

LTUSD steaming toward reopening Al Tahoe

By Kathryn Reed

A light is being shined on the lack of equality in Lake Tahoe Unified School District as officials work toward reopening Al Tahoe Elementary School.

Declining enrollment forced the school to be closed in 2004. Now the remaining four elementary schools are overcrowded, necessitating some form of relief.

On Jan. 31 the school board had its second workshop pertaining to the future of Al Tahoe. Ideas and opinions were discussed, but this was not a night to vote on any proposals. Nonetheless, the wheels are in motion to make this a reality.

After the district created the magnet school in Meyers there has been a concerted effort to make each elementary have its own theme. Bijou's theme is bilingual education; Sierra House – fitness, health, mountain sports; Meyers – environment; Tahoe Valley – performing arts. But some are more robust than others and all do not reflect the complexion of the whole community.

Al Tahoe would be the STEAM Academy. STEAM stands for science, technology, engineering, art and math.

Tuesday's staff report said, "STEAM takes STEM to the next level by allowing students to connect their learning in these areas with art practices, design principles, and standards. The A in STEAM doesn't just represent the arts but is more of a broad term that represents liberal arts, language arts, social studies, physical arts, and fine arts and music. It's a framework for teaching which is customizable and functional, hence the fun in functional. It's about applying creative

thinking to STEM projects, and sparking students' imagination and creativity through the arts. It's about exploring where art naturally fits into the STEM subjects."

Much of the board as well as parents would like science in particular to be available to all students. While the magnet school focuses on the environment, that isn't the case throughout the district.

"The Al Tahoe program looks great," parent Rebecca Bryson said. But what she worries is that it "could be further ghettoizing the schools."

Board member Larry Reilly said, "Parity is an issue." He would like to see the curriculum at Al Tahoe offered to other students, even it means exporting it. This, he suggested, could be done similar to when PE instructors traveled to the various school sites. Classroom space could be created so students learned some of the STEAM lessons.

Bonnie Turnbull, another board member, also spoke of lack of equality.

"I worry some kids will be left behind," she said. With parents being responsible for choosing a child's school, she fears some parents won't understand all that STEAM can offer, and that gender and ethnicity may play a role in decision making.

For board member Angela Swanson her concern is for the students in the neighborhood be given first priority to attend Al Tahoe.

The current proposal by staff is to open in the fall with preschool. By 2020-21 the school would house K-5.

Kelly Martin, who is in charge of curriculum for the district, explained how at the start the learning would be in a fun lab where experimentation is encouraged and failure means just

starting over again. Don't think science lab, but instead creative learning space. Curriculum would get more complex with each grade level.

"A makerspace is a collaborative workspace for making, learning, exploring and sharing that uses high tech to no tech tools. The maker mindset is creating something out of nothing and exploring your interests that are at the core of a makerspace," the staff report says.

The district is eligible for Proposition 51 dollars to pay for the renovations – like a new boiler and revamping the kitchen. Portables that are more than 20 years old can also be upgraded with that money.

The plan also is to create a child care facility.

"Childcare has become a nationwide concern due to rising numbers of working parents and the increase in childcare costs. Looking ahead, the district faces issues in recruiting new teachers, housing for district staff, and childcare. The district proposes to accommodate an employee childcare center which could dramatically reduce costs-of-living for families," the staff report says.

Housing crunch exacts heavy price on Californians

By Vanessa Rancano, KQED-TV

California is producing less than half the new homes it needs to meet demand in the Golden State.

In its first comprehensive analysis since the year 2000,

California's Department of Housing and Community Development paints a bleak picture of the state's housing landscape. While it points to some hopeful developments, the report suggests lawmakers will need to consider serious policy changes if California is going to build the projected 1.8 million new homes needed by 2025.

The Statewide Housing Assessment Report is still in draft form, and its authors are gathering public input at workshops around the state. On Monday a small group of mostly local government representatives and advocates met in Fresno to hear the report's findings.

Read the whole story

EDC woman assaulted on West Slope trail

An El Dorado County woman walking a West Slope bike trail with her child in a stroller was sexually assaulted on the afternoon of Jan. 27.



The suspect's shoe.

A male approached her from behind and asked her about the

location of a nearby business. He asked for a dollar and then to shake her hand to thank her. When the suspect grabbed a hold of her hand, he pulled her in close and used his other hand to sexually assault her, according to El Dorado County sheriff's deputies.

