Fallen Leaf Lake residents vote in 3 new board members

By Susan Wood

Based on semi-official results reported by El Dorado County Elections Department officials Tuesday night, Fallen Leaf Lake residents will get mostly a new board in the coming months.

More than two-thirds (321) of the 461 registered voters cast ballots for Thomas Barber to replace former board member Dana Clark, Wanda Kownacki taking board member Eric Thaden's seat and Thomas Bacchetti taking over where former board President Mike Kraft once sat. More than 80 percent opted to recall board members Thaden and Kraft, the latter resigning Aug. 20 as president amid a report of him not qualifying to be a registered to voter in the Community Services District.

Kraft has become a controversial figure with a segment of the community. He led a movement to oust longtime general store and marina concessionaire John and Ruth Rich. Since then, Rob and Sandy Wirth have taken over the hub of the lakeside community. For more than a year, CSD meetings have been punctuated by perceived threats, standing room only attendance, shouting matches and has led to a divided community.

When all is said and done, board member Jennifer Thornton will be the only familiar face on the board, as Terri Thomas decided to move on as well. Thornton has been on the board for less than a year.

Board clerk Patsy Miller resigned at about the same time as Kraft with no public explanation. A new clerk will be appointed by the incoming board. Choosing officers of the board is on the Sept. 4 agenda for the district.

In his resignation, Kraft said he's "disheartened" about the "selfish" nature of some citizens of the village at the base of the Desolation Wilderness near South Lake Tahoe.

His successor, Bacchetti, told Lake Tahoe News he looks forward to the opportunity.

"One thing I've looked at over the last year is how important it is to make sure we take care of the process and make sure everyone knows what's going on," Bacchetti said, adding how the CSD board shouldn't "go off and do whatever it wants." He believes the outgoing board failed to do that.

Bacchetti, an arts administrator, noted how the lake represents the one constant in his life over the last 45 years.

Phone calls to Kownacki and Barber were left unanswered.

The district turmoil also prompted a review of the elections code from El Dorado County. A question arose as to the eligibility of board candidates and registered voters if they don't permanently reside in the district.

"(Residency) is where they claim their homeowner tax exemption," Green said.

Report: Angora Fire didn't hurt Tahoe

UC Davis researchers noted several bright spots in their annual Lake Tahoe health report issued today: The 2007 Angora

Fire had no significant impact on lake clarity; a small test of a method to kill invasive clams worked; the pollutant phosphorus was at its lowest level in 29 years; and free-floating algae in the lake have generally remained constant since 1996.

Earlier this month, the UC Davis Tahoe Environmental Research Center announced lake clarity held relatively steady in 2009. It was noted the rate of decline in Lake Tahoe's clarity since 2000 was less that that seen in past decades.

"Overall, we remain cautiously optimistic," John Reuter, associate director of the UC Davis Tahoe Environmental Research Center, said in a press release.

The "Tahoe: State of the Lake Report" is intended to give the public a better understanding of the changes occurring in Lake Tahoe on a year-to-year basis and to place current conditions within a historical perspective. It summarizes tens of thousands of scientific observations of lake weather, water conditions and aquatic life made since 1900.

"This report is an impartial, annual accounting of many key variables of lake change," Geoff Schladow, director of the UC Davis Tahoe Environmental Research Center, said in a statement. "It helps us all recognize the differences between natural variability and longterm change, and how our efforts toward the restoration of Lake Tahoe are progressing."

Reuter emphasized the lake is not out of the woods, "but it does have the ability to improve, provided that pollution control is achieved."

The report also shows these 2009 events: Potentially disastrous invasive quagga mussels were found on 10 boats inspected by Tahoe management agencies as they headed for the lake. More precipitation fell as rain and less as snow. Algae attached to rocks and docks increased along the northeast shoreline. The amount of water-clouding particles and

nutrients reaching the lake by west-side streams increased as precipitation rose from previous years. Lake levels fell below the natural rim of the lake, causing water to stop flowing into the Truckee River.

