

EDC sheriff candidates reveal a bit about themselves

Publisher's note: *Click on the link below to read the Sacramento Bee's mini Q&A with the six El Dorado County sheriff candidates.*

The candidates are:

John D'Agostini, former Amador sheriff's deputy and DA investigator

Larry Hennick, retired El Dorado County sheriff's deputy

Ernie Hillman, former El Dorado County undersheriff

Bob Luca, retired chief, California Bureau of Investigation

George Nielsen, Placerville police chief

Craig Therkildsen, an El Dorado sheriff's captain

Read the whole story

Douglas County superintendent search drags on

By Kathryn Reed

Douglas County School District still doesn't know who its next superintendent is going to be.

The board interviewed two candidates Monday night at the Minden office before a room of more than a dozen people. Board

members Cindy Trigg and Karen Chessell were participating via telephone.

The first motion was to have David Jensen be superintendent. That failed 4-3. The next vote was to have Mary Bull be the district leader. That idea failed 5-2.

The board then voted to bring back the other two finalists for interviews. That passed 5-1-1, with Tom Moore voting no and Cindy Trigg abstaining.

District officials hope Heather Henderson-Hill and Lisa Noonan will be available for interviews at the end of next week.

In the meantime, John Soderman continues as interim superintendent. He resumed his old job after Carol Lark left in January.

2 arrests in weekend stabbing in Truckee

On May 1 at 1:48am Truckee police officers were dispatched to a reported street fight involving a handgun inside the Donner Creek Mobile Home Park.

Officers located trails of blood that led to one of the mobile homes. Several people were inside the mobile home. Three had suffered knife and assault injuries and one had been hit in the head with a blunt object. Officers also located a bullet casing near the mobile home.

Witnesses told police a large fight had taken place involving about 10 individuals who were armed with knives and clubs. One suspect was said to have pulled a handgun and fired several

shots into the air and ground during the fight.

Additional blood trails were located and witnesses led officers to another mobile home where another knife was located. Entry was made into the second mobile home and it was found that the apparent gunman had fled.

A search warrant was later served at the second residence and evidence relative to the handgun was recovered.

Two suspects were identified and arrested on charges of felony assault with a deadly weapon and booked at the Nevada County Jail. Arrested were Manual Miranda Cota, 30, from Truckee, and Jorge Valenzuela-Felix, 24, from Truckee.

The third suspect alleged to be the gunman and has not been located. A felony arrest warrant has been issued for Abraham Cota, 25.

Anyone with information is requested to call Truckee police detectives at (530) 550.2323.

Wet winter decreases threat of summer wildfires in Sierra

By Jeff DeLong, Reno Gazette-Journal

Favorable winter weather should reduce wildfire danger across most of Nevada and much of the Sierra this summer, federal experts said in a report released Monday.

While parts of the Pacific Northwest are at significant risk of wildfire, the situation looks more favorable in western Nevada and most of the Sierra mountain range, the National

Interagency Fire Center said in its wildland fire outlook for May through August.



2007 Angora
Fire

“If you look at Nevada as a whole, it’s going to be below normal,” said Rick Ochoa, predictive services meteorologist for the Boise-based fire center.

Read the whole story

16 Barton employees take early retirement

By Kathryn Reed



Barton Health has trimmed its payroll even further, with 16 people taking early retirement packages at the end of April.

Employees with at least 10 years of service and who are 59 or older qualified for the package.

The South Lake Tahoe health care system offered the incentive in hopes of not having to issue more pink slips. In March, Barton laid off six people and in March 2009 43 people lost their jobs.

It's likely a few more employees will sign up for the retirement package, Barton officials said. The same package has been offered to people who are 55 and will have 10 years of service accrued by the end of the year. Those people have until May 14 to decide.

Barton officials said other cost-cutting measures are possible in the future, but are not likely to involve staff reductions.

"Barton, as most entities in the region, has seen decreased volumes due to the declining residential population, a decrease in tourism over the last year, and an increase in unemployment. Increased unemployment has translated into an increased number of underinsured and uninsured patients in the region as well as those putting off elective procedures," Monica Sciuto, Barton's director of public relations, told *Lake Tahoe News*. "As a double-whammy, reduced reimbursements from federal and state programs have impacted the hospital as well."

