

Placer County on path to build affordable housing

Placer County supervisors this week agreed to take steps to purchase an 11-acre plot near Dollar Hill for \$3.6 million that could be developed into affordable housing.

The property, located on North Lake Boulevard just northeast of Tahoe City, was previously approved for a mixed-use housing and retail development and retains its development rights for residential and commercial use. Its expired permit approved 128 housing units – 78 affordable apartments for seniors and 50 market-rate units – as well as 4,800 square feet for commercial use. Dollar Hill offers an ideal site for achievable housing, with easy access to TART bus routes, schools, North Lake Tahoe's downtown centers of Tahoe City and Kings Beach and the Dollar Hill Trail.

The Tahoe Regional Planning Agency has also designated it a "preferred affordable housing area," which could make it eligible for more units than zoning density would otherwise allow.

A recent study by Beacon Economics commissioned by the county's Economic Development Office showed that while local housing prices are increasing at a rate slightly lower than elsewhere in California, median local wages are actually decreasing, worsening the problem.

Under the terms approved this week the county would pay a \$50,000 refundable deposit, with a 120-day investigation period to explore the feasibility of a workforce housing project, find a housing developer to build it and secure funding for the land purchase. The county may exercise up to three three-month extensions to complete its investigations, with an additional \$20,000 deposit for each. All deposits

would be applied to the final sale price if the county buys the land.

Funding for the purchase could come from a variety of sources including the Placer County Housing Trust Fund, transient occupancy tax revenue and possibly local partner agencies and philanthropists. The Tahoe Truckee Airport District Board of Directors is expected to vote on a proposal to allocate \$500,000 toward the purchase.

Maloff University Center to open at LTCC in Aug.

The Lisa Maloff University Center at Lake Tahoe Community College will open Aug. 16 offering associate to master's degree programs.

Through LTCC's partnerships with Sierra Nevada College and Brandman University students may earn degrees on LTCC's campus in global business management, psychology, liberal studies, applied studies, a master's degree in education, and a teaching credential.

The 7,000-square-foot University Center was made possible by a \$5.8 million donation from South Lake Tahoe philanthropist Lisa Maloff.

The college is hosting two open houses: Aug. 22 from 4 to 6pm and Aug. 23 from 5:30 to 7:30pm.

Sierra Nevada College classes in the new center start Aug. 20, and Brandman University classes begin Sept. 4.

LTCC is in talks with other potential partners including

Washington State University, which may offer hospitality management courses at the center.

Placer supes OK nearly \$5M for Tahoe projects

Placer County Board of Supervisors this week approved \$4.9 million in funding for trail planning and construction as well as other capital projects in the Lake Tahoe area.

The Capital Projects Advisory Committee evaluates project proposals based on how well they advance key priorities outlined in the county's Tourism Master Plan for the region. The committee makes recommendations to supervisors on which projects should receive funding allocated from transient occupancy tax collected in eastern Placer County.

This year the committee reviewed and evaluated 29 grant applications totaling more than \$36 million in TOT funding requests. The committee recommended 18 projects. The remaining projects are still being considered by the committee and will be brought before the board later this year.

More than 70 percent of the approved TOT funds will go to projects that focus on trail planning and construction. Several trail projects are part of the Resort Triangle Trail System, which connects the North Lake Tahoe town centers Tahoe City and Kings Beach with nearby mountain resorts and Truckee through highways 89, 28 and 267.

The remaining approved projects focus on transportation and visitor facilities, including a visitor center at Donner Summit, a performing arts center at Northstar and parking

facilities and bike repair stations in Tahoe City. A full list of the approved projects is available [here](#).

SLT clerk releases partial info, withholds own texts

By Kathryn Reed

The release of some of the public records that were requested of the South Lake Tahoe city clerk only muddies the waters.

Suzie Alessi, who is quitting effective next Friday, provided *Lake Tahoe News* on July 25 with some of the documents that had been requested earlier this year. Normally a public agency has 10 days to provide the records. This took months.

Her email stated, "For the record, my cell phone is my personal cell phone and I do not receive a stipend from the city. I do not have a city cell phone as you erroneously reported and am not providing my text messages pursuant to your request."

Not releasing the records is against state law.

At a public records training on April 30 at which Alessi attended attorney Leah Castella of Burke, Williams and Sorensen showed a slide that stated, "The California Supreme Court ruled in 2017 that information related to the public's business retained on private phones, computers and other personal devices and accounts of public employees and officials is a public record."

In other words, doing public, aka city business, on a personal phone regardless of a stipend is a matter of public record.

Interim City Attorney Nira Doherty, who works for that same law firm, agrees.

“You will receive all public records which are responsive to your request. I anticipate you will receive them (Friday), and if not, you will receive them within 10 days,” Doherty told *LTN*.

Lake Tahoe News has been speaking with an attorney about suing to get the records, which the city is aware of. If *LTN* were to prevail in court, the city would have to pay *LTN*'s legal costs.

While Alessi has powers as an elected official that she would not have if she were a city employee, she is not above the law.

Alessi's email went on to say, “There are no text messages that were retrieved from Tracy Franklin cell phones.”

Tracy Franklin, aka Tracy Sheldon, is the public information officer for the city. Alessi is saying that between August 2017 and April 2018 the woman whose job it is to communicate with everyone has no text messages. That is not true because this reporter has texts from her during that time period.

