

Condos proposed near Van Sickle Park

By Kathryn Reed

What was going to be a hotel project at the edge of Van Sickle Bi-State Park in South Lake Tahoe is now going to be 22 condominiums.

The South Lake Tahoe Planning Commission on June 9 at 3pm will have a public hearing about the project. The meeting is at Lake Tahoe Airport.

Commissioners will be considering a negative declaration addendum and a request to grant a variance from the front yard setback standard and trash enclosure requirement.

Lucky Look LLC is the owner and applicant. The Washington state-based corporation is a partnership of Michael E. Pegram and Robert S. Over. Pegram is a partner in the Carson Valley Inn in Minden and Bodines casino in Carson. The company's name is a play off of a horse Pegram owned – Lookin at Lucky – the 2010 Preakness Stakes winner. Neither man was available for comment.

They acquired the property in foreclosure.

Sloan Gordon of Gordon Consulting in Stateline told *Lake Tahoe News*, "I work for the owner. I'm not going to make any comment." According to his website, he was a principle planner for Lake Tahoe Development Company. That is the Randy Lane-owned firm that created the Ta-hole – aka failed convention center project.

Lane has been brought in as a consultant for the condo project because at one time he was going to build what was known as the Gondola Vista Boutique Hotel. This was going to be a time-

share. Those permits have expired.

When the permitting agencies approved the old project time-shares were an allowed use and whole ownership condos were not. The Tourist Area Plan that was approved in the last couple years now allows condos there. (Time-shares are also still permissible.)

"They called me because I have knowledge of the process. Beyond that I don't have any involvement," Lane told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Attorney Lew Feldman will be representing the project applicants at Thursday's meeting.

The current project is called Gondola Vista Estates, which will be at 20, 30, 40 Lake Parkway. The units are each two-story and 2,670 square feet.

"The applicant will develop the site using existing residential units of use that are being transferred from the old Colony Inn site," John Hitchcock, planning manager with South Lake Tahoe, told *Lake Tahoe News*.

The parcel can be located by going into the state park and taking the access road near the gondola.

"We have different alternative designs. They are going to have to figure out ingress/egress to the loop road if it ever gets built," Hitchcock said.

(The loop road is a proposal to bring Highway 50 behind Harrah's-Mont Bleu and in front of the park. Carl Hasty with the Tahoe Transportation District, which is the lead agency on the loop road, did not respond to *LTN's* inquiries.)

TRPA has sent a notice to neighbors asking for comments.

"The notice will only ask for comments and does not include a public hearing date because if there are no substantial

comments submitted, we can approve at staff level since it is re-permitting a project that was previously approved several years ago,” Tom Lotshaw, TRPA spokesman, told *Lake Tahoe News*. “The new permit does not have to be issued to the previous applicant/owner.”

2 teens killed, 2 hurt in accident near Northstar

Two Reno teenagers died Friday when the vehicle they were in crashed near Northstar.

Gregoria Martinez-Reyes, 15, died at the scene. Miguel Ramos-Carillo, 16, succumbed to his injuries that night at Renown Medical Center in Reno.

Two other passengers, both 16 and from Reno, were taken to Renown with major injuries. Their names have not been released.

Martinez-Reyes was on Highway 267 near Northstar Drive when the Jeep Grand Cherokee he was driving left the roadway, and then flipped several times, according to the California Highway Patrol.

Officers said alcohol and drugs are not likely factors in the June 3, 8:30pm accident, though speed could be. All four were wearing seat belts.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

Planned Placerville courthouse move rattles town

By Hudson Sangree, Sacramento Bee

El Dorado County courts have called the stocky white courthouse in downtown Placerville home for over 100 years – and for nearly half that time residents have argued about whether the historic courthouse has outlived its usefulness.

The debate riled the Gold Rush-era town in the 1960s and resulted in a makeover that covered the neoclassic courthouse's interior with dark wood paneling and swapped chandeliers for florescent lights.

Today, plans call for a new courthouse to be built in a parking lot behind the El Dorado County jail, in a wooded area on the western edge of the community of 10,000 in the Sierra Nevada foothills.

"It is a building that has outlived its usefulness as a courthouse," said Suzanne Kingsbury, presiding judge of the El Dorado Superior Court.

