

AAA: Gas prices will remain low in 2016

By Ahiza Garcia, CNN Money

Drivers may pay even less at the pump in 2016.

AAA, which compiles gas price information from around the country, is projecting that gas prices will stay lower in the year ahead – maybe even lower than this year.

It estimates that the average price of a gallon of regular, unleaded gasoline would be between \$2.25 and \$2.45 a gallon. In 2015, the average price per gallon was \$2.40 – Americans saved \$540 on gas as a result.

Read the whole story

Conner seeks to have judge dismissed

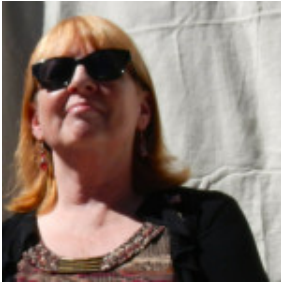
By Kathryn Reed

Because JoAnn Conner believes the judge in her case against the city of South Lake Tahoe has already made up his mind, her attorney is trying to get the matter heard before another judge.

This means the hearing scheduled for today isn't going to happen.

Conner, who is a first-term city council member, at the end of last year took legal action against the city and City Manager

Nancy Kerry in regards to being **censured** by her colleagues and being **banned from talking to staff**.



JoAnn Conner

“The law requires a judge not be biased and not to have predetermined the outcome of the case. If evidence arises where it appears to an ordinary person on the street that the judge has made a predetermination on an issue of the case or outcome of the case, it is essentially automatic disqualification because the litigants are entitled to a fair and unbiased judge,” Jacqueline Mittelstadt told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Mittelstadt, who used to be city’s attorney, is representing Conner.

At the **Dec. 15 hearing**, El Dorado County Superior Court Judge Steve Bailey said he would not deal with the censure issue because it is a political matter and not something for the court to decide. That is where Mittelstadt and Conner believe there is bias, and why they’ve asked Bailey to be replaced.

If Bailey is replaced, the matter will likely be heard on the West Slope.

If Conner were to prevail, she would likely have censure overturned – though the council could redo it. A censure is a hand slap with zero consequences when it comes to being able to do her job. She would also be given access back to the city offices as well as be able to directly communicate with staff via phone, email and in person.

Today, she can still have questions answered, but they must go through the city manager and/or city attorney.

The council has a card key to access the offices at the airport. However, it has been inconsistent through the years when it comes to which councils have had the access. It is up to the council to decide if they have the card keys.

Councilman Hal Cole on Dec. 30 turned his card in.

"If we need to see someone, we can make an appointment," Cole told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Mayor Wendy David said, "I usually don't need to even use it."

Council members have a mailbox behind the locked doors. There is talk of moving those into a public area, though the boxes would be locked. This would alleviate the need to bother city employees to get the mail.

Multiple emails were sent to City Clerk Suzie Alessi asking about the history of the card keys and why councilmembers have access. She didn't respond to the inquiries.

Mittelstadt maintains she and Conner are willing to work with the city to resolve the matter outside of the courtroom.

"After the litigation was filed, the Thursday before the City Council's closed session, [City Attorney] Tom Watson called me. During that conversation, we discussed possible resolution with my providing a variety of suggested approaches. He said he would get back to me. He never did," Mittelstadt said in an email. "After the first hearing on the matter, in light of the judge's direction telling us that we should resolve the matter, I approached their outside counsel and referred to what the judge said. I indicated that we would be happy to discuss options to try to resolve the situation, and had tried to do so prior to his involvement. He said he was new to the matter but would consider it and get back to me. I have not

heard from him either. Until the city is willing to come to the table and discuss resolution, we have no choice but to proceed with the litigation.”

Watson told *Lake Tahoe News* it was not accurate that no one from the city has responded to Mittelstadt. But he would not elaborate because he said it would be inappropriate to do so because he works for all five electeds.

“I have heard nothing from Jacqueline and as I said before we are proceeding within the court process of the suit,” David told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Girl survives fall from chairlift at Squaw Valley

Updated Jan. 5, 7:45am:

By Kathryn Reed

A young girl who fell nearly 40-feet from a chairlift at Squaw Valley on Saturday is expected to survive.

“The child was flown to Renown [Medical Center in Reno] in fairly stable condition,” Marcus Dorsey-Hirt, clinical manager with CareFlight, told *Lake Tahoe News*.

He said the 8-year-old from Los Gatos sustained broken bones in the fall. Resort officials said she was conscious when ski patrol arrived.

“The skier was wearing a helmet at the time of her injury, however the restraint bar on the chair had not been used at any point during the lift ride,” Squaw officials said in a

statement. Squaw said the mother of the victim said the restraint bar was not used.

Dominique Roddier of the Bay Area said his wife and daughter saw the girl fall Jan. 2 at about 3pm from the Big Blue chairlift. He said the victim was near the end of the lift when the accident occurred.

“The lift was stopped. When it started again ... they think she slipped and fell,” Roddier told *Lake Tahoe News*. “My daughter said she landed on her side.”

Personnel at the hospital could not release any information, including if the girl was still there, because of medical confidentiality laws.

