

Harrah's dragged into CalPERS-Villalobos controversy

By Dale Kasler, Sacramento Bee

Alfred Villalobos, the former CalPERS board member accused of bribing pension fund officials, has squandered \$68 million of his fortune and owes more money to one casino than he has in cash, the state said Wednesday.

In a court filing, the state revealed fresh allegations about Villalobos' spending habits in an effort to maintain a court-ordered freeze on his assets. It is suing Villalobos for \$70 million, saying he lavished gifts on three CalPERS officials to influence investment decisions.

If the freeze is lifted, as Villalobos has demanded, the state said he could waste his money on gambling or transfer it overseas before the state can pursue its lawsuit.

Read the whole story

Donner Lake diesel spill contained

By Lenita Powers, Reno Gazette-Journal

Thousands of gallons of diesel fuel that threatened Donner Lake after a tanker truck overturned early Wednesday has been contained, and the spill will have no impact on Truckee

Meadows Water Authority customers, Bill Hauck of TMWA said Wednesday.

“At this point, only a limited amount of diesel fuel actually entered the lake, and that small volume should have no impact on our water quality, especially since the point of entry was on the west side of the lake, and our dam is on the east side,” said Hauck, TMWA’s senior water supply coordinator.

The spill occurred about 6 a.m. Wednesday when a tanker truck headed east over Interstate 80 overturned on the snowy roadway, according to the California Highway Patrol.

Read the whole story

Lakefront luxury condos ready to be built in S. Tahoe

By Kathryn Reed

Five multi-million dollar condominiums will replace a rundown building that looks like a relic from an architectural era that would be best not repeated.

Tahoe Lakeview LLC had the final subdivision map and condominium plan approved by the South Lake Tahoe City Council last week. TRPA permits are already in hand.



Five luxury condos are slated to occupy this site in South Tahoe.

Photo/Kathryn Reed

Don Reid, who owns the property on Lakeview Avenue near El Dorado Beach, was in the audience May 18 in case the council had questions. With him was Gary Midkiff of Midkiff and Associates.

“I hope this summer,” Reid said of when construction will begin. “We still have some hurdles – political and financial.” Construction is expected to take 12 months.

None of the condos has been pre-sold. Reid expects them to range in price from \$2 million to \$2.5 million. He has bought a large billboard on Highway 50 in the American River canyon that travelers to South Tahoe pass.

The name of the project is Pavati Lakefront. Maybe sales would be going better if www.pavatilakefront.com actually went someplace.

The permitting process has been going for two years, according to Midkiff. One piece that isn’t complete is getting all the agencies to sign off on Reid being able to extend the pier and remove the boathouse.

Four buoys come with the site. Buoys and piers are a big deal

at Lake Tahoe because a limited number are available. In essence, they are a commodity unto themselves.

Reid, who lives in Folsom, hired Midkiff because as a former Tahoe Regional Planning Agency employee, he is well versed in how the system works in the Lake Tahoe Basin. Reid has owned the parcel for three years.

Besides the city and TRPA, Midkiff said this project involves Lahontan Regional Water Control Board, California Fish & Game and California State Lands.

“It’s an opportunity to take a parcel that long ago had a house torn down that was not rebuilt and has a three-unit apartment, and hopefully start to improve that neighborhood,” Midkiff said.

The condos are expected to range in size from 1,800- to 2,500-square-feet. Each will have a custom floor plan. Rock and wood will be used extensively inside and out to fit in with the mountains more so than the structure that is there now.

“My dream is for it to be the nicest thing on the lake,” Reid said.

Each unit will have a 150-degree view of Lake Tahoe. The parcel sits right on the lake.

Memorial Day weekend DUI checkpoints



The Avoid the 6 DUI Campaign will be deploying officers this holiday weekend at DUI/Driver's License Checkpoints and DUI Saturation Patrols to continue efforts toward arresting drunken drivers, lowering deaths and injuries, and educating the public about the dangers of impaired driving.