Others think the move is misguided. The courthouse has anchored downtown Placerville since it was built in 1912, and it reliably infuses Main Street with dozens of jurors, lawyers and court employees who keep downtown restaurants and shops busy on weekdays. Tourists generally don't show up until the weekends.

Critics of the move contend there is ample room to build a modern courthouse annex with a much-needed parking garage, while rehabilitating the historic courthouse.

Kirk Smith, a downtown property owner whose family has been in the Placerville area since the 1840s, has led the fight against moving the court.

"It has to do with pride. That's our heritage. It's part of our DNA," Smith said. "People come to Placerville because of what's old, not what's new."

In 1965, grand jurors recommended replacing the old courthouse because of seismic instability, he said. That caused a public outcry and resulted in the courthouse being renovated.

This time, the plan to move the court hasn't caused such a stir, but there are those who think it's a bad idea and would siphon dollars that keep downtown's restaurants and shops afloat.

Main Street business owners say a significant portion of their sales, up to 30 percent in some cases, come from customers who work in the courthouse or residents who are called for jury duty. During the court's long lunch break, they eat, shop and stroll Main Street, often coming back on the weekend with friends, they said.

Albert Fausel co-owns Placerville Hardware, billed as the oldest operating hardware store west of the Mississippi and one of the longest-operating businesses in California. He and other merchants said they felt excluded from the debate over the courthouse's fate by public officials intent on a new building despite public sentiment.

Fausel said an addition to the existing courthouse would have been a better option.

"They're spending so much money (to build a new courthouse)," he said. "I think they could spend the money down here and help the merchants. I don't know why they're taking it away from us."

Preservationists have sued the state Judicial Council to stop

the project, saying a legally mandated environmental analysis overlooked the potential for urban blight if the courthouse moves.

“The (environmental impact report) failed to adequately disclose, analyze and/or mitigate the Project’s economic impacts to the businesses in historic Placerville on Main Street that will lead to urban decay,” says the complaint by the Placerville Historic Preservation League.

The case, brought under the California Environmental Quality Act, is pending in San Francisco Superior Court and could be decided soon. Courthouse construction, which was scheduled to start next year, is on hold pending the outcome.

In a legal brief filed by the Judicial Council and El Dorado County, lawyers argued that there is no real evidence that the court’s relocation would lead to blight. Plans call for the 1912 courthouse to be left standing and reused in a way that will enhance the local economy and draw people downtown, the attorneys said.

At the same time, construction of a new 88,000-square-foot courthouse will improve the county’s criminal justice system by providing modern facilities with holding cells, jury-assembly rooms and ample security, the lawyers said. Its location next to the jail will make bringing defendants to court much easier and save money, the lawyers wrote.

Placerville City Councilwoman Wendy Thomas said she understands the concerns of business owners but is certain the ornate white courthouse needs replacing.

“She’s a shining jewel in the center of our city and she’s a mess inside,” Thomas said.

The court’s move should be looked at as an opportunity to reuse the old building in a way that would draw visitors to Placerville on weekdays and at night, Thomas said. She

suggested it might be turned into a boutique hotel with a restaurant or a performing arts center.

One expert suggested the move might not have the long-term benefits that advocates envision, however.

Ray McDevitt, a retired lawyer who wrote the book "Courthouses of California: An Illustrated History," said courthouses such as Placerville's were traditionally the center of small towns, and not just for symbolic reasons.

"It was an economically sensible decision," McDevitt said. Lawyers and others using the courthouse had offices downtown, as they still do. Hotels and other prominent public and commercial buildings often shared a square with the courthouse. Centralizing functions made sense.

These days counties around the state are building new justice facilities on the outskirts of towns, including in Auburn, Roseville and San Andreas, the county seat of Calaveras County.

New suburban courthouses might seem logical in the short run by providing ample space and easy access to the county jail, McDevitt said, but he doesn't think they'll last 100 years.

"Land at the fringe of a community is cheaper and you can have a huge parking lot," said McDevitt, who practiced local government law in San Francisco for decades.

