Settlement offer pulled in Roethlisberger's Tahoe case

By Dan Majors, Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

The attorney for a woman who filed a civil lawsuit claiming Ben Roethlisberger sexually assaulted her in a Nevada resort hotel in 2008 said Wednesday that a previous offer to settle the case is no longer on the table.

"The deadline for that has passed," said Calvin R.X. Dunlap, the Reno, Nev., attorney representing a 32-year-old woman who was a VIP host at Harrah's Lake Tahoe. The woman filed her case in August 2009.



Ben Roethlisberger

In September, Mr. Dunlap offered to drop the lawsuit if Mr. Roethlisberger admitted assaulting the plaintiff, wrote a letter of apology, and made a $100,000 donation to a Reno group that aids abused women.

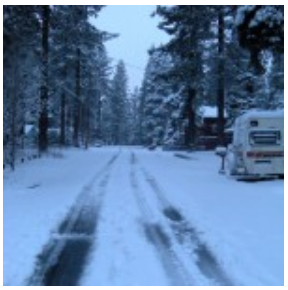
Read the whole story

Snow covers Lake Tahoe; sun will return Saturday

By Kathryn Reed

The greater Lake Tahoe area is covered in snow this Earth Day.

“It will be beautiful conditions this weekend,” said Jessica Kielhorn, meteorologist technician with the National Weather Service in Reno.



First tracks of a different kind. Photo/Kathryn Reed

But before the sun arrives, people in the basin, Reno and the Carson Valley will have to endure a bit of snow and freezing temperatures.

In the 7am hour snow is expected to get heavier. Visibility will be about 2 miles. By noon the snow is expected to become shower conditions, with that lasting to about 5pm.

Overnight about 6 inches fell in South Lake Tahoe, 5-7 inches at Squaw Valley and 8 inches at Incline Village.

Chain and 4-wheel drive requirements are the norm on the roads in the area. It’s slushy and mucky out there.

With many of the ski resorts in the Tahoe area closed, more people will be venturing into the backcountry. A moderate warning has been issued by the Sierra Avalanche Center.

The highs today will be in the upper 30s, Friday in the upper 50s and Saturday-Sunday it will be in the low 60s.

But the weekend's nice weather will not last. The Weather Service is calling for showers to return Monday, with most of the snow on Tuesday above 6,900 feet.

Do It Center begins remodel of old car dealership in SLT

By Kathryn Reed

Work has begun on transforming the old South Shore Motors building into a Do It Center.

The locally controversial chain store based in Southern California is expected to open this summer – a year later than it had wanted to. Disagreements between store owners, South Lake Tahoe officials and nearby businesses led to months of back-and-forth arguments and petitions to ban the store from opening.



Shane Guzman

works on the exterior of the Do It Center this week. Photos/Kathryn Reed

The City Council finally ruled that a general merchandise store could go in at the Lake Tahoe Boulevard location. Ace Hardware, which is kitty corner to the new store, is considered general merchandise.

It was another 3-2 vote last fall to deny the last appeal. Only this time it was Councilmen Bill Crawford and Bruce Grego in the minority.

Scotty’s Hardware and Meeks Lumber were vocal that Do It Center would bring unfair competition to their respective businesses as well as other construction/home improvement related stores in the area.

The one thing Do It Center can’t sell as a general merchandise store is lumber. This means Meeks Lumber continues to have a monopoly on that product.

The irony is John Carricaburu, the general contractor from Gardnerville hired to remodel the building, is going to Meeks for his lumber needs.



It's a construction

zone inside the old South Shore Motors buidling.

Carricaburu this week told *Lake Tahoe News* that Do It Center officials want to use as many local workers as he can hire and told him to buy local when possible. Axelson Irons Shop Welding will be doing work and South Shore Glass has a contract.

Mike Mauck, senior vice president and general manager for Do It Center, had little to say when contacted by *Lake Tahoe News*. He wouldn't confirm the projected opening month of July.

Work on the exterior will begin May 1 when the building season begins in the Lake Tahoe Basin per Tahoe Regional Planning Agency regulations. The crack-filled asphalt parking area extends to the Cardinale auto dealer building.



John Carricaburu shows what the buidling will look like.

