Nev. climate expert Redmond dies at 64

Climate expert Kelly Redmond died Nov. 3. Photo/DRI

By Henry Brean, Las Vegas Review-Journal

Kelly Redmond was a leading expert on the climate of the West and how humans are changing it, but it was his ability to talk about science in an engaging and understandable way that might be his greatest legacy.

Redmond died Thursday at his home in Reno after a long illness. He was 64.

Since 1989, he served as the regional climatologist for the Western Regional Climate Center at the Desert Research Institute in Reno, where he also worked as a research professor. His work spanned every facet of climate and climate behavior, its physical causes and variability and how climate interacts with other human and natural processes.

“He knew the ins and outs of climate, but he was also very keen on what climate meant to society,” said Tim Brown, director of the climate center.

Read the whole story

Is Nevada an industry leader in drones?

By Nicole Raz, Las Vegas Review-Journal

Local drone industry insiders say they are working to make Nevada the industry's "global destination of choice" and consistently tout Nevada as an industry leader.

But is it?

The *Review-Journal* caught up with several out-of-state industry experts at the Commercial Unmanned Aerial Vehicle Expo held Monday through Wednesday at the MGM Grand to find out. In short, the answer is mostly yes, Nevada is an industry leader nationally, but the jury is still out on its place in the global industry.

Baptiste Tripard, director of business development and strategy for strategy for Intel's New Technology Group, which works on commercial drones, said Nevada is "a little bit ahead" because of its Federal Aviation Administration designation as an unmanned aerial systems test site. Nevada is the only state authorized as a test site; the other six test sites are state agencies, airports or universities.

Read the whole story

Caesars raising $3.8B to exit bankruptcy

By Tracy Rucinski, Reuters

Caesars Entertainment Corp.'s main casino operating unit has begun a process to raise up to $3.8 billion of cash needed to exit a contentious two-year bankruptcy, according to a court filing on Wednesday.

After more than a year of legal wrangling, the Caesars subsidiary last month secured support from the vast majority of its creditors for a wide-ranging plan to emerge from bankruptcy early next year.

Now Caesars Entertainment Operating Co Inc (CEOC) is seeking financing for its reorganization plan, which entails splitting Caesars' main bankrupt unit into a casino operator and real estate investment trust (REIT), both controlled by creditors.

Caesars is the parent company of Harrah's Lake Tahoe and Harveys in Stateline.

Read the whole story

Legal pot is still a tough deal for investors

By Trevor Hughes, USA Today

With California voters poised to legalize marijuana this month, investors face a choice: jump into an industry whose tantalizing growth prospects are hamstrung by its criminal legacy or wait until federal-level banking and legal restrictions get resolved.

California for decades has been home to a thriving illegal marketplace for black-market cannabis, but a legalization vote on Nov. 8 could dramatically alter the landscape. A state-taxed marijuana marketplace in California could generate $1 billion in taxes, experts say. That's money that today vanishes into the pockets of black marketers and smugglers. Polls show the measure with significant public support.

Nationally, legal pot initiatives could spell a threefold expansion in legal cannabis in the U.S.

Read the whole story

SLT candidate's paperwork on desk at City Hall

It was disclosed late Nov. 4 that Jason Collin's political financial documents have been sitting in the South Lake Tahoe city clerk's office.

Jason Collin

"Apparently a Form 460 was dropped off at the finance counter in an envelope marked Susan Alessi and was left on her desk. She has been out of the office and I don't open what looks like personal mail left on her desk," Assistant City Clerk Ellen Palazzo told *Lake Tahoe News.*

She has since opened the envelope. These are the forms it contained: Collin 497 and Collin 460.

Collin is running for South Lake Tahoe City Council. To have not filed the documents would have been a violation of state law.

The Fair Political Practices Commission had been told Collin had not filed his paperwork. Collin said he did. That led to Palazzo looking on her boss' desk.

— *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

Whole Foods signs SLT lease agreement

By Kathryn Reed

Whole Foods is coming to South Lake Tahoe after all.

The announcement came this week in conjunction with the high-end supermarket chain's fourth quarter earnings report. Leases for its 365 by Whole Foods Market stores have been signed in South Lake Tahoe, Redlands, and Fairfax, Va.

Details of the lease have not been disclosed. A representative from Whole Foods did not respond to an inquiry from *Lake Tahoe*

News.