The full 69-page report is online.

Lawsuits, runway improvements dominate SLT council agenda

By Kathryn Reed

Much of today's special South Lake Tahoe City Council meeting will be behind closed doors. Litigation matters are the topic of the day.

The cases before the council are former transit operator John Andoh. A second civil rights case also involves the city and police officers filed by Daniel Thomas Harvey. The other cases are MV Transportation's lawsuit and Lake Tahoe Development Company's bankruptcy status.

Action that is likely to take place this morning is approval of a last-minute grant from the Federal Aviation Administration. Word came earlier this summer the FAA may have money that would need to be spent before Sept. 30.



The area where cars parked for Saturday's air show is Phase III for ramp improvements. Photo/Kathryn Reed

The nearly $1.45 million grant would require a 5 percent match by the city, or $76,000.

The money would complete Phase III of the runway-paving project at Lake Tahoe Airport. Phases I and II were finished in June. This would be the final phase of repaving the terminal area.

In anticipation of the money coming forward, the city went out to bid last month. The council is being asked this morning to accept the grant and award the bid.

The grant will also buy a snowblower for the airport. A 25-year-old blower hasn’t worked since December and would cost $40,000 to fix. The other blower dates to 1992 and is often on the fritz, with $20,000 having been put into it this year.

The meeting is at Lake Tahoe Airport starting at 9 this morning. The meeting is expected to be over by 11am.

Upper Truckee Marsh tree

thinning project wraps up

By Kathryn Reed

Work wrapped up Monday on a two-week tree-thinning project in the Upper Truckee Marsh that involved clearing about 12,000 board feet (52 trees) and 50 tons of wood chips being hauled out.

A semi-truck early on the afternoon of Aug. 30 was full of chips being taken to the cogeneration plant in Quincy.



David Tormey adn David Mercer wrap up a thinning project Aug. 23 in the Upper Truckee Marsh. Photos/Kathryn Reed



Slash will be

turned into
mulch.

Slashed remained off San Francisco Street on California Tahoe Conservancy land. A specialized machine was to be brought in to turn it into mulch.

Six acres were treated here, with another 28 in the upland side of the meadow treated earlier by Cross Check Services out of Reno.

“This is for forest health and fire hazard reduction,” David Mercer of the tree cutting firm said. “It’s not that healthy of a forest to begin with.”

He pointed to gall rust and split trees as a problem.

But he Mercer, and his partner David Tormey, said the area looks better than it did.

Although CTC owns the land, this is a project funded by South Lake Tahoe through grants.

Record cold Tahoe to return to normal this week

By Kathryn Reed

Furnaces were churning and woodstoves smoking as the highs in the region over the weekend set records for how cold it was.

On Sunday in South Lake Tahoe the high was 57 degrees. This broke the record set in 1979 at 62 degrees. Normal is 77 degrees.



Calm waters and sunny skies are expected this week for Lake Tahoe. Photo/Kathryn Reed

It was the fifth coolest high temperature on record for all Augusts dating to 1968.

South Tahoe came in with 0.16 inches of rain. About an inch of snow accumulated on Mount Rose at 9,000 feet and on other peaks around the basin.

Reno also set a record for Aug. 29. The mercury hit 64 degrees, while the previous record low maximum was 66 set in 1953.

It was 33 degrees in South Lake Tahoe at 5 this morning.

Lightning struck several places Sunday.

“We’re going back to summer here pretty quick,” Scott McGuire, meteorologist with the National Weather Service in Reno, said.

The sun has returned to the region today. The high today in Tahoe is expected to be in the 60s, the mid-70s on Tuesday and 80 by Friday. Add 10 degrees for Reno’s expected highs.

A low-pressure system from the Gulf of Alaska is to blame for the winter-like cold snap that blew through. Labor Day weekend

is expected to normal weather-wise, but later next week another low pressure may come this way.

