

Ballot measure could re-establish tiered water pricing

By Taylor Goldenstein, Los Angeles Times

A coalition of groups representing cities, counties and water agencies filed a proposed ballot measure Monday that would allow water providers to reestablish so-called tiered pricing as a means of encouraging conservation.

Backers submitted the California Water Conservation, Flood Control and Stormwater Management Act of 2016 to the attorney general's office. The measure would appear on next November's state ballot as a proposed constitutional amendment if enough signatures are collected.

The measure was crafted after a state appeals court ruled last spring that the tiered water rate structure used by the city of San Juan Capistrano was unconstitutional because it violated voter-approved Proposition 218, which prohibits government agencies from charging more for a service than it costs to provide it.

[Read the whole story](#)

El Dorado County's top lawyer resigns

Sixteen months after coming on board as El Dorado County's chief lawyer Robyn Drivon is leaving.

The Board of Supervisors accepted her resignation on Dec. 15.



Robyn Drivon

Drivon started as El Dorado's county counsel in September 2014. Her last day is Jan. 8. She is going to work for Sacramento County starting Jan. 10 as their county counsel. She will be making \$215,043 plus benefits of \$80,944 for a total of \$295,987.

Because the two counties are in different retirement systems Drivon is actually retiring from El Dorado County. She is eligible for double dipping, like interim CAO Larry Combs. She will get about \$100,000 from the Public Employees Retirement System while getting paid by Sac County.

Drivon's annual salary in El Dorado County is \$196,560.

Michael Ciccozzi, deputy county counsel, will be the interim county counsel. Currently he is acting assistant chief administrative officer. Combs is recruiting for a permanent assistant CAO.

The departure adds to the **county's vacancies** at the upper echelon.

Per state law, county counsels serve four-year terms.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Boreal makes strides to reduce carbon footprint

By investing in energy efficiency, green building, alternative fuels, renewable energy and waste reduction Boreal Mountain Resort has reduced its carbon footprint by 72 tons between 2014-2015,

The ski resort is on track to increase that number in 2016.

Boreal's changes include: a snowmaking cooling system, HVAC in shop, airlock door in loading bay, washable dishes at camp and restaurant, 100 percent purchasing of electricity through renewable energy credits.

Another successful initiative is Protect Your Playground, which exists to empower and inspire individuals to identify and develop solutions for environmental issues that affect their local natural playgrounds.

The resort's efforts also tie into Truckee's Climate Action Plan.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

White House pushes water

conservation

By Carolyn Lochhead, San Francisco Chronicle

WASHINGTON — The White House followed Sunday's landmark climate pact in Paris with a push Tuesday on water conservation and efficiency, as top administration officials warned that water shortages are among the biggest consequences of rising global temperatures.

White House science adviser John Holdren and Interior Secretary Sally Jewell said the plan is to find ways to squeeze more water from existing systems through new technologies.

Congress is no longer funding the giant dams like those built in the last century that led to the development of the West, Jewell said, while Holdren warned that climate change is reducing the available freshwater supply even as higher temperatures increase demand.

Read the whole story

Embezzlement cases ends with prison term

An El Dorado County man is headed for prison for 30 months for embezzling nearly a half million dollars from a company that was doing business in Placer and Sacramento counties.

Jeffrey Lamson, 51, of El Dorado Hills was sentenced Dec. 15. In addition to prison Lamson must pay more than \$400,000 in restitution.

Court documents show that from at least 2009 through 2011 Lamson embezzled the money while he was controller of the company. He used company funds to make unauthorized payments to himself and others and made payments to a fictitious vendor, controlled by Lamson, for services that were never performed.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

Child safe after LTUSD bus driver ‘loses’ him

By Kathryn Reed

It was probably the longest hour of Libi and Jason Fenley’s life. Their son was missing. He didn’t get off the school bus at day care. And no one knew where he was.

Corben is a 6-year-old first-grader at Sierra House Elementary School in South Lake Tahoe. His teacher and principal confirmed he got on the bus at about 3:20pm last Friday.

Jason Corben got a call at approximately 4:10pm from the day care center saying the bus did not drop Corben off.

