

Tsunami warnings in Lake Tahoe?



By Susan Voyles, Reno Gazette-Journal

Tsunami warning signs at Lake Tahoe?

If new Nevada Seismology Laboratory Director Graham Kent has his way, signs would be posted to warn people of potential giant waves at Tahoe beaches.

"I would advocate over time, we put those signs up there," he said. "It's something that needs extra special attention. We have to work through getting those signs on the beaches."

Read the whole story

Plastic bags in South Tahoe OK, polystyrene may not be

By Kathryn Reed

South Lake Tahoe is on course to create a massive education campaign about why saying no to plastic bags is the right thing to do and why using a reusable canvas bag is the best option.

This comes at the direction of the city's Sustainability Commission, which met Wednesday afternoon. The commission

called for a special meeting for March 17 at 4pm at Lake Tahoe Airport to hammer out the specifics of the campaign.



Containers like this may one day be banned in South Tahoe.

At the commission's February meeting, a full house weighed in on the good and bad of banning plastic bags. At this time the commission is not seeking a ban.

Reasons the commission is against a ban are because the state will not allow a fee to be imposed on businesses using plastic bags and several jurisdictions have been sued because of their respective bans.

“More than public education, it should be a public campaign,” Commissioner Claire Fortier said. “We need to have goals.”

All of the commissioners concurred.

South Tahoe High School teacher Jamie Greenough was with a handful of her students at the meeting. Though no students chose to speak, Greenough offered to help however her classes can when it comes to education about using reusable bags.

The commission welcomed the support and will be working with the students and teacher.

Also at the March 3 meeting, the seven-member panel agreed to

recommend to the City Council to ban the use of polystyrene throughout the city within a year. The council will likely take this up in May. It has ultimate authority over saying yea or nay to ordinances.

The American Chemistry website says, "Polystyrene is found in your home, office, local grocery and in the cafeteria. It comes in many shapes and forms, from foam egg cartons and meat trays, to soup bowls and salad boxes, from coffee cups and utensils to CD jewel boxes, and from produce trays to peanuts used in packing and the lightweight foam pieces that cushion new appliances and electronics."

The commission is more interested in eliminating to-go containers made from polystyrene than all of the items mentioned above. However, the commission did not address specifics in the motion.

The city attorney's office is tasked with bringing back to the commission language for the proposed ordinance before it goes to the council.

"I think polystyrene is easy. There are so many distribution routes in place," Chairwoman Kirstin Cattell said in regards to how businesses could replace the product they are now using.

Commissioner Do Lee suggested the ban be phased in so the impact to small businesses would be less.

Another item the commission voted on was to further investigate joining a statewide coalition that is looking into having an environmental impact report done in regards to banning plastic bags.

Tahoe City man missing from Boreal ski resort

By Chelsea Phua, Sacramento Bee

Authorities are looking for a 28-year-old Tahoe City man who went missing Tuesday afternoon in the Boreal Ridge ski area after he went snowshoeing and cross-country skiing with a group of friends.



Kevin Bradstreet
Davis

Nevada County Sheriff's officials said in a statement released Wednesday night that Kevin Bradstreet Davis was reported to be lost near Peter Grub hut in the area of Castle Peak on Donner Summit.

[Read the whole story](#)

Water content in Sierra

remains above average

As skiers were enjoying fresh powder today at Sierra-at-Tahoe, state snow surveyors were at the entrance to the resort on Highway 50 measuring the water content.

The readings are much better than last year when the water content was at 80 percent of normal. On Wednesday they came in at 107 percent of normal. At the January reading the water content was at 115 percent and in December it was 75 percent.



John Deam and
Frank Gehrke
measure the
water content.
Photo/LTN file

“Today’s readings boost our hope that we will be able to increase the State Water Project allocation by this spring to deliver more water to our cities and farms,” Department of Water Resources Director Mark Cowin said in a press release. “But we must remember that even a wet winter will not fully offset three consecutive dry years or pumping restrictions to protect Delta fish so we must continue to conserve and protect our water resources.”

Lake Oroville, the State Water Project’s principal storage reservoir, is recovering slowly after three dry years. Despite recent storms, its storage level today is only 55 percent average for this time of year. It is also expected that dry soil conditions will absorb much of the snowpack’s water

content that otherwise would help to replenish streams and reservoirs during the spring and early summer melt.

On Feb. 26, the State Water Project allocation was increased from 5 to 15 percent of requested amounts. If wet weather continues, the final allocation this spring likely will be in the range of 35-45 percent of requested amounts. The figure will partially be determined by how the fishery agency restrictions on pumping are applied, which will determine how much flexibility DWR has to export water from the Delta.