She screamed and fought until he released her.

While running away south on the trail near Missouri Flat Road, the suspect lost his shoe.

He is described as being 14- to 20-years-old, a dark skinned Hispanic, 5-feet-7, 130 pounds, dark hair and brown eyes. His hair was described as messy, with two to three inches in length that stood straight up. He was wearing a sky blue short sleeve polo shirt, blue jeans and red Nike shoes.

Anyone with information is asked to contact Detective Anthony Prencipe at 530.642.4709.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Placer County recovering from storm damage

By Michael Rohm

The first thing Harold Slear saw when he walked through the main entrance of Boatworks Mall in Tahoe City just before noon Jan. 8 was merchants pulling inventory from their waterlogged stores.

The owner of James-Harold Galleries, Slear was late for work because he had needed to clear his driveway of the snow that

had been falling heavily all night and into the morning. That same precipitation was now responsible for disorder on a greater scale.

"I came in and saw that it was literally raining from the ceiling," he told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Slear walked first to the nearby 1960 Winter Games and Sierra Ski Museum. When he saw the extent of the damage he called his friend David Antonucci. "I think you're going to want to see this," he told him.

The flat roof at Boatworks Mall had already accumulated 3 feet of snow. When the heavy rain hit that weekend, an additional foot of precipitation augmented the snowpack and swelled above the exhaust ducts in the roof. There was nowhere for the water to go but down the ducts and into the building. The stores beneath these ducts, including the Sierra Ski Museum, were in the direct path of the water.

Despite his meticulous preservation of artifacts, Sierra Ski Museum co-founder David Antonucci, was worried as he drove to the mall. The damage that Slear had described on the phone was unprecedented. Dripping ceiling. Ruined walls. Standing water.



Heaters and blowers work to dry out the ski museum in Tahoe City. Photo/David Antonucci

"This museum is probably the best collection of artifacts from the 1960 Winter Olympics," Antonucci told *Lake Tahoe News*. "It's really one of kind."

When he arrived, Antonucci was relieved to find that his security measures had paid off. The glass cases surrounding the artifacts had kept everything dry.

"It's really amazing that nothing was damaged," he said.

Other shops were not as fortunate. According to Antonucci, Geared for Games and Tahoe Shoe & Clothing Co., two stores directly below his museum, were "a complete loss."

No one from either store could be reached for comment.

In the days following the damage, Channel Properties, the real estate agency that owns Boatworks Mall, began remediation and repair. When the company hired to do the job proved too small for the extensive damage, Channel brought in BELFOR, the

largest restoration contractor in the world.

“We got called in because we had the resources to handle it,” said Mark Malcuit, project manager and estimator for BELFOR. “We came in with a large crew to start removing wet material and to dry out the building.”

Since then, the 16-person crew with dehumidifiers have worked around the clock to get the damaged stores back in business. “We’ve finished with demolition and the mall is just about dry,” Malcuit said. “Within another month or so we should have everything put back together.”

The atmospheric river that overwhelmed the drainage system at Boatworks Mall has wreaked havoc throughout all of Lake Tahoe. Placer County eventually declared a local emergency because of the exact conditions that had impacted Boatworks Mall and several other local businesses. The county estimates the financial damage to local infrastructure is as high as \$8 million.

DeDe Cordell, director of communications and public affairs for Placer County, urges small business owners to report any property damage.

“We’re trying to get folks to reach out to make sure we’re connected and tracking damages for local business,” she told *Lake Tahoe News*. “If we’re able to get federal assistance, the small business administration can offer assistance.”

Small business owners affected by the storms may contact Placer County Economic Development Director Sherri Conway at 530.889.4096 or go **online** for more information.

Tahoe casino revenue increases in December

The gaming win for December on both ends of the lake prove that it was a busy time in Tahoe.

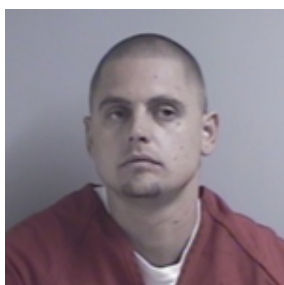
The South Shore casinos were up 7.65 percent compared to 2015, at \$18.7 million. North Shore casinos had a win of \$2.5 million, a 24.9 percent increase over December 2015.

