

Whittell High trying to figure out its future



Brian Rippet talks Oct. 7 while task force member Stacy Noyes takes notes and facilitator Nancy McMillan listens. Photo/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

ZEPHYR COVE – While a group of concerned individuals is tasked with answering three questions regarding the future of Whittell High School, the chore is turning out to be anything but simple and straightforward.

The committee – made up of parents, teachers, and a community representative – came about after last spring's uprising regarding staffing and course offering issues at the Zephyr Cove 7-12 school. Staff, administrators and board members are often on hand to help or to answer questions.

Last week was the second time they met to discuss:

- What should/could the format and course offerings look like if Whittell stays approximately the same size?
- What should/could the format and course offerings look like if Whittell grows in enrollment?
- What should/could the lake schools' format and course offerings look like if Whittell/Zephyr Cove Elementary decline in enrollment?

Member Brian Rippet on Oct. 7 pointed out how prior to 2010 there was an opportunity for students in California (that goes beyond the Alpine County agreement) to attend Whittell. He said the board took that opportunity away unbeknownst to staff and parents. This has led to trust issues.

It was also pointed out that when programs start and stop it does not build confidence in parents to enroll their students.

(No board members attended last week's meeting, nor did the superintendent.)

Member Stacy Noyes has been talking to Lake Tahoe Unified School District Superintendent Jim Tarwater and Lake Tahoe Community College President Kindred Murillo about Douglas County students taking classes across the state line. The biggest roadblock was put up by Nevada when it eliminated the good neighbor policy a handful of years ago.

Only six credits from outside Nevada can be applied toward high school graduation. However, unlimited community college credits from a Silver State institution would be allowed. The problem, though, is that LTCC is closer for Whittell students than Western Nevada College.

Noyes said there is work being done at higher levels to rectify the California-Nevada enrollment issue so perhaps the local group should focus on other things.

Parent Carol Chaplin pointed out how her sons were promised

the opportunity to be able to take WNC classes, but that was short-lived. In fall 2008, Whittell had an agreement with WNC. Whittell teachers taught WNC classes in addition to their regular five periods. One was a section of composition and one of trig/pre-calculus.

She pleaded with the panel to find things in the short-term that would benefit her son who is still at Whittell, since one son has already graduated.

One of the more immediate measures that could be done, though it doesn't affect current students, is to look at a program that welcomes potential new students as a way to grow enrollment. There was talk of how people have called the school and been turned off before even scheduling a visit. A member of the parents club said she would look into whether that group would take on a more formal orientation program.

Task force members don't want money to be a reason not to consider an idea. They want to explore the idea for merit first.

Reaching out to area preschools was also broached because they are the feeder programs for the school district.

Also to be explored is why people who live in Douglas County are opting not to go Zephyr Cove Elementary or Whittell High schools, as well as finding out why new enrollees picked DCSD.

The next meeting is Oct. 21 at 4:30pm at Whittell High School.

Military prepares to respond

to climate change

By W.J. Hennigan, Washington Post

Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel addressed the Conference of Defense Ministers of the Americas on Monday, unveiling a comprehensive plan for how the U.S. military will address the effects of climate change.

Rising global temperatures, increasing sea levels and intensifying weather events will challenge global stability, he said, and could lead to food and water shortages, pandemic disease and disputes over refugees and resources.

The Pentagon's "2014 Climate Change Adaptation Roadmap" describes how global warming will bring new demands on the military.

Among the report's conclusions: Coastal military installations that are vulnerable to flooding will need to be altered; humanitarian assistance missions will be more frequent in the face of more intense natural disasters; weapons and other critical military equipment will need to work under more severe weather conditions.

Read the whole story

King Fire terrain susceptible to more devastation

By Hudson Sangree, Sacramento Bee

Rugged and isolated, the Rubicon River Valley on the border of

El Dorado and Placer counties was for many years an idyll of old-growth trees and icy swimming holes. Then the King Fire roared through last month, turning a 20-mile stretch of the canyon into a vast dead zone of ashen earth and smoldering stumps.

Experts now worry that the devastation and the extreme temperatures of the fire, which scorched much of the soil and reduced its ability to hold together and absorb runoff, could lead to floods and mudslides when winter storms arrive. The same conditions affect parts of the south fork of the American River near Pollock Pines, where an arsonist allegedly started the 98,000-acre King Fire on Sept. 13.

Members of the U.S. Forest Service's Burned Area Emergency Response team, or BAER, swooped in last week, as the fire was finally contained, to assess the immediate dangers remaining in its aftermath. Members include botanists, hydrologists and geologists. Their job is to deal with such immediate threats as falling trees and crumbling roads.

BAER coordinator Eric Nicita said possible mudslides are a major concern, because when the top layer of soil cooks, it looses the fungi, bacteria and other organic material that hold it together and allow it to absorb water. In these conditions, rain runs through soil and tears it down instead of percolating into the earth.

