

Lovell mayor of SLT; sediment, pot, green building on agenda

By Kathryn Reed

Kathay Lovell took the gavel from Jerry Birdwell on Dec. 8 – as expected. The 3-2 vote to have her become mayor of South Lake Tahoe was also predictable.

Birdwell and Councilman Bill Crawford did not want her to take the helm again – a position she has had twice in seven years in office. Crawford has never been mayor and has served the same length of time, though not consecutive terms.



Kathay Lovell

The transaction was short and sweet, with no pontificating by any of the councilmembers.

Hal Cole is mayor pro tem. All but Crawford voted for that appointment.

The honorary positions are one-year terms.

In other action on Dec. 8:

- The council listened to a lengthy presentation by Harold Singer, executive director of Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board. He talked about the need to

reduce fine sediment from going into Lake Tahoe and how the city will have to come up with millions of dollars for its contribution to have lake clarity return to a depth of 100 feet.

- Extended the moratorium on medicinal marijuana dispensaries to Nov. 17, 2010, to make it a full year with keeping the number of such businesses at three. This gives the city time to craft an ordinance regulating the pot clubs.
 - Gave staff direction to come up with a green building ordinance. This should be before the council in the spring. The council favors developers be allowed to build green on a voluntary basis.
 - The city's grievance policy will be discussed in late winter when outside officials are able to be in attendance.
 - The next regular council meeting will be Jan. 12 at 9am.
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Fake ski instructors arrested at Heavenly

Four people were caught trying to make a buck as would-be ski-snowboard instructors at Heavenly Mountain Resort.

The two from South Lake Tahoe, one from Carson City and the other from Albany were charged with misdemeanor crimes and released on promise to appear citations.

El Dorado County sheriff's deputies set up the sting Dec. 4.

A business license is necessary to conduct such a business and none of these suspects had one, nor did they have permission from Heavenly to offer ski instructor services.

“Operations such as this are sometimes necessary to ensure public safety and local business security,” a press release states. “El Dorado County Sheriff’s Office will continue to monitor Internet and other media sources to ensure our locals and visitors that vendors are operating with the law.”

Lake Tahoe = white and cold

By Kathryn Reed

El Dorado County workers can sleep in – start time is 10am today. Backcountry skiers better think twice about strapping on skis or a board. All resorts are giddy about the snow accumulations. And the storms have only just begun.

County Supervisor Norma Santiago told *Lake Tahoe News* on Monday night that staff will meet to “assess how we are with power and computers. If it doesn’t look good, we may close the offices again.”



Highway 50 in
South Lake
Tahoe about
3:30pm Dec. 7.
Photo/Kathryn
Reed

County offices were closed all day Monday.

Not much was going on in Placerville Monday afternoon when a *Lake Tahoe News* reporter drove through. Power was out – meaning no gas was available, no coffee, nothing.

The Board of Supervisors has moved today's regular meeting to Thursday. Closed session will still begin at 8am, with open session at 9am in Placerville.

Santiago said parts of rural El Dorado County on the West Slope received 1.5 feet of snow. This brought everything to a halt.

Trees along Highway 50 west of the county seat were bent in ways that would make a contortionist proud.

But the reality is the winds with the storm, and the snowload on trees and power lines meant the town was dark. Pacific Gas & Electric officials expected electricity to be restored Monday night.

"It's really hard on the rural roads. Some parts of (Highway) 49 have only one lane plowed. It's hard to get into the deeper county roads," Santiago said.

A Red Cross trailer was being hauled into Placerville about 1pm Monday. The county set up a shelter Monday at the town hall so people would have a warm place to spend the night. It's at 549 Main St. in Placerville.

For more information about what's going on in El Dorado County, go to www.edcgov.us (though the website has been down) or call 866.934.8771.

Other storm issues

In Nevada, Gov. Jim Gibbons shut down all non-essential government offices in Northern Nevada on Monday. Carson City, the state capital, received more than 18 inches of snow. That

amount essentially cripples this part of the Sierra.

Slick roads are being blamed for Sunday's accident on Interstate 80 near Donner Summit that claimed the life of a 14-year-old boy from Orangevale.

All regional offices of AAA were closed Monday, though they are expected to be open today.

Schools are also set to open their doors after most called it a snow day Monday.

The Sierra Avalanche Center reports the danger is high above the treeline and moderate below it. It's always risky when light fluffy snow like what dumped in the last couple of days sits on top of a hard, deep slab. This is often prime condition for an avalanche.

"This one wasn't so much the water content. It was so dry to start with we piled up the snow efficiently," Mark Faucette, meteorologist with the National Weather Service in Reno, said late Monday night. "It maybe was a little underforecast. We got a couple feet of snow at lake level."

Less water content makes for better skiing; more water content eventually fills parched reservoirs.

It's too soon to tell how freezing temperatures will affect crops. Citrus is the big concern this time of year. It can handle temps just below freezing.

