

South Shore water meter project off to rocky start

By Kathryn Reed

Surprises. There have been a lot of them as crews put in water meters on the California side of the South Shore.

One house had five lines to it. Pipes aren't the size crews expected. Some lines are not straight. Others aren't as deep as expected. Crews have dumped dirt on flowerbeds. Water hasn't been turned back on. Debris has come out of indoor spigots.



Streets around South Tahoe are a mess as water meters are put in. Photos/Kathryn Reed

It was such a cluster of chaos that construction teams in the Angora area were pulled from the job last week and sent to another location of El Dorado County. The North and South Upper Truckee areas are also slated for meters.

"We're working with the contractor to find a solution," Paul Sciuto, STPUD assistant general manager, said of the Angora situation. "There are a lot of unknowns."

It was hoped 40 meters would be installed each day. Some days it has been 15 because of the problems.

GPS units are being used to record where lines are so records will be correct going forward.

The small water districts that now make up STPUD put in much of the infrastructure South Tahoe PUD is responsible for. Lack of uniformity is normal.

South Tahoe Public Utility District has received a number of calls from irate individuals as the installation of nearly 2,800 meters began this month.

Sciuto gave a brief update to the board at its meeting this month. One of the problems is when staff went out to bid last fall to spend the \$4.38 million federal grant the bids were lower than expected. This resulted in being able to have a second bid with the "leftover" money. This also meant staff didn't do the thorough preparation it would have normally liked to have, Sciuto said.

"This project is much more intrusive than many," Sciuto told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Drive down Modesto Avenue in the middle of South Lake Tahoe to see how intrusive the project is. Tiechert Construction out of Sacramento started taking over the street Monday and could finish there today.

Several backhoes are churning away at the dirt to dig a hole big enough to fit a white plastic meter pit that is a couple feet tall.

Foreman Matt Carney said at first the city gave his team grief for being in the right-of-way. Then environmental groups complained about how the dirt was being handled. Carney believes everyone has been appeased.

"We get a lot of questions. People are leery about getting

meters,” Carney said as he kept an eye on his crew Monday. “I tell them it may lower their water bill. People have been good so far.”

Carney said one surprise has been how pristine the galvanized pipes are after all these years. He attributed this to the soil conditions.

Any landscaping or driveway that is dug up for the meter must be returned to how it looked pre-meter.

Sciuto said cost overruns were anticipated even though all the issues were not. He said if the add-ons were in the 7 percent range, it would be reasonable.

“At this stage it’s hard to gauge (what they will be),” Sciuto said. The district will pick up the cost of the overruns, not the grant. A line is in the budget for this.

All this work is part of the utility district’s quest to meet the state’s unfunded mandate to have water meters installed on every property by 2025. STPUD estimates it will cost \$20 million to put in the 10,000 units. The end result is supposed to be less water usage throughout the state.

New homes and ones with major remodels have been required to have meters since 1992. There are 1,600 of those.

One of the issues the local board must still grapple with is a rate for metered use. Money for a rate study is part of the budget that was passed last week for the fiscal year that starts July 1.

Paul Hughes, chief financial officer for the district, told the board a tiered scale is what staff is looking at once consumption patterns are established.

A workshop for the board will be scheduled in the near future to discuss metered rates.

Data from all of the metered residences will be collected for a year, most likely starting in 2011. This will give the district usage information as it goes forward with rates.

Some leeway exists in the state law when it comes to setting rates based on fixed costs and consumption. With the current flat rate, it means people pay the same no matter the usage. This scenario favors full-time residents. Paying based on consumption would likely favor second-home owners.

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South Tahoe real estate posts modest gain

By Ron Trujillo, Sacramento Business Journal

Sacramento-area home prices are climbing off the mat, increasing 12.4 percent from the bottom reached in April 2009, according to a report released Monday.

The four-county region – arguably one of the hardest hit, with an abundance of foreclosures and 35 percent-plus home price declines – had a median-home price of \$188,100 in April, compared to the so-called “trough” price of \$167,340 a year ago, according to the California Association of Realtors.

However, much of the price increase last month came from Sacramento County, easily the most affected by the downturn, with numerous communities, such as Elk Grove and North Natomas, reporting 50 percent price drops in some neighborhoods.

The Sacramento region had the smallest price increase from the

“bottom” of the market in the state, with 40 percent-plus gains in San Francisco and Santa Clara County leading the way.