Carricaburu said it's possible all the parking lot work the city wants done could cost $100,000. He didn't have an estimate for how much money will be spend on getting the interior and exterior of the building suitable and looking more appealing.

On the roof, a 20-foot-by-20-foot tower will be built for the store’s sign.

South Tahoe seeks federal dollars for Lukins Water Co.



By Kathryn Reed

When the invitation came Sen. Dianne Feinstein, D-Calif., to apply for appropriations from Congress, South Lake Tahoe fit one category.

The city asked for $4 million that it would use to upgrade Lukins Brothers Water Company so it would be more capable to fight fires.

“You have to be very specific in those requests. They even have a code,” Mayor Kathay Lovell explained. “For us, it has that nexus for fire suppression.”

The city could hear in May if it has been awarded the money.

“If you don’t try, it’s certain what the answer is,” Lovell said.

Lukins, which has just less than 1,000 customers, delivers water to people who mostly live off of Highway 89. When the Angora Fire of 2007 hit, the inefficiencies of the company’s ability to fight a fire became public knowledge. However, how

the water company was set up, it is not required by law to have firefighting capability.

Nonetheless, the city has a franchise agreement with Lukins and wants the company to upgrade its system to protect the residents and businesses of the city. But completely overhaul the system will cost about $20 million.

Winter refuses to leave the Sierra

Reno Gazette-Journal

A Special Weather Statement is in place as more snow and rain are expected through Thursday morning as part of a system that was dumping heavy snow in parts of the region Wednesday night.

Several inches had fallen in the Spanish Springs area with more than 6 inches of heavy, wet snow in parts of Palomino Valley on Wednesday night.

Read the whole story

Fish & Game refuses to expand bear hunting territory

By Carla Hall, Los Angeles Times

The state Fish and Game Commission voted unanimously Wednesday

not to expand bear hunting grounds in California or eliminate the cap on the number of bears that can be killed each season.

The commission decided not to make changes to existing regulations after the Department of Fish and Game, which initially urged the changes, reversed its position Tuesday afternoon because it had been deluged with public comments. Officials said they had not had time to respond to them all. By law, all comments must be answered before changes are made.



A Tahoe bear in 2009. Photo/Janice Eastburn

Read the whole story

Broc’s Puppies, sister store in Carson City out of business

By Kathryn Reed

Broc’s Puppies and Lil’ Pups are closed. Where the dogs are is unknown. A family member who at one time claimed to be an

owner is in a Nevada prison on charges relating to violating probation regarding an earlier drug charge.

The phone numbers for the South Lake Tahoe and Carson City stores that were owned and operated by members of the Franks clan are both disconnected. Websites for both stores are still up.



Broc's Puppies has a padlock on the front door. Photos/Kathryn Reed

The van that so often was parked outside of the South Lake Tahoe store has not been seen for a few days. A padlock is on the front door. Signs are gone that had been in the window.

Peering inside it is obvious most items have been cleared out. There is no evidence any dogs are inside.

A filing cabinet with a couple missing drawers is in the back by the dumpster. Inside the dumpster is a television and the stench of animal urine.

At the Carson City store the sign is still up, but the windows are covered with paper to prevent anyone from looking in.

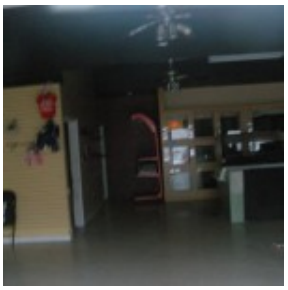
Where the owners are is not known. Nor is it known exactly how long each store has been closed.

Sources close to the issue told *Lake Tahoe News* the Tahoe

store was shuttered because the owners were evicted for not paying rent and not having the proper permits because they had begun to groom and board animals without authorization.

A South Lake Tahoe police sergeant said his department was not involved in getting the owners to leave.

Both stores were the first in the respective cities to sell puppies. After the Carson store opened in November 2006, people complained of sick dogs much like they did when the Tahoe store later opened. Animal advocates alleged puppy mills were the suppliers. Owners denied these allegations.



Not much is left inside Broc's.