"The only thing the water can do is roll downslope," said Nicita, a soil scientist with the Forest Service. "All of a sudden, your flow is increasing incredibly."

One of the most vulnerable danger zones from the King fire is the White Meadows Road area above the south fork of the American River, along Highway 50 near Fresh Pond. That's where a dozen homes burned and where residents are already busy clearing dead trees and starting to rebuild.

Read the whole story

Carbon monoxide scare on Kingsbury Grade

Three rooms at the Lodge at Kingsbury Crossing in Stateline had to be evacuated today because of carbon monoxide.

An alarm went off in one room just before 10am Oct. 14. The odorless gas then spread to two other rooms.

“It was coming from the vent, but we’re not sure if it was drawing from somewhere else,” Tahoe Douglas Fire Marshal Eric Guevin told *Lake Tahoe News*.

It’s possible the heater could be the source, or it could have been from the exhaust of a vehicle that was left running near the air intake.

The county building department and utility company also responded to the Lower Kingsbury Grade resort.

No one was hurt or became ill.

The heat was shut off and the rooms cleared of the potentially deadly gas.

All tourist accommodation units are supposed to have carbon monoxide detectors in each room per Nevada law. The same goes for California. In Douglas County, these get inspected each year by the fire department.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

Lake Tahoe Hyatt operator calls proxy fight 'disruptive'

By Howard Stutz, Las Vegas Review-Journal

Casino operator Full House Resorts said Monday the Las Vegas-based company has been "evaluating strategic alternatives for several months" and called a proxy fight by a group of shareholders "inappropriate and disruptive."

The company said in a statement it was exploring options, such as "potential merger or sale of the company."

The statement followed a proxy solicitation filed last week with the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission by a group of Full House shareholders. The group is led by former Pinnacle Entertainment CEO Dan Lee and is seeking a special stockholders meeting to remake the company's board of directors.

Full House owns three casinos: one in Indiana, one in Mississippi and the Stockman's Casino in Fallon. The company also manages the Grand Lodge Casino at Hyatt Regency Lake Tahoe under a lease agreement. In September, the company's management contract for an Indian casino in New Mexico ended.

Full House said it would "inform its stockholders of the result of its review of strategic alternatives at the appropriate time" and asked its shareholders to not take any actions on the proxy filing.

Read the whole story

Safe connections to STMS being plotted

By Kathryn Reed

On a good day maybe three dozen of the nearly 800 students at South Tahoe Middle School ride their bike to school. Some walk, even more get a ride either from their parents, friends' parents or via the school bus.

For anyone who has been by the school in the morning or afternoon it's easy to see why parents may not want their child to walk or bike to the campus. The school fronts a state highway and has a four-lane major thoroughfare on one side.

Along Al Tahoe Boulevard the sidewalks are sporadic. It's most dangerous by the school because of the bus barn on the school side and all the driveways to the shopping center on the other side.



Planners want to make it safer to bike and walk to South Tahoe Middle School.
Photo/LTN file

Because this is the only 6-8 school in South Lake Tahoe students are coming from all parts of the district. And the routes to get there are not ideal.

This is why a group in town is looking at how to improve the trail system in the area to make it safer for students.

"At the end of it we will have a full connectivity plan," Gavin Feiger with the Community Mobility Group told *Lake Tahoe News*. "Consultants will provide alternatives about how to connect to surrounding neighborhoods and the broader community."

His group is part of the larger Lake Tahoe Sustainability Collaborative. The collaborative was awarded a \$153,625 On Our Way grant from the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency. Experts associated with Safe Routes to Schools are part of the team.

Enough money is in the pot to pay for design and engineering plans. The goal is not to talk about what could be done, but to have a plan ready to build.

This week begins a series of meetings and workshops to gather input from the public about possible improvements to get kids to and from school as well as how to tie the school to the existing trail system.

Safety is a huge concern.

"It is a problem not only in that area but elsewhere in the city," Police Chief Brian Uhler told *Lake Tahoe News*. "Anything that can be done to improve bike trails, pedestrian pathways, signage, and increasing the distance from 4,000-pound vehicles and bicycles or walkers is going to help."

With how trails suddenly stop, people often find themselves in precarious situations, even going against the flow of traffic.

Principal Beth Delacour said the biggest problem she sees is students not using the crosswalk between STMS and Rite-Aid.

Delacour is curious to hear what the activists come up with, as she was just brought into the loop in the last two weeks. She will be administering a survey to students to get their feedback about trail connections in and around the South Lake Tahoe school.

The mobility group earlier this month conducted traffic counts during the week and weekend to see how many people were using trails by STMS and which ones.

Going forward planners see this area of town being more of a hub, especially with the addition of Lakeview Commons, improvements to Harrison Avenue and potential growth at Lake Tahoe Community College. They would like the trails to logically connect to the recreation center