

Meyers Landfill: contractor sought, toxic plume moving



By Kathryn Reed

A settlement has not been reached, but resolution to the debacle known at the Meyers Landfill is getting closer.

The El Dorado County Board of Supervisors will accept bids to cap the toxic site until Dec. 15, with the bid expected to be awarded Jan. 12.

The more than 20 acres of U.S. Forest Service land off Pioneer Trail on the outskirts of South Lake Tahoe has sat idle for years after the county stopped using the property as a dump. When the Forest Service figured out gunk from the trash site had decomposed into a toxic mess that was leaching contaminants into the soil, it sued the county and a plethora of other entities.

That lawsuit has for years been mired in a bureaucratic mess. Much of the problem is centered on who is going to pay the clean-up costs.

“The Forest Service engineers’ estimate for the project is \$5.5 million; however, given the current bidding climate, it is highly likely that the bids will come in below that amount,” Supervisor Norma Santiago said. “This does not include ongoing operations and maintenance (O&M) which has been estimated by the USFS as \$1.1 million over a 30-year period. Who will pay for the O&M is still under the ongoing negotiations through the mediation process.”

Meetings with both sides have been taking place on a regular basis lately. Resolution is expected to come before supervisors award the bid in January so it's known where the money is coming from to pay for construction of the cap, installing surface drainage controls, and putting in passive landfill gas extraction and parameter monitor systems.

Part of the funding will be a \$750,000 grant the county received from the California Integrated Waste Management Board for the project.

“Additional funding will be coming from settlement agreements that have been finalized during the course of the mediation,” Santiago said.

Forest Service officials found out in November that the plume is moving. A series of wells were drilled with the one on Hekpa Drive showing low levels of vinyl chloride and other volatile organic compounds.

“It was about 160 feet down. There is no reason anyone would come in contact with it. No drinking wells or private wells are in the area,” Forest Service spokeswoman Cheva Heck said.

Neighbors have been advised of the situation and offered one-on-one meetings with the Forest Service if they have questions.

“Sampling results from Saxon Creek did not detect vinyl chloride or others VOCs, and there is no danger of exposure due to contact with the water in the creek,” Heck said.

More drilling will be necessary, most likely this winter, to establish the outer limits of the plume.

LTUSD students not feeling safe or healthy



By Kathryn Reed

South Lake Tahoe's kids aren't so healthy. And they don't feel safe.

Results from a statewide survey taken last fall show an increase in tobacco, alcohol and marijuana use by some Lake Tahoe Unified students.

Students in grades five, seven, nine and 11 take the survey every other year. It's a way for districts to know what problems students are facing and identify what programs might need to be put in place to address those concerns.

Lisa Huard, who was the safe schools coordinator until her position was eliminated this school year, believes students are honest with their responses based on information the schools have, as well as the number of suspensions, expulsions and arrests.

In 2004, 5 percent of the seventh-graders said they regularly smoke tobacco, in 2006 the ninth-graders (so the same class) had 14 percent say they were users, while in 2008 as 11th-graders 22 percent were lighting up.

More members of the class of 2010 are drinking alcohol and smoking pot as they get older. As seventh-graders, about 10 percent were imbibing, 32 percent at ninth-graders and 44 percent this school year.

When it comes to marijuana, 7 percent of next year's graduating class took a hit as seventh-graders, a quarter of them did as ninth-graders and 36 percent do today.

"Those same children report a decrease in caring relationships with a teacher or other adults at the schools over the years, a decrease in high expectation from a teacher or other adult at their school, and a decrease of opportunities in meaningful participation at their school," Huard said.

Huard says the way to stop the escalation in drug use and risky behavior is to start the education at an earlier grade level. She would like to see schools be less test oriented and more student oriented.

"Schools in general are focusing on the test scores and not focusing on the life scores of our youth," Huard said.

South Lake Tahoe Police Chief Terry Daniels also believes teaching kids sooner rather than later is important. "Energy needs to go to preventive programs," he said, adding that he supports efforts being made in the schools.

