

Sandoval set to slash \$20M from mental health

By Anjeanette Damon, Reno Gazette-Journal

Gov. Brian Sandoval has proposed slashing the state's chronically underfunded mental health budget by \$20 million—including eliminating 112 positions statewide—arguing that the expansion of Medicaid under the Affordable Care Act means more mentally ill clients can find care in private hospitals.

But advocates for the mentally ill say even with Medicaid coverage, patients have difficulty accessing private care in Reno, citing a shortage in psychiatrists in private practice, too-few psychiatrists accepting new patients and a shortage of in-patient treatment beds.

Even more troubling for them is the prospect that Congress has promised to repeal the Affordable Care Act, which means all of the mentally ill clients who now have insurance under Medicaid could lose coverage at the same time the state is shrinking a key safety net.

Read the whole story

Constituents frustrated with inability to reach Heller

By Seth A. Richardson, Reno Gazette-Journal

Nancy Lang has been trying to reach Sen. Dean Heller's office for some time, but to no avail.

The 67-year-old from Gardnerville wanted to talk about some of the votes before the Senate – especially confirmation votes for some of President Trump’s cabinet appointees and the precarious position of President Barack Obama’s health care plan in Congress.

Especially problematic at the moment for Lang is Trump’s nominee for Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos, who Heller on Wednesday came out in support of.

Heller addressed the large numbers of calls via a Thursday morning tweet” We are experiencing heavy call volumes in all our offices. Staff is answering as many as possible. Please continue calling to get through.”

Read the whole story

Placer deputies kill suspect near Squaw Valley

What started out with California Highway Patrol officers trying to pull over a suspected drunken driver early Friday morning ended with a Placer County sheriff’s deputy fatally shooting that person.

Highway 89 between Squaw Valley and Fairway Drive in Tahoe City is expected to be closed for the better part of Feb. 3 while officers investigate. Squaw Valley is accessible via Truckee.

Names of the victim and the officer involved have not been released.

The incident started about 1:40am today when CHP officers said they saw someone driving erratically on Highway 28. The pursuit was stopped because it was creating a dangerous situation for others.

The vehicle was then spotted near Dollar Hill about an hour later. The suspect would not pull over. This is when spike strips were employed on Highway 89 between Squaw and Alpine Meadows.

“The driver exited the car, holding his female passenger hostage, at gunpoint, and walked away. He pointed his gun at deputies and at passing vehicles,” according to PCSO.

Law enforcement followed him, trying to negotiate as he walked up a residential driveway.

“Fearing for the safety and lives of the hostage and the people inside the home where he was headed, deputies shot the suspect,” Placer deputies said.

The suspect was pronounced dead at the scene. No one else was hurt.

The relationship of the suspect and woman has not been released.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Zeroing in on future of Kings Beach park, pier

By Kathryn Reed

KINGS BEACH – California State Parks wants to turn the centerpiece of Kings Beach into a masterpiece.

Overhauling the master plan from 1980 for the Kings Beach State Recreation Area and replacing the pier that boats can't reach are closer to being a reality. Creating a more welcoming, aesthetically pleasing, environmentally sensitive destination that links the land to the water are the goals.

On Thursday night the preferred alternative for the master plan was unveiled. Instead of picking one of the three alternatives, what are deemed the best aspects of the project were selected and incorporated into essentially what is a new alternative.

The preferred placement for the pier is on the eastern edge. (All three alternatives will be studied in the environmental documents.) It would be part fixed and part floating. While the pier would be able to accommodate boat shuttles, it is not being designed as a port for a cross lake ferry.



Marilyn Linkem, superintendent of the Sierra District for State Parks, talks Feb. 2 about the future of Kings Beach.
Photo/Kathryn Reed

"What goes away is the motorized boat launch," explained Lisa O'Daly of the California Tahoe Conservancy. The ramp has been

unusable since 2012 because of the drought, and since 2008 it has been off-limits 75 percent of the time.

O'Daly's agency is integral to the process because it owns some of the land in the area and has been involved with planning grants for part of the project.

Non-motorized watercraft will be encouraged to use the area even more. A building to keep kayaks-canoes-paddleboards is part of the plans.

Specifically what the pier will look like was a concern of one man who attended the Feb. 2 presentation. While the agencies tend to like structures to blend in with the natural environmental, he was a proponent of making it architecturally appealing, as well as functional. That level of design is still a ways off.

All of the environmental documents – CEQA, environmental impact report for the general plan, and EIR/EIS for the pier – need to be completed. The goal is to have them finalized about a year from now.

State Parks engineers will then plot out what it will cost. The Legislature and state Department of Finance must give their OK, and will help with financing.

“Then we decide the implementation; if we do phases,” Marilyn Linkem, superintendent of the Sierra District for State Parks, told *Lake Tahoe News*. Once the other state agencies weigh in it will be a few more years before any work is done.

Build out? No speculation for that date.

A promenade on the edge of the beach will go from the event center to Koon Street. From there it will be up to Placer County what happens. Lookouts will be built in so people can take in the scenery without blocking pedestrians or bicyclists.

Retaining walls and vegetation are part of the plan. Those two items are key to keeping sand out of the parking lot.

Today whenever sand reaches the asphalt it has to be hauled away. Per Tahoe Regional Planning Agency rules the parking lot sand cannot be returned to the beach.

The parking lot will be reconfigured a bit so when driving in vehicles are not the main focus. There will be a 12 percent or 22-car space reduction.

“This is a state recreation area, not a state parking area,” Steve Musillami with State Parks said.

