# Caesars directors must ‘pony up’ details of wealth

**By Tracy Rucinski, Reuters**

Billionaire investors Marc Rowan and David Bonderman are among Caesars Entertainment Corp. directors who must disclose details of their wealth to creditors of the casino holding company’s bankrupt subsidiary, a U.S. judge said last week.

Junior creditors of Caesars Entertainment Operating Co Inc. convinced the court on Wednesday to force six of the parent’s directors to prove they can contribute to CEOC’s reorganization plan in exchange for releases from allegations of fraud.

“These folks are going to have to pony up the paper,” U.S. Bankruptcy Judge Benjamin Goldgar said at a hearing in Chicago on Wednesday.

**Read the whole story**

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# Fire near Mammoth 20% contained, outbuilding burned

**Updated 8:20pm:**

As of Sunday night the Owens River Fire near Mammoth is estimated to be 6,000 acres and 20 percent contained, according to the U.S. Forest Service.

The fire that started Sept. 17 is burning north of the Owens

River Road near Clark Canyon, east of Highway 395. It is burning in sagebrush and Jeffrey pine.

The fire grew Sunday afternoon along the northeast flank and interior islands of fuel also burned actively. Fire crews tied the fireline from the Owens River Fire to the recent Clark Fire, which will provide an effective control line for a portion of the northern flank.

The Big Springs Campground, Clark Canyon (a popular climbing area), and nearby ranches and developments have been evacuated.

Four uninhabited outbuildings and several pieces of heavy equipment were destroyed during the initial response Saturday.

Smoke will be highly visible from locations throughout the Highway 395 corridor including Bishop, Mammoth Lakes, June Lake, and Lee Vining.

The cause of the fire is under investigation, but officials said it appears to be human caused.

*— Lake Tahoe News staff report*

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# Evacuations because of fire near Mammoth

**By Associated Press**

MAMMOTH LAKES — Firefighters are battling a wildfire in the Eastern Sierra that has led to the evacuation of a campground and several ranches and private developments near Mammoth Lakes.

The U.S. Forest Service says the blaze broke out Saturday about 7 miles north of the ski resort town along Highway 395.

It has burned at least 500 acres of brush and timber in Inyo National Forest, sending a plume of smoke visible for miles along the highway corridor.

Officials say the fire forced an unknown number of people to evacuate from the Big Springs campground, a popular climbing area called Clark Canyon and nearby ranches and private developments.

However, they say there are no threats to Mammoth Lakes.

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# Study: Calif. drought could last indefinitely

**By Tracy Bloom and Eric Spillman, KTLA-TV**

A grim study led by a UCLA geography professor revealed that the current five-year drought in California could last indefinitely, with the resulting arid conditions becoming “the new normal” for the state.

The study, which looked at prolonged periods of dryness in California over the past 10,000 years, was published Thursday in the Nature.com journal Scientific Reports.

It noted that the state’s drought in the 21st century has been the most intense ever recorded, with drier than normal conditions in 10 of the past 14 years; the last three years have also been the hottest and driest in about 120 years.

**Read the whole story**

# Tax revenues good omen for SLT budget

**By Kathryn Reed**

The budget the South Lake Tahoe City Council will be asked to approve on Tuesday has been built with cautious optimism.

City Manager Nancy Kerry likes to look at the big picture when putting numbers together. In particular she is paying attention to models that show recessions in the last 50 years have hit on average every six years. It’s been eight years since the last one.

And while that last recession was a doozy, Kerry doesn’t want to forget the lessons learned from it. She doesn’t want to spend money with abandon or overinflate the payroll with employees.

The global economy has a direct correlation to Lake Tahoe as a whole because if money tightens elsewhere, people tend to stop traveling. And with a tourist-based economy, the area gets slammed harder when the economy heads south.

The California travel forecast is for the international tourist market to shrink a bit.

South Lake Tahoe’s three main revenue sources are hotel, sales and property taxes. The first is all tourists, sales is a mix of locals and others, and property taxes are both as well, though with second homeowners at 70 percent they are still the predominant purchasers of houses here.