From the 2008 survey:

51 percent feel safe at school all of the time;

40 percent of seventh-graders, 31 percent of ninth-graders and 22 percent of 11th-graders are afraid of being beaten up;

79 percent of fifth-graders, 68 percent of seventh, 53 percent ninth and 55 percent 11th-graders ate breakfast on test day.

According to the report, "Students who attend school hungry or malnourished may experience compromised health, well-being, and school performance."

Huard believes it takes the entire community to set an example and be responsible for youth. Why didn't you call the cops when the kids down the street had a party? Why didn't you talk

to the parents? Why did you give a dirty look to the kids congregated on the corner smoking cigarettes instead of telling them about lung and throat cancer? Why did you buy a six-pack for your kid brother? Those are questions Huard is asking. When she doesn't have to ask them anymore, the survey results

Draft EIR on South Tahoe redevelopment plan is out

The public has until mid-January to weigh-in on the draft environmental impact report for a proposed redevelopment area in South Lake Tahoe.

The project area takes up 1,300 acres, encompasses much of the south end of town and affects businesses and residences.

In September the City Council approved the release of redevelopment plan for public review. [Click here to read more about it.](#)

The 127-page draft EIR and all the documents are at www.ctcip.org.

The City Council is expected to take action on all the documents in early March. Meetings will be scheduled before then to gather public input.

Carson City to infuse \$87 million into downtown

By Ray Hagar, Reno Gazette-Journal

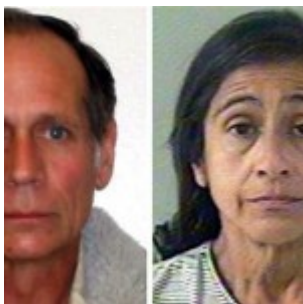
Carson City's Board of Supervisors signed off on a financial plan to fund an \$87 million downtown renewal project, which could create hundreds of construction jobs starting next year.

The project, which was approved late Thursday night, would turn eight acres of parking lots into a technology plaza. Proponents said the area will attract entrepreneurial companies to Nevada's capital city and provide high-paying jobs.

The project would provide an average of 561 annual construction-related jobs for five years, with 820 jobs coming in the first year of the project.

Read the whole story

Lawyer issue delays movement in Garrido case



By Sam Stanton, Sacramento Bee

Accused kidnappers Phillip and Nancy Garrido returned to court

this afternoon, but the continuing dispute over who will represent Nancy Garrido delayed any progress in the case for at least a month.

El Dorado County Superior Court Judge Douglas Phimister set the next hearing date for Jan. 21, and said the court had received new information regarding the case from the district attorney's office that he was going to keep secret.

"I don't want anything to prejudice this case potentially," the judge said.

Read the whole story

Tribal gaming revenue up slightly

By Howard Stutz, Las Vegas Review-Journal

American Indian casinos suffered a similar fate as their counterparts in Las Vegas during 2008 – the recession played havoc with gaming revenues.

But unlike the Strip, Indian casinos enjoyed a slight boost in gaming revenues compared with prior years, although, the increase was not the double-digit jump that tribal casinos experienced between 1993 and 2006.

According to the Indian Gaming Industry Report, authored by economist Alan Meister of Nathan Associates, tribal casinos in 28 states collected \$26.8 billion in gaming revenue in 2008, a 1.5 percent increase compared with \$26.4 billion.

Read the whole story

Soderman returns to DCSD

By Kathryn Reed

On a 7-0 vote the Douglas County School District board voted this week to bring John Soderman back as superintendent.

He will fill in while the board looks for a permanent hire. Soderman, who lives in Gardnerville, had been superintendent from 2000-06.



Sode
rman

“It was a very good choice. We are all looking forward to moving forward,” said Rich Alexander, assistant superintendent.

Soderman has been consulting for school districts in Nevada since his retirement.

At a previous meeting the board had agreed not to hire the interim superintendent at the permanent supe.

Alexander would not say if he is considering tossing his resume onto the stack. He was superintendent of Lake Tahoe Unified School District before joining DCSD.

The details of Soderman’s contract and exact start day were to be finalized this week. Soderman is expected to begin work this month and make about \$10,000/month.