Statewide the numbers weren't as good; the gaming win fell 2.73 percent in December to \$956.1 million.

The state Gaming Control Board released the figures on Jan. 31.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Inmate from S. Tahoe attacks state prison guard



Sean Paul
McIntire

A South Lake Tahoe man serving a life sentence at Donovan

Correctional Facility in San Diego is accused of attacking two guards.

Sean Paul McIntire, 35, hit an officer in the head and face on Jan. 27, the California Department of Corrections said Monday.

A second officer was hurt as he tried to intervene. Neither guard sustained life-threatening injuries.

Prison guards used chemical agents, batons and physical force to subdue McIntire.

McIntire was sent to Donovan in March 2015 for the second-degree murder of Shirley Gordon. Gordon, 57, was found stabbed to death in August 2013 while sleeping on Wildwood Avenue in South Lake Tahoe.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

I-80 to close for 2 hours to fix storm damage

Interstate 80 will be closed in both directions from 11pm Jan. 31 to 1am Feb. 1 so crews can repair power transmission lines damaged during the Jan. 8 mudslide just west of the Donner Lake interchange.

Automobiles will be detoured onto Donner Pass Road and can rejoin I-80 at the Donner Lake interchange. Trucks will be turned at Exit 184 and are encouraged to find parking in the Reno area during the closure.

Eastbound I-80 will be closed at Donner Summit (Castle Peak

Exit 176). All traffic will exit, but automobiles will be allowed back onto the freeway to detour onto Donner Pass Road at the Donner Lake Interchange and reconnect with I-80 at Exit 184. Trucks are encouraged to utilize the Auburn Fairgrounds or Gold Run Rest Area for their waits. Limited parking for trucks will be available at Boreal Ski Resort after 11pm.

LTN reporter honored for travel writing

Every day journalists write about events. It takes a skilled professional to transport readers so they feel like they are living that same experience.

That is exactly what *Lake Tahoe News* reporter Susan Wood does on a regular basis.



Susan Wood on assignment in Park City in 2016. Photo/LTN

The North American Travel Journalists Association on Jan. 31 honored Wood for her **“Salt Lake Olympic legacy remains on fast track”** story that appeared on *LTN* on Feb. 28, 2016. She earned second place in the Special Focus Travel Articles – Internet: Leisure or Hobby Travel category.

The story starts out about riding the bobsled down the course used in the 2002 Salt Lake City Olympics and continues to delve into the legacy left behind from those Games.

“Susan is a tremendous asset to *Lake Tahoe News*. She brings a depth to her stories that is reflective of her inquisitive nature. She goes beyond the surface of every topic she covers to enable her to write comprehensive, in-depth stories,” Kathryn Reed, *Lake Tahoe News* publisher, said.

This was the 25th year for the NATJA awards, with a 20 percent increase in entries over the prior year. Submissions were from September 2015 through August 2016.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

EDC judge hasn't worked in nearly 6 months

Updated Feb. 4:

The family of the judge sent this statement today: “Judge Brooks suffered a cardiovascular event last summer. He has not been medically cleared to work at this time and the family greatly appreciates all the caring concern that has been expressed by the public regarding this unfortunate event.”

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By Kathryn Reed

No one is saying why El Dorado County Superior Court Judge Nelson Brooks has not been to work for nearly six months.

Brooks did not return a call to *Lake Tahoe News*.



Nelson Brooks

Suzanne Thurman, court coordinator, told *LTN*, “He is out on leave.” She did not know how long he would be out of work.

The leave started Aug. 8.

Since then the county has relied on the assigned judge program through the Judicial Council, the reciprocal agreement with neighboring courts and having local judges fill in for Brooks.

Brooks was first appointed to the bench by Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger in 2009, and was elected a year later to a six-year term with more than 75 percent of the vote. He was re-elected in a bitter battle in June 2016. He had 58.53 percent of the votes, while his opponent Roland Thiemann had 41.16 percent. The race garnered statewide scrutiny because it is almost unheard of for a sitting judge’s colleagues to support a challenger.

Even though Brooks isn’t working, he was still sworn in this month for another term. And he is still collecting his full paycheck – \$189,041 – at taxpayers’ expense.