As the summer season kicks off at the end of May holiday travelers, college graduates and communities enjoying local festivities are warned that driving drunk won't be tolerated.

The Avoid DUI campaigns are proving successful. Memorial Day weekend alcohol involved deaths and injuries over the past three years have dropped dramatically by more than 26 percent from Memorial Weekend 2007 to 2009.

Data for California over past Memorial Day weekends show 516 people were killed or injured in 2007, 431 in 2008 and 385 in 2009.

The enforcement campaign begins Friday night with a DUI/Driver's License checkpoint in the city of Placerville.

More local DUI Saturation Patrols will be out on Saturday and Sunday nights in South Lake Tahoe and Placerville.

The California Highway Patrol is deploying extra officers Memorial Day weekend onto freeways and county roads in their jurisdiction.

In April, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) reported another significant annual decline in traffic deaths in California; traffic safety experts are hopeful to report similar declines in alcohol impaired deaths for 2009 within several months. Funding for the Avoid Campaign is through a grant from the California Office of Traffic Safety, through the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

Future of polystyrene in South Tahoe up in the air

By Kathryn Reed

Will Styrofoam be banned from use in South Lake Tahoe?

It's what the Sustainability Commission wants and recommended to the City Council this month. But the council was mum on its opinion about getting rid of the product that many restaurants use for to-go containers.

The problem with polystyrene is it doesn't breakdown.

Another recommendation by commissioners when they spoke May 18 was to have a time period where bags would not be used. The idea is to encourage reusable bags. Much of the last year the commission has talked about wanting to curb the use of plastic and paper bags in the city limits.

During council member comments, Mayor Kathay Lovell suggested the bag-free movement could be tied into August's annual environmental summit.

The commission is also in need of another member because Kirstin Cattell resigned. Two student members may be added as well.

MV Transit set to put brakes on South Shore bus service

Publisher's note: *Updated May 28, 2010, at 11:55am.*

By Kathryn Reed

MV Transit may walk away from its three-year contract to provide bus service to the South Shore of Lake Tahoe if something isn't done about the more than \$2 million it is owed.

The Fairfield-based company entered the contract Aug. 1, 2009. On May 25, the firm gave South Tahoe Area Transit Authority – the coalition it has the contract with – a 60-day termination notice.



Transit on the South Shore has hit a serious roadblock.

The company also informed employees things might soon change. This must be done via the WARN Act. WARN kicks in when 50 or more jobs are eliminated or an entire plant is about to be shuttered. WARN mandates employees be given at least 60 days notice.

MV has 70 employees on the South Shore. Management is having

one-on-one meetings with employees to let them know what is going on.

"We've never been current in our billing. It's just gotten worse," Thom McAleer, MV general manager, told *Lake Tahoe News*.

A payment plan was in place, but the deficit kept growing.

McAleer is hopeful things can be worked out so MV continues to operate BlueGo, the name of the local bus system.

"This is a fragile situation for MV. MV has never walked away from a contract. We don't take it lightly," McAleer said. "But at some point we need to protect ourselves. We need to have assurance that future billings will be current and there will be a solution to the outstanding billing and how they will pay the billing that is in arrears."

Stacy Dingman, spokeswoman for the STATA board, said the notice to end the contract surprised her.

"Ideally, we will resolve our issues and it will be business as usual except it will be a different operation model that we can afford," Dingman said. "If we can't resolve our issues, STATA would operate (the system). Our intention is to flawlessly as possible continue the operation. We will have to make some service changes."

When MV started it was contracted to provide 96,000 hours of service a year. That has been reduced to 67,000 hours. Whoever operates BlueGo, the Nifty 50 Trolley and the ski shuttles in the future will likely have even fewer hours.

This also means riders will have to adapt to another schedule change with fewer options. Dingman wants riders to have input into future changes.

The STATA board will meet Friday in closed session to discuss the MV situation. Its next regular meeting is June 4 at the

Tahoe Regional Planning Agency office in Stateline.

MV first came on board as a temporary operator when ATM abruptly left a couple years ago. Then MV was awarded a long-term contract.