The trend, however, is oddly retrogressive, like building shopping centers in the 1950s and 1960s on the edges of cities, he said. The current return to city centers and away from car-based culture is more economically and environmentally feasible going forward, he said.

"The flight to the suburbs is sort of over, I think, as an urban design formula," McDevitt said. "A lot of places are spending time and energy to revitalize the cores of their

communities. So to take a functioning governmental institution and remove it from a place where it's visible, understandable and accessible seems going against the grain."

"I think that in another 30 years," he said, "the decision to remove courthouses to remote locations will be looked at as errors."

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Kirk Smith

A number of local politicians pushed closure of our historic courthouse with outrageous claims like councilmember Wendy Thomas telling folks that the state wanted to move our courthouse to Rancho Cordova and that if local government did

not support this project now, our courts would lose \$90 million and would no longer be high on the list for new construction. But court authorities have said those statements are absolutely false, but neither Thomas nor any of the rest have shown the personal integrity required to correct those and a series of other lies.

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16 hours ago

Kirk Smith

There were no public hearings this time, no public input, just the usual backroom deals where politically connected people are slanted to make huge sums if their scheme to build on property near the jail goes through. Instead they could do what has been done in California and throughout the nation to save old courthouses, expand older courthouses with an annex as would work here since the adjoining public property could allow for increasing court space by at least three times.

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1 day ago

William Howard

Many of these old courthouses were built at the sites where public executions took place before the state took over that task from the counties. An example is the beautiful old courthouse in Placer County that you can see as you drive through Auburn on I-80. It was built at the site of the gallows used for the first three legal public executions in Placer County. The three murderers were buried under the gallows after their executions. I have always wondered if they moved the graves to a cemetery before they built that courthouse or if their bodies are still moldering beneath it.

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William Howard

It seems to me that a compromise could be reached that would make both sides happy. Keep the old courthouse for civil actions and maybe traffic tickets and build a new courthouse for the criminal actions.

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Claim challenges funding source for Hwy. 89 work

While the goal is to break ground this summer on the Fanny Bridge-Highway 89 realignment in Tahoe City, the project still has not gone out to bid. That may not happen until later this month.

In the mean time the state Attorney General's Office is

reviewing a claim filed by Tahoe City resident Jim Sajdak regarding the multimillion-dollar project.

The project would take Highway 89 on the North Shore through 64 acres of forest and turn the bridge into a regular road to be maintained by Placer County. Their goal is to eliminate backup at the Y and ease congestion.

A roundabout is slated to be built at the Y, plus two others at key locations.

The Tahoe Transportation District is the lead agency.

"I have filed a claim to the California Attorney General's Office which states that the funding application filed by the TTD to the California Transportation Commission contains numerous amounts of falsified information to gain state funding in the amount of \$4.9 million," Sajdak said. "The California Attorney General's Office is currently reviewing the information provided under the California False Claims Act which states that it is a felony to obtain state funding based on falsified information."

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Battle royal for open Senate seat in Nevada

By Erica Werner, AP

In a state where the politics can be as raucous as the casinos, the race for U.S. Senate in Nevada is shaping up as a battle royal.

Senate Democratic leader Harry Reid's retirement after three decades has created a rare open seat that offers Republicans their one real shot at winning a state now held by the Democrats. With their slim Senate majority under siege around the country, Republicans are determined to replace Reid with one of their own, Rep. Joe Heck, a wonkish and hard-working Army reservist.

But the canny Reid is just as intent on installing a Democrat to replace him. He recruited a former state attorney general, Catherine Cortez Masto, who would be the first Latina ever to serve in the U.S. Senate. Her candidacy is giving the state's increasingly powerful and overwhelmingly Democratic Latino voting bloc an opportunity to send a message to GOP presidential candidate Donald Trump, who is sowing fear and anger in their community with his threats to build a wall with Mexico and deport more than 11 million immigrants who are in the country illegally.

With special interest money already gushing into the race, the dynamics make for a super-charged throw-down in this state of bright lights and wild contradictions.

"It's not lost on either side of the aisle that the Senate majority in 2017 could very well come down to this race," Heck said in an interview in his clean and orderly campaign office. As volunteers worked the phones, Heck professed confidence, saying he has won three competitive races for his Southern Nevada House seat and insisted he would do it again for Senate.