Read the whole story

Kingsbury Grade to be under construction all summer

By Kathryn Reed

A \$6.8 million water quality and erosion control project along Kingsbury Grade will mean minor delays for people traveling along the route that links Stateline and the Carson Valley.

Crews from El Camino Construction Company out of Las Vegas will not be onsite May 28-June 1 so Memorial Day weekend traffic will not be impeded.



Expect delays when traveling on Kingsbury Grade this summer.

Photo/Kathryn Reed

This is the second year of the two-year project. It is

scheduled to be finished in October.

The money is coming from the feds and Nevada Department of Transportation coffers.

Curbs, gutters, retaining walls, drainage improvements – they are all part of the plan.

Lane restrictions may delay travel for 10-15 minutes. All the work is being done on the lake side of Highway 207. Construction will be from Highway 50 to Daggett Summit.

LTUSD suffers another financial blow from state

By Kathryn Reed



Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger said his May revise did not take away money from K-12 districts. But it's a lie.

At Tuesday's Lake Tahoe Unified School District board meeting, CFO Deb Yates will explain how another \$160,000 in cuts is coming to the district for 2010-11.

It's more of the funny math Sacramento likes to use as well as twisting the language a bit to confuse people.

The governor's budget calls for reducing the per pupil allocation by 3.85 percent on undedicated revenue. Part of the

change from what Schwarzenegger had said previously is going from a flat reduction of \$201 per pupil to the percentage. And the key word in his proposal is “undeficited”.

The state should be sending LTUSD \$6,376 per student for the next school year. Instead, the amount is budgeted at \$5,185.

The May revise is taking the 3.85 percent off the \$6,376 – an amount that in reality doesn’t exist. That cut is \$160,000 just for LTUSD. Add a few zeros to get the statewide take-away to K-12 education.

“I have no doubt education coalitions will fight that vigorously,” Yates told *Lake Tahoe News*. “We were hoping for better, obviously.”

At the May 25 6pm board meeting at the district office in South Lake Tahoe, Yates will tell the board that reserves is the logical place to dip into for the latest state take-away. She plans to give a more detailed budget update at the June 8 meeting.

Yates said education fared better than other areas in the budget, but she isn’t sure how much more the state could cut. She was at a meeting on May 20 in Sacramento with peers to discuss the ramifications.

It’s likely the May revise will look nothing like what the governor came out with. Although a state budget is supposed to be adopted by June 30, that hasn’t happened in years.

With it being an election year, it’s likely more creative financing will be found to solve the \$20 billion state budget deficit instead of real answers.

“They have gone about as far as they can go without completely decimating the system,” Yates said of lawmakers and the K-12 system. “At the end of the day the kids are the ones who suffer.”

The California School Boards Association and Association of California School Administrations, to get lawmakers to revisit how education is funded, filed a lawsuit last week against the state.

Secretary of Education Bonnie Reiss on Thursday issued the following response, "The governor will oppose this lawsuit and believes the state will prevail. The funding of public education in California has long been and continues to be a top priority of California, even in bad economic and budget times. We will continue to fight to keep education a budget priority as well as fight for the other reforms essential to ensuring a great education for all our students regardless of where they live or their race or economic background."

Nevada No. 1 place to get a divorce

By Frank X. Mullen Jr., Reno Gazette-Journal

Reno is in fourth place nationally among cities that are "most doomed for divorce," according to Men's Health magazine.

Las Vegas came in second after first-place Cheyenne, Wyo. Billings, Mont., was third on the list of 100 cities ranked in order of their propensity to become Splitsville.

To determine where "I do" is most doomed, the magazine considered the rate of failed marriages, the stringency of divorce laws, the percentage of the population who have split and the number of licensed marriage and family therapists.

In 2007, Nevada had 6.5 divorces per 1,000 population, as

compared to 5.4 rate in Wyoming and a 4-per-1,000 rate in Montana, according to the Division of Vital Statistics at the National Center for Health Statistics.

Read the whole story

Spring bypasses Tahoe, more snow coming

By Kathryn Reed

With a wind advisory nearly every day for the last week and presumably for much of the coming week for Lake Tahoe, the fact that May 22-28 is National Safe Boating Week may not be a factor in the Sierra if everyone is huddled indoors.

