

Placer County looking to regulate medical pot

A comprehensive medical marijuana regulatory framework for the unincorporated areas of Placer County was adopted this week by the Board of Supervisors.

The board's decision allows county staff to work with the community to begin to define what the regulation should look like.

"What we discussed (Dec. 8) was putting in a placeholder legislation in January that would preserve our right of jurisdiction over what happens in Placer with regards to cultivation, land use, location, manufacturing – all of the components that come with medicinal marijuana use," said Supervisor Jack Duran. "And provide us the opportunity after January to then really put the meat on the bones in crafting an ordinance that suits our needs for passage later in the year."

To date, Placer County has not enacted any ordinances that regulate medicinal marijuana. Since county zoning ordinances prohibit activities that aren't expressly permitted, this has effectively banned medical marijuana in the county's unincorporated areas.

County staff advised the board that not regulating or banning medical marijuana will continue to put the county at risk of criminal activity and environmental damage.

The board is expected to take up the issue again in January.

Enrollment surge may mean Al Tahoe reopens

By Kathryn Reed

Enrollment in Lake Tahoe Unified School District is escalating to the point that officials are wondering if Al Tahoe Elementary School might need to be reopened.

The South Lake Tahoe school closed starting with the 2004-05 school year because of budget deficits and declining enrollment.

There are currently 3,988 students in the district, which is 100 more students than a year ago. The district had 4,544 students in September 2005. The numbers peaked in 1996-97 at 5,978 students.

The biggest growth continues to be at the high school. In 2014-15 there were 911 kids at South Tahoe High School and now there are 1,088.

"They like the career piece push," Superintendent Jim Tarwater said of why parents want to enroll their kids at STHS.

Between the \$64 million facilities bond approved by local voters and more than \$30 million in matching funds from the state, the district in the last few years has had a bit of a renaissance. The bulk of the money revamped STHS. With the buildings came a slew of programs.

South Tahoe Middle School has seen enrollment go from 745 students to 830.

The elementary schools are also seeing more students.

"It's why you never get rid of a school," Tarwater told *Lake Tahoe News*.

While the district has good enrollment numbers, it would like to see the attendance figures increase. Ninety-five percent is the goal. It's at about 93.7 percent.

The district loses \$60 a day per student when they are not in school.

Today the Al Tahoe site is used mostly by the Lake Tahoe Boys & Girls Club. Before it could be put back into service as an elementary school Tarwater said it needs a new boiler and flooring.

The state owes the district \$1.4 million for improvements made to STMS. When the reimbursement comes the district could use it for Al Tahoe.

A state school bond is expected to be on the November 2016 ballot. That is where the state would get the money to pay back LTUSD.

SLT council waiting for lawsuit to be served

There was no reportable action from today's emergency South Lake Tahoe City Council meeting.

They were meeting Dec. 11 to discuss the **suit filed by fellow Councilwoman JoAnn Conner** regarding her censure and ban from talking to city staff.

Mayor Wendy David after the nearly three-hour meeting told *Lake Tahoe News*, "There was not reportable action taken. We were discussing one potential case and we have not been served that case."

City Manager Nancy Kerry was at times in the locked room with the four other council members as well as City Attorney Tom Watson.

Kerry and the city have been named in the court filings. Outside counsel will need to be hired to represent both, and it could be different people. The city will be responsible for paying for Kerry's attorney.

Watson cannot represent the city or Kerry because he will likely be a witness to both parties.

Once the city and Kerry are served there is bound to be another special meeting to decide how to proceed.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Farmers now see drought as rule, not exception

By Robert Rodriguez, Fresno Bee

Farmers are no strangers to struggle or drought. But this four-year drought is different than others, they say. It's more widespread, touching nearly everyone who turns on the tap or starts an irrigation pump.

This past summer, wells dried up and farmland sat idle. The drought also came to mean that life on the farm has likely changed forever.

"In the early years when we went through a drought, we tended to say that this too shall pass," said Richard Waycott, president of the Almond Board of California in Modesto. "But

there is a different consciousness now. People are looking at the future very differently.”

Farmers talk of a new reality – one in which droughts are more of the rule than the exception, and water availability, both above and below ground, becomes less certain.

Read the whole story

Bay Area couple sues TRPA over Angora burn property

By Howard Mintz, San Jose Mercury News

Backed by a conservative legal group, a San Jose couple has taken their six-year feud with Lake Tahoe regional planners to federal court, arguing that a policy keeping them from building a house for their elderly mothers on vacant property is unconstitutional.

In a lawsuit filed Thursday in U.S. District Court in Sacramento, Ray and Teresa Burns allege that the government is violating protections against improper taking of property by denying them permits to build the South Lake Tahoe home.