KMS not in Douglas County School District's future



By Kathryn Reed

When Kingsbury Middle School closed two years ago no one thought it would re-open. That thinking was solidified with the approval of Douglas County School District's facilities master plan.

The plan that was OK'd by the board in April calls for getting rid of the Stateline parcel or at a minimum lease the property.

Declining enrollment at Lake Tahoe forced the district to go from three schools at the lake to two in fall 2008. For a variety of reasons KMS was picked as the school to close.

At the time John Soderman was superintendent of the district and he was talking to Douglas County about using the school in some capacity. Now that Soderman is the interim superintendent of the district those talks have resumed with current County Manager Michael Brown.

"The idea at this time is maybe to lease the building," Soderman said. "It serves us to have somebody in it. It would be good for a senior center. It has a cooking facility, classrooms, all the computer wiring, a gym for activities. It could be an expanded library because there is plenty of space."

If a lease were to occur, it's most likely would be with the county and not a private company or individual. This is because there are state regulations about who could lease such an entity.

A land swap and selling the property are other alternatives.

If a swap were to occur, it would most likely be with the county. There is land near Zephyr Cove Elementary and Whittell High schools the district might be interested in acquiring, Soderman said.

A couple real estate agents made inquiries in April about the KMS property.

Nevada law requires the district go through a well mapped-out process in order to sell school property. This includes getting multiple appraisals, seeking bids and being completely transparent. The district could turn down offers for any reason.

DCSD Chief Financial Officer Holly Luna would not put a monetary value on the property because an appraisal has not been done in years. Any money collected from the sale would be deposited in the capital improvement account. It cannot go toward salaries – just capital projects.

All of the projects approved in the 2008 bond will not be covered with those dollars. The idea is selling Kingsbury Middle School would supplement that pot of cash.

“It’s not the building that is worth anything. It’s a prime piece of property at Lake Tahoe,” Luna said.

Soderman said, “I’m guessing just the coverage is worth a fortune.”

With the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency dictating the percentage of a parcel that can be covered, coverage is a huge issue in Lake Tahoe.

Luna said there is minimal cost to the district with KMS closed – keeping the thermostat at 50 degrees, plowing in the winter and having a phone going so it connects to the fire line.

With the second gym opening at Whittell High School this

spring, it means the gym at KMS has been padlocked.

Soderman says the district has saved about \$1 million a year by closing the Kingsbury Middle School.

Caltrans begins another year of work on Hwy. 28



Caltrans will be working on Highway 28 now through Oct. 15. This is the third season of construction of a \$46 million drainage reconstruction and environmental improvement project east of Tahoe City.

Motorists can expect delays from 7am-5pm Monday through Friday from three miles east of Tahoe City to Tahoe Vista.

Work will consist of placing sand collection vaults, infiltration basins and curb and gutters to channel runoff to these treatment facilities.

Also, roadway widening including a bicycle lane in both directions and new turn lanes at the busier intersections will be constructed.

New signs, roadside planting, vehicle barriers and slope stabilization will enhance the lakeshore highway environment. Final paving will take place later in the summer.

It covers 9.4 miles. The prime contractor on this project is Diablo Contractors of San Ramon. Completion is expected in 2011.

Researcher: Donner Party cannibalism did happen



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

Contrary to recent media reports sparked by a university's news release, the Donner Party of 1846-47 did cannibalize the dead, Western historians, authors and a bone researcher said.

The clarifications were based on a flurry of stories last week, which included headlines like: "Oops! Donner Party Gets Apology" (Winston-Salem Journal); "Analysis Clears Donner Party of Rumored Cannibalism" (Cleveland Leader); and "Donner Party Did Not Eat Each Other" (Examiner.com).

The problem: That's not what the bone study says. And telling Western historians the entrapped 1846-47 pioneers didn't eat each other is akin to announcing the Titanic missed that iceberg or Custer survived the Little Big Horn.

