

Youth threatens to shoot up DC school in valley

A Douglas County 12-year-old was arrested Thursday night on charges of harassment and threatening to use a firearm at a school. He was turned over to Douglas County Juvenile Probation authorities.

The sheriff's department at about 7pm Feb. 16 received a report that a male juvenile had made threats that he intended to bring a gun to Carson Valley Middle School on Feb. 17 to "shoot up the school."

Deputies traced the phone threat to a residence in Chichester Estates. Investigators said the juvenile admitted to sending the message, but claimed he was not serious.

The weapons recovered at the suspect residence were a BB gun and two knives. There was no evidence the juvenile ever had a firearm or access to firearms, deputies said.

Investigators said there is no evidence or information to indicate any other threat or danger exists. Classes were not interrupted.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Higher lodging fee to fund Stateline event center



Edgewood Lodge once completed will add to Douglas County's bed tax revenue. Photo/LTN

By Kathryn Reed

STATELINE – It is going to cost a little more to stay at a Stateline lodging property beginning May 1.

Douglas County commissioners on Feb. 16 agreed to increase the lodging license fee from 3 percent to 4 percent just for properties at the lake. The additional revenue will be for the sole purpose of planning, building and maintaining an events center.

Because this is a fee and not a tax it does not need to go before voters. It will bring the total hotel tax to 14 percent. This is the same rate tourists pay in the redevelopment area of South Lake Tahoe.

Based on last year's lodging revenues, an additional 1 percent would have brought in \$600,000. With the Edgewood Lodge expected to open in late spring, that will be additional revenue that has not been part of the mix.

The added fee will affect all short-term rentals, not just traditional hotels.

Since 2010 an effort has been under way to create a year-round event center. The goal is to be able to attract conventions that are too big for the casinos, bring in entertainment year-round, and have indoor athletic events.

The current proposal is for the event center to be built at the corner of Highway 50 and Lake Parkway in MontBleu's parking lot.

Tahoe Douglas Visitors Authority would own and operate the facility.

TDVA in October approved the lodging fee. That entity is responsible for spending the lodging fees and taxes collected by the county at the lake. The money is for tourism – including helping fund Lake Tahoe Visitors Authority, putting on the two fireworks shows on the South Shore, contributing to the celebrity golf tournament, outdoor concert series and other events.

At Thursday's meeting the 11 people who spoke were all in favor of the proposal, including reps from LTVA, Harrah's-Harveys, MontBleu, Ridge Tahoe, and Edgewood Tahoe.

This was the first reading of the ordinance, with one more to come. Then a business impact statement will be prepared.

Assuming those get approved, then TDVA will go forward with environmental documents and all associated studies. That process could take two years.

Why falling home prices could be a good thing

By Conor Dougherty, New York Times

Suppose there were a way to pump up the economy, reduce inequality and put an end to destructive housing bubbles like the one that contributed to the Great Recession. The idea would be simple, but not easy, requiring a wholesale reframing of the United States economy and housing market.

The solution: Americans, together and all at once, would have to stop thinking about their homes as an investment.

The virtues of homeownership are so ingrained in the American psyche that we often forget that housing is also a source of economic stress. Rising milk prices are regarded as a household tragedy for some, and spiking gas prices stoke national outrage. But whenever home prices go up, it's "a recovery," even though that recovery also means millions of people can no longer afford to buy.

Read the whole story

Tax relief for storm damaged EDC properties

Property damaged in the recent winter storms are eligible for immediate property tax relief, according to El Dorado County Assessor Karl Weiland.

There are provisions of the Revenue & Taxation code that

immediately reduce the assessed value in recognition of loss caused by storm damage.

In order to qualify for relief, the loss in value must exceed \$10,000 and a claim filed within 12 months of the damage. The office will also be contacting property owners in an effort to insure all damaged property is reviewed.

Property owners who have questions or need assistance should call 530.621.5719.

Nev. bridges strong, but upgrades needed

By Art Marroquin, Las Vegas Review-Journal

The majority of Nevada's bridges are in good to fair condition, but the state faces a \$133 million shortfall to upgrade a handful of spans, officials said this week.

Of the 2,008 bridges maintained or receiving assistance from the Nevada Department of Transportation, only 31 are considered to be in poor condition, said Reid Kaiser, NDOT's assistant operations director.

Federal laws require all structures to undergo assessments at least once every two years, leading to \$17 million in repairs for 27 bridges across Nevada in 2015 and 2016, NDOT officials said.

Read the whole story

Truckee children's museum severely damaged

Major structural storm damage to the KidZone Museum in Truckee may force it to close indefinitely.

The 24-year-old nonprofit children's museum is looking for donation to be able to repair the tent structure so it can resume operations.

Tahoe Mountain Resorts Foundation, a donor to the KidZone Museum for more than a decade, has stepped up and contributed \$15,000 in support of programming and the Museum's emergency request.

To donate, go **online**.

NTPUD without main water source for 1 month

By Kathryn Reed

This is the first full day North Tahoe Public Utility District has been using its main water source – Lake Tahoe – after a leak was discovered in the intake pipe in mid-January.