The couple purchased the property in foreclosure in 2009, two years after a house on that land burned down in the 2007 Angora forest fire. The lawsuit, crafted by the Sacramento-based Pacific Legal Foundation, notes that a house had been on that same property for 30 years prior to the fire, and that the property is surrounded by other homes and businesses.

Read the whole story

Congress scrutinizes bill outlawing online gaming in Nev.

By J.D. Morris, Las Vegas Sun

Congressional lawmakers took another intense look Wednesday at a controversial bill that would ban online gaming, including in Nevada and the other two states where it is already legal.

The bill was discussed in a House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform hearing that focused largely on the legal and law enforcement aspects of gambling on the Internet. Arguments from the ban's proponents included that online gaming could not be confidently controlled and was too vulnerable to criminal activity, while ban opponents countered that legal online gambling websites are robustly regulated and actually steer Americans away from shady illegal sites.

The ban legislation, which has been introduced in both chambers of Congress, would roll back a 2011 Department of Justice opinion that paved the way for Nevada, New Jersey and Delaware to implement some form of legal online gaming.

Read the whole story

CalFire Academy investigating cheating allegations

By Robert Handa, NBC Bay Area

CalFire is taking measures to clean up its reputation after a state investigation indicated that some academy cadets may have been cheating.

CalFire is in the midst of getting ready for the winter, and El Niño, and officials definitely want to put the scandals behind them. But they also say they believe some of the allegations about firefighting training are misleading. The agency wants to dispel any public doubts that some firefighters were not properly trained.

A statewide California Highway Patrol investigation indicated some academy cadets said instructors helped students, including manipulating tests, in order to graduate as many cadets as possible. The investigation also revealed there were reported incidents of Instructors drinking alcohol on the job and sexual harassment.

[Read the whole story](#)

Snow brings power outage, cancels some classes



Snow was blowing at Sierra-at-Tahoe for much of Dec. 10. Photo/Provided

Updated: 7:29am

A large part of Meyers is without power this morning. Liberty Utilities has no estimate of when it will be restored.

Initially there were 3,500 customers in the dark. That is down to about 400 in the Christmas Valley area.

They still don't know the cause of the outage.

All schools in Lake Tahoe Unified School District are open Dec. 11.

Douglas County schools are open, too. However, only the main bus stops will be serviced.

Schools in Incline Village are on a two-hour delay.

All schools are closed in Tahoe Truckee Unified School District.

A winter storm warning remains in effect for the Lake Tahoe Basin until 10am Friday, with a few more inches of snow likely. Many parts of the basin received 8 inches or more of snow in the last 24 hours. About a foot of white stuff fell in Meyers. Donner Summit is reporting 16 inches.

It's likely going to be a powder at ski resorts for the next

few days. The National Weather Service in Reno is calling for snow through Sunday.

Roads are slick and chain controls are in effect. For the most current road conditions, click on the state icons on the home page of *Lake Tahoe News*.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

Tahoe's needy, other nonprofits (except Christmas Cheer) praise EDC Food Bank



Diane Rawski, from left, Carson Alexander and Jennifer Patterson help at the Dec. 2 El Dorado County Food Bank distribution. Photo Copyright 2015 Carolyn E. Wright

By Kathryn Reed

Carson Alexander had to choose between school and volunteering. He chose volunteering.

The South Tahoe High School senior skipped class one day last week in order to help the El Dorado County Food Bank.

He assisted several of the nearly 80 people who showed up at the American Legion Hall parking lot in South Lake Tahoe to get frozen chicken and seafood, and pantry staples. Normally that number is closer to 200, but the truck came a week late because of the snow.

“Without this, I don’t know what I would be eating,” Steve, who was waiting in line, told *Lake Tahoe News*. He went from making \$120,000 a year as a truck driver to existing on \$900 a month.

He has a 17-year-old son who is an athlete who he is trying to keep fed. Steve said he has lost 40 pounds “because of starving.”

Renee is disabled, raising two kids on her own. Child support is limited.

“It’s a difficult position to be in to need help,” she said. But she is also thankful and grateful for those who make this allocation possible.

For Diane she is most thankful for the protein the Food Bank distributes, and the fact that the food is healthy.

They all praised the summer farmers’ market where the Food Bank brings fresh produce.



In 2015, El Dorado Food Bank has provided 176,071 pounds of food to people and nonprofits in South Lake Tahoe. Photo Copyright 2015 Carolyn E. Wright

The Dec. 2 truck was the last one for the year. The next one is not scheduled until late January. The truck comes once a month to hand out food to people who qualify based on their income. The truck also makes rounds to about a half dozen nonprofits to fill their pantries.

Diane Weidinger, who runs Bread & Broth, said her nonprofit depends on the Food Bank.

“If it wasn’t for the product we get from (them), we would have to buy everything. That would cost a lot of money,” Weidinger told *Lake Tahoe News*. “We receive all of our protein from the Food Bank.”