"After eight years of Barack Obama and 30 years of Harry Reid people are truly ready for a change, especially in a place like Nevada where we're still bouncing along the bottom in economic recovery," Heck said.

Campaigning at El Tarasco Mexican restaurant, where colorful offerings included rose petal ice cream, Cortez Masto played

up a different kind of change. She emphasized her Mexican roots, reminding supporters her grandfather emigrated from Chihuahua and she and her sister were the first in their family to graduate from college. In an interview, she was quick to link Heck to Trump.

"It is crazy to me that in this day and age we're having this discussion about electing somebody who is full of hate and discrimination," Cortez Masto said. "I have an opponent I'm running against, Congressman Heck, who is supporting him."

It's a line of attack that figures to be a staple of Democratic Senate campaigns around the country this year. In Nevada, Democrats are sending two people in parrot costumes and Trump hats to follow Heck around, intending to suggest he parrots Trump's views. Despite blistering heat topping 100 degrees, the parrots jumped up and down outside a Hyundai dealership where Heck was campaigning one recent afternoon, before getting escorted off the lot.

Heck insisted such attacks won't work.

"People know who Joe Heck is," he said. "This idea of identity politics or guilt by association, I think the electorate is smarter than that."

If Heck faces a challenge in being linked to Trump, Cortez Masto is confronting something similar in her connections to Reid, who is closely involved in her campaign and has put his still-formidable political machine behind her. Reid, 76, is a polarizing figure in the state, beloved by many Democrats but loathed by Republicans.

Cortez Masto, a cautious campaigner who has not previously faced a highly competitive race, is quick to change the topic when asked about him.

"Sen. Reid's not on the ballot, and to me this is a race I'm focused on about the issues that people in my state, where I

was born and raised, care about, because I will be representing them in Washington, not Sen. Reid," Cortez Masto said.

Yet for both candidates in Nevada, as in other states with competitive Senate races, the outcome will depend partly on something they can't control: how the presidential race plays out between Trump and the likely Democratic nominee, Hillary Clinton.

Republicans are optimistic Trump could win Nevada, but the state has gone Democratic in the past two presidential elections. Registered Democrats outnumber Republicans by some 65,000 voters, a figure Democrats and labor unions are working hard to increase even more.

With Trump as their nominee, Republicans face the prospect of record Latino turnout. Activists point to increased voter registrations and citizenship applications as evidence Latinos are lining up to prevent Trump from becoming president.

"Heck is doomed," Reid himself predicted when asked about the impact of the Latino vote.

After greeting supporters at El Tarasco restaurant on a recent afternoon, Cortez Masto headed across the street to an early-voting site where a life-size Elvis Presley cutout beckoned voters to the polls ahead of the state's June 14 congressional primary.

Neither Cortez Masto nor Heck faces serious opposition in the primary, though in a taste of Nevada's colorful politics one of Heck's opponents is a hard-core conservative named Sharron Angle. She lost a winnable Senate race against Reid six years ago after a series of gaffes, including telling Latino school-children they looked like Asians. Angle doesn't appear to have much money or support this time around, but she recently produced an ad depicting herself as a tiger and Heck as a bunny rabbit, and showing herself gripping Trump's hand.

Glow-in-the-dark sidewalks could replace streetlights

By Casey Williams, Huffington Post

The world's dullest building material just got a lot more exciting.

A scientist in Mexico announced earlier this month that he had developed solar-powered, glow-in-the-dark cement that could be used to illuminate roads, bike lanes and walking paths, according to the news site *Investigación y Desarrollo*.

The cement absorbs energy from the sun during the day and converts that energy into light at night. After a full day under the sun, the material can shine for up to 12 hours.

Cement is a powder that forms a gel when it's mixed with water. Adding water also typically produces tiny crystal flakes that block light.

[Read the whole story](#)

California's registered voters hit record high

By John Myers, Los Angeles Times

With one of the most closely watched presidential primary

seasons in modern times , California's voter rolls grew by almost 650,000 in the final six weeks of registration. And three of every four new voters were Democrats.

On Friday, Secretary of State Alex Padilla released the final report of voter registration prior to the June 7 statewide primary. The deadline to register for Tuesday's election was May 23.

