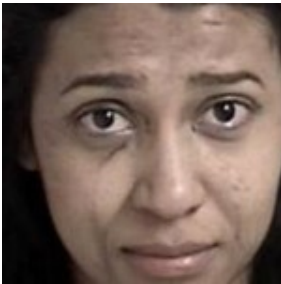


No contest plea in fatal DUI case

A South Lake Tahoe woman this week pleaded no contest to gross vehicular manslaughter while intoxicated and DUI causing injury.



Olga Nayeli
Pena-Arce

Olga Nayeli Pena-Arce, 21, was driving her 2000 Saturn sedan west on Pioneer Trail on Nov. 24, 2014, at a high rate of speed, lost control of the vehicle, and slammed into a retaining wall. The impact killed Aimee Campos, 21, of South Lake Tahoe and injured the other passenger.

Investigators found Pena-Arce had a blood alcohol level of more than 0.08, and that she was driving in excess of 75 mph in the 35 mph zone.

She will return to El Dorado County Superior Court on Nov. 13 for sentencing. She faces a possible state prison sentence up to 12 years, eight months.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

S. Tahoe council backs prosperity center

By Kathryn Reed

Money was the dominant subject at Tuesday's South Lake Tahoe City Council meeting.

After multiple attempts by the Tahoe Prosperity Center to get \$10,000 from the city, the council said yes on a 4-1 vote on Sept. 15. Councilwoman JoAnn Conner was the dissenting member. Conner is against giving any nonprofit taxpayer money.

Mayor Hal Cole noted the city is a voting member on the TPC board and that it is not a traditional nonprofit because of the public input, and that it is a regional body that can do things the city alone cannot do.

Councilman Tom Davis reluctantly voted to spend the money, but said without proven deliverables in the next year, he won't do so again.

While at previous meetings the council had talked about designating what the money would be earmarked for, this was not the ultimate decision.

—

Resident Jerry Goodman brought forward a desire to institute parking permits for his neighborhood near Heavenly Mountain Resort to deal with vacation home rentals taking over city streets.

Councilman Tom Davis recused himself because his company has rentals in the area.

The vote was 2-2, and therefore died. Cole and Councilwoman Wendy David opposed the permits, while Conner and Councilman

Austin Sass were for them.

"I don't think this is the right solution for vacation home rental problems," Cole said.

—

Jerry Bindel, chairman of the Tourism Improvement District, and Carol Chaplin, executive director of the Lake Tahoe Visitors Authority, gave a tourism report. TID collects transient occupancy tax on top of what the city mandates.

Bindel is expecting a 2 percent increase in 2016 in hotel taxes collected; this is on top of the 2 percent that has been accrued to date this year.

Cycling is likely to become a bigger piece of the marketing story, including the bike park at Bijou Community Park that opens Saturday.

The Tahoe South ad campaign is being re-thought.

Much of what Chaplin said had been covered in that day's **Lake Tahoe News** story.

In other action:

- Mark Carlson, who is in charge of the city's finance department, is now also the assistant city manager. He will receive a 5 percent boost in pay.
- The council approved the **budget** for fiscal year 2015-16.
- The Oct. 6 council meeting has been canceled so most of the council may attend the League of California Cities conference.
- The council approved the agreement with Lake Tahoe Unified School District regarding **ball fields**.

Firefighters make progress on NorCal blazes

Blue skies have returned to the Lake Tahoe Basin as firefighters continue to make inroads on two major burns in Northern California.

Fire spread was minimal overnight for the Butte and Valley fires. Cooler temps and some moisture are aiding suppression efforts.

The Butte Fire, which has brought smoke to Tahoe-Truckee-Carson-Reno for several days, is at 71,780 acres and 45 percent containment. Still, 6,400 structures remain threatened in Amador and Calaveras counties. Mandatory evacuations for Amador County have been lifted.

Lost are 233 residences, 175 outbuildings, with 15 structures damaged.

The Valley Fire, that is mostly in Lake County north of Napa County, has charred 70,000 acres and is 30 percent contained. It wiped out 585 homes and hundreds of other structures. Another 7,650 are threatened.

