Protesters walk out of McClintock's town hall

By Angela Hart, Sacramento Bee

A group of about 40 protesters quietly and abruptly walked out of Republican Rep. Tom McClintock's town hall in the city of Angels Camp Wednesday night.

"We're going to take our district back," said Kate Hege, 38, of nearby Amador City. "We have been to a half dozen town halls, we have made thousands of calls, we have talked with his staffers…to be heard. The only response that he has is to slander us as the radical left. We are his constituents, and he owes us representation…yet he doesn't do anything for this district. This is about switching gears."

Many outside the meeting said they don't feel heard by McClintock, a conservative Republican who has represented California's deep-red, largely rural 4th Congressional District, which includes Lake Tahoe, since 2009.

Read the whole story

Experts weigh in on administrative bloat in Nevada's higher ed system

By Natalie Bruzda, Las Vegas Review-Journal

Can too many administrators spoil the classroom? That's a

question a Board of Regents member seemed to ask the Nevada System of Higher Education.

At a June board meeting, Regent Trevor Hayes questioned the necessity of hiring a seventh vice chancellor – with a $175,000 annual salary.

NSHE Chancellor Thom Reilly, hired in June, said he wants to ensure system priorities are where they should be. An October board retreat will examine system priorities and aim to ensure that NSHE and its schools are meeting goals such as improving access to higher education and overall degree completion.

Read the whole story

Suspect sought in Kings Beach thefts



Police are looking for this person. Photo/Provided

Placer County sheriff's detectives are looking for a man they believe stole a vehicle from the parking lot at Bank of the West in Kings Beach on Sept. 8.

The vehicle was found the next day in Truckee.

Investigators believe the suspect is also responsible for additional thefts in the area.

The male suspect has red or light brown hair, a goatee (which might have been shaved off), is approximately 5-feet-10-inches to 6-feet tall, weighing between 170 and 190 pounds, and last seen wearing a blue “Norway” sweat shirt, grey pants, and blue shoes.

Anyone with information is asked to call 530.581.6320; to remain anonymous, call Placer County Crime Stoppers at 800.923.8191.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Lake Tahoe Airport may become solar site



The executive hangar at Lake Tahoe Airport and others could have solar panels as soon as next summer. Photo/Provided

By Kathryn Reed

South Lake Tahoe could save about $1.28 million in electric bills over the course of 25 years if solar panels were installed at Lake Tahoe Airport.

That is the projection by Bay Area-based Staten Solar. Representatives from the company gave the City Council an overview on Sept. 19 of what a solar field at the airport would mean.

The firm would install all of the equipment and maintain it for the life of the contract, and would secure all the permits.

Scott DuBois with Staten Solar said of the sun here “it’s raining free energy on us” and now is the time to take advantage of it.

Solar systems have been installed in other mountain regions, so snow load factors as well as the time it takes for the snow to melt on panels have all been studied. Panels have also been installed at airports, so this is something the FAA is familiar with signing off on.

There would be no outlay of cash from the city. The only expense might be if more insurance is required on the hangars.

The use of solar is part of the recently adopted airport master plan. Going forward with this would also help the city attain its goal of using 100 percent renewable energy by 2032.

The local system is proposed to be a 300 kilowatt unit.

Instead of the city buying power from Liberty it would be

buying it from Staten.

The savings stated are projected by Staten and have not been independently analyzed by city staff. The company used the city's current bill, which is about $50,000 a year at the airport, with projected rate increases from Liberty and then what it projects the cost of its service will be.

So, there is no guarantee of these cost savings.

The estimate is 90 percent of the airport's electrical needs could be provided by the solar.

City Councilman Tom Davis was concerned about having equipment for so long when technology is always changing. DuBois said the most substantive changes lately are to software, which will be updated as needed.

DuBois said his firm has had positive conversations with Liberty Utilities.

Liberty Utilities did not respond to *Lake Tahoe News'* questions about this proposal.

Staten wants to work with South Lake Tahoe to potentially put solar in on other city owned buildings, like the fire stations. It is talking to other businesses in town, like Heavenly Mountain Resort and Tahoe Mountain Lab.

Tuesday's presentation was just that and not an action item. However, the council members expressed interest in having more serious talks with Staten to put solar on the airport hangars.

Assessed property values increasing in EDC

The assessed value of property in El Dorado County went up 6 percent this year compared to a year ago.

The numbers were released this week.

The $31.5 billion property tax roll, which reflects the assessed value as of Jan. 1, is approximately $1.7 billion above last year's assessed value of $29.8 billion.

This equates to about $315 million in property taxes every year.

"The same factors that increased last year's values by over 5 percent continued to influence property values this year," Assessor Karl Weiland said in a press release. "The recovering real estate market led to properties selling for more than the assessed value. This is especially true in the west end of the county, which showed higher sales volume and pricing than more rural areas of the county."