“The stores will feature a simple, affordable and convenient shopping experience that offers the high quality standards that Whole Foods Market pioneered,” the Austin, Texas-based chain said in a press release.

It will be built where the Knights Inn currently sits on Highway 50 near Ski Run Boulevard.

“The fact that Whole Foods has issued a press release is encouraging to us that they have comfort in the contract that we have,” City Manager Nancy Kerry told *Lake Tahoe News.*

This is an example of the architecture Whole Foods uses. Rendering/Provided

The city and Pradip Patel, who owns Knights Inn, entered an agreement earlier this year for the city to purchase the parcel for $6 million. That agreement **fell apart this fall** when the California Tahoe Conservancy started talking privately to Patel as it angled for the commodities associated with the property.

(Tahoe Regional Planning Agency, the bi-state regulatory entity, has put a price on hotel units, commercial floor area and land coverage which has falsely inflated the value of properties in the basin and has stifled redevelopment.)

Patel did not return a call.

Mike McLaughlin, his attorney, told *Lake Tahoe News* he was unaware of any deal. McLaughlin does not believe the contract with the city is still viable.

“There was a financing contingency as part of the contract and the city didn’t satisfy that contingency. So by its terms the contract automatically terminated,” McLaughlin told *Lake Tahoe News*.

City Attorney Tom Watson told *Lake Tahoe News*, “Our position is we have an enforceable agreement.”

The City Council last month gave Watson direction to look into a potential lawsuit to enforce the agreement with Patel. The contingency was written to give the city an out in case funding from the California Tahoe Conservancy didn’t come through. And while that money isn’t available to the city, the city came up with the $6 million.

Patel used the contingency to his advantage to say he could pull out because the CTC wasn’t involved. The city says Patel and his attorney are wrong.

Since the blow up this fall Patel has been speaking directly with Halferty Development of Southern California.

Chris Peto with Halferty could not be reached.

What the terms of their agreement are have not been disclosed.

Halferty is in escrow to buy the neighboring property on the corner of Highway 50 and Ski Run Boulevard. The plan is to blur the property lines with commercial development that flows from one parcel to the other.

There is no way, according to officials, that the southwest lot could house Whole Foods because the store needs about 25,000-square-feet of commercial floor area and the corner parcel comes with about half that much.

The city originally wanted to make this a commercial and environmental project. That is why the CTC was involved.

“This is economic development first,” Kerry said.

Environmentally the creek that runs under the property was going to be day-lighted and 10,000 pounds of sediment diverted from the lake. The developer is under no obligation to make that happen. It was the Conservancy’s money – aka California taxpayers’ – that was going to pay for it. That aspect of the project may never happen.

Post office delivers SLT ballot to Utah

By Vicki Gonzalez, KCRA-TV

An El Dorado County woman’s vote-by-mail ballot mistakenly was sent more than 650 miles away to Utah. The El Dorado County Registrar of Voters is trying to get back the California ballot after it mistakenly traveled out-of-state.

A woman from South Lake Tahoe mailed her ballot last week when it ended up just outside Salt Lake City.

“Found a piece of mail that said, ’Official Ballot Enclosed.’ And I was like, ’Wow. Really?’” Leland Neil told KSL-TV. “We get misprinted mail a lot of the time, but not a ballot.”

The ballot ended up at Neil’s workplace in Ogden, Utah.

Read the whole story

Lawsuit filed to stop Martis Valley West project

A lawsuit has been filed to stop the **Martis Valley West** project.

The Davis-based nonprofit California Clean Energy Committee on Oct. 26 filed the suit against Placer County.

The group contends the county did not adequately address California Environmental Quality Act regulations because the environmental documents were inadequate.

The California Attorney General's Office had weighed in before the vote saying the documents were substandard as well. The county multiple times said the documents are solid.

Mountainside Partners of Truckee, the developer, and landowner Sierra Pacific Industries have been working on this project for at least 10 years. Build out is expected to take 20 years.

The project has been controversial because it takes undeveloped land in Truckee that borders Lake Tahoe and turns it into a subdivision for second homeowners.

— Lake Tahoe News staff report

Housing dominates loop road forum discussion

By Jessie Marchesseau

The loop road has been a hotly debated topic in recent years. As such, it was surprising to see more empty seats than filled ones in the conference room at Lake Tahoe Resort Hotel on Thursday night.

