

No takers for old KMS site despite lower price

Even with a lower price tag, no buyer has come forward to purchase the old Kingsbury Middle School site in Stateline.

The topic was on the Douglas County School District's board agenda last week.

Superintendent Teri White said the district had anticipated an offer would come forward, but it didn't materialize. However, she said it's possible something will happen in the future.

"There has been some interest and we've had some inquiries," White told Lake Tahoe News. "The latest resolution allowed for averaging the two appraisals which brought the price down a little; to \$3.125 million."

DCSD in January 2012 voted to put the 10-acre school on the market with an asking price of \$4 million. The buildings encompass 36,000-square-feet.

The item is on a three-month cycle to keep coming back to the board.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Court decisions good news for FOIA users

By Jonathan Peters, Columbia Journalism Review

As the Freedom of Information Act approaches its 50th birthday

next year, a major advocacy effort continues to push important reforms in Congress. But Capitol Hill isn't the only place where FOIA's future is being forged. Two federal appeals courts recently handed down opinions that clarify and affirm the rights of requestors and the responsibilities of agencies – one of them with particular importance for groups that plan to release publicly the information they gather.

That case comes from the D.C. Circuit, which in late August handed down an opinion that has big implications for advocacy groups and nontraditional publishers, increasing their chances of successfully claiming FOIA fee waivers. The case arose after Cause of Action, a conservative nonprofit organization, submitted three FOIA requests to the Federal Trade Commission, which denied the nonprofit's fee-waiver claims.

The FOIA permits agencies to charge reasonable fees for “document search, duplication, and review, when records are requested for commercial use.” Depending on the request, these fees can be substantial. But certain types of requests and requesters are entitled to fee waivers, and two were at issue in this case.

Read the whole story

Residents run for safety as wildfire explodes

By Corina Knoll and Bettina Boxall, Los Angeles Times

Fueled by heat and winds, a wildfire exploded Saturday afternoon to 10,000 acres in Lake County, threatening several communities and leaving four firefighters with second-degree

burns.

The Valley Fire spread so quickly that residents in Cobb and surrounding communities had little time to flee. Photos on social media showed towering flames descending on towns and jammed highways.

Evacuees crowded roads in the area, with firefighters warning that more than 1,000 structures were threatened. There were reports Saturday night that some homes were lost and that people were trapped awaiting rescue.

The state was calling in hundreds of firefighters from around California to battle the blaze, which was hopscotching across oak woodlands and grasslands, driven by 20 to 30 mph winds.

Across Amador and Calaveras counties, nearly 4,000 fire personnel battled the Butte fire that began southeast of Sacramento and has plowed through 65,000 acres. Swift and stubborn, it started Wednesday, doubled in size the following night, then doubled again the next day – prompting Gov. Jerry Brown to declare a state of emergency.

Read the whole story

Gold miners rescued near Lake Tahoe

By KRNV-TV

The California Highway Patrol confirmed Thursday that it used one of its helicopters to rescue two gold miners near Lake Tahoe.

Authorities said California Highway Patrol Helicopter 20 was requested for a search and rescue by Placer County Sheriff's Office for two miners that had been reported missing in the Sawtooth Ridge area at about 4:20pm Sept. 9.

According to an official statement issued by Placer County authorities, three friends had reportedly gone gold panning on a tributary of the North Fork of the American River below Sawtooth Ridge on Sept. 8.

Read the whole story

Nevada's middle man — Gov. Sandoval

By Jon Ralston, Politico

As Republicans look on in dismay at the chaos of the party's presidential race and a Congress that can't seem to get anything done, their focus keeps turning to Nevada Governor Brian Sandoval. Reelected in a landslide last year, he has earned a reputation as a chief executive who somehow manages to get things done. Jon Ralston, a *Politico* magazine contributing editor and longtime Nevada political reporter, talked with Sandoval about why he's staying focused—for now—on fixing his state.

JR: Is there a place for a guy like Brian Sandoval in the Republican Party who says, "You know what, I think at times you have to raise taxes, you have to expand Medicaid even though you don't necessarily agree with the overarching Obamacare"?

BS: Absolutely—it's about solutions. I stepped in here—the highest unemployment in the country, second highest in the country uninsured, \$2 billion budget deficit, an ineffective economic development structure, a failing infrastructure, all of that. People want someone who's going to find solutions and make tough decisions, and do what's in the best interest of the state. I don't see why there wouldn't be a place for somebody who wants to do that.

Read the whole story

Whittell donation to help with STEM programs

A \$50,000 donation to Whittell High School is designed to help improve its science, technology, engineering, and mathematics programs.

Douglas County School District is making a concerted effort to enhance its STEM offerings.

The donation by Big George Ventures will support two AP classes in particular – environmental science and computer science.