Damage to the 18-inch pipe was the result of the age of the

pipe – 25 years – and not the weather.

NTPUD, which is the main water supplier for Tahoe Vista and Kings Beach, relied on the well it has while the lake was inaccessible. NTPUD has more than 4,000 customers. This time of year the well has plenty of capacity for the number of users. It can produce enough water to meet half of the district's daily peak demand, with that date occurring July 4.

A multi-day effort to fix the pipe was completed Feb. 15.

"We cut out about a 10-foot long section that had leaks. We replaced it with an identical piece and have repair bands that go around the two joints," NTPUD project engineer Mike Twomey explained to *Lake Tahoe News*.

The difficult part was the location of the leak, which was right at the water's edge. At least that is where it was when it was first detected. The lake has been rising about a half a foot a week, so the challenge grew each week the weather prevented repairs being made.

Permits had to be secured from Lahontan Water Quality Control Board, Tahoe Regional Planning Agency, Army Corps of Engineers, and state Department of Fish and Wildlife before work began. The threat to the lake wasn't the leak, but the necessity of having to dig right at the shoreline.

"There are probably 2- to 3-foot breakers coming right over the whole worksite where we were. I feel extremely fortunate we got that weather window," Twomey said on Feb. 16.

Tahoe remains affordable destination market

By Theresa Souers

Not only is the median home price in South Lake Tahoe below the state's median, South Lake Tahoe continues to rank as one of the most affordable resort destinations throughout the country.

According to the California Association of Realtors (CAR), "The percentage of homebuyers who could afford to purchase a median priced, existing single-family home in California in fourth-quarter 2016 remained at 31 percent, unchanged from the third quarter of 2016, but up from 30 percent in fourth-quarter 2015, according to C.A.R.'s Traditional Housing Affordability Index (HAI)."

	<u>Median Home Price</u>	<u>% change</u>	<u>DOM</u>	<u>Month Supply</u>
South Lake Tahoe	\$405,000	+13.3	91	3.6
California (12/31/16)	\$509,060	+1.7	33	2.6

Source: STAR

Key points from the fourth-quarter 2016 Housing Affordability report include:

- Compared to affordability in third-quarter 2016, eight of 29 counties tracked saw an improvement in housing affordability (Contra Costa, Marin, Napa, Los Angeles, Ventura, Monterey, Santa Barbara, and Madera), 10 experienced a decline (San Francisco, Sonoma, Orange County, Riverside, San Bernardino, Santa Cruz, Kern, Kings, Merced, and SanJoaquin), and 11 were unchanged (Alameda, San Mateo, Santa Clara, Solano, San Diego, San Luis Obispo, Fresno, Placer,

Sacramento, Stanislaus, and Tulare).

· Only three of nine Bay Area counties (Contra Costa, Marin, Napa) recorded higher affordability numbers than the previous quarter, as higher earning Bay Area workers drove up home prices. Housing affordability results were mixed in Southern California, but largely declined in Central Valley counties.

Theresa Souers is with the South Tahoe Association of Realtors.

Water a key issue for Nevada Legislature

By Sandra Chereb, Las Vegas Review-Journal

CARSON CITY – State lawmakers got a crash course Tuesday on Nevada's complicated water laws as they prepare to consider several bills dealing with the most precious resource in the driest state in the nation.

State Engineer Jason King, whose office has proposed four bills this session, said more proposed laws are expected, including one to address Nevada's long-standing doctrine of "use-it-or-lose it."

He also tried to dispel concerns by domestic well owners that his office wants to take away domestic well rights.

Read the whole story

Myriad ideas spill forth for SLT at vision session

By Kathryn Reed

Could South Lake Tahoe become the outdoor capital of the world while at the same time providing enough affordable housing for those working here?

The answer, according to some residents, is a resounding yes.

The future of the city was the focus of Tuesday's City Council meeting. It was a workshop in advance of the Feb. 25 strategic planning session where decisions will be made. On Feb. 14 it was about hearing ideas from more than a dozen community members about their vision for the city.

Each councilmember was asked to invite three people who would each give a 15-minute presentation. The idea was to give more voices to the discussion. It also allowed the electeds to promote their own agendas. Councilmember Jason Collin told *Lake Tahoe News* he invited two people, but neither could make it.

Speakers in order:

- **Jude Wood, director of Lake Tahoe Boys & Girls Club – invited by Councilmember Wendy David**

The agency is losing its location at Al Tahoe Elementary School because Lake Tahoe Unified School District wants to return the building to a school. The Boys & Girls Club recognizes the need for its own building. Talks are under way with the city to move El Dorado County's vector control, with the idea of the club erecting a building on that site. This

location would be walking distance to the rec center. Wood would like the building to be a community center. Architecturally it could complement the new recreation center.

• **Chris McNamara, owner of Outdoor Gear Lab – Councilmember Austin Sass**

McNamara's 2030 vision for the city includes making Tahoe the outdoor capital of the world. Several speakers after him seized that sentiment with gusto. He wants Ski Run Boulevard, where his business operates and where he owns property, to be a downtown hub. He plans to have a pilot project on Ski Run for affordable housing. He asked for more flexibility with how commercial floor area is allocated so it is more predictable for those wanting to build or renovate.

