

Calif. studying health effects of artificial turf

By Melody Gutierrez, San Francisco Chronicle

SACRAMENTO — California officials have authorized spending \$2.9 million to study the health effects of using recycled tire pieces on artificial turf fields, hoping to put to rest a simmering debate over their safety.

But even as the health effects are studied, the state will dole out millions of dollars in subsidies to schools and cities so that they can install public playgrounds and fields using the materials in question.

“I think it’s irresponsible,” said Sen. Jerry Hill, D-San Mateo, who authored legislation that would have stopped the grant program while the state conducted the study.

Hill’s bill was killed amid fierce lobbying from well-funded opponents in the tire recycling industry as well as labor interests. The groups spent nearly \$300,000 for lobbying on Hill’s bill and other legislation during the first three months of the year, according to filings with the secretary of state.

Read the whole story

Kings Beach to re-do

roundabouts

Construction on Highway 28 in Kings Beach will resume Aug. 10 in order to complete the highway work this year.

Work will be focused along the north side of Highway 28 between Secline and Deer streets. One lane of traffic in each direction will be maintained at all times, and a designated parking lane along the south side of the highway will also be made available.

Modifications and further construction work is planned for the roundabouts After careful consideration because Caltrans says they could inhibit safe and efficient snow removal operations. This construction work will occur after-hours in August.

The concrete curbs of the four islands leading into and out of the roundabouts will be flattened. This design change won't leave enough room for landscaping in the center of the islands, so instead, they will be paved with concrete.

These unanticipated modifications also increase the possibility that some of the neighborhood grid work may not be completed until 2016.

Q & D is also constructing three parking lots this fall as part of the project. One lot will be along the south side of Highway 28 between Coon and Fox streets. The second lot will be just east of the post office on the north side of Salmon Avenue. The third lot will be located at the intersection of Deer Street and Rainbow Avenue directly behind the former Carpenters' Union Hall. This work is expected to begin in August.

TART staff has been relocating signage and temporary benches to help public transit riders get used to the new bus stop locations. Two permanent bus shelters will be constructed this fall.

Socio-economic impact of VHRs to be studied

Even though the South Lake Tahoe City Council on July 21 is expected to vote on a vacation home rental ordinance, the city is going to spend money after that fact on a consultant who will prepare a socio-economic impact study of vacation home rentals.

The city says it will be a comprehensive, unbiased report assessing how VHR's impact the city, community, housing market and day-to-day quality of life for residents.

The VHR issue has become more heated and contentious in the last year between residents who believe these rentals are ruining neighborhoods and those who believe they are another economic driver in a town whose main industry is tourism.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Calif. gas prices surge to highest in nation

By Jessica Rogness, Vacaville Reporter

The price at the California gas pump continues to be the most expensive in the nation.

Wednesday's average gas price in California was \$3.86 per gallon of unleaded gasoline, according to AAA Northern California. The average per gallon on Tuesday was \$3.80.

On Tuesday, AAA Northern California spokeswoman Cynthia Harris noted that Tuesday's price was a 36 cents jump in one week, and 6 cents higher since last month's AAA Northern California gas survey on July 10.

By comparison, Wednesday's national average price for regular unleaded gasoline was \$2.78 per gallon.

Read the whole story

LTUSD to reorganize front office

With all the retirements in Lake Tahoe Unified School District, changes are coming to the front office.

At the July 21 6pm board of trustee meeting the electeds are being asked to approve a reorganization of the district office. The proposal affects the composition of cabinet, coordinators and principals.

The new coordinator positions and/or principals will participate with the cabinet when needed to ensure program development and efficiency.

Instead of replacing CFO Deb Yates, the district is likely to have a chief business and operations officer who will

oversee information technology, facilities, nutrition and purchasing, and the newly created financial services director position.

“This will improve district-wide efficiency, communication and problem solving. The shift from the fiscal services specialist to a director of financial services allows the senior accounting team to receive direction in day-to-day business,” the staff report says.

The receptionist-office assistant position will be retitled to include accounting assistant to better reflect current job duties.

A new custodial supervisor position is on the agenda.

The Human Resources Department is also likely to be revamped. The HR administrative assistant will become an HR classified personnel specialist, with duties including chief labor negotiations, district health benefits program, state required employee training, and assignment of retiree work program for benefits.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

Placer County to vote on closing animal shelter

The Placer County Board of Supervisors is contemplating closing the animal shelter in Tahoe Vista.

