11% raises for Placer County workers in 4 years

Updated 12:34pm:

By Kathryn Reed

Placer County has put itself further into debt by agreeing to give employees four years of raises.

Supervisors on July 25 granted the more than 2,000 employees a 4 percent wage increase starting in August, a 3 percent increase in July 2018, 2 percent increase in 2019, and another 2 percent in 2020. The agreement is actually for five years, ending in June 2022.

The county's 85 confidential and unclassified non-management employees are receiving the same wage increase.

The nearly 250 upper managers have not received a salary increase. "That's not to say we won't at some date in the future be considered for a raise – but at this time, nothing is on the table," county spokeswoman DeDe Cordell told *Lake Tahoe News.*

The last spike in salaries for the union members was an agreement from 2014 that included a combined 6 percent raise over the last three years.

The new raises will cost taxpayers $7.9 million this fiscal year. The county projects the annual impact over the remaining length of the agreement to range from $13.5 million to $20 million. Those figures include merit increases and pension costs.

Those pension expenses are what have been glossed over – last week and earlier this summer when the $796,495,106 2017-18 budget was approved. The General Fund is about $460 million;

this is considered the discretionary spending account. It includes wages. But when wages start taking up more of the budget it means less money for services. Services include repairing roads and other basics that residents expect government to provide.

For every dollar that goes to wages, approximately another 50 cents of taxpayer money go to pension costs. Retirees are given a defined amount of money they get to retire with for what can be decades after they've done any work for the county. (Placer retirees also have health benefits.)

David Boesch, county chief executive officer, in the budget report on June 13 barely mentioned CalPERS. The same goes for the July 25 staff report.

Earlier this year the state Public Employee Retirement System notified all member agencies that their obligations would be increasing. For Placer County the annual obligation is going from $54 million to more than $100 million a year. This was before the raises that were approved for the next four years.

According to PensionTracker, in 2015 the pension debt per household in Placer County was $10,573. That means each household in the county would have to pony up that amount to pay off the county's CalPERS debt. (In El Dorado County it's $12,856 and in South Lake Tahoe $24,757.)

Placer County has no substantive plan to deal with the rising retiree costs. CalPERS can say it needs more money and member agencies have no choice but to pay. It would take an act of the Legislature to change how thing are run.

For cities and counties that choose the status quo in terms of how to do business, layoffs will be the ultimate answer in how to pay for the raises because revenues can't keep pace. Giving raises is the easy out; providing that instant gratification for all within the agency instead of looking for innovative solutions or being fiscally conservative. It remains to be

seen if multi-year raises are the prudent thing for elected officials because it’s the taxpayers – aka voters – who are left footing the bills that never end.

High-tech team recovers body of missing paddleboarder

By Hannah Knowles, Sacramento Bee

A body believed to be that of a college student presumed to have drowned in Lake Tahoe in June 2016 was recovered Monday afternoon near the area where he was last seen.

A high-tech search team hired by the family of 20-year-old Marc Ma was located about 1:05 p.m., according to a Placer County Sheriff’s Office Facebook post. A camera spotted the body in about 240 feet of water near the West Shore Cafe. The body was brought to shore with assistance from of the Sheriff’s Office and the U.S. Coast Guard.

Ma’s family commissioned the search with a special vessel that can scan deep water.

Read the whole story

Home builders want students

for construction jobs

By Hudson Sangree, Sacramento Bee

Sacramento home builders are trying to deal with a severe shortage of construction workers by training high school students in summer internships. They want the teens and their parents to consider the possibility that a construction career might be a good alternative to college, though that can require some convincing.

“There’s a negative stereotype about dirty jobs,” said Rick Larkey, executive director of the North State Building Industry Foundation. The group is leading the effort to recruit 5,000 new workers over five years in Sacramento, Placer, Yolo and El Dorado counties. A big part of that is the outreach to high-school students through internships and after-school programs.

The foundation’s pitch on its website is that a four-year college degree isn’t the guarantee of financial success it used to be. The American workforce is in desperate need of skilled technicians, and incomes for construction work can rival jobs requiring four-year degrees without the expense of college.

