

Storm advisory for Lake Tahoe

A winter weather advisory is in effect from 10pm Thursday to 10am Friday for the Lake Tahoe Basin.

Moderate to heavy snow is expected late tonight into the morning. Expect 2-6 inches below 7,000 feet and 6-9 inches above that elevation, the National Weather Service says.

Winds will be in the 15 to 25mph range, with gusts of 45mph and the ridges likely to see 85mph gusts.



Expect chain controls in and out of Tahoe on Friday.

Photo/Kathryn Reed

The forecast is for much of the same on Saturday, though a weather advisory has not been issued yet.

With temperatures not expected to get out of the 30s during the day (that's at the lake, not the slopes), it should just be snow falling, not rain like late January.

As with most winter storms, chain controls over the passes are apt to be in place when the white stuff starts coming down. Road conditions can be accessed via the Home page of *Lake Tahoe News*.

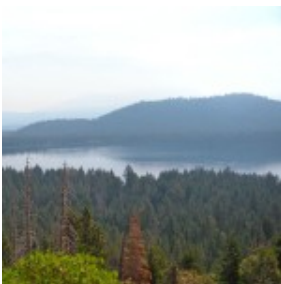
Fallen Leaf Lake board president resigns

By Susan Wood

Another chapter unfolds in the continuing saga of the Fallen Leaf Lake Community Services District.

The CSD board is expected Saturday to discuss how to fill one of its seats left vacant with President Dana Clark resigning last month amid turmoil over who will run the marina and general store. The meeting is at 11am at Lake Tahoe Airport in South Lake Tahoe.

The board and vocal community members have debated the issue for months, resulting in shouting matches, harsh feelings and even the threat of legal action. In some cases, the quandary has caused a rift between board members leaning toward an option of the district running the concessionaire and some in the community insisting it should stay in the hands of Fallen Leaf Landing. The company, managed by the John Rich family, has run the dual operation that's the hub of the mountain village outside South Lake Tahoe for 14 years. No contract exists between the two entities.



The water may
be tranquil,

but the
business of
Fallen Leaf
Lake is
anything but
that.

Photo/Kathryn
Reed

"It appears to me that some community members have already made a decision, and the CSD will run into more legal resistance if the board does anything other than contract with Fallen Leaf Landing. (It) may have the experience of running this operation, but that is not the only factor to be considered," Clark wrote in his resignation letter.

The two sides have fought over issues ranging from accounting practices to an agreeable rate for rent of the facilities.

According to Clark, the district has spent \$7,600 in legal fees with the intent of countering the threat of legal action.

Beyond the monetary issues, the dispute has created arguments between board members and residents of the ordinarily quiet mountain hamlet at the base of the Desolation Wilderness.

"I am unwilling to serve in an environment where my every move and decision is judged and possibly escalated to legal action," Clark added.

The environment was rocked six months ago when Lee Vestal, the CSD general manager, resigned over disagreements with the community on how to run the district.

Board member Mike Kraft, whose own negotiations broke down with Rich a few months ago, will take over for Clark as president. He wrote a letter to the community declaring the latest departure of such a high profile person within the district represents "the embarrassing truth in our community

at this time.”

Kraft commended Clark for all his work, including a major repair of the marina dock and the move into the new general store in 2003.

It’s unclear the direction the board will take in filling the vacant seat or the concessionaire post. A new board member may be appointed or elected this weekend.

Facts, figures, opinions delay SLT’s plastic bag ban decision

By Kathryn Reed

Enough information about the merits and hazards of banning plastic bags was disseminated Wednesday that the commission tasked with making a recommendation to the South Lake Tahoe City Council deferred its decision for a month.

“The goal is to reduce and eventually eliminate one-time use plastic bags,” Chairwoman Kirstin Cattell said at the beginning of the meeting.

Assistant City Attorney Jacqueline Mittelstadt told the 40 people gathered at the city offices at Lake Tahoe Airport that a court ruling came down last week calling the prohibition of plastic bags in one city illegal because adequate environmental reports were not done.



Promoting
reusable bags
in South Lake
Tahoe.

Mittelstadt also enlightened everyone that in 2007 the state Legislature ruled cities couldn't impose a fee to use plastic bags. However, the state can. But two bills relating to that matter have died.