A group of volunteers is trying to keep the facility open.

The supervisors are meeting July 20 at 2:30pm at the shelter

(849 Shelter Road, Tahoe Vista) to receive a tour and see the facility. They will then go to Truckee at 3:30pm to tour the animal shelter at 10961 Stevens Lane.

On the July 21 agenda is an item to just have the Truckee facility.

“The Tahoe Visa shelter is over 40 years old approaching the original operating life expectancy, and is not considered to be compliant with current standards for animal care and sheltering as recommended by the Humane Society of the United States,” the staff report says.

The county would pay the Truckee shelter \$750,000 and the agreement would be for 30 years.

Staff expects to save \$100,000 a year. The report says, “This agreement will eliminate the need to upgrade or build a new shelter potentially saving several million dollars in the near future.”

The meeting starts at 9am at the Resort at Squaw Creek.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

Moody's sees brighter outlook for U.S. gaming

By J.D. Morris, Las Vegas Sun

Moody's Investors Service is feeling much better about the financial future of gaming than it did around the same time last year.

The credit rating agency said today that it has upgraded the outlook for the U.S. gaming industry to stable from negative. Moody's assigned the industry a negative outlook last June partly because of declining gaming revenue, but a new agency report now anticipates that revenue will rise for the next 12 to 18 months.

Moody's Senior Vice President Keith Foley said in a statement that the agency thinks gaming revenue will increase by as much as 2 percent each month compared to the year before. He said that should result in increases of 3 percent to 4 percent in the industry's earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation and amortization.

Read the whole story

Study: Texting while driving on the rise

By Molly Martinez, KRON-TV

In a worrying trend, more California drivers are using their cell phones while driving this year than last, according to a

study released by state officials today.

The study, conducted by the state Office of Traffic Safety and the UC Berkeley Safe Transportation Research and Education Center, centers on observations of driver behavior.

Researchers this year observed 9.2 percent of drivers using their cell phone. That marks a 39 percent increase from 2014, when 6.6 percent of drivers were seen using their cell phones, but remains lower than the all-time high of 10.8 percent recorded in 2012, officials said.

Read the whole story

Studies: World's water basins being depleted

By Rosanna Xia, Los Angeles Times

More than a third of the largest groundwater basins in the world are being depleted faster than they are getting replenished, and there are little to no accurate data showing just how much water is left in them, according to two studies published Tuesday.

Researchers used data from NASA satellites to examine the 37 largest aquifers in the world. They found that eight were being depleted with almost no natural replenishment and five, including the Central Valley, were “extremely” or “highly stressed,” with not enough water flowing back to offset how much is sucked up. Saudi Arabia, India, Pakistan and northern Africa have the most stressed aquifers, according to the research.

The studies spotlight increasing sustainability concerns as regions like California rely more and more on groundwater during times of severe drought.

Read the whole story

TPRID to have 4 seats on November ballot

By Kathryn Reed

Tahoe Paradise Resort Improvement District may finally have an elected board instead of one appointed by sitting members.

Four of the five seats are supposed to be elected, with the fifth being appointed by the El Dorado County Board of Supervisors. The District 5 supervisor usually fills that seat.

Four seats will be open on the Nov. 3 ballot. The terms of Judy Clot and Pete Nelligan are expiring. Those are for four-year terms. The other two seats are for terms that expire Dec. 1, 2017. Joe Cardinale and Victor Babbitt are in those seats.

People living within the boundaries of the district are eligible to run. The deadline to file is Aug. 7 at 5pm. To date no one has filed. If the candidates run unopposed, there will be no election and they will be sworn in. And if fewer than three apply, then the board may appointment people.

The county election's department with last November's contest started a program designed to help applicants with the process.

“They come in and get a packet, we go over each page they need to complete and do their declaration of candidacy,” Kim Smith with county elections told *Lake Tahoe News*.

The idea is to make running for office not seem so daunting. People in Tahoe are encouraged to use the local recorder’s office instead of driving to Placerville. While November was the pilot of the new process, the county intends to offer this service to all candidates going forward. It is not mandatory, though.

For more information or for TPRID board candidates to schedule an appointment, contact Smith at 530-621-7490 or kim.smith@edcgov.us.