“We freaked out because we knew neither of us had him,” Libi Fenley told *Lake Tahoe News*. “I called the bus garage. They said he was not there.”

South Lake Tahoe Police Department received a call from the Fenleys at 4:34pm Dec. 11. In about five minutes officers were at the bus garage.

The bus driver, who is reportedly a veteran at her job – even

a trainer, searched the bus three times. No Corben.

"The bus driver said he got off at the wrong stop," Fenley said. She said this before film from the cameras was reviewed.

All LTUSD school buses have two cameras, some have three. They are there for safety and security.

There was quick talk among the Fenleys, officers and Lake Tahoe Unified School District transportation officials that a search should begin in the neighborhood where Corben may have gotten off. This was going on despite there being no proof he got off somewhere else.

Then suddenly there was banging on the bus garage door. It was Corben.

He had actually been on that bus that was supposedly searched by the driver. He had fallen asleep. It's not the first time. And he's not the first kid to do so.

"He was fine, he was scared. He woke up in the dark in a scary place," Fenley said of her son.

But she's not happy how the district handled things. When Corben got on the bus Monday the driver didn't offer an apology. Fenley was flabbergasted Christy Blach, director of transportation, seemed to care more about her employee than Fenley's son. She was miffed Superintendent Jim Tarwater had not responded to her email.

Blach was short with *Lake Tahoe News* on Dec. 15. "He was at the bus garage for maybe 10 minutes," she said.

That might be true, but no knew it. Corben was found at 5:04pm that Friday.

Tarwater didn't know about the incident until *Lake Tahoe News* called on Tuesday. He said that is not normal protocol.

“I would say they slipped up, didn’t they?” he said of not being told. “I can see why she would be upset,” Tarwater said of the distraught mother.

Fenley said, “If the driver is not going to be accountable, what procedures are going to be put in place other than flashlights will be used for looking for items (and people) on the bus?”

With neither the superintendent nor the board being told about the incident by staff, change couldn’t happen as fast as Fenley would have liked.

School attendance numbers hide big problems

By Elissa Nadworny, NPR

Every morning, the familiar routine plays out in hundreds of thousands of classrooms: A teacher looks out over the desks, taking note of who’s in their seats and who isn’t.

On any given day, maybe there are one or two empty chairs. One here, one there. And that all goes into the school’s daily attendance rate.

But here’s what that morning ritual doesn’t show: That empty desk? It might be the same one that was empty last week or two weeks ago. The desk of a student who has racked up five, 10, 20 absences this year.

It’s called chronic absence. The official definition: missing more than 10 percent of the school year – just two days a month.

And the real-life implication: a warning sign for a student on the brink of failing or dropping out.

Read the whole story

EDC general plan EIR vote involves controversy

By Joann Eisenbrandt

PLACERVILLE – At its Dec. 15, meeting the El Dorado County Board of Supervisors certified the EIR for the **Targeted General Plan Amendment/Zoning Ordinance Update** (TGPA/ZOU), adopted the Statement of Overriding Considerations, and the Mitigation and Monitoring Reporting Program. The board also adopted the Zoning Ordinance Update as well as a list of community design standards and directed staff to return in approximately a year to review implementation of the project.

Supervisor Shiva Frentzen was the lone dissenting vote on all items except the direction to staff to review the project in a year and on the community design standards (with the exception of mixed use design where she voted no). Supervisor Michael Ranalli recused himself for the vote on the ag opt-in resolution because he owns property impacted by it.

Some confusion arose as to whether additional public comment would be heard at the meeting. After hearing that the public comment period had been closed on Nov. 12 and that no additional comment would be received, resident Sue Taylor told board Chairman Brian Veerkamp from the audience that she had

been told in a phone conversation before the meeting by Jim Mitrisin, clerk of the board, that it would be allowed. Mitrisin confirmed this conversation with *Lake Tahoe News*, but added that his office had assumed that it would be allowed as it is at all board meetings and referred LTN to interim CAO Larry Combs and to Deputy County Counsel Kay Ann Markham for more specifics.

