

Union opposes NV Energy breakup, Reid backs it, and utility claims to be neutral

By Daniel Rothberg, Las Vegas Sun

NV Energy reaffirmed its plans Tuesday to remain neutral on a ballot measure that would start a multiyear process of ending the company's regulated monopoly on supplying electricity. Later in the day, organized labor confirmed plans to oppose the measure, while Sen. Harry Reid voiced his support.

The ballot measure known as the Energy Choice Initiative, with financial support from Nevada gaming and technology companies, would create a competitive retail energy market in which customers would be able to buy electricity from suppliers other than NV Energy.

Under the language of the measure, a proposed constitutional amendment, NV Energy could continue operating the grid, handling transmission and distribution for suppliers.

[Read the whole story](#)

Queen safe at the dock, but unable to sail

By Kathryn Reed

Coast Guard officials spent Wednesday scouring the Tahoe Queen after a fire swept through it the day before.

It has been determined to be structurally sound and poses no threat to the public. However, it won't be leaving the dock anytime soon.

"They are making sure the vessel is sea worthy at the pier – that it is not going to sink or capsize," Coast Guard Lt. Lt. Jake Aulner told *Lake Tahoe News*. "The vessel is not sea worthy for getting under way or carrying passengers."

While the cause of the fire has not been determined, investigators said it started on the second level.

Painters and welders were working on renovating the boat when the fire broke out just after 8am Aug. 16. Aulner said the investigation will determine if the two types of contractors working in the same area sparked the blaze or if was something else.

The Coast Guard will also eventually put a dollar value on the loss.



The future of the Tahoe Queen is in limbo after the Aug. 16 fire. Photo/LTN

Ultimately it will be up to owner Aramark and insurance investigators to determine the future of the paddle-wheeler.

“We are cooperating with the U.S. Coast Guard as they investigate the cause of the fire. We are still in the process of determining extent of damage,” Karen Cutler, spokeswoman for Aramark, told *Lake Tahoe News*.

There appears to be no environmental damage from the blaze.

“There was some ash/burn debris on the water, but they did not

see any sign of fuel or oil spilled associated with the fire and all the fire retardant was contained," Tom Lotshaw with the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency told *Lake Tahoe News*.

That was the same conclusion of the Coast Guard and the U.S. Forest Service.

At the time of the fire there were approximately 800 gallons of diesel fuel and 100 gallons of hydraulic oil onboard. None was lost during the blaze.

"No petroleum product reached the lake; any sheen on the surface of the water was from the Class A foam that Tahoe Douglas Fire Protection District used to put out the fire," Lisa Herron, spokeswoman for the Forest Service, told *Lake Tahoe News*. The USFS owns the land, with Aramark being the concessionaire.

The pier did not sustain any damage or scorching.

Aramark has a permit from the TRPA to operate one boat out of Zephyr Cove Marina, though more than one can be stored there. The Dixie operates there and the Queen was on site during renovations. It was only eight years ago that the Queen received a make-over to the tune of more than a half million dollars. She was originally launched the last week of June 1983. The first public cruise was Aug. 11, 1983.

The Queen used to be able to carry 500 passengers. That number dropped to 300 with the 2008 renovation in order to create a more relaxing, spacious setting.

Even though the Tahoe Queen has been at Zephyr Cove for more than a year, the lease with Ski Run Marina is still in effect – meaning they still have to pay that rent. That agreement, though, expires at the end of the year.

The Dixie resumed normal operations on Wednesday after two cruises were canceled Tuesday. It had been tied up near the

Queen when the fire started, but crews were able to take her out so she didn't catch fire.

NV Energy hopes to shutter coal-generated plant early

By Daniel Rothberg, Las Vegas Sun

NV Energy asked regulators Monday for permission to retire a utility-owned coal plant 10 months earlier than expected as part of an effort to move toward a cleaner fuel portfolio.

The utility shut down three of four generating units at its 257-megawatt Reid Gardner Generating Station in Moapa at the end of 2014. If regulators at the Public Utilities Commission of Nevada approve its request, it will shut down the final Reid Gardner unit Feb. 28.

NV Energy had originally planned to fully shut down the coal-fired plant in December 2017.

Read the whole story

July 'absolutely' Earth's hottest month recorded

By Jason Samenow, Washington Post

NASA data reveal the Earth's temperature reached its highest point in 136 years of record-keeping during July.

"July 2016 was absolutely the hottest month since the instrumental records began," tweeted Gavin Schmidt, who directs NASA's Goddard Institute for Space Studies, which is responsible for temperature measurements.

It was the 10th-straight month of record-breaking temperatures in NASA's analysis, a substantial 0.18 degrees (0.1 Celsius) warmer than the previous hottest July in 2011.

[Read the whole story](#)

Lightning catches tree on fire near Truckee

Several lightning strikes have hit the ground in the Truckee area today.

In the late afternoon of Aug. 17 there was a tree on fire in the Granite area near China Wall, which is confined to one tree with no threat to the wildland at this time, according to Truckee police officers.

"There is also a helicopter being used for any remote areas to help with any fires from the lightning strikes," officers said

in a statement.

All resources are out checking reports of smokes in the area.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

Truckee CHP officer arrested on privacy charges

By KTVN-TV



Jose Ignacio
Roid

Officials say a California Highway Patrol officer who was assigned to the Truckee office was arrested Aug. 15 after turning himself into the Placer County Jail.

Roseville police officers say that on Aug. 11, they were investigating Jose Ignacio Roid, 30, of Roseville who they say had concealed a video camera in the bathroom of a private residence in Roseville and recorded an adult victim.

Roid is a seven-year veteran of the CHP and has been in Truckee since graduating from the academy.