“The bulk of the funding is to get the teachers some training,” Superintendent Teri White told *Lake Tahoe News*. The plan is those two teachers will then share their new knowledge with other faculty members.

Money will also be spent on field trips the district wouldn't otherwise be able to offer students. This includes community outreach so students can see how classroom studies are

applicable to the work world; with the idea it might be a career they would want to pursue.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

Calif. lawmakers want special session to tackle drought

By Juliet Williams, AP

SACRAMENTO – A bipartisan group of 47 state Assembly members delivered a letter to Gov. Jerry Brown on Friday asking him to declare a special session to tackle problems related to California's ongoing drought.

In the letter provided to The Associated Press, they say a special session is needed to address the unprecedented water crisis, which could worsen as California faces the prospect of an El Nino weather pattern that could bring severe flooding.

"We have seen from widespread reports that as much as half of the \$687 million set aside to help drought-stricken communities remains unspent in state accounts – and will remain there until 2016," says the letter. "In addition, we are seeing the same slow and lethargic project pace with the funds raised as a result of last year's Proposition 1 ballot measure."

The AP reported in June that more than \$320 million that was supposed to be rushed to drought-stricken California communities was sitting unspent in government bank accounts, more than a year after lawmakers voted to use the money to provide water, protect wells from contamination and upgrade

outdated water systems.

A special session addressing the drought should also include “thoughtful and careful review of environmental policies that – even if well-meaning – may be doing more harm than good,” the letter says.

Assemblyman Devon Mathis, a Republican who represents some of the hardest hit areas of the state, spearheaded the effort.

“It just makes me sad. This is one of the worst public health epidemics that we have, this is up and down the state, and we have to do something about it,” he said in an interview before taking the letter into the governor’s office. “We talk about all these problems about water and we don’t really have a solid plan.”

He said while lawmakers have been talking about the drought for much of the regular session scheduled to wrap up late Friday, little has been accomplished.

A spokesman for Brown, Gareth Lacy, said the administration has taken hundreds of coordinated actions to address the drought, and a sound process is in place to ensure assistance is distributed properly.

“To date, hundreds of millions have been committed to emergency drought relief, disaster assistance, water conservation and infrastructure projects across California – with much more on the way,” Lacy said in an email. “This investment and response is the product of Republicans and Democrats setting aside politics and working together, without any need for a special session.”

He cited new rebate programs to replace old appliances and tear out water-guzzling lawns, and groundwater legislation to preserve vulnerable basins.

Democratic Assemblyman Luis Alejo, of Watsonville, said in a

statement that the Legislature must ensure disadvantaged communities that rely on wells have access to safe drinking water.

“Additionally, as forecasters predict strong El Nino storms to hit California this winter, we must ensure our communities have flood controls in place and healthy rivers that can act as safeguards to the storms,” he said.

Republican Sen. Andy Vidak, of Hanford, also added to the call for a special session.

Brown called special sessions this year to address a \$59 billion transportation infrastructure backlog over the next decade and figure out a new funding mechanism for Medi-Cal, the state’s health insurance program for the poor, but lawmakers were set to wrap up Friday without proposals to address either.

LTUSD enrollment increasing

Enrollment in Lake Tahoe Unified School District is on the upswing.

So far there are 3,972 students. This compares to last school year at 3,888 kids.

South Tahoe High School has seen a huge spike; going from 942 students to 1,050.

“The high school has popped from last year,” Superintendent Jim Tarwater told *Lake Tahoe News*. “More publicity is paying off.”

The district has made a concerted effort with the school’s

website to promote the facilities that were built in the last few years as well as the programs associated with them.

There are 34 new teachers in the district, as well as new employees in other disciplines.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

Butte Fire: 15 structures lost, 10% containment

Fifteen structures have been destroyed in the Butte Fire that is raging out of control in Amador and Calaveras counties.

The fire has consumed 64,728 acres and is 10 percent contained as of Saturday morning.

It is burning east of Jackson in extremely dry terrain.

About 6,400 structures remain threatened and evacuations continue to grow.

More than 3,000 people are working to contain the fire that started Sept. 9. The cause is under investigation.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

14% of U.S. households struggle to put food on the table

By Jordan Malter, CNN Money

Last year, 17.4 million households struggled to put food on the table.

That means 14 percent of households either experienced a reduced quality of diet or disrupted eating patterns at some time during the year, the U.S. Department of Agriculture said in its annual food security report.

That percentage is 'essentially unchanged' from 2013, the USDA said. This is despite the fact that the economy improved overall during that time period, with the unemployment rate falling from 8 percent in January 2013 to 5.6 percent by the end of 2014, when the USDA conducted its survey.

Read the whole story