What's next?

Some forecasts show snow for six of the next nine days for the Lake Tahoe Basin.

Even though the winter storm warning was canceled by the National Weather Service on Monday at 6:14pm, the snow was still falling for several hours afterward, especially in the South Lake area.

The overnight low for the basin was expected to be in negatives digits. This means roads this morning are likely to like an ice rink.

Several residential streets throughout the region never saw a plow on Monday

Highways in the area were closed at various times because of periods of heavy snowfall and spinouts.

Remember, four-wheel drive does not mean drive the speed limit or faster in winter conditions, nor does four-wheel drive allow you to brake faster.

“(Tuesday) won’t warm up much at all. We are still mainly going to be below freezing as a high for a big chunk of the week,” Faucette said.

He said the storm moving in Thursday night into Friday will bring snow, but not the accumulations originally forecast.

It’s more likely a foot or two will arrive at lake level Saturday night into Sunday. More moisture will come with this storm – which means temperatures will be rising. Snow levels are expected to be below 6,000 feet.

An even warmer storm is farther out. Mid-next week snow levels may not drop below 8,000 feet.

Ski resort update

Resorts in and around the Lake Tahoe Basin received more than 2 feet of snow in 24 hours.

Kirkwood Mountain Resort, which is notorious for recording more snow than anyone else, boasted of 3 feet of fresh powder by noon Dec. 7. This means more terrain will open today.

With the storms rolling in all week, the resort that is about 45 minutes south of South Lake Tahoe, expects to have eight

chairs operating this weekend, including the Timber Creek area, several other resort restaurants and amenities.

Prices today will be \$48 for adults.

Most all of the resorts will be open within 10 days. Opening dates: Dec. 12, Donner Ski Ranch; Dec. 17, Diamond Peak; Dec. 18, Granlibakken Resort, Homewood Mountain Resort and Tahoe Donner.

“This is the type of storm that sets us up for the winter season,” Andy Chapman, tourism director for North Lake Tahoe Resort Association, said in a press release. “Resorts are open and the lifts are cranking, and with an abundance of deals and packages, there has never been a better time to ski and board North Lake Tahoe.”

The same can easily be said for all the shores of Lake Tahoe.



Placerville is full of snow on Monday. Photos/Kathryn Reed



Red Cross
helps out in
Placerville.



No last name
Mike checks
for 4-wheel
drive/chains
just outside
of Placerville
on Highway 50.

Roberson guilty of second-degree murder

By Kathryn Reed

Premeditation. That was the sticking point for jurors in the Ulysses Roberson trial. Without being able to say he killed his son with forethought, the panel on Monday morning convicted Roberson of second-degree murder.

The former South Lake Tahoe resident will be sentenced Jan. 6. He could get 15 years to life for killing his 4-year-old son Alexander Olive. Olive's body has never been found.



Ulysses
Roberson

"We're very satisfied with the outcome and thankful the family and the community can have some resolution on this after so long," FBI agent Chris Campion said.

Campion worked this case for years. The boy was killed in either December 1985 or January 1986.

Chris Cefalu was one of six alternates for the 12-member jury. Until the last day of closing arguments on Nov. 30 he thought his job was done because the alternates would not be part of the deliberations. One of the female jurors was dismissed and he had more work to do regarding the case.

"We got to the point (Monday morning) where everyone gave their opinion about what charge was appropriate," Cefalu said. "It got to the point where we couldn't prove first degree and then we decided murder in the second degree because we agreed it was murder."

Cefalu had high praise for jury foreman Charles Emmett and El Dorado County Superior Court Judge Suzanne Kingsbury.

"The nature of the case was circumstantial mostly. That is a tough concept," Cefalu said.

Keith Cooney was an alternate the entire time on the case that started in early October.

"I found some of the testimony, pictures and evidence pretty disturbing," Cooney said. "There were times when I was

silently screaming at the witnesses on the stand – ‘how can you walk into a room and see a child hanging upside down and not do anything’.”

His voice fills with disgust thinking about how the boy’s mother, Judy Olive (who also goes by Ruby and Rosemary), knew about it and did nothing but allow her son to be further tortured by Roberson.

It came out during the trial that Roberson hated his son for being half white. But it’s unclear how he justified sleeping with a white woman.

Plenty of blame can go around in the case. But those close to the case say it was eerie how Roberson never showed remorse.

Krolicki cleared of all charges

By Cara McCoy, Las Vegas Sun

Charges against Lt. Gov. Brian Krolicki and his chief of staff tied to his alleged mismanagement of a college savings program were dismissed this morning in Clark County District Court.

Judge Valerie Adair issued a written ruling on arguments she heard Nov. 24 from attorneys for Krolicki and his chief of staff, Kathryn Besser, dismissing counts that stemmed from what prosecutors called mismanagement of a multi-billion dollar college savings program while Krolicki served as state treasurer.