The cause of both fires is under investigation.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

North Shore churches vandalized

Churches in Tahoe City and Kings Beach were vandalized between Sept. 13 and Sept. 14. One religious statue and exterior walls were spray painted with offensive statements.

This comes on the heels of a rash of church vandalism in Incline Village. Detectives in Placer and Washoe counties are collaborating.

Anyone with information regarding these crimes is urged to contact Detective John Riella at 530.581.6325. Anyone who has information but wishes to remain anonymous and be eligible for a cash reward of up to \$1,000 should contact Placer County Crime Stoppers at 800.923.8191.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

EDC ed board takes no action regarding supe

By Kathryn Reed and Joann Eisenbrandt

Jeremy Meyers, superintendent of the El Dorado County Office of Education, was not at Tuesday's special board meeting where he was the only agenda item.

He did write a letter to the board and had spoken to each member before the meeting.

"As you know, as elected county superintendent, I am not

employed by the board, nor does the board evaluate my performance. As such, I believe there is not an appropriate role for me to play at this board's meeting," he wrote.



Jeremy Meyers

The letter was read into the record Sept. 15 by board President John Lane.

David Gerard, who is the attorney representing the board and the superintendent, cited a state Attorney General's opinion stating it would not be a conflict of interest for him to represent both entities.

Tuesday's special meeting was called to discuss what, if any, recourse the board might have in handling Meyers' DUI from earlier this summer.

A California Highway Patrol officer found Meyers asleep in a construction zone on Highway 49 at 2:45pm June 9, less than three hours after he left a board meeting. The CHP recorded Meyers' blood alcohol level at nearly twice the legal limit. He pleaded no contest to driving under the influence with a blood alcohol level of just more than 0.08.

A judge sentenced Meyers to five days in county jail that was then commuted to five days of home arrest.

In the letter to the board, Meyers wrote, "The home arrest portion of my sentence was done on personal time, not on work time. I will continue to separate my personal matter from my responsibilities as the county superintendent."

Unlike an employee who has differentiated work and personal time, an elected official does not have a set number of work hours. Even when they are away from the office they are still accountable to the people who put them in office – the public.

Meyers did not return or decline any of his nearly \$200,000 annual salary for the five days he was on house arrest.

He was driving his own vehicle at the time of his DUI. He drives his own vehicle for work and is reimbursed for mileage by the county. As is normal with a DUI arrest, Meyers' driver's license now restricts him to drive only for work, which given the nature of his position could be almost anywhere at anytime.

Board member Heidi Weiland, who had initiated the special meeting, asked if the county office of ed's drug-free work environment policy mentions alcohol. It does. It says one cannot possess, use, or be under the influence of a controlled substance at a school or other district workplace. Meyers was not accused of being under the influence at a work site.

About two dozen people attended Tuesday's 45-minute meeting in Placerville – a much larger number than is usual. Seven of them spoke.

Nick Ridout, a part-time teacher for the county, asked the board not to play politics. He adamantly defended Meyers, calling him "an honorable man and a good human being."

A couple others echoed that sentiment.

Sherri Lum-Alarcon, though, said there should be consequences for what Meyers did, especially because he is in education.

Ken Cater, who used to work for the county Probation Department, said Meyers being released to his wife and not taken to jail was "not a sweetheart deal. It was pretty much standard stuff."

Instead of being taken directly to jail, Meyers was released to the custody of his wife. Law enforcement officials not with probation have told *Lake Tahoe News* it is “highly unusual” for that to have occurred.

Girard explained in detail the relationship between the board and superintendent, all of whom are elected.

“Neither is superior over the other. They each have their own responsibilities,” Girard said. “They work as a partnership. The education codes lay out what each does. They work together in a give and take. Both are responsible to the electorate.”

The board had little to say, with members Georgie Knight and Debbie Akin saying nothing.

“I clearly understand our role. I have complete faith that Jeremy will act in the county’s best interest,” board Vice Chairman Rich Fischer said.

Lane added, “I second what Rich said.”

Meyers concluded his letter to the board by saying, “It is my belief the integrity of the elected office of the county superintendent and the elected board of education is best served by recognizing the separate functions and duties of each.”

Lane asked if the board wanted to take any action; no one responded and the meeting was adjourned.