The meetings on Nov. 10, 12, 13 and Dec. 15 were all part of one extended meeting, not independent individual meetings, Shawna Purvines of long range planning explained to the board at the outset of Tuesday's meeting. Because of the large scope of the project it could not be presented by planning staff in a one-day meeting and so was continued over the four days. When public comment was closed in November it was closed for the entire meeting.

A second issue raised by Taylor was that the agenda on the county website as well as the hard copies distributed at the meeting listed five resolutions, but the board actually voted on seven. The differences between the published agenda and the items voted on by the board were that the mixed-use design standard was separated out for its own motion on Dec. 15, and the ag-opt in guidelines were also voted on in a separate motion, but they did not appear in the text of the published meeting agenda.

Under the Brown Act – California's open meeting law – all items that are voted on must appear on the agenda so the public has the opportunity to know what will be discussed in advance of the meeting. Deputy County Counsel Markham noted during the meeting that some of the items had been renumbered, but all items were also included by reference in the new numbered list from which the board made its motions.

Rural Communities United (RCU) attorney Tom Infusino told the board members on Nov. 10 that if they certified the EIR and approved the TGPA/ZOU, that RCU would file a lawsuit based on

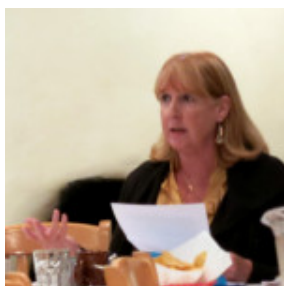
the failure of the environmental impact report to meet all the requirements set out by the California Environmental Quality Act for such a project by a public agency.

Judge denies emergency stay in Conner case

By Kathryn Reed

Round 1 in the case of Councilwoman JoAnn Conner v. the city of South Lake Tahoe goes to the city.

Conner's attorney filed an emergency stay on Dec. 14. The hearing was before Judge Steve Bailey on Dec. 15 in El Dorado County Superior Court.



JoAnn Conner

Bailey denied Conner the emergency stay because Jacqueline Mittelstadt, Conner's attorney, could not prove Conner is not able to do her job. A stay is much like an injunction.

At the late afternoon Tuesday court session in South Lake Tahoe the judge said there was no evidence showing Conner was not getting the same information as other councilmembers and that she could get her questions answered if they were to be asked.

Conner is suing the city and City Manager Nancy Kerry, the latter who is actually Conner's employee. Conner believes Kerry has no right to keep her from **talking to staff** and believes the other councilmembers erred when they voted to censure her.

The city contends Conner receives the same correspondence and materials the other councilmembers get, that she has declined the opportunity to meet with staff before the council meetings to go over the agenda, and that she can get her mail at city offices.

What changed earlier this fall is that Conner does not have a card key to get into the inner sanctum of city hall and she must go through the city manager or city attorney to speak to staff. In the city code it says councilmembers are not to go directly to staff.

Bailey took some issue with Conner's badge being deactivated when the other councilmembers have access.

The judge set an evidentiary hearing for Jan. 4. This will allow him to review videotapes of the council meetings since September to see if Conner is treated the same as the other four electeds. It also gives each side time to present other evidence.

Bailey said he was not going to touch the **censure issue**, saying it was a political issue, not a legal one.

The city and Kerry were represented in court by William Chisum of Kronik Moskovitz Tiedemann law firm out of Sacramento. This is because City Attorney Tom Watson is a party to the case.

Snow putting heads in Lake Tahoe beds

By Tom Stienstra, San Francisco Chronicle

A white Christmas at Tahoe and across the High Sierra has set off a rush for holiday lodging and driven up prices across the board.

Even the 1-star hotels are getting in on it. For New Year's weekend at South Lake Tahoe, a 2-star hotel on Hotels.com is going for \$219 a night for a New Year's Eve check-in. Motel 6 was sold out. For Christmas weekend, Motel 6 was selling rooms at \$135 a night and had only five rooms left.

At the other end of the spectrum, the 5-star Ritz Carlton, Lake Tahoe, located near Northstar, had a no-view room for \$1,169 per night. As of Sunday, only five rooms remained at that price for New Year's weekend.

[Read the whole story](#)