John Andoh was the transit administrator until earlier this year when he was let go by the STATA board. The evaluation committee recommended MV be hired.

Dingman said Andoh was approving expenditures the board knew nothing about. Andoh said that isn't true, that he had been updating the board and had asked MV to defer payments based on a letter dated June 2009. STATA has no reserve fund. It was operating on a cash in, cash out basis.

Another money issue is all the costs associated with getting MV in place because of the disarray ATM left the transit garage in, the buses not all running and other unforeseen expenses.

When it comes to income, most of the grants are for buses, not operating costs. Ridership is down, so the fare box is far from full. The entities that make up STATA – South Lake Tahoe, El Dorado and Douglas counties, Heavenly Mountain Resort, the Stateline casinos and a few others – subsidize the transit operation.

The board approved a cost containment plan in the last year, but McAleer believes it did not go far enough. Nonetheless, he said MV wants to keep operating on the South Shore. The company just wants to be paid for the service it's providing.

Dingman said under no circumstances is the public bus system going away. The need is there and for it to not exist would create more problems, she said.

"It's not about tourism as much as it's about residents and the people who are transit dependent," Dingman said of why

BlueGo will continue on.

2 finalists for WHS principal job to meet with public

By Kathryn Reed

Whittell High School's new principal could be named June 8.

The two finalists will be at the school May 28 for a meet-and-greet. The first candidate will be on campus at 11:30am, the second at 1pm. The names of the two are not being released until then.

Before arriving in Zephyr Cove they will have been interviewed that morning by interim Superintendent John Soderman and the cabinet. The board could take action in two weeks.

Principal Sue Shannon gave her notice earlier this year.

Lisa Noonan, who has been offered the superintendent job, is being kept in the loop and will be able to offer input into the hiring process of the principal even though she has not signed a contract with Douglas County School District.

Both principal candidates are from Northern Nevada. Neither one is currently employed by the district.

The Friday meetings are informal and not intended as an interview. They are designed as an opportunity for the community to meet the candidates. This is the first time DCSD has done something like this.

Broken line cuts water to 100s in Tahoe Keys area

Hundreds of South Tahoe Public Utility District customers were without water for a couple hours on Tuesday afternoon. The liquid was flowing at 5:50pm

A major water main broke at Tahoe Keys Boulevard and Arizona Street. Officials at the plant didn't know what caused the brake. No water meter work was being done in this area.

The agency fielded more than 150 calls from people wondering what was going on.

It's suggested people run an outside line for about 10 minutes to flush out any potential dirt that may have gotten in the line.

LTCC president takes job in Seattle

By Puget Sound Business Journal

Seattle Central Community College has named Paul Tracy Killpatrick its new president.

Killpatrick, currently the superintendent-president of Lake Tahoe Community College in California, will replace Mildred Ollée, who retired after serving seven years at the school.



Paul
Killpatrick
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Killpatrick has served as president of the Lake Tahoe school for two years.

Read the whole story

Grant keeps South Tahoe's business coaching program alive



South Lake Tahoe received a \$300,000 grant from the California Housing and Community Development Department Community Development Block Grant Program, Economic Development Enterprise Fund to continue the city's Technical Assistance Program to assist small businesses -- a program locally called Business Coaching.

In 2006, the city was awarded \$500,000 to establish a Microenterprise Assistance Program to provide technical assistance to small businesses. By February 2009, the funds had been used.

In fall 2009, the city was awarded \$300,000 from the

CDBG/Economic Development Allocation to continue the program.

The city recently rebranded its Economic Development under the Business TIES (Tahoe Inventors and Entrepreneur Services) program offering assistance through coaching which includes advice, mentoring, technical, and professional assistance.

The City has recently strengthened its partnerships with local professional experts to deliver the services and encourages businesses to call for assistance.

If you need a business plan, advice from marketing experts, tax consulting, website design, how to find funding in these economic times, the city encourages you to give the Business TIES advisers a call.

For more information, or to participate in the program, call (530) 542.6043.