Read the whole story

Calif. water districts ready if drought continues

By Phillip Reese, Sacramento Bee

State officials will not force most California water districts to reduce water use this year, even as they caution that the five-year drought persists and note that drought-fueled wildfires continue to wreak havoc.

The State Water Resources Control Board in May asked California's 411 urban water districts to evaluate how much water they would need in the next three years if drought continued – and whether their supplies would meet that demand. Districts that certified their supplies are adequate do not face mandatory water-use cuts. Those with inadequate supplies must set conservation goals proportional to their anticipated shortfall.

About 85 percent of the state's water districts told the water board that they believe they have adequate supplies to handle continued drought and should not be subject to state-mandated conservation targets, according to results released Tuesday by the water board.

Read the whole story

SLT wins ruling in \$1M attorneys' fees request

By Kathryn Reed

Instead of being granted more than \$1 million in attorneys' fees, the court did a 180 and is telling the lawyers who requested that sum that they have to pay more than \$2,000 for bring forward the "frivolous" request.

The case involves South Lake Tahoe and **Tahoe Pines Lodge**.

Both sides said they won and wanted the other to pay attorneys fees. Cyrus Sanai, lead attorney representing hotel owner Darren Cobrae, then asked the court for the city to be sanctioned more than \$1 million. He more than lost that request when the judge said he was awarding \$2,145 in attorneys' fees to the city.

El Dorado County Superior Court Judge Warren Stracener cited state code that says, "A trial court may order a party, the party's attorney, or both to pay the reasonable expenses, including attorney's fees, incurred by another party as a result of bad-faith actions or tactics that are frivolous or solely intended to cause unnecessary delay."

What the Aug. 15 decision doesn't say is who is supposed to pay that money – the attorneys of record or Cobrae.

"They have to say what the sanctionable conduct was and who is supposed to pay," Sanai told *Lake Tahoe News*.

He has 10 days to respond to the decision.

If an attorney in California is sanctioned \$1,000 or more by a judge, this must be reported to the State Bar.

South Lake Tahoe attorney Jacqueline Mittelstadt was first

contacted by Cobrae, but then Sanai took over because he had a prior relationship with the hotel owner.

“I will hopefully be getting them to sign a substitution of attorney to get me off the case,” Mittelstadt told *Lake Tahoe News*. “I’m not lead counsel; I’m local counsel to handle any hearing at which Cyrus was not available.”

City Attorney Tom Watson told *Lake Tahoe News*, “The outrageous request for attorney’s fees by Jacqueline Mittelstadt and Cyrus Sanai was properly denied by the court. The fact that the defendant and his attorneys were sanctioned over \$2,000 in favor of the city by the court speaks for itself.”

Sanai said he is ready to ask for the original agreement to be dismissed and to go to trial. He said the judge has ignored facts presented, and did not take into account how his client was essentially being denied due process and other rights.

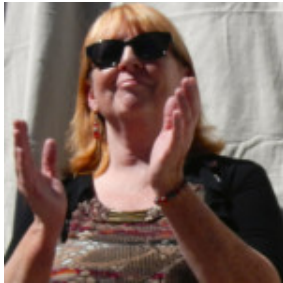
The original case was about whether the hotel was complying with city ordinances in terms of health and safe codes as well as other rules. Both sides admit what needed to be fixed has been.

“The city is delighted that this code enforcement lawsuit achieved the owner’s rehabilitation of the Tahoe Pines. The city will continue to challenge landlords who are providing unfit places for our residents to live,” Watson said.

SLT signs settlement in Conner lawsuit

By Kathryn Reed

Mayor Wendy David on Aug. 16 signed the settlement agreement on behalf of South Lake Tahoe. Once City Councilwoman JoAnn Conner does the same, the nearly year-old issue goes away.



JoAnn Conner

Conner in fall 2015 filed a lawsuit against the city – essentially her four colleagues and her employee City Manager Nancy Kerry – because of a censure motion and how she was restricted regarding interacting with staff.

The judge early on said the matter of censure was not something he would rule on.

Going forward Conner will be treated like the other four councilmembers – she may interact with staff, with the city manager copied on all such emails. This is done so council does not start telling staff what to do. It is the council's job to set policy, not tell people – other than the city manager and city attorney – how to do their job.

Also agreed to is there will be no exchange of money.

The city has spent about \$90,000 on the case; Conner has a bill of a little more than \$30,000. The taxpayers pay the city's bill. This year the city has spent about \$107,000 in outside legal bills, so the bulk of it is on this one case.

Both sides point fingers at the other regarding why it took so long to settle the case, especially when an agreement was reached in June.

Conner deferred comment to her attorney.

"The city manager refused to sign off on parts that she initialed in mediation, so the agreement had to be modified as a result of that," attorney Jacqueline Mittelstadt told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Bill Chisum, who represented the city and Kerry, told *Lake Tahoe News*, "I would dispute that statement. All parties had issues we worked into the agreement. I would dispute that any one party was refusing to sign."

Mittelstadt said her client is ready to sign. At that time the two sides intend to issue a joint statement as well as the full settlement agreement.

SLT's manager, attorney receive glowing reviews

The South Lake Tahoe City Council today gave glowing reviews to the city manager and city attorney.

Even so, neither will be receiving a raise. City Attorney Tom Watson asked for more vacation time. The council deferred making a decision on that request to the September meeting. Watson gets two weeks vacation, just like all employees with his number of years with the city. After five years, it goes to three weeks.

City Manager Nancy Kerry did not seek any adjustments to her contract or benefits.

"Ms. Kerry was praised for her handling of the budget, her guidance and her leadership," Mayor Wendy David told *Lake Tahoe News* after the Aug. 16 closed session discussion. "Mr.

Watson was recognized in particular for his litigation successes this year and for basically representing the city well."

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*