Big Blue is a six-seater that starts at mid-mountain, with mostly green runs off of it.

Slew of new laws affect Californians

By Patrick McGreevy, Christine Mai-Duc and Jon Schleuss, Los Angeles Times

Californians face new restrictions on carrying guns, new regulations on medical marijuana, and higher pay if they earn minimum wage under laws that take effect in 2016.

Parents, students, healthcare providers and anyone who gets behind the wheel of a car will see changes – some immediately, some over the course of the year.

Many of the 807 bills signed into law touch on broad aspects

of California residents' everyday lives or address major issues like voter participation, and life and death.

Read the whole story

Storms lined up to drop white stuff on Tahoe

A winter storm watch has been issued by the National Weather Service in Reno for the Lake Tahoe Basin for the 24-hour period starting Jan. 4 at 10pm.

Heavy snow is forecast for the basin from 1am to 6pm on Tuesday. Four to 8 inches is expected at lake level, with 8 to 15 inches at higher elevations.

"Once the storm arrives, travel may be difficult at times with long delays," the agency said in a statement.

Snow is predicted for the better part of the week.

The bone-chilling temperatures are gone for now. Highs are expected to be in the 30s, with overnight lows in the 20s.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

65 people evacuated from

Heavenly chairlift

Sixty-five people were evacuated from North Bowl chairlift at Heavenly Mountain Resort today.

At 10:58am Jan. 3 an unoccupied chair on the downhill side fell from the lift.

No injuries were reported.

This is a fixed grip triple chair on the Nevada side of the South Shore resort. Fixed grip means the chairs are permanently attached to the cable.

The chairlift will be out of service until the maintenance team can evaluate what happened.

The lift was stopped immediately, according to resort officials. Ski patrol then was able to bring everyone off the lift.

North Bowl lift is in the master plan to be replaced with a high speed detachable quad, but there is no date when this will happen.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Court will hear case against data trespass laws

By Dustin Bleizeffer, WyoFile

A federal judge has rejected the state of Wyoming's motion to dismiss a lawsuit aimed at striking down a pair of laws that

make it illegal to collect data from public lands without first gaining permission.

U.S. District Court Judge Scott Skavdahl issued the order last month, finding that Wyoming's "data trespass" laws may unconstitutionally criminalize activities such as photography on public lands.

Groups suing the state say the case strikes at the heart of free speech and the right to petition the government as protected under the First Amendment, as well as equal protection under the Fourteenth Amendment. "A law that makes sharing photos of Devil's Tower or Yellowstone a punishable offense just isn't consistent with Americans' right to Free Speech," Natural Resources Defense Council senior attorney Michael Wall said in a prepared statement.

Earlier in 2015, the Wyoming Legislature passed Senate File 12 creating the crime of trespassing to collect data, and Senate File 80, which made the practice a civil violation. Key in the language of the statutes is the application to all "open lands" outside of municipalities.

Read the whole story

Predicting '16 gaming landscape an inexact science

By Howard Stutz, Las Vegas Review-Journal

Not many folks predicted that daily fantasy sports would dominate the headlines over the last half of 2015.

That was before DraftKings and FanDuel blasted television

audiences with commercials that had more airtime than the actual football games.

Meanwhile, the business operators showed an arrogance not seen in nearly a decade, when offshore online gambling websites heavily advertised their products before the Unlawful Internet Gambling Enforcement Act of 2006 closed them out of the marketplace.

That's the trouble with making predictions. It's not an exact science.

Still, as we roll into 2016, I'll take a stab at what the gaming landscape will look like in year dominated by the presidential campaign and other national news events.

Read the whole story

Rubio, Cruz vie for Mormon support in Nevada

By Kurtis Lee, Los Angeles Times

Deep divisions among Nevada Republicans over a \$1-billion tax increase pushed by the state's Republican governor are helping to shape the battle between Sens. Marco Rubio of Florida and Ted Cruz of Texas

to win this state's presidential caucuses – the first nominating contest in the West.

Rubio's backers are eagerly eyeing Nevada as they look for an early-voting state the candidate could win. Although Rubio is widely seen as one of the leading contenders for the GOP nomination, the early primary states mostly look unpromising

for him.

Cruz, by contrast, leads the polls in Iowa, which holds the first contest of the season on Feb. 1, and is well-positioned in several other conservative states that hold early contests.

Read the whole story

New laws in 2016 for Nevadans

By Sandra Chereb, Las Vegas Review-Journal

CARSON CITY – Dozens of new laws dealing with police body cameras and elections to industrial hemp and craft pickling will take effect in Nevada at the stroke of midnight.

Here is an overview of some the 50 new laws that will become effective Jan 1, 2016:

Elections, lobbying

Nevada voters may soon forgo receiving paper sample ballots in the mail. Assembly Bill 94 authorizes local election officials to set up systems allowing voters, upon request, to receive sample ballots electronically, either by email or through website access.

Assembly Bill 462 makes several changes to election law. It raises to 3,000 from 1,500 the maximum number of voters in a precinct and imposes new measures to verify voter identity. If signatures do not match, voters may be asked to answer questions about personal data on their voter registration application or provide other proof of identity.

Read the whole story