It is not known why Alessi is protecting Sheldon. The deletion of texts raises more questions.

Sheldon was called out in an ***LTN* column this week**. On *Lake Tahoe News*' Facebook page she wrote, “You have just earned yourself a lawsuit Ms. Reed. You can't publish false information.”

There was nothing false in the column. As the spokeswoman for the city, her words are supposed to reflect the sentiment of

the city.

Mayor Wendy David emailed *LTN* to say, "Tracy Sheldon's comments do not reflect the position of the city or that of the City Council."

However, Sheldon's boss, interim City Manager Dirk Brazil, has been silent as to what his thoughts are about Sheldon's comment or Alessi's lack of transparency. So it's not known if Sheldon went rogue with her threat of legal action.

The texts Alessi released from David and Councilman Austin Sass's were rather benign because most were redacted.

"I redacted information in the text messages that were provided to me. Text messages were extracted from cell phones by the police department. On city-issued phones, I only redact information which is privileged, i.e. information that implicates privacy rights, attorney-client privilege, etc. On personal devices, I redact information which is privileged and which is unrelated to city business," Doherty explained.

However, it was Alessi who first had access to the documents. The attorney didn't see them until after Alessi had read through them, so it's not known what may have been removed by the clerk.

Most of Sass's texts were between whoever was city manager at the time, with most having been redacted. A few were to his wife and some to his ski buddies.

The only slightly interesting one was from former City Manager Nancy Kerry to Sass on Feb. 5 saying, "I was calling to let you know Bob Hassett wants to call you re Cody [Bass] (space) I sent him your contact info (space) He is concerned about councils [sic] possible position re Cody /mj license."

The few texts of David's left intact were not interesting.

Alessi did not answer why it took her so long to release so

little.

When the remainder of the documents are released that may shed some light on why she has been stalling.

Each of the council members was asked what they thought about Alessi's refusal to release her own texts. Only Councilmembers Tom Davis and Brooke Laine responded.

Laine told *LTN*, "I am very disappointed that the city clerk has failed to fulfill this public records request, as required by law. This situation marks an unfortunate way to end an otherwise honorable career."

Davis told *LTN*, "I've known Suzie for many, many years and she has had a great career. I don't know what happened in the last couple months about the public records. I told her it was embarrassing to the city. Then she gave you partial stuff. I'm frustrated with her. It's not just you, but the public has a right to know."

Calif. funds dams to protect against future drought

By Kurtis Alexander, San Francisco Chronicle

For the first time since California's dam-building boom ended nearly a half century ago, state officials on Tuesday approved a windfall of cash for new water storage projects, setting the stage for at least a mini-resurgence of reservoir construction.

The historic \$2.7 billion of voter-approved bond money will go to elevating two Bay Area dams, at Los Vaqueros Reservoir near

Livermore and Pacheco Reservoir east of Gilroy, as well as to the development of two much larger dams in the Central Valley. Funds also will go to four less traditional endeavors that store water underground.

Read the whole story

Report: Lake Tahoe warmer than ever

By Benjamin Spillman, Reno Gazette-Journal

Water in Lake Tahoe was warmer than ever last year – and the average temperature of the Tahoe Basin is expected to keep getting warmer.

That's according to the latest yearly report on water and climate conditions at the world's second largest alpine lake.

The findings show climate change is putting the squeeze on the environment at the lake, a situation that highlights the urgency of efforts to make the lake's ecosystem more resilient to global warming.

The "Tahoe: State of the Lake," report published Thursday.

Read the whole story

Nevada marijuana sales in May set record

By Wade Tyler Millward, Las Vegas Review-Journal

April showers bring May flowers, as the saying goes – and in Nevada’s case, that flower comes from marijuana.

The state posted another record monthly sale of the once illegal plant.

Recreational sales in May reached \$43.74 million, exceeding the previous \$41 million monthly record set in March, according to state Department of Taxation data released Thursday.

Read the whole story

Missing woman may be in Tahoe area



Jessica Youssi

By Katelyn Stark, Fox 40

The El Dorado County Sheriff’s Office says Jessica Youssi’s

family reported her missing Wednesday when they could not contact her and she stopped being active on social media.

She was last seen Saturday leaving her Modesto home. That same day the 40-year-old nurse posted to a social media account that she was going to the Tahoe area.

Read the whole story

Nevada named one of the worst states to retire

By Jason Hidalgo, Reno Gazette-Journal

Nevada just can't seem to catch a break this year when it comes to rankings for retirement.

After being named one of the worst states for retirement by a report in February, the state ranked poorly in yet another list that came out this month.

Nevada was the ninth-worst state in the nation for retirement according to a report by personal finance company Bankrate.com. The state received a favorable top 10 ranking in only one out of seven categories: taxes. Nevada earned the fifth best rating in the nation for its favorable tax climate.

Read the whole story

3.5 earthquake shakes Tahoe City

Tahoe City residents were woken up early Thursday morning to the earth shaking.

The Nevada Seismological Laboratory reported a 3.5 earthquake at 12.22am July 26 less than 7 miles from Tahoe City. This was along the West Tahoe-Dollar Point fault.

According to the U.S. Geological Survey, 444 people felt the temblor, including in South Lake Tahoe, Reno and Grass Valley.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report