A year ago, the South Lake Tahoe City Council enacted an ordinance prohibiting the sale of live dogs and cats. Broc’s was to be grandfathered in for two years.

Albert Franks at one time was the manager in Carson City and Danny Franks had owned the store. Albert Franks is the patriarch of the family and has also managed the Tahoe store.

Albert Franks told this reporter in fall 2008 that his grandson owns the Tahoe store. David Franks is the one now in a Nevada penitentiary. He was arrested at Broc’s in January.

Dennis Franks, brother of Danny, is David Franks’ father. Dennis Franks was listed as the owner when El Dorado County Animal Control officers raided the store in June 2009. The

District Attorney's Office had not determined if charges would be filed.

DA rules in favor of Grego

By Kathryn Reed

The El Dorado County District Attorney's Office has reviewed material supplied to it and has determined "there does not appear to be any criminal violation of law relating to Council Member [Bruce] Grego's reimbursement for legal fees."

Grego was the subject of a divisive South Lake Tahoe City Council meeting on April 15 that will go down as the oddest meeting these five elected officials have been part of. Nothing was resolved at the end of the meeting.



Bruce Grego

Councilman Jerry Birdwell had requested the council meeting and sought the opinion of the county's highest legal authority. His belief is Grego's reimbursement with taxpayer money for the use of outside legal counsel to determine if he had a conflict of interest regarding the convention center project, was not justified.

Deputy District Attorney James Clinchard in his letter dated April 20 says to Birdwell that he can ask the grand jury to

look into the matter.

Birdwell told *Lake Tahoe News* he has no intention of doing so.

Clinchard's letter said, "Whether or not such conduct violated South Lake Tahoe city guidelines for reimbursement is an issue best left to city government and the SLT City Council."

Grego was not available for comment Tuesday night.

SLT council proves it can play nice when the agenda is light

By Kathryn Reed

The biggest news to come out of the South Lake Tahoe City Council meeting Tuesday is they all got along. With the meeting lasting less than an hour and most items being deferred to a future meeting, the biggest question was: Why was there even a meeting?

At an earlier meeting City Attorney Patrick Enright had said he was going to keep the agenda for April 20 light because he was going to be out of town. The council made it even lighter by doing almost nothing.

The issue of raising the master fee schedule received the most

discussion. A full vetting of the issue was delayed until the April 27 10am special meeting at Lake Tahoe Airport. The mid-year budget will be discussed then.

Also moved to next week was discussion of creating a formal policy regarding employee meeting and travel expenditures.

Voting on the transfer of land use commodities was put off until next month.

Tahoe tourism mildly affected by Iceland's volcano

By Kathryn Reed

While the airline industry racks of billions of dollars in loses, it's hard to gauge the economic impact the volcanic eruption in Iceland will have on Lake Tahoe.

Tourism officials on the South and North shores are not reporting any inconveniences by businesses. However, that doesn't mean it isn't happening.



The volcanic eruption in Iceland has far-reaching

economic
consequences.
Photo/Lucas
Jackson/Reuter
s

The Black Bear Inn had a call from people in Paris unable to get out because of the flight ban. Fortunately, the South Lake Tahoe bed and breakfast was able to rebook the people for a week later, but for a shorter time.

Jerry Bindel, who is on the South Lake Tahoe Lodging Association board, said with spring break and the height of ski season in the past, the impact of international travelers trying to get to Tahoe is greatly diminished compared to if this had happened a month or two ago.

“It’s a good thing it didn’t hit in the middle of winter,” Bindel said of the April 14 volcano.

European officials on Monday created three levels for allowing aircraft to fly: a “no-fly zone” directly above the cloud of ash; a “caution zone” where planes will have the engine checked for possible damage; and a “no restriction zone”.

The flight restrictions are because the plume of ash causes visibility issues, as well as possible engine seizure.

Reno-Tahoe International Airport does not have any nonstop commercial flights out of the country. (It used to into and out of Mexico and Canada.)

Heidi Jared, spokeswoman with the airport, said people with connecting flight coming to and leaving the area who could be impacted by the international incident. But she did not know how many people might have been affected when air travel abruptly halted abroad.

While travel experts resume flights, all eyes are on another

volcano in Iceland that is rumbling.