Of the 646,220 people who registered in the final rush –between April 8 and May 23 – 76 percent became Democrats.

California's total voter registration now stands at 17,915,053. That's the largest number ever registered heading into a primary election.

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Landowner wins wetland development case in court

By Greg Stohr, Bloomberg

The U.S. Supreme Court gave landowners a new avenue to challenge some federal regulatory decisions affecting their property rights, in a case that three conservative justices said raised troubling questions about government overreach.

The 8-0 ruling said landowners can go straight to court after federal regulators decide that a piece of property containing wetlands is covered by the Clean Water Act.

The ruling is a blow to the Obama administration and a victory for property-rights activists, potentially streamlining the

approval process for people and companies seeking to develop wetlands.

Read the whole story

Guards armed at Reno hospital after deadly 2013 shooting

By Scott Sonner, AP

Renown Regional Medical Center has taken a number of steps to enhance security since a deadly shooting on the Reno medical campus in 2013, including arming private security guards, hospital officials said Thursday.

Renown officials said they spent a year reviewing security protocols and consulting outside experts before adopting new policies based on “national best practices” after a gunman fatally shot a doctor, critically injured two others and killed himself in December 2013.

“Armed officers are part of a tiered approach to many security enhancements that we’ve implemented in recent years,” hospital spokeswoman Stacey Sunday said in an email.

The *Reno-Gazette Journal* first reported on its website Wednesday that the hospital added armed security guards for the first time last year.

Alan Frazier, a California man who blamed his doctor for a botched vasectomy, walked past patients in a medical office waiting room on the Renown campus with a 12-gauge shotgun before he opened fire on Dec. 17, 2013, police said.

Sunday said the hospital cannot provide details about all the security changes since then, including the number of armed guards who first began work in February 2015 under a contract with G4S, a private, Florida-based security company.

Renown Health Security Director Ryan Clarke said in a statement that one security officer staffs the emergency room around the clock and others man the main entrances, as well as roam the facility and its exterior.

"The decision to hire armed officers was not an easy one or one we took lightly," said Clarke. He explained that they worked with law enforcement, employees and the medical community "to evaluate and enhance our security practices."

Security guards are not armed at Saint Mary's Regional Medical Center in Reno, Northern Nevada Medical Center in Sparks or Carson Tahoe Regional Medical Center in Carson City. But some do carry guns in Las Vegas at the University Medical Center of Southern Nevada and Sunrise Hospital and Medical Center, officials at those facilities said Thursday.

"Because of the nature of being Nevada's only Level I Trauma Center, treating patients who have been injured in violent crimes, we do have armed public safety officers here at UMC, to provide an abundance of caution in keeping our patients, families and clinical staff safe," said Danita Cohen, University Medical Center's executive director for strategic development and marketing.

Sunrise, the closest hospital to the Las Vegas Strip, has armed its security guards for the past 18 months, hospital spokeswoman Marissa Mussi said.

"We see a large volume of individuals through our facility on a daily basis and our main concern is for the safety of our patients, visitors and employees," she said.

Clarke said Renown, just east of downtown Reno, strives "to be

a welcoming campus.”

“Our ultimate decision weighed the impact that armed officers would have on this perception against the need to provide ourselves with the ability to immediately address any security situation,” he said. “The addition of armed officers to support our general safety officers provides us with a controllable response time and the ability to address any security situation in cooperation with local law enforcement.”

Calif. water crisis not on presidential candidates' radar

By Carolyn Lochhead, San Francisco Chronicle

WASHINGTON — The 20th century dams and canals that gave birth to modern California — to San Francisco, to Los Angeles, to the San Joaquin Valley farms that feed the nation — are near the end of their engineered lives. The rivers and aquifers they tap are, simply, tapped out.

The state's record drought, only dented by last winter's rains, comes amid a 16-year dry spell in the Colorado River basin, which provides 16 percent of California's water. The basin's giant reservoirs are dwindling and may never fill again, even as the nation's population continues to shift relentlessly into the arid West.

So far, the three people running for president have hardly noticed these problems as they barnstorm the state heading into the June 7 primary.

Read the whole story