About 35 people were in attendance to hear Tahoe Transportation District's District Manager Carl Hasty talk about the logistics of the loop road project and what his organization views as the benefits of it.

Hasty began by explaining that even though the plan for this project has been in discussions since the 1970s, the TTD believes the need for it now is much greater than it was then. As evidence of this, he pointed to traffic problems such as how people are cutting through residential neighborhoods to avoid congestion along Lake Tahoe Boulevard, an issue the TTD believes will be resolved by the loop road. He also pointed out that the casinos are not providing the draw for tourists the way they once did, and suggested having a pedestrian-friendly resort-style commercial core may help attract more visitors.

However, the issue which earned the most talk time for the evening was South Lake Tahoe's housing woes.

Hasty mentioned time and again how hard it is for residents, especially people wanting to move to the area, to find affordable housing. He asserted that this project will help with that issue.

A sparse audience listens to Carl Hasty, head of TTD, talk about the loop road on Nov. 3. Photo/Jessie Marchesseau

For the preferred project plan which was presented at the forum, 76 current residential units would be removed. The intent is to replace those with the same number of new residential units, most likely in the form of apartment buildings along the new highway. Hasty said there is "potential" for additional housing units, but the plan as of now only includes replacing the ones being removed.

Of those 76 new residences, more than half would be designated low-income housing, and some would likely be senior housing. Hasty presented a few options for where new apartment buildings may be erected. The area behind Raley's which is currently a parking lot is one of those options, as is the area where Naked Fish currently sits.

Hasty told attendees building this new housing would be the first step in the construction process. Before any houses are torn down, the new ones will be up, he said. Only after the housing is ready would demolition and construction of the actual road begin. Traffic would continue as usual on the current Highway 50 until the new road is completed, so traffic should be affected minimally, if at all, by the construction.

From approval to finish, Hasty estimates it to be about a five-year process.

the project is still a ways from approval. The TTD is hoping to release the draft environmental impact study for public review and comment before the holidays, which means no major decisions would be made on the project before late spring 2017.

After the presentation, attendees were encouraged to submit written questions for Hasty to answer. Many of the questions concerned the housing and existing property issues:

· Would there be any new low income housing in Nevada? It's not planned, but could be possible down the road.

· Would they be looking for money from HUD? Yes, and also California's Cap-and-Trade Program.

· Who would own the new residential units? The TTD initially, but "TTD is not looking to be in the long-term landlord business," Hasty said. They would look at other long-term options such as a land trust or companies designed to own and manage such housing.

· Would residents, both residential and commercial, be compensated for the inconvenience of construction? TTD would try to minimize the impact of construction, but Hasty said he was not sure how they could compensate a non-commercial resident for something like that.

· Would the property be acquired by eminent domain? Technically, yes, but fair market value will be offered for all parcels, and they hope to have willing sellers. Hasty said they do not want to force anyone to sell.

Other questions involved parking issues, roundabouts, overhead walkways and the upcoming election.

When asked whether he thought this project, 35 years in the making, was actually going to happen, Hasty offered an emphatic, "Yes." He said if projects like the one in Tahoe City and the bike path on the Nevada side could finally come to fruition, this will, too.

The draft EIS for the U.S. 50 South Shore Community Revitalization Project will be available for public review sometime in the upcoming months. The Nov. 3 forum was hosted by the Lake Tahoe South Shore Chamber of Commerce.

Calif. pension dollars at work in Las Vegas

By Dale Kasler, Sacramento Bee

CalPERS is betting big on Las Vegas real estate, purchasing a glitzy retail and nightlife complex on the Strip where entertainers such as Britney Spears and Jennifer Lopez regularly perform.

California's giant public pension fund recently bought Las Vegas' high-profile Miracle Mile Shops for a reported $1.1 billion. It's one of the largest real estate deals CalPERS has made since the property bubble burst nearly a decade ago.

CalPERS purchased the 200-store mall, next to Planet Hollywood Resort & Casino, through a company called Institutional Mall Investors LLC. Institutional Mall, which owns 21 shopping centers, is a partnership between the California Public Employees' Retirement System and Chicago-area real estate firm Miller Capital Advisory Inc.

Read the whole story