An automated pay system is expected to be implemented this spring.

The basketball court will be relocated. Near it will be a grassy area with a stage. Bands or the like could also bring in a portable stage. It’s possible the audience could be on the beach or the lawn.

Current restrooms will be upgraded and another one added.

For now dogs on leashes will still be allowed in a section of the park, but dogs are not part of the general plan overview. That level of detail will be up to State Parks in the future.

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Notes:

- More information is available **online**.
- Comments are being accepted until Feb. 15. They may be emailed to plan.general@parks.ca.gov.

NFL against casino interests owning franchises

By Jon Mark Saraceno, Las Vegas Review-Journal

HOUSTON — NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell said Wednesday that no team owner can have any ownership stake in a casino, a proclamation aimed squarely at Las Vegas as the Oakland Raiders pursue relocation to a stadium suddenly in need of new investors.

“That is not something that’s consistent with our policies,” Goodell said during his televised State of the League address and news conference leading to Super Bowl LI. “Not likely a stadium (ownership role), either.”

Last month, Goodell told Fox Sports’ Colin Cowherd: “If we did in any way approve the Raiders’ move, I don’t see us compromising on any of the policies,” the commissioner told Colin Cowherd on his Fox Sports show.

Read the whole story

Congress likely to seek funding for Yucca Mountain nuclear waste project

By Keith Rogers, Las Vegas Review-Journal

The Nevada commission charged with overseeing nuclear waste issues on Tuesday warned that it expects Congress to seek

funding to revive the shuttered Yucca Mountain repository project this year.

The warning is contained in a report to Gov. Brian Sandoval and the state Legislature from the Nuclear Projects Commission.

The report states it is not yet clear whether the Trump administration would support reviving the shuttered program to permanently store 77,000 tons of high-level radioactive waste – primarily spent fuel from commercial power reactors – in a maze of tunnels inside the Nye County mountain.

Read the whole story

Nev. retirement board to appeal pension records release

By Sandra Chereb, Las Vegas Review-Journal

CARSON CITY – The state retirement board voted Tuesday to appeal a judge's order requiring it to release the names and pension information of tens of thousands of retired public workers.

The Public Employees Retirement System board, after meeting briefly in a closed session, agreed unanimously in a public vote to appeal the case to the Nevada Supreme Court.

Chris Nielsen, the board's general counsel, said the legal issues go beyond the suit filed against PERS by conservative group Nevada Policy Research Institute, and the high court

could provide “black and white guidance” on how to balance confidentiality statutes and public information.

Read the whole story

Carson City man dies in crash on Luther Pass

A 30-year-old Carson City man whose parents live in Meyers was killed in a car wreck on Luther Pass on Wednesday night.

The name of the victim has not been released.

He was driving a Ford F150 north on Highway 89 near Grass Lake at an unknown rate of speed when he drifted onto the shoulder, overcorrected and went into oncoming traffic, according to the California Highway Patrol.

Officer Ruth Loehr told *Lake Tahoe News* toxicology reports are pending.

The pickup was totaled after colliding with a Chevy 4500 belonging to PR Supply that was in the opposite lane. The vehicle was driven by a 36-year-old man from Gardnerville who was not injured.

A Subaru with three people could not avoid the initial wreck. The two adults were taken to Barton Memorial Hospital with minor to moderate injuries. A 2-year-old boy in that vehicle was not injured.

Highway 89 was closed for more than three hours after the 4:30pm Feb. 1 accident.

Snowpack near Echo Summit 153% of average



The deep snowpack could mean an extended ski season. Photo Copyright 2017 Carolyn E. Wright

By Lake Tahoe News

What a difference a month makes. The snowpack just keeps getting deeper and that's a good thing.

"We've got a very good snowpack, a very robust snowpack on the ground right now," Frank Gehrke said Thursday after taking a

series of measurements in the field near the entrance to Sierra-at-Tahoe. He noted there is as much snow on the ground as there can be at the usual peak in April.

The water equivalency of the 90 inches of snow at Phillips Station measured 28.1 inches. The average this time of year is 11.3 inches, so this is 153 percent of the historical average at this location. This is the highest measurement for February in 12 years.

Under overcast skies and the promise by forecasters of more snow, the field was dramatically different than a month ago. At the Jan. 3 snow survey the water content was 6 inches, which is 53 percent of average for then.

The news is good statewide – the snowpack contains 31 inches of water, which is 173 percent of the Feb. 2 average of 18.1 inches.

The average annual precipitation at the eight-station Northern California index is 50 inches. That total was surpassed on Jan. 20. Since October, when the water year began, 58.22 inches of rain have been recorded in Northern California. The record for that same four-month period was set in 1997 – 58.22 inches.

The water content is critical because the snowpack supplies about 30 percent of California's water needs as it melts in the spring and early summer.

Shasta Lake, California's largest surface reservoir is at 114 percent of its historical average, while a year ago it was at 78 percent. Lake Oroville, the State Water Project's largest reservoir, is at 121 percent of its historical average today compared to 68 percent in 2016.

Indicators still show almost half of California in a drought, but that's all south of here.

Punxsutawney Phil sees shadow; more winter

By Sean Rossman, USA Today

Punxsutawney Phil made his famous weather prediction Thursday morning, emerging from his burrow to see his shadow.

That means, according to Groundhog Day tradition, the U.S. will brave another six weeks of winter.

The groundhog, emerging from a sleep, squealed as he was pulled from his burrow about 7:15am. He was hoisted into the air and placed on a stump before his official prognostication was made.

[Read the whole story](#)