At the end of the meeting Cattell said she wants more details on the legalities of the issue before making up her mind.

Some of the people who spoke said waiting for the state to implement a fee is the right course.

Ellen Camacho spoke out in favor of a ban on plastic bags.

"We need to make it hurt to use plastic bags," she told the commissioners.

Ellen Nunes, who runs Clean Tahoe, rattled off a slew of statistics about the billions of plastic bags produced in the world each year. She said this as slides of trash scattered about Tahoe – in marshes, the street and meadows – filled the screen.

She said Clean Tahoe picked up 108 tons of trash in 2009 – that's just in South Lake Tahoe – and has nothing to do with normal trash service. How much of that was plastic bags she didn't know.

Nunes said her crews have found plastic particles in animal

scat.

Environmentally, that's one of the arguments to ban the bags – that they get loose and animals ingest the toxins. Also, as the bags slowly decompose they leach chemicals into the soil and waterways. It takes hundreds of years for ordinary plastic bags to decompose.

But Ryan Kenny with the American Chemistry Council said environmentally plastic bags are better than paper when it comes to the production process. Kenny said plastic produces less emissions, use less water, less energy and more can be transported at once compared to paper bags.

Mike Murphy, who owns Road Runner gas station, said he would need a warehouse to store paper bags, whereas plastic are so compact.

He said a big issue is with tourists who don't know what to do with their trash and who don't believe a garbage company sorts recyclables by hand, like South Tahoe Refuse does.

Jeff Tillman of the refuse company said about 45 percent of what comes on the conveyer belt is pulled off to recycle. That number is expected to jump when the new facility opens this spring.

Education was a big theme of the discussion.

It was noted that consumers don't recycle their plastic bags at grocery stores. Mike Schouten, owner of the local Grocery Outlet, said he estimates about 1 percent of the bags are recycled. They offer plastic bags and have reusable canvas bags for sale.

Schouten said he believes customers are speaking – they want the convenience of the plastic bags. He says this because only about 10 customers a day come in with reusable bags.

But that gets back to the education component – to make the

public aware of what it takes to create plastic and paper bags, and what happens to those bags at the end of their life. And plastic bags are said to average 12 minutes of use before becoming trash.

Sustainability Commissioner Do Lee said he would like a cost analysis regarding how a ban would affect small and large businesses. He also wants to know the financial impact to customers before he decides how to vote.

Former Mayor Margo Osti is adamantly in support of banning plastic bags. She said the commission needs to work with Clean Tahoe, tell the council to have a dedicated code enforcement officer for trash related issues and should seek grants that could possibly provide reusable bags to everyone in the city for free.

Others who spoke questioned the logic in having South Tahoe ban the bags at stores when tourists come here with bags and so many locals shop off the hill where plastic bags are the norm.

Minutes before the meeting, *Lake Tahoe News* received a phone call from Jim Coalwell, who runs the farmers market in South Tahoe each summer. He said his organization is willing to cooperate with whatever decision is made, but hopes any change would be phased in.

Some of the discussion centered on getting rid of Styrofoam as well.

Jeremy Bauer, purchasing manager for Sierra-at-Tahoe, said all of the products at the resort are recyclable, with many made from corn resin.

"Our consumers have told us they appreciate that," Bauer said.

David Hansen, director of engineering for Embassy Suites South Lake Tahoe, said he agreed with just about everything that had

been said that afternoon, recognizing there are trade-offs with every decision.

Embassy doesn't use plastic or Styrofoam. With its composting program and recycling efforts, in 2009 STR picked up 45 percent less waste at the hotel.

Speaking on behalf of the Lake Tahoe South Shore Chamber of Commerce, Hansen said, "We support your decision if it makes economic and environmental sense."

The Sustainability Commission is expected to make a recommendation at its March 3 4pm meeting.

Cremations top full burials at South Tahoe cemetery

By Kathryn Reed

Happy Homestead Cemetery in 2009 continued the trend of more people seeking cremation over full body burial.

Of the 73 burials at the South Lake Tahoe cemetery, 45 were cremations, 28 full body – or 62 percent v. 38 percent.



John McChesney

This is consistent with 2008, with 48 cremations (64 percent) and 27 full body (36 percent).

The five-year average is 57 percent cremations and 43 percent full body burials.