Brian
Krolicki

“I am greatly relieved,” Krolicki said after the hearing. “The judge has given me and my family an extraordinary Christmas present.”

Read the whole story

Lake Tahoe snow coming down by the foot

By Kathryn Reed

A cold storm is lingering throughout much of Northern California and Northern Nevada this morning, with more snow coming down in the mountains and foothills and rain in the much lower elevations.

In Tahoe-Donner on the North Shore, residents tell *Lake Tahoe News* they have 18 inches of white stuff.



Snow keeps
falling around
Lake Tahoe.
Photo/Brenda
Knox

In the Tahoe Keys area of South Lake Tahoe about 9 inches greeted those needing to start their workday.

Off of Elk's Club road in El Dorado County, about 13 inches fell. As of just after 8am, the plows still had not been out there.

AAA is reporting 18 inches at its office in Carson City.

Most schools are closed in and around the Lake Tahoe Basin, including Carson City and Reno. The one exception is Lake Tahoe Community College " it's open.

Highway 50 was closed this morning at Placerville for people trying to get to Tahoe. Spinouts are the problem. Interstate 80 has been closed off and on. Highway 89 is closed going around Emerald Bay. Be sure to check the road conditions on *Lake Tahoe News's* Home page.

All El Dorado County offices are closed.

For those commuting between the Carson Valley and South Shore, Highway 50 is well plowed for those heading west. About 3-inch ruts are on the road going into the valley.

The visibility is about 100 yards on Spooner Summit. The snow is blowing horizontally. They are expecting 70mph gusts, with

one driver saying she believes the forecast is accurate. The only good thing is not many people are on the highway.

It took one commuter about 30 minutes to get from South Lake Tahoe to Zephyr Point “ twice the usual amount of time.

If you’re flying out of Reno-Tahoe International Airport today, call first. Some flights have been canceled. Flights got out early this morning and at 8:30am plows were on the runway.

Snow is being reported in Modesto, on the Altamont Pass (1,009 feet), and the mountains around the Bay Area.

Another foot of white stuff could fall at lake level before the day is done. More storms are lined up to keep striking the Sierra this week. Temperatures are super cold “ not getting much higher than freezing as a high, with single digits for the lows.

Monday is all about shoveling in Lake Tahoe

Even though the winter storm warning took effect Sunday at 7pm, snow started falling in the Lake Tahoe Basin in the afternoon. Before midnight about 5 inches had fallen at lake level.

The snow level was expected to be at sea level, with the Bay Area and parts of the Sacramento Valley being warned of possible white stuff for today. A rare hard freeze had been forecast for Saturday night in the valley.



Snow total at
Sierra-at-
Tahoe on Dec.
6.

Photo/Provided

As of Sunday night, snow was already accumulating in the Carson Valley and Placerville in large enough quantities to allow people to engage in snowball fights.

Chain controls are enforce on most roads leading into and out of the Lake Tahoe Basin. Road conditions may be accessed via *Lake Tahoe News'* Home page.

The winter storm warning is in effect through 7pm Monday night. Snow accumulations could be moderate to heavy through the afternoon. Above 5,000 feet (the lake is 6,200 feet) 15-25 inches could fall by the time the storm clears out. Two to 3 feet are expected above 7,000 feet.

Winter weather is expected to be the norm for Lake Tahoe for the better part of the week. Tonight's overnight low may be 1 degree, Highs this week are not expected to reach 40 degrees.

Kollar may be appointed EDC

sheriff Tuesday

By Cathy Locke, Sacramento Bee

The El Dorado County Board of Supervisors on Tuesday will consider appointing Undersheriff Fred Kollar as sheriff, effective Dec. 27.

Sheriff Jeff Neves has announced that he will retire Dec. 26 with a year remaining in his term. The board last month postponed discussion of a replacement to its Jan. 12 meeting. But in a staff report, county Chief Administrative Officer Gayle Erbe-Hamlin says: "There are immediate challenges for the Sheriff's Department which will require consistent and knowledgeable leadership."

Read the whole story

Study: Resorts inflate snow totals

By Bruce Edwards, Rutland Herald

Two Dartmouth College professors have come out with a report that accuses ski areas across the country of fudging snowfall totals.

The study, "Wintertime for Deceptive Advertising?," compares snowfall reports from eastern and western resorts with totals recorded by nearby government weather stations.

The report co-authored by Eric Zitzewitz and Jonathan Zinman concluded that ski areas inflated snowfall totals, especially

on weekends, which are the more profitable days of the week.

Read the whole story

Racing may have led to fatal EDC crash

By Tony Bizjak, Sacramento Bee

Several vehicles may have been racing on Salmon Falls Road in El Dorado County early Sunday before three young people were killed in a solo car crash, investigators said.

“That is something we are looking into,” California Highway Patrol spokesman Officer Dan Stark said Friday. “There is a suspicion there may have been street racing involved.”

Street racing is illegal and could lead to charges, he said.

Read the whole story