The National Weather Service has a winter weather advisory in effect until 7am Sunday. Expect 3-5 inches at the lake, with 8 inches above 7,000 feet.

Snow is in the forecast for much of the week. Folks on the South Shore woke up Saturday to about 4 inches of the white stuff. Most of it melted as the day went on.



Regan Beach in
South Lake
Tahoe was a

pretty cold
place to get
married May
22.

Photo/Kathryn
Reed

But as the snow disappeared, so too did the sun. Gray skies covered the basin for much of Saturday afternoon. The winds also returned.

With daytime highs continuing to be in the 40s for the next few days, it will be at night when the snow falls. Expect overnight lows in the 20s for a few more nights.

The extended forecast says the next completely cloud-free, precipitation-free day will be Memorial Day. It could be 64 that Monday.

Full body scanners coming to Reno airport

By Ray Hagar, Reno Gazette-Journal

Reno-Tahoe International Airport is one of 28 national airports scheduled to receive full-body security scanning machines from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security this summer, according to a list released by the Transportation Security Administration.

Reno airport executives will request that the instillation of the scanners – that can see objects hidden under clothing – be postponed until the development of new technology that makes

the scanners smaller and less invasive, airport spokesman Brian Kulpin said.

[Read the whole story](#)

Mountain passes may open by Memorial Day weekend

By Lacey Peterson, Union Democrat

Sonora and Ebbetts passes will likely be open by Memorial Day weekend, despite a series of late spring storms.

“The weather has slowed us down a bit,” said Charly Modrell, Caltrans supervisor based at Camp Connell on Highway 4, “but we should make it unless a freak major snowstorm hits before then.”

Caltrans spokeswoman Lisa Balcom said crews are working as quickly as they can to get the roads open.

“After the snow is removed, they have to assure the road doesn’t have any damage to the pavement and get it ready to assure safety,” she said. “We don’t have an estimated time yet.”

[Read the whole story](#)

Event puts exclamation point on STHS performing arts

By Kathryn Reed

It was certainly a production worthy of names like Nannette Niven, Bob Grant and J.J. Clause being associated with it. And it was definitely an original.

The three South Tahoe High School performing arts teachers were recognized Thursday for their dedication to their specialties as well as their vision toward the future. They, with a lot of help from others, have turned an art room into a theater room.



SMC Contracting, under the watchful eye of LTUSD's Steve Morales, is starting on the third new building at STHS.

Photos/Kathryn Reed

Their greater vision will come to life over the course of the next year. They had a tremendous amount of input into what the

Tahoe Arts & Design Academy will look. It is being built at the front of the campus next to the Construction Arts and Transportation Academy that opened in April.

Grant talked about taking a trip to Hollywood with LPA Architects so they could understand what he wanted. He anticipates students being able to go from STHS to Hollywood.

With the demolition of the little theater this spring, the campus will be without a theater for the entire 2010-11 school year. By the time the class of 2012 starts its senior year, a new facility will be ready for all students.

The Tahoe Arts & Design Academy had its ceremonial groundbreaking on Friday even though actual construction started May 1.

A little razzle-dazzle from students was the highlight of the hour-long ceremony. After all the accolades and recognition from and by the adults were made, it was time to show why such a facility is needed.

Theater arts have a long history at South Tahoe High. Grant showed a program from January 1967 for "South Pacific" that called it the "new South Tahoe auditorium".

Clearly, what was there was old.

Three students performed a scene from "A Servant of Two Masters". A song-dance-tap number by Chelsea Wightman and Nick Kushner followed this to "I Love A Piano". The high school Show Choir wrapped up the theatrical portion of the event with the French song "Je Le Vous Dirai".

The money to construct all the new buildings at the school comes from the \$64.5 million bond voters passed in November 2008. An additional \$30 million has been secured from the state in matching dollars.

Principal Ivone Larson said, "It goes beyond a building. It's

a program for kids. It's a legacy."

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CHP officer who worked in South Lake faces drug charges

By KCRA-TV

A California Highway Patrol officer arrested on several drug charges previously had been fired because of drug-related accusations, KCRA 3 has learned.

Officer Ruben Salgado has been locked up in jail for more than a week in Placer County, where he was arraigned on felony counts.

CHP brass previously described Salgado as an average officer, but court documents show suspicions about bad behavior go back at least six years.

[Read the whole story](#)