Read the whole story

Carson City bypass opening this week

It’s done. Starting this week there is no longer a need to

drive through Carson City to get to Reno, or for those in Reno to drive through the capital city to get to Lake Tahoe.

The last leg of the Interstate 580 Carson City Freeway is ready for vehicles. The earliest the southern end of the freeway will be open is 10am Wednesday. The northern end will open later that afternoon or on Aug. 3.

Motorists should anticipate minor lane and traffic pattern changes across the area as the new freeway segment opens. Periodic, minor roadside shoulder and lane closures will take place on South Carson Street and the Carson City Freeway for finishing construction.

Modified 747 could soon fight Calif. wildfires



The modified 747 would be limited where it could fight fires. Photo/Global Supertanker Services

By Michael McGough, Sacramento Bee

Some of the summer's worst wildfires have spanned tens of thousands of acres in California.

As heat waves continue in the dry season, a new weapon may soon be at firefighters' disposal to help combat wildfires across the state.

The Global SuperTanker – a converted Boeing 747-400 jet capable of dropping 19,000 gallons of water or fire retardant – last week received interim approval from the Interagency Airtanker Board, Fireaviation.com reported, clearing it for use over the next 17 months.

Read the whole story

Fire fee for rural Calif. homeowners suspended

By Eli Stillman, Paradise Post

Thousands of rural residents including many homeowners in El Dorado County will no longer be paying an annual fire prevention fee that was enacted in 2014.

The fire prevention fee of more than $153 for homeowners in the state responsibility area totals $83 million annually for state government. The fee has been suspended until 2031 under a cap-and-trade bill that was passed by the Legislature last week.

Under AB398 the fee will now be supplemented using proceeds from the state's cap-and-trade auctions.

Read the whole story

Bay Area petition targets Waze, Google Maps

By Judy Peterson, Bay Area News Group

A Los Gatos resident who is fed up with cut-through beach traffic has started a change.org petition that she plans to personally deliver to Waze and Google Maps officials, telling them they're "ruining" the quality of life in Los Gatos.

Debbie Moessinger launched the petition and spoke about gridlock on the east side of Los Gatos at the June 20 town council meeting. Moessinger estimated that portions of a 15-block area of streets were gridlocked from 11am to 2:30pm on June 17.

"We were unable to get out of our driveways, to get into our driveways," Moessinger said. "There were frustrated drivers weaving in and out of traffic. I witnessed many extreme safety issues with drivers."

Read the whole story

Eclipse plea from regulators: Stay in the dark

By David R. Baker, San Francisco Chronicle

When a solar eclipse darkens the sky next month, California

energy regulators have a small request:

Don’t turn on the lights.

Or, if you must, please make sure they’re LEDs.

The Aug. 21 eclipse that will completely block the sun across a wide arc of North America arrives at a time when California is relying more and more on solar power. During past eclipses in the United States, no one had to wonder how the events would affect electricity supplies. Now they do.

Read the whole story

Real estate sales value in basin on upswing

The luxury housing market in the Lake Tahoe Basin has helped the total sales for the first half of the year reach more than a half billion dollars.

According to Chase International, the value of single-family residences in the basin for the first six months of 2017 was $511,139,859. For the same period in 2016 the number was $472,811,970.

There have been 104 houses priced at $1 million or more that have sold this year.

Incline Village has been the hot spot for sales with $175,924,050 in sales for the first six months.

The South Shore was the region with the second highest value at $145,112,125. However, the number of houses sold dropped

year-over-year from 318 in 2016 to 274 in 2017. The average home price, though, is increasing – $500,589 last year, $529,606 this year.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Feds call Nevada Air Guard C-130 to battle wildfires

By Benjamin Spillman, Reno Gazette-Journal

With wildfires raging throughout the western U.S. a Reno-based National Guard unit will join the firefighting effort.

The deployment of a specially equipped Nevada Air National Guard C-130 comes at the request of the U.S. Forest Service.

The aircraft is equipped with Modular Airborne Firefighting Systems, referred to as MAFFS, and will be based in Fresno during the deployment.

Read the whole story