Prop. 19 splits medical pot industry

By Peter Hecht, Sacramento Bee

The Canna Care medical marijuana dispensary has a truck driving around Sacramento with a sign telling people to vote “no” on the state ballot initiative that would legalize pot for recreational use.

George Mull, a lawyer for several Northern California pot shops, is fighting Proposition 19 on claims it threatens protections put in place for medical pot users with the 1996 passage of California’s medical marijuana law.

And a Humboldt County dispensary operator complains that the new pot measure simply isn’t needed. “They say they’re legalizing marijuana,” said Stephen Gasparas, who runs the iCenter pot dispensary in Arcata. “It’s already legal. All they’re doing is taxing it.”

California’s landmark initiative to legalize marijuana use for adults over 21 and permit local governments to tax retail pot sales is backed – and bankrolled – by leaders in California’s medical cannabis movement.

Read the whole story

California lawmakers getting paid when they don’t show up

By Jim Sanders, Sacramento Bee

California legislators collected tens of thousands of dollars in taxpayer-funded per diem payments for floor sessions they did not attend this year, records show.

Failing to show up for work typically did not hurt lawmakers’ pocketbooks: Only about one of every four absences included the loss of the tax-free $142 per day in living expenses.

The bulk of compensated absences was tied to medical ailments or to lawmakers who missed floor sessions at the same time they were campaigning for higher office.

Derek Cressman of Common Cause said that absent lawmakers had better have a good excuse for voters who depend upon them.

Read the whole story

Nevada top among pro-debtor states

By Ashlea Ebeling, Forbes

Forget about hiding money offshore from the Internal Revenue Service—unless you want to risk the penalties, back tax bills

and threat of prosecution that thousands of American clients of ubs now face. But what about protecting your cash from vexatious litigants, a grasping ex-spouse or pesky creditors? Then offshore trusts are still an option, but a far less attractive one now that legal reporting requirements for offshore holdings have become more onerous and some U.S. judges have taken to jailing folks who won't (or can't) turn over offshore assets.

That's good news for the lawyers and bankers promoting domestic asset protection trusts instead. "U.S. clients don't want to be offshore anymore," crows Al W. King III, co-chief executive of the South Dakota Trust Co., who woos wealthy clients from his office in New York City. Last year New Hampshire became the twelfth state to allow these trusts (see table, below). As the competition has intensified, states have been tweaking their laws to make them even more favorable to debtors. Currently Alaska, Delaware, Nevada and South Dakota have the most trust business and the most pro-debtor laws.

Read the whole story

Miner found in Tahoe National Forest

By Matt Kawahara, Sacramento Bee

The Placer County Sheriff's Department has found a gold miner reported missing since Sunday in the Sailor Flat area of Tahoe National Forest.

Gary Davis, 65, of Sacramento entered the mountainous region at the north fork of the American River on Aug. 20, looking

for gold, said Sgt. Troy Minton-Sander, a Sheriff's Department spokesman.

Davis parked his car at a trailhead and walked into the mountainous area, Minton-Sander said.

He was last seen Sunday by another hiker, who noticed that Davis didn't have much water or food left, Minton-Sander said.

Read the whole story

Snow at 8,500 feet, record cold expected Sunday

By Victor Calderon, Reno Gazette-Journal

Reno might be known for hot August nights, but the month will end on a cold note this weekend, with showers and thunderstorms possible and even an inch or two of snow in the upper elevations of the Sierra, weather forecasters said.

After high temperatures in the upper 90s in Reno earlier in the week, a low-pressure system coming from the Gulf of Alaska will lead to a cold front, with highs in the 60s and a chance of showers and thunderstorms beginning Saturday.

In the Lake Tahoe basin, forecasters expect scattered snow showers above 8,500 feet with up to an inch or two of snow possible Sunday morning.

Read the whole story