Calif. looks to build \$7B legal pot economy

By Michael R. Blood and Don Thompson, AP

SACRAMENTO — The future of California's legal marijuana industry is being shaped in a warren of cubicles tucked inside a retired basketball arena, where a garden of paper cannabis leaves sprouts on file cabinets and a burlap sack advertising "USA Home Grown" dangles from a wall.

Here, in the outskirts of Sacramento, a handful of government workers face a daunting task: By next year, craft regulations and rules that will govern the state's emerging legal pot market, from where and how plants can be grown to setting guidelines to track the buds from fields to stores.

Getting it wrong could mean the robust cannabis black market stays that way — outside the law — undercutting the attempt to create the nation's largest legal marijuana economy. The new industry has a projected value of \$7 billion, and state and local governments could eventually collect \$1 billion a year in taxes.

California is "building the airplane while it's being flown," lamented state Sen. Mike McGuire, a Democrat whose sprawling Northern California district includes some of the world's most prized pot fields.

He questions if the state can meet January deadlines to create a coherent system that accounts for the loosely regulated medical marijuana industry, now two decades old and developing its own rules, while transforming the enormous illegal market into a legal, licensed one.

“It’s going to take us 10 years to dig out of the mess we are in,” predicted McGuire, referring to the unruly market, legal and not.

It’s likely that tens of thousands of people and businesses will need licensing. The job of overseeing the industry touches on issues from protecting water quality for fish in streams near pot grows, to safely collecting hundreds of millions of dollars in taxes from businesses that often operate in cash.

Inside the former arena, Lori Ajax, the state’s top pot regulator, acknowledged the challenges but said the state can, indeed must, be ready on Jan. 1 when California is required to issue licenses.

“We’re small but mighty,” she said of her staff of 11 full-time workers spearheading the project.

The new law calls for nearly 20 different types of licenses, including permits for farmers; delivery services that will take pot to a buyer’s front door; testing labs; distributors; and dispensary operators at the retail level.

Part of the job heading toward the start of next year falls to other agencies, including the Food and Agriculture Department, which will issue licenses for cultivators.

In November, California joined a growing number of states in legalizing recreational marijuana use for adults. In general, the state will treat cannabis like alcohol, allowing people 21 and older to legally possess up to an ounce of pot and grow six marijuana plants at home.

The law kicks in Jan. 1, 2018, but many communities already turn an indifferent eye toward pot smoking and local cultivators.

Earlier this month, Gov. Jerry Brown proposed spending more

than \$50 million to establish programs to collect taxes and issue licenses while hiring dozens of workers to regulate the industry, a figure some say is too low. His office stresses that one regulatory framework is needed, not separate ones for recreational and medical cannabis, even though there are laws for each that could duplicate costs and confuse businesses.

One of the new law's requirements calls for the state to develop a computerized system to track cannabis, sometimes called "seed-to-sale" monitoring. It's envisioned that scanners will be used to keep tabs on pot as it moves from the leafy raw product to street-level sales.

McGuire, however, projects it could take much of this year for the state to evaluate and hire a company to do the work, making it questionable if a functioning system could be in place when legal sales launch in January.

Attorney Aaron Herzberg, a partner at CalCann Holdings, which leases property to cannabis operations, called the governor's funding only a starting point. He doesn't believe there's enough time to get a regulatory system in place by January.

"You are always going to have a black market," he said. To make the new economy work, "you have to reduce the black market to tolerable levels."

With the rules in development, there are concerns that cottage-industry growers could be driven out by corporate-type businesses, much the way large-scale agribusiness doomed family farms in the Midwest.

State Treasurer John Chiang, who is running for governor, has asked President Donald Trump for guidance on how the state's marijuana industry can participate in the nation's banking system, while pot remains illegal under U.S. law.

Legislators were to hold a hearing Monday on whether the state can meet the January deadline.

Ajax, whose agency is an arm of the California Department of Consumer Affairs, is well-versed in controlled substances. Six badges she carried while rising through the ranks as an agent with the state Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control are on display in her sunny, corner office.

Along with her extensive experience, she brings a sense of humor to the job. Her office decor includes a psychedelic-style painting of a 1960s hippie wearing a peace symbol necklace with a marijuana plant, joints and a bong.

It's inscribed by the artist to the "new czarina of weed."

"We're confident that we can get this accomplished," Ajax said.