Property taxes grew 3.5 percent in fiscal year 2014, 4.7 percent in FY 2015 and are expected to hit 4.3 percent this year. The 2016-17 budget calls for a spike of 5.1 percent. But after that the city projects property taxes to be flat at 1.5 percent for several years. The upward trend in the last few years is attributed to housing being one of the last sectors to recover from a recession, so it’s just now that prices are returning to prerecession figures.

With sales tax, the city saw an increase of 9 percent in FY 2014, 3.7 percent in FY15, and a7.4 percent was budgeted for this year. The budget that goes into effect Oct. 1 forecasts a 1.4 percent increase.

TOT has been fabulous of late. In FY 2014 there was a 17 percent increase from the previous year, it was up 16 percent in FY 2015 and it expected to hit 8 percent at the close of this fiscal year. The budget for 2016-17calls for a 4 percent increase. After that the city is reeling in the numbers, saying a 1 percent increase is likely.

Kerry believes now might be the time to rethink having 25 percent reserves. After all, that money was not touched during the Great Recession. Lowering that percentage to 20 would loosen up the overall budget a bit and still have plenty in the bank for a catastrophic situation. To change the allocation would take a four-fifths vote of the council.

There is much to be celebrated with where the city is today economically compared to recent times. The city is $100 million better off today than it was five years ago. Half of that is from state and federal grants; the other half is what the city did via health care and debt refinancing. The city’s debt accounts for 4 percent of the General Fund. Refinancing bonds has lessened that burden.

The General Fund for 2016-17 calls for $38.4 million in revenue and $37.2 million in expenses for a net revenue of $1.2 million.

“This is the first budget in the city’s history that we can find where we are budgeting with a positive cash flow," Kerry told *Lake Tahoe News.*

Between 2010 and 2012 the city was experiencing $5 million in structural deficits. Thirty percent of the workforce was laid off. In 2003 the city didn't even have any reserves.

A little more than three years ago Kerry said for the South Shore to be an economically viable region $1 billion in capital investment would be needed. That goal, through public and private dollars, is more than halfway to being a reality. It includes such things as single-family residences, BevMo and the hotel complex at Edgewood Tahoe.

Looking forward the city may have more money in its coffers if voters this November increase the transient occupancy and sales taxes. TOT would be used exclusively for recreation infrastructure, while the sales tax could be used for anything. Voters will be asked where they want the extra sales tax money to go, but the council is under no obligation to follow that suggestion.

Admittedly, the budget doesn't cover the costs of all the needs South Lake Tahoe has – such as roads, future raises for employees (their current contract expires at the end of September 2017 and negotiations are under way), and the nearly $4.6 million unfunded pension liability. Those are bigger picture issues council members will have to face, though they are not expected to do so at their Sept. 20 meeting.

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# Calif. bill gives biomass

# industry a boost

**By Nathan Solis, Redding Record Searchlight**

Biomass facilities across the state banked their future on Gov. Jerry Brown’s signing of Senate Bill 859 on Wednesday, which gives energy providers incentive to consider bioenergy and purchase electricity from those plants.

The bill will allow bioenergy plants to stay in business or at least that is the hope. Contract negotiations between power companies and bioenergy plants will work out the details of who will stay afloat. Current contracts with power companies with will term out by the end of this year, leaving many biomass plants scrambling to sign new deals.

SB859, along with Assembly Bill 1613 signed on Wednesday, provides direction on the spending of $900 million in cap-and-trade funding. SB 859 gives bioenergy the type of incentive solar and wind power enjoys.

**Read the whole story**

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# Income inequality gap continues to widen in Nev.

**By Adelaide Chen, Las Vegas Review-Journal**

Nevada is one of just eight states that saw a slight increase in income inequality from 2014 to 2015, according to Census data that raise questions about the evenness of the state’s economic recovery.