Bread & Broth makes a hot meal every Monday for about 100

people. The organization just started Bread & Broth 4 Kids, which provides food for youngsters and their families over the weekend. B&B also works with Lake Tahoe Presbyterian Church to provide soup to the needy every Friday through a program called Second Serving.

In South Lake Tahoe, the Family Resource Center, Kelly Ridge Senior Apartments, and Senior Plaza Apartments also receive goods from the Food Bank.

The Food Bank is a nonprofit based on the West Slope. It has nothing to do with county government.

But not every entity on the South Shore likes the Food Bank.

“I hate them,” Joann Shope with Christmas Cheer told *Lake Tahoe News*.

She and Mike Sproull, who runs the Food Bank, don’t have nice things to say about each other’s organization.



Protein and fresh produce are welcome deliveries from the El Dorado County Food Bank truck. Photo Copyright 2015 Carolyn E. Wright

There was a time when the Food Bank supplied Christmas Cheer. Shope contends they were given things people wouldn’t eat, like kale. Sproull said some of what he gets is from the U.S.

Department of Food and Agriculture. He doesn't have total control over what his warehouse is filled with.

Shope believes the two organizations are similar. The reality is her group is only helping their clients, which she claims is 1,000 a month, and the Food Bank is helping people directly as well as other nonprofits.

Christmas Cheer is always claiming to be out of cash, with bare shelves.

"We need turkeys badly or hams or anything; food or cash," Shope said last week. This is for the annual distribution of a Christmas dinner that takes place Dec. 21-22 at South Tahoe Middle School.

Shope pays thousands of dollars a year to get food from the Nevada Food Bank.

Most of the nonprofits using the El Dorado County Food Bank pay \$25 a month. Bread & Broth upped its payment to \$100/month last year.

"We feel because of our Adopt a Day program and how successful it is we want to support (the Food Bank). It is important to nonprofits that the truck comes up once a month with product. We all depend on it," Weidinger said.

The Food Bank got the attention of the folks who distribute funds from the American Century Championship golf tournament, receiving a check for \$7,500 this fall. Christmas Cheer got nothing. The Food Bank must spend all of that money on the South Shore.

Shope and Christmas Cheer board member Tom Davis have criticized that decision.

"We are sophisticated. We know how to raise money," Sproull said. In the South Lake Tahoe community alone the Food Bank supplies more than \$300,000 worth of food a year.

His goal is to have a warehouse on the South Shore. While Sproull has talked to folks here about doing so, it has not come to fruition. There is only so much land available for such an enterprise, and so many volunteers who could make it work.

Sproull envisions it would be open four to five days a week for people to get food. That is what Christmas Cheer is afraid of because then it might not be relevant.

The warehouse would also then be a site where nonprofits could come get food. What the nonprofits would likely have to give up is some control and the direct access to donors like grocery stores.

EDC supervisors intend to sue auditor-controller

Updated: *On Dec. 10 at 3:10pm with county counsel comments.*

By Kathryn Reed

El Dorado County Board of Supervisors voted unanimously this week to sue a fellow elected official, Auditor-Controller Joe Harn.

At issue is payment of \$169,859 in developer mitigation fees to Diamond Springs-El Dorado Fire District. This is **not a new issue**, but is actually several years old.



Joe Harn

Harn believes it would be illegal for him to release the funds based on the county not performing its nexus studies in a timely manner and an appellate court decision that came out this fall. If Harn is correct, anyone who paid the fee could personally sue him as well as the county if he were to pay the money.

The county believes the court decision is not a factor and that the check should be written, and has told Harn to do so. Harn continually refuses to. That is why the board took the action on Dec. 8.

Before Tuesday's vote Harn had already retained a private attorney. Neither Harn nor his attorney was at the meeting, which was in Somerset instead of Placerville.

Harn on Nov. 15 asked in writing for a deputy county counsel to be assigned to assist with the matter in order to get it resolved. That has never happened.

"They ordered me to transfer some money. I said I need a more robust legal opinion before I transfer the money. I haven't gotten one yet," Harn told *Lake Tahoe News* on Dec. 9. "In order to sue me they need to establish written legal arguments as to specifically why I need to do this. That is what I have been asking Robyn Drivon for for a long time."

Drivon told *Lake Tahoe News*, "How many written legal opinions does he need? It has been asked and it has been answered. This is an issue driven by facts. He has been provided all the facts."

Neither Brian Veerkamp, chair of the Board of Supervisors, nor Sue Novasel, who represents Lake Tahoe on the board, returned a phone call.

Drivon said she hopes conversations between her office and Harn's continue so litigation can be avoided. She doesn't have a hard date as to when she will call off talks, but said she is hoping for resolution in the next few weeks.