Jim Huge, the consultant the district is using in the hiring

process, expects to post the job in January, have interviews shortly after that, with the anticipation of the next person starting July 1.

Carol Lark's last day as leader of the district was Nov. 30. Her tenure at the helm was full of strife – not all her own doing.

Part was money issues, part personnel and part having to contend with the dynamics of one district with two distinct personalities. This is because the district seat is in Minden in the Carson Valley, while a small part of the district is in Lake Tahoe.

Lake parents have often felt they get the short-end of things because at the high school level fewer extra-curricular classes can be offered because of the size of the school, while at the elementary level classes are large because there aren't quite enough students to create a second class. Plus, only one of the seven board members lives at the lake so parents believe the representation is skewed.

South Tahoe PUD board member faces felony charge

By Kathryn Reed

South Tahoe Public Utility District board member Dale Rise faces up to three years in state prison if he is found guilty of resisting an officer.

The El Dorado County District Attorney's Office has filed the felony charge against the elected official. Rise was arrested

at his home in late September. A preliminary hearing is scheduled for Jan. 22 in El Dorado County Superior Court.



Dale Rise

“It’s a felony because of the extent of the resistance to the officer,” said Hans Uthe, assistant district attorney. “He tried to use the Taser on one of the officers.”

Rise, on Thursday, said, “I am not going to make a statement.” He deferred comment to his attorney, Lori London. London did not return a phone call.

Officers were called to Rise’s home the morning of Sept. 28 on a domestic call. Rise was allegedly arguing with his adult daughter.

“He wasn’t very cooperative,” South Lake Tahoe police Lt. Marty Hale said just after the arrest. “He tried to shut the door in the officers’ face. He was pretty belligerent and uncooperative.”

Officers said they tried to use the Taser on Rise, but it wasn’t working correctly. Rise then allegedly grabbed the Taser and tried to use it on officers.

According to Uthe, Rise does not have any priors.

South Tahoe PUD spokesman Dennis Cocking said district policy is if Rise is convicted, he would have to resign from the board. For now, he continues to carry out his duties as a board member.

Rise is not the first STPUD board member to have a run-in with the law. One-time board Chairman Pembroke Gochnauer was part of the 2001 FBI sting dubbed Operation Clean Sheets. He resigned shortly after his arrest.

Freezing temps equate to record natural gas consumption

By Steve Timko, Reno Gazette-Journal

NV Energy customers set a record for natural gas use in the 24 hours that ended Thursday at 7 a.m.

The region consumed 156,332 decatherms, almost 156 million cubic feet of natural gas, NV Energy spokesman Karl Walquist said. The record was 155,194 decatherms Jan. 12, 2007.

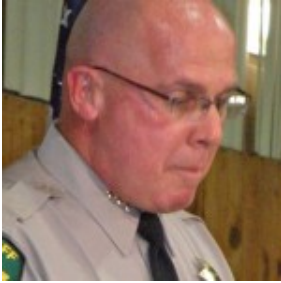
Read the whole story

Kollar appointed sheriff of El Dorado County

By Kathryn Reed

It took an hour of discussion today before Fred Kollar was appointed interim sheriff of El Dorado County.

Kollar, who was appointed undersheriff by Sheriff Neves when he took office, will fill out the rest of Neves' term. Neves' resignation is effective Dec. 26.



Fred Kollar

It was a 3-2 vote Dec. 10 to appoint Kollar. Supervisors Ray Nutting and Ron Briggs voted no.

"Bottomline, in times like these, we need continuity, and Kollar not only provides this continuity, but also has the proven leadership skills to move forward during this time of transition," Supervisor Norma Santiago told Lake Tahoe News.

Kollar has worked both sides of the county. He lived in South Lake Tahoe for a number of years.

One of the strengths he brings is familiarity with budget issues – which is needed in these economic times.

Kollar also is not running for sheriff.

The primary is in June. Candidates cannot officially declare until next year, but seven people have expressed interest in the job. If no one wins the primary outright, the runoff will be in November.