The state’s increase in income inequality, as measured by a mathematical formula known as the Gini Index, was not steep. But it was statistically significant, according to data from the Census Bureau’s American Community Survey.

The index, which ranges between zero and 1 — with 0 representing perfect equality and 1 representing total inequality — edged upward for Nevada as a whole from 0.43 in 2014 to 0.45 last year.

**Read the whole story**

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# Inmate crews dwindle as wildfire season grows longer

Inmate crews were used on the Washington Fire near Markleeville in 2015. Photo/Carolyn E. Wright/Copyright 2016

**By Joseph Serna, Los Angeles Times**

Already plagued by years of drought and a beetle infestation that has reduced millions of trees to kindling, California is facing yet another crisis as it enters the brunt of wildfire season: a dwindling roster of prison inmates who can battle blazes.

The gap is due largely to California's controversial realignment law, which mandates that inmates convicted of non-serious, nonviolent and non-sexual offenses serve time in county jails rather than in state prisons.

As a result, the pool of eligible firefighting inmates has been shrinking.

**Read the whole story**

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# Placer County approves $815.8 mil. budget

The Placer County Board of Supervisors this week approved a $815.8 million budget for 2016-17.

The budget is balanced conservatively as property taxes, the county's largest revenue source, continues to increase. In addition, sales taxes, transient occupancy taxes charges on lodging and other revenue sources tied to the economy continue to improve.

"Regarding the tree mortality dollars: I'm delighted that we were able to identify three-quarters of a million dollars for a state match grant," said Supervisor Jennifer Montgomery, "I think this is going to become a much larger issue in the very near future and we will be having future conversations on how we're going to identify additional dollars."

The board will receive a mid-year review of the county finances in early 2017 and recommend any needed adjustments to further board priorities.

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# Murillo – a stabilizing force for LTCC

**By Kathryn Reed**

A fiscally sound institution. That's what Kindred Murillo thought she was walking into. It was just the opposite.

It took her four months after coming on board in July 2011 to figure out that Lake Tahoe Community College's budget wasn't what it appeared to be. Previous administrators, with the board's approval, were carrying over $1 million every year that wasn't projected.

The South Lake Tahoe institution was bleeding financially, with a tourniquet applied each year, but no surgeon in the house.

"I don't do business that way," Murillo said.

She was speaking Sept. 15 at the annual convocation before faculty and staff. In many ways, it's like the state of the college address as well as a pep rally for the coming year.

This was Murillo’s last such talk, as she is leaving in February. She tendered her resignation earlier this year.

LTCC President Kindred Murillo on Sept. 15 talks about accomplishments during her tenure. Photo/Pat Leonard-Heffner

In her first three years about $2.5 million was cut from the budget.

“Leadership for the college used to reside in the president’s office,” she said. “It now resides throughout the campus. I think it’s important we all have some voice for what happens.”

The focus has been returned to students – what their needs are. This includes working to create a schedule that meets their needs and not the desire of those who are teaching the courses.

Murillo has established a leadership team that she says is strong, reliable and will carry the college forward – and will listen to students, faculty, staff and the community. The budget now reflects actual expenses and revenues. Strategies and goals have been developed, and are in the works to be achieved.

New programs must pass the test of whether they meet the strategic goals.

“We now have a vision. We know where we are going. We want to be a destination college,” she said.

With this area not growing, it’s attracting students from elsewhere that will help sustain LTCC. It means probably building dorms to house them. A study about student housing should be completed in November.

It means expanding distance learning. It means being creative, like the program LTCC participates in to educate prisoners.

While things have improved under her watch, Murillo said the road ahead is not going to be easy. Projections are for small community colleges to see a drop in enrollment over the next 10 years.

Toward the end of Thursday’s talk she got a bit melancholy, even appeared to be on the verge of tears, as she thanked those in the room for helping mold her into the president she has become.

“Don’t every stop being a student of life,” Murillo told them.

As she said her parting words of wisdom she was met with a standing ovation and whoops from those who call her boss.