In 2009, the State Water Project delivered 40 percent of customer requests. The federal Central Valley Project in 2009 was able to deliver 10 percent of contracted amounts to some agricultural areas in the San Joaquin Valley. The reduced deliveries were due to dry weather and fishery agency pumping restrictions to protect fish species; principally Delta smelt, salmon, and longfin smelt.

Results of today's manual snow survey by the Department of Water resources off Highway 50 near Echo Summit are as follows:

Location	Elevation	Snow Depth	Water Content	% of Long Term Average
Alpha	7,600 feet	74.3Â inches	26.2 Â inches	94
Phillips Station	6,800 feet	76.3 Â inches	25.1 Â inches	102
Lyons Creek	6,700 feet	79.4 Â inches	26.9 Â inches	105
Tamarack Flat	6,500 feet	77.8 Â inches	26.2 Â inches	112

Click video to see what snow surveys are all about.

Council wants outside agency to find SLT city manager

By Kathryn Reed

The majority of the South Lake Tahoe City Council wants an outside agency to recruit the next city manager. Councilman Bill Crawford was the lone voice against that idea at Tuesday's meeting.

Dave Jinkens gave notice earlier this year that he will not seek an extension to his contract that expires in August. He came on board as city manager in 2002.



Dave Jinkens' departure has the council squabbling about how to replace him.

Before the final vote, Crawford proposed having Assistant City Manager Rick Angelocci be the interim city manager upon Jinkens departure. He and Councilman Jerry Birdwell were on the losing end of that vote.

It was estimated it will take four to six months before a city

manager is hired.

Crawford's logic was that it would be good to have an interim named now, take the time to find the right person and save the city money in the process.

Birdwell liked the idea of saving money as well.

"We are going to have to start cutting in a big way," Birdwell said. "I think we need to let him work as assistant city manager and see how the economy goes."

He said hotel tax numbers were down in February by half of what they were the prior year at his bed and breakfast.

Mayor Kathay Lovell said she'd prefer "crossing that bridge when get to it" if an interim city manager is needed.

The only member of the public to speak was Kenny Curtzwiler, who doesn't live in the city. He is an advocate of creating a strong mayor government and doing away with the city manager form of rule.

The city will send out requests for proposals to find a headhunter to find a city manager. No discussion was had on how much the city would pay for a recruiter or what the next city manager's pay range will be.

The idea of waiting until the next council is seated to hire the city manager was broached, but went nowhere. Lovell, Crawford and Birdwell's terms expire at the end of the year.

In other action:

¢ Jinkens said officials from Target are still interested in talking about opening a store in South Lake Tahoe. The council said it's fine if he keeps talking with them.

¢ Charter Communications, the cable television supplier to the city, is applying for a state agreement. The city would

still see money from the deal, but the franchise agreement would not be directly with the city. The city will need to rewrite some of its regulations to accommodate the change when it goes into affect later this year.

â€¢ Council heard a lengthy discussion on the state of disrepair the cityâ€™s roads are in. Staff said it could cost \$78 million over 25 years to fix them. The funding, though, isnâ€™t there. The council asked for an executive summary and recommendations for how to proceed to be given to them at a future meeting.

â€¢ Revenues are off by 2.7 percent to date and growing.

2 South Lake Tahoe men guilty in 4-wheeling incident

A federal judge found two South Lake Tahoe men guilty of damaging National Forest lands and ordered them to help pay restoration costs.

Jack G. Burns III, 24, and Kent Johnson, 47, were 4-wheeling in the Twin Peaks Off Highway Vehicle area in South Lake Tahoe on Aug. 29, 2009. They had driven off the designated route in an apparent attempt to avoid a large technical boulder field, according to the U.S. Forest Service. In doing so, they caused damage to an area of about 1 acre.

Additionally, they destroyed log barricades, disturbed ground cover, caused deep ruts in the soil and created new routes with their vehicles, the judge ruled.

The court placed both men on one-year probation and ordered

each to pay \$500 to the Forest Service to help pay for restoring the damage. A representative from the Lake Tahoe Hi/Lo four-wheel drive club testified at the trial and stated that the club will be volunteering for restoration work to repair the damage done by Burns and Johnson.

LTUSD approves \$1.8 million in cuts, teacher layoffs

By Kathryn Reed

It was an all too familiar scene with an all too predictable outcome.

Lake Tahoe Unified School District's board on Tuesday night approved \$1.8 million in budget reductions for the 2010-11 and 2011-12 school years, along with reducing certificated employees by 5.688. Board member Sue Novasel was absent.

Board member Judy Cefalu seemed lost in the whole process. She didn't want to vote. It appeared at that moment in the South Tahoe Middle School auditorium the reality of what it means to be a board member struck her. It's not all about site visits to classrooms, construction projects and million-dollar grants to spend.



LTUSD CFO Deb

Yates goes
over the
numbers March
2.