At the cemetery district's board meeting Wednesday, two members were added to make it a five-member board. The El Dorado County Board of Supervisors appointed John Poell and Joe Tillson.

Their terms expire in January 2013.

John McChesney, who has been on the board for 35 years, said he expects to step down when his term expires next January.

Technically the members serve at the pleasure of the seated District 5 supervisor. If Norma Santiago is not re-elected in November, the incoming supervisor could seek to appointment some or all new cemetery board members.

Perhaps the hazard of showing up late for your first meeting is being nominated to be chairman of the board for the next year. Such was Tillson's luck. When it came to voting, he said, "I guess" in regards to his role.

Poell is vice chairman and Del Laine secretary.

At the next meeting in the spring the board is going to consider having subcommittees, which it couldn't have before because of being a three-person board.

Another agenda item is likely to be discussion of cooperating with the Lake Tahoe Historical Society for the preservation of Pioneer Cemetery in the Al Tahoe neighborhood.

EDC feels snubbed by South Lake Tahoe

By Kathryn Reed

El Dorado County is miffed with South Lake Tahoe's decision to abort its presentation to the Board of Supervisors less than 24 hours before it was to take place.

The city was supposed to explain its latest redevelopment proposal to the county on Tuesday. Instead, City Manager Dave Jinkens sent a letter to County Administrator Gayle Erbe-Hamlin the afternoon of Feb. 1 that requested postponement and denied her request dated Jan. 26 asking for more time to comment on the environmental documents.

The redevelopment plan that encompasses the bulk of the city's businesses and residents along Emerald Bay Road and on Highway 50 from the Y to Glenwood Avenue is slated to be discussed by the city's planning commission in the coming weeks, with the council likely to take it up in March.

Mike Applegarth, senior administrative analyst for El Dorado County, said his bosses wanted to hear about the project "in advance of formal proceedings, before you can't undo things."

The loss of sales tax dollars is what has the county concerned regarding the 45-year plan.

Jinkens in his letter says he is out of town on business and that others who were to speak Tuesday would likely be at a bankruptcy meeting regarding the would-be convention center.

Why Jinkens is in San Diego is not known. The city knew about the bankruptcy hearing on Jan. 28.

Applegarth said staff and the Board of Supervisors are frustrated because it has taken months to get a date on the

books for the presentation.

“We take direction from the board. It’s hard for us to make a comment on a project of this significance without board input,” Applegarth said as to why the county has not submitted comments.

The comment period on the draft Environmental Impact Report ended Jan. 14.

Jenkins letter says, “All other agencies that received notice have provided comments within the time limits prescribed in law.” He also said he is willing to reschedule and to answer any questions staff or supervisors have.

City officials are slated to make a presentation about the redevelopment plan on Feb. 18 at 2pm to the South Tahoe Public Utility District board.

Judge denies Lane extension in bankruptcy court

By Kathryn Reed

Developer Randy Lane was handed another setback Tuesday, though he is not calling it that.

As principal of Lake Tahoe Development Company, Lane has been trying to turn what South Shore residents call “the hole” into the region’s most expensive redevelopment project. The problem is he doesn’t have the money to build the \$400-plus-million convention center-retail-hotel complex that broke ground in 2006.

He never did. But, still, the city gave him the OK to begin construction without financing in place. The city approved the contract without a performance bond. Hal Cole and John Upton were the City Council members who negotiated the contract.



Snow is the only thing new at the would-be convention center near Stateline.

Photo/Kathryn Reed

Lake Tahoe Development Company, which is based in Zephyr Cove, filed for bankruptcy in October.

On Feb. 2, U.S. Bankruptcy Judge Thomas Holman in Sacramento denied Lane's request to extend the length of time he has to put together a plan. Lane wanted another 150 days.

The city and at least two creditors filed motions opposing Lane's request. He owes \$54 million to various people who sold him the 11-plus acres in South Lake Tahoe directly across the Nevada border.

After the hearing, Lane told *Lake Tahoe News*, "It's a legal thing that doesn't impact what we are trying to get accomplished. What we are trying to do is a very positive thing for the city."

Lane would not divulge whether he intends to be part of the

project when the dust settles; nor would he elaborate about the negotiations he is having or with whom he is talking to.

In addressing the rumor that Vail Resorts is interested again in the project, Lane said, "I wish they would tell me that."