Growing up poor in U.S.

impacts adult life

By Victoria Stilwell, Bloomberg Business

We already know that poverty disproportionately affects children, with about 20 percent of those younger than 18 impoverished versus about 13 percent of adults. New research from the Urban Institute in Washington shows child poverty is actually more common than those headline statistics suggest, and that has consequences for success in adulthood.

Some 39 percent of children are poor for at least one year before they reach their 18th birthday, according to Caroline Ratcliffe, a senior fellow and economist at Urban. For black children, that statistic is 75 percent, compared with 30 percent of whites.

A child is identified as poor if they live in a family whose gross annual money income is below the federal poverty level. For a family of three in 2015, that threshold is \$20,090, according to the paper.

Read the whole story

Poll: Politics at local level pointless

By Cathleen Decker, Los Angeles Times

Disdain and disgust have been common sentiments when it comes to Americans' views of the national political environment. But local government was supposed to be the safe haven, where things got done in a more neighborly way, with a lot less

frustration than, say, dealing with the groaning bureaucracies of the IRS or Veterans Affairs.

It hasn't worked out that way, exactly.

In a somewhat surprising twist, a new USC Dornsife/California Community Foundation/Los Angeles Times poll on community involvement suggests tension between California voters and their local governments.

A quarter or more of California voters say their elected officials are not responsive to their needs, a figure larger than might have been expected years ago. Voters cast a broad brush of negativity about the usefulness of volunteering for or giving money to political candidates and politicians.

Read the whole story

NV Energy proposes solar subscription program

By Jason Hildago, Reno Gazette-Journal

NV Energy is seeking approval from the state for a new community solar program that will allow customers to access renewable energy through a subscription.

The Subscription Solar Pilot Program will allow customers to receive a production credit on their bill even without rooftop solar on their homes by subscribing to 100-kilowatt-hour blocks of solar power from NV Energy.

The energy will come from one of two solar farms that will be developed in the northern and southern part of the state if

the proposal is approved by the Public Utilities Commission of Nevada. Each facility can have up to 5 megawatts of capacity, said Marie Steele, NV Energy manager of renewable energy.

Read the whole story

I-80 roadwork in Truckee to cause delays

Emergency paving operations on westbound Interstate 80 started today and will last through Sept. 17.

Work on deteriorating pavement in the right lanes of westbound I-80 between the agricultural inspection station and Donner Park will require alternating closures of right lanes 2 and 3 as well as ramp closures at five Truckee exits. Expect traffic delays between 8am-8pm.

While project operations may result in construction schedule changes, ramp closures from or on to I-80 are anticipated to occur as follows:

- **Sept. 15:**
 - o Overland Trail WB off ramp.
- **Sept. 16:**
 - o Highway 267 WB off ramp
 - o Highway 89 NB on ramp
 - o Central Truckee WB off ramp.

Sept. 17:

- o Central Truckee WB on ramp
- o Highway 89 SB on and off ramps.

Paving and striping work will continue the following week with the same scheduled closures. All work is scheduled to be completed by Oct. 15.

Calif. wildfires – worst may be yet to come

By Paul Rogers, San Jose Mercury News

Summer officially ends next week, but California's devastating wildfire season will almost certainly rage on.

As of Monday, three enormous blazes – the Valley Fire in Lake, Napa and Sonoma counties; the Rough Fire in the Sierra National Forest in Fresno County; and the Butte Fire, burning in Amador and Calaveras counties – had already charred 270,000 acres, an area 10 times the size of the city of San Francisco.

Experts said at least another month, possibly two, of extreme fire risk remains before hoped-for El Niño winter rains could begin to dampen dry grasses, shrubs and trees all over California.

And, if history is any indication, the most destructive fires can come in October, when conditions are their driest. Major infernos like the 1991 Oakland Hills Fire, which killed 25 people and destroyed 2,843 homes, and the 2003 Cedar Fire and the 2007 Witch Fire, which together burned nearly 3,500 homes

in San Diego County, all began in October.

Through Monday, 738,516 acres had burned in California in 2015, a 75 percent increase from the same date last year, and a 37 percent increase when compared to the five-year average.

Read the whole story