Read the whole story

USFS sets meetings regarding Tahoe basin forest plan



Recreation, forest health, fuels reduction, wildlife habitat, watershed restoration and aquatic habitat will be the subject of meetings next month conducted by the Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit of the U.S. Forest Service.

The public is encouraged to attend to learn about and comment on the forest plan revision, which is agency's blue print of sorts for the future.

The first meeting is May 11 at the LTBMU Forest Supervisor's Office, 35 College Drive, South Lake Tahoe. The other is May 13 at the North Tahoe Conference Center, 8318 North Lake Blvd., Kings Beach. Both are from 5-7pm.

Each meeting will begin with an overview of the process and time line for revising the forest plan, after which participants will have the opportunity to talk with staff members regarding alternatives under consideration.

The LTBMU was in the process of revising its forest plan when the 2008 planning rule was enjoined by the U.S. District Court. The 2000 planning rule, under which the LTBMU is now proceeding, requires the Forest Service to develop a draft environmental impact statement that analyzes several alternatives for forest plan revision.

The LTBMU has engaged the public extensively to get input on how the plan should be revised. Despite the changes in process, the public's comments and suggestions remain relevant and will continue to shape the proposed revised plan and the alternatives.

Approximately 75 percent of the Lake Tahoe Basin is managed by the Forest Service. The LTBMU's current plan is 20 years old.

More information on LTBMU forest plan revision is available [here](#).

Zephyr Cove may close; DCSD aims for K-12 at Tahoe



By Kathryn Reed

Change. It's the one constant for students, parents and educators at the lake schools in Douglas County School District.

More change is in the works. One day there will be only one school – a K-12 on the campus of Whittell High School. This won't happen for several years, but still, just two years ago there were three schools at Lake Tahoe. Kingsbury Middle School closed at the end of the 2007-08 school year. (Read *Lake Tahoe News* on May 4 to find out what is going on with that property.)

The school board in April approved the facilities master plan. Further consolidation of the lake schools is in phase three, with phase one having not even started. Creating one school to accommodate the shrinking school population is part of that plan.

In the Carson Valley the two middle schools will be consolidated into one. Which school will remain open has not been determined.

At Lake Tahoe, various scenarios were considered, including having Whittell students transfer to South Tahoe or Douglas

high schools. The former was nixed because it is in California. The latter was discarded because of travel time and costs associated with that.

However, DCSD Chief Financial Officer Holly Luna and Lake Tahoe Unified School District Superintendent Jim Tarwater have been discussing having Whittell students take classes at STHS.

"It probably would not be full participation. It would allow them to take classes. We're looking at our specialty classes they couldn't offer," Tarwater said.

Those talks are in the initial stages.

One of the issues with small schools like Whittell is the limited number of electives that can be offered.

Because enrollment at DCSD's lake schools has declined by 50 percent since the peak in 1994-95 of 942 students, something has to be done in terms of housing the students to make it economically feasible.

Between Whittell and Zephyr Cove Elementary there are 454 students. The district projects a yearly decline at the lake to continue at 5 to 6 percent a year. (Enrollment is dropping by about 2 percent a year in the valley.)

"Over time the number will guide us. If we reach 350, it makes sense for a K-12," Luna said. "We don't want to delay it so long that we don't have construction and we don't want to do it too early."

Her projections are that in the next three to five years the numbers are likely to indicate it's time to begin serious K-12 discussions, with the talk about construction in year five.

Ultimately, it will be up to the school board how to proceed. But it was the board that decided last month the K-12 scenario is the one to pursue. It will be a future board that decides when that happens.

Like the consolidation of three schools into two and the four-day school week at Whittell, parents and the community will have ample opportunity to voice their opinions and concerns.

The plan is Zephyr Cove Elementary will close because there is more room at WHS and it has classrooms designed to meet the needs of a high school curriculum – like science labs.

Selling the elementary property is not being talked about. First, because of how the property was deeded to the district from the George Whittell estate and secondly, the district anticipates using the soccer fields.

What will happen to the buildings is a big question with no immediate answer. They will not be used in the K-12 configuration.

The footprint of Whittell is not expected to change much – it's more internal changes that would be needed to accommodate more students and younger grades.

"We've had a legacy of three schools there. It's hard to see that change," Luna said.