• **Duane Wallace, South Tahoe Chamber of Commerce – Councilmember Tom Davis**

Housing needs to be the No. 1 priority. Wallace called it a crisis in the area with people not able to find a place to live that they can afford. He'd like to see less taxes and fewer regulations, especially for businesses.

• **Bonnie Turnbull, Nick Exline, Devin Middlebrook, sustainability proponents – Councilmember Brooke Laine**

Their message was about how climate change is already impacting the Lake Tahoe Basin. They want the city to operate on 100 percent renewable energy. This in turn could lead to branding and economic gains for South Lake Tahoe.

• **Brooke Hernandez, real estate agent – Davis**

She touted all the benefits to vacation home rentals, and the negatives if they were to go away. Hernandez said a problem is that no VHR permits have been revoked. Enforcement is critical.

• **Cheyenne Lane, Tahoe Youth & Family Services – David**

She spoke about the homeless situation in the area. With her were two South Tahoe High School students who gave firsthand testimonials about what homelessness looks like. Lane would like \$20,000 from the city to match what El Dorado County has given to create a single point of entry process to collect data countywide.

- **David Orr, Tahoe Mountain Lab – Sass**

He believes jobs is the No. 1 issue for Tahoe. But Orr also said that without housing, there is no chance of attracting those jobs. Bandwidth has to increase, too, for people to relocate. He mentioned how Mammoth has faster download capabilities than Los Angeles. Orr would also like the town to have an identity, and embraced McNamara's idea. He wants electric vehicle stations to be throughout the region.

- **Tyler Cannon, owner of Sprouts – Sass**

Housing is an overriding issue for him, pointing to how he's lost employees because they couldn't afford to live here. He believes VHRs are contributing to the housing woes. Cannon wants tourist traffic out of neighborhoods. He would like better wayfinding signs, and bike paths that connect to destinations. While he was against paid parking when the city initiated it, now he wants to stop people from parking in front of his business all day if they aren't in his restaurant. Cannon also would like fines for people who don't pick up after their pooch.

- **Brooke Laine, Dave, Kurtzman, Jose Henriquez – Laine**

The trio spoke about creating a Tahoe County and what that would entail. Kurtzman gave some history from having been on the county redistricting committee. He pointed out that in 2020 or 2030 Tahoe is likely not to have a local representative on the Board of Supervisors based on population distribution. Henriquez, who heads LAFCO, outlined the details for this county conversion process. Laine touted all the

benefits that could come of creating such an entity.

- **Jason Drew, Lake Tahoe South Shore Chamber of Commerce – Davis**

He talked about the need to have economic vitality, and embrace the chamber's 2020 vision. Chamber leader Craig Schmidt said the housing crisis and poor customer service are his main concerns.

- **Bill Roby, El Dorado Community Foundation – David**

He would like to take 3 percent off every home sale (so, out of the seller's pocket) to create a land bank, which would then buy old motels and convert them into long-term housing. The land bank would own the land and the people would own the structure/unit.

In the afternoon City Manager Nancy Kerry stirred the collective creative juices by showing videos of other locales. Dilapidated areas were repurposed into thriving destinations. This takes vision, dedication and collaboration.

Kerry talked about how the city has been visionary – pointing to the gondola coming into the middle of town and Harrison Avenue.

Opposition should not be a roadblock because not everyone is always going to agree on everything.

"Keep the long game in mind," she said.

Department heads were more reality based instead of visionary, informing the council about what they are doing and the future they see.

- **Finance:** CalPERS is the biggest threat to the city's coffers, as the retirement agency keeps taking more from jurisdictions to pay for a defined benefit for retirees.

- **Recreation:** Need more staff, right now there are only four full-timers. This will especially be needed when the new recreation center is built; construction should start in 2018. Pickleball has been a huge success, generating new recreation users. Last season Campground by the Lake had 50,000 campers.

- **Development Services:** Proud of community design guidelines. Hopes council makes Bijou Park Master Plan a priority. Studying commercial project trends to use it as a budgetary basis.

- **Public Works:** Praised how well Bijou erosion control project is functioning, how the bike park is a destination. Seventy-four percent of the city's fleet is beyond its service life; this doesn't include police and fire. A dedicated source to fund roads needs to be found. Vehicle replacement and road rehab need to be the priorities.

- **Police Department:** Property crimes are increasing. In terms of being a safe city, it is in the 37 percent level, with 100 percent being the worst.

- **Fire Department:** Responded to 3,239 calls in 2016. Second smallest department in basin, but the busiest. Three radio systems in the city between fire, police and public works is old and not working well. They should be updated so they all can talk to each other.

- **City manager:** Creating three new teams – talent and career development team because fewer people are going into government; strategic communications team; City Council priority team.

The next step is for the council to digest everything they heard on Tuesday. Nine days from now they will hash out the city's strategic plan among themselves. This will be the time they come forward with a blueprint for the immediate future, and possibly more long term.

As City Manager Kerry pointed out not everything the council or community members want to do can be done. Time, money and resources are limiting factors. That is also why the strategic plan needs to be flexible, because priorities can change.