RockResorts, the real estate arm of the Vail-based company, was going to operate the two hotels that were slated for the complex. That agreement was mutually severed a couple years ago.

The last time Lane met with city officials was Jan. 15. They found out Jan. 28 about Lane's decision to ask for an extension and were not happy.

In the filing Feb. 1 to the court the city writes, "If Debtor does have an investor, the City is prepared to meet with them and re-negotiate the OPA (Owner Participation Agreement), but as of this date the City has not been contacted to even set a meeting, much less discuss the OPA."

On Feb. 9, the City Council plans to discuss the whole issue in closed session.

"They have performance measures in the contract. At this point we don't have any construction going on and there probably should be," said Gene Palazzo, South Lake Tahoe Redevelopment Agency manager.

Palazzo said staff has not vetted all scenarios the City Council could contemplate.

The council must approve any changes to the contract or in ownership of the property.

"I think it will come to a conclusion this year," Councilman Bruce Grego said. "No one has a crystal ball, but it's possible the bankruptcy will fail."

Lane filed Chapter 11 bankruptcy, that means the court will

have to approve a restructuring plan with the consent of creditors. Chapter 7 would have meant the sale of assets.

If Chapter 11 fails, it's unknown where this leaves creditors. Because a final parcel map was never approved by the city it's possible the land could return to the original owners. The problem is rebar and concrete cover a good portion of the acreage.

What the city's liability in allowing construction to begin without the map being recorded is not known.

Right now the city is not financially at-risk other than losing projected revenue.

Originally, the project was supposed to be celebrating its one-year anniversary this summer. Developers anticipated the property to bring 180,000 visitors a year who would funnel \$78 million into the South Shore economy.

Parole agent speaks out about Phillip Garrido

By Lynsey Paulo, KCRA-TV

SACRAMENTO – Federal parole supervision records show officers recommended continuing Phillip Garrido's parole four times between 1990 and 1998, after he allegedly kidnapped and held Jaycee Lee Dugard captive in his Antioch home.

KCRA 3 obtained newly released U.S. Parole Commission documents Tuesday.

[Read the whole story](#)

Sky Tavern Ski Lodge founder dies

By Siobhan McAndrew, Reno Gazette-Journal

Everyone thought Keston Ramsey was going to live forever.

His wife of 80 years, his two sons, six grandchildren, 12 great-grandchildren, neighbors and friends who saw the 101-year-old man shoveling snow and fixing his roof never expected life without Ramsey.

Ramsey, who opened the Sky Tavern Ski Lodge in 1945 with hopes of making it a celebrity skiing hot spot, died Thursday night after being admitted Wednesday to Renown South Meadows Regional Medical Center. He was among the first residential home builders in the area.

[Read the whole story](#)

Indian casino expansion threatens Reno-Tahoe gaming venues

By Howard Stutz, Las Vegas Review-Journal

Expansion plans by an Indian casino near Sacramento signal another bad omen for Northern Nevada's beleaguered gaming

market.

Casino revenues in Reno and the Lake Tahoe area have been decimated for almost three years. The recession has zapped tourism, while bad weather routinely impedes travel by casino patrons from the important San Francisco Bay Area feeder market.

But Northern California's large Indian casino community is the primary reason Washoe County hasn't seen positive gaming revenues in 29 months and South Lake Tahoe's casinos are reporting figures mirroring the 1980s.

Bay Area residents have a choice. The Red Hawk in Placerville opened a year ago with 2,100 slot machines and 75 table games. The 7-year-old Thunder Valley near Sacramento is answering with an \$800 million expansion opening in July.

Now, Cache Creek is adding to the pain.

Read the whole story

Skier visits surge at Tahoe resorts

By Jim Carlton, Wall Street Journal

Lake Tahoe's ski resorts are reporting their best business in four years, buoyed by unusually abundant snow and an improving Northern California economy.

The number of skier visits at the Sugar Bowl Ski Resort, for example, has jumped 21% so far this season compared with the prior one, while the resort's revenue has increased 15%

despite discounting. The



Reduced season
pass prices
have helped
increase
traffic at
Squaw.

Photo/Kathryn
Reed

Northstar-at-Tahoe Resort has seen a 10% rise in skier visits, while Squaw Valley USA said visits have soared 46%, in part because of a steep cut in season-pass prices.

Read the whole story