El Dorado County has approximately 95,000 real property parcels; almost 67,000 are single family residences. There are also nearly 39,000 timeshare vacation parcels in South Lake Tahoe. In addition to homes and parcels, Weiland assesses approximately 12,000 businesses, boats, mining claims, possessory interests and aircraft.

Calif. pensioners: Your COLAs are safe, for now

By Adam Ashton, Sacramento Bee

The state's largest pension fund on Tuesday shot down a pitch from a Republican lawmaker who wants it to study how much money it could save by cutting benefits for retired public workers.

Sen. John Moorlach of Orange County in July wrote letters to CalPERS board members – Richard Costigan and Dana Hollinger – making two touchy requests for the pension fund.

In one, Moorlach wanted CalPERS to estimate how much money it could save by temporarily suspending cost-of-living adjustments for retirees. CalPERS has different retirement plans that allow cost-of-living adjustments of 2 to 5 percent for its pensioners.

In the other, Moorlach asked CalPERS to look at reducing benefits for current workers and retirees by moving them into the less generous plans public agencies began offering in 2013, after Gov. Jerry Brown signed a pension reform law.

Read the whole story

Solution to South Tahoe's

city attorney vacancy

By Kathryn Reed

South Lake Tahoe will be using the law firm Burke, Williams & Sorensen out of Oakland when City Attorney Tom Watson leaves at the end of the month.

Nira Doherty, a partner in the firm, has been on retainer with the city for a while. She is used in special cases, most notably the marijuana regulations. Doherty worked in the South Lake Tahoe City Attorney's Office prior to going into private practice.

Mayor Austin Sass told *Lake Tahoe News*, "She is the foreseeable city attorney until council decides to do something different."

Mayor Pro Tem Wendy David told *Lake Tahoe News*, "We are offering Nira Doherty an interim city attorney position."

There is disagreement among the council members whether a full time city attorney should be hired as has been the norm in South Lake Tahoe or if a firm should be on retainer and do the legal work.

"For me she is a good fit for what our needs are right now. We have not talked about anything beyond that right now," Sass said.

Sass said the appointment has no end date, which contradicts David's statement saying this is interim, which by definition is temporary.

Sass said the details of Doherty's employment have not been finalized so they are not yet public information. This means it's not known what she will be making or what the city will be paying the firm for her to be here.

Sass said Doherty will be in town for council meetings and other times, but the structure of her time in South Lake Tahoe or hours doing work for the city has not been released.

Sass said he spoke to recruitment firms who said even if the city were to want to hire an in-house city attorney, it would be best to start the process after the holidays. This was the same thing the city manager told him and the rest of the council when Watson tendered his resignation earlier this summer.

International tourism to U.S. declined in early 2017

By Elaine Glusac, New York Times

Fewer international travelers came to the United States during the first few months of this year than over the same period last year, confirming concerns of some in the travel industry.

Figures released by the U.S. Department of Commerce show a drop in international visitors to the United States by close to 700,000 in the first quarter of 2017 compared to the previous year. European countries were down 10.1 percent, and Mexico was off 7.1 percent in the quarter. The largest drops were from the Middle East and Africa, though they represent a much smaller percentage of overall travel to the United States.

Overall, 697,791 fewer foreigners visited the United States in the first three months of the year, down 4.2 percent to 15.8 million. According to Tourism Economics, a branch of Oxford Economics based in Wayne, Pa., that analyzes travel data, the

drop represents a loss of nearly $2.7 billion in spending.

Read the whole story

Lawsuit aims to block oil drilling on U.S. land in Nev.

By Scott Sonner, AP

Environmentalists have sued a U.S. agency to try to stop it from allowing oil and gas drilling on a vast stretch of federal land in Nevada, where the government is reversing protections put in place nine months ago under the Obama administration.

The Sierra Club and Center for Biological Diversity say the U.S. Bureau of Land Management illegally failed to consider potential consequences of hydraulic fracturing, known as fracking, ranging from harm to the greater sage grouse to contamination of fragile desert water sources and emission of climate-altering greenhouse gases.

The suit filed last week in federal court in Reno seeks an order forcing the bureau to rescind oil drilling leases it sold in June for as low as $2 per acre on three land parcels covering about 9 square miles.

Read the whole story

Poll: Housing a reason for Californians to move

By Angela Hart, Sacramento Bee

More than half of California voters say the state's housing affordability crisis is so bad that they've considered moving, and 60 percent of the electorate supports rent control, according to a statewide poll.

The findings from UC Berkeley's Institute of Governmental Studies reflect broad concerns Californians have over the soaring cost of living. Amid an unprecedented housing shortage, rents have skyrocketed and tenants have faced mass evictions, especially in desirable areas.

Of the 56 percent of voters who said they've considered moving, 1 in 4 said they'd relocate out of state if they did.

Read the whole story