at the site per current USFS rules means to the entire South Shore bottom line, not just TTA's. It is in the millions of dollars when things like lodging for the people not able to use the site is added in, linen rentals not booked, photographers not used, restaurants not frequented and so on.

The TTA is not blaming its meager bottom line solely on the Forest Service. It knows it has to change some thing going forward regardless of what the landowner does.

This is Cramer's first season at the helm after the board let the previous executive director go. Ticket prices did not necessarily reflect what it cost to bring in a performer. Grants have not been written for all the money that is out there.

A tentative schedule was presented to the board for the 2011 season that calls for recurring events like a local band performance the first Thursday of each month. The idea is people would get used to being at the site more consistently.

At the end of the evening the board met in closed session to discuss Cramer's future. They offered her the executive director's job and she wants it. It remains to be seen if a contract can be worked out along with a conflict of interest clause crafted. Executive directors have made in the mid-\$40,000s in the past, with no benefits. The conflict issue is Cramer has a wedding business. This past season she was not permitted to schedule any weddings at Valhalla for her business.

TTA's annual gala fundraiser is Dec. 4. The Tahoe Improv Players are having a benefit performance Sept. 27. TTA also sells memberships.

Man Black Booked for cheating at Stateline club arrested in Vegas

By Richard N. Velotta, Las Vegas Sun

A New Jersey man who has been on Nevada's List of Excluded Persons – the Black Book – since 1994 and on New Jersey's List of Exclusion since 1989 was arrested in a Las Vegas casino Wednesday morning.

Brent Eli Morris was apprehended by enforcement agents of the state Gaming Control Board at about 1am at Caesars Palace after he was spotted playing craps by casino surveillance personnel.

[Read the whole story](#)

Lahontan's Tahoe office threatened with power being cut

By Kathryn Reed

California's budget mess had employees at Lahontan Water Quality Control Board scrambling to figure out a way to keep the lights on.

With rent not being paid on the South Lake Tahoe office on Lake Tahoe Boulevard, it also meant the electric bill was not getting paid. These checks are cut in Sacramento and the state isn't writing checks because it doesn't have a budget for the fiscal year that began July 1.

NV Energy had threatened to shut off power beginning Sept. 27. The landlord stepped in, paid the bill and Lahontan workers will keep working – except, of course, on the second, third and fourth Fridays of the month because of the state-imposed furlough days.

Contingency plans were being made for some Lahontan workers to squeeze into the annex building on James Street if the lights went out at the main office.

Former Cal-Neva owner indicted on wire fraud charges

By Stuart Pfeifer and Robert Faturechi, Los Angeles Times

Los Angeles real estate mogul Ezri Namvar, an Iranian immigrant who amassed and then lost billions of dollars of commercial real estate holdings, has been indicted on wire fraud charges, his attorney said.

Namvar, former owner of such high-profile properties as the Marriott hotel in downtown Los Angeles and the Cal Neva resort in Lake Tahoe, was accused of five counts of wire fraud related to a company, Namco Financial Exchange Corp., that sheltered proceeds from real estate transactions, said defense

attorney Marc Harris.

Thom Mrozek, a spokesman for the U.S. attorney's office, said a grand jury indicted Namvar on Tuesday.

Read the whole story

Gibbons recovering from pelvis surgery

By David McGrath Schwartz, Las Vegas Sun

Gov. Jim Gibbons is in stable condition after doctors performed surgery to repair his pelvis, which was broken in "several places," according to his office.

Gibbons suffered the injury Tuesday afternoon when he was thrown from a horse at a private Northern Nevada ranch.



Jim Gibbons

Gibbons, 65, had the surgery at Renown Regional Medical Center in Reno, where he is recovering and expected to be through at least Friday. The surgery lasted about two hours.

Read the whole story

Tahoe left out of DEA, El Dorado sheriff's drug disposal day

The El Dorado County Sheriff's Office is partnering with the Drug Enforcement Administration in the National Prescription Drug Take-Back Day on Sept. 25. This is an opportunity for county residents to dispose of old and unwanted prescription drugs.

The sheriff's office will be operating two sites where these drugs can be disposed of with no questions asked. The hours of collection will be from 10am to 4pm. One location is the main office – 300 Fair Lane, Placerville and the other is the El Dorado Hills Substation, 4354 Town Center Drive, Ste. 112. El Dorado Hills.

The initiative seeks to prevent increased pill abuse and theft. DEA will be collecting potentially dangerous expired, unused, and unwanted prescription drugs for destruction at sites nationwide on Saturday.