Photo/Kathryn
Reed

As board President Wendy David put it, no one wants to cast these votes, but it's the board's job to keep the district solvent.

Because education funding comes with so many strings, the board is left with the task of explaining to the community how millions of dollars are being spent on new buildings while layoffs and furloughs are in the near future.

The problem is there can be no co-mingling of different funding sources.

LTUSD is dealing with continued reductions in state dollars as well as enrollment that won't stop sliding downward. The last official enrollment number was 3,966 students, but Superintendent Jim Tarwater says it's been dropping 12-15 students a week this calendar year.

With an unemployment rate nearing 17 percent in South Lake Tahoe, Bill's Casino closing, other casinos laying off workers, the city cutting staff, the hospital making cuts – it means families are moving to where the jobs are – which isn't Lake Tahoe.

In California, districts are paid based on average daily attendance. The state has reduced the per pupil allotment from \$6,376 to \$5,186 for the school year starting this fall.

But the cost of doing business doesn't change much – teachers and staff need to be paid, lights turned on, buses filled with gas, paper to write on, pencils to write with.

March 15 is the deadline for the district, per state law, to let teachers know if they'll be hired back next school year. With two resignations coming in this week, the district is hoping others will retire so no pink slips are actually sent out.

Only two of the nearly 60 people at the meeting spoke. Birgit Lukins, who has been in the front office at South Tahoe High School for 16 years, was in tears as she talked about the possibility of her co-worker losing her job.

"The attendance office is not a one person job," Lukins said. "I would be willing to take a three-day furlough."

That is one of the scenarios the board approved Tuesday. Teachers would lose three staff development days and all staff would be furloughed three days. It would save the district \$285,000.

Based on they only work 180 days, the reduction in pay is 1.3 percent. It would not affect their long-term pay scale or retirement.

It is something that needs negotiating. This will take place in May with the unions after all the sun-setting labor rules are dealt with in April.

If the unions don't agree to the furlough days – something that has occurred for most government workers throughout California – it will mean losing a full time counselor, a maintenance worker and the high school attendance technician Lukins spoke of.

If the governor and Legislature come up with different numbers that are less drastic, the furlough days could be rescinded.

No matter what happens on that front, the board agreed to reduce the reserves from 3 percent to 1.5 percent. This puts that fund at \$500,000.

Board member Larry Green asked if reducing the reserve will affect the district's bond rating. CFO Deb Yates said no.

Tarwater isn't concerned the county or state will force districts to immediately replenish reserves to what is supposed to be a minimum threshold of 3 percent.

"They couldn't enforce it because districts would be bankrupt," Tarwater said.

Some of the other cuts in 2010-11 include: saving \$100,000 by not offering vacation buyouts, losing a person at the district office or everyone taking six furlough days to save \$60,000; reducing elementary office staff hours or cutting a full-time position; cutting from transportation; losing a custodian; not paying the city of South Lake Tahoe for grounds keeping; and reducing stipends for lead teachers.

The district plans to offer a golden handshake (aka pay incentive to retire early) to at least 15 people, which would bring a savings in 2011-12.

On March 9 the school board will be discussing more budget issues. The 2010-11 budget is expected to be adopted in June.

Snowboarder dies at Mammoth

By Reno Gazette-Journal

A Los Angeles-area woman died Saturday while snowboarding about 50 feet to 60 feet off the groomed trail on Mammoth Mountain, the Mono County Sheriff's Department reported.

Erica Crystal Patterson, 43, of Hidden Hills, Calif., was not out of bounds but was by herself in a steep slope skiing among

the trees when she fell face first and suffocated in the snow, said sheriff's Lt. Rob Weber, the chief deputy coroner.

Read the whole story

Snow advisory for Lake Tahoe

A winter weather advisory is in effect from 4am to 10pm Wednesday.

It's been snowing lightly off and on all day in the Lake Tahoe Basin. The National Weather Service expects heavier snow to move into the Tahoe Basin late tonight, with it becoming heavier during the daytime hours Wednesday.



More snow is falling and will fall this week at the Amacker ranch.

Photo/Kathryn Reed

Snow accumulations are expected to be 4 to 8 inches around Lake Tahoe and Truckee, with 8 to 14 inches above 7,000 feet.

Winds will be out of the southwest, with gusts between 30 and 40mph before and during the advisory period, with gusts along

the ridges of 75mph.

Expect chain controls on mountain roads.

Snow is in the forecast for most of the week. Temperatures will be in the mid-30s, with lows in the low 20s.

Power outage closes LTCC

Due to a power outage that affected all of the college's buildings, Lake Tahoe Community College closed the campus at about 1pm Tuesday.

All afternoon and evening classes are canceled and students should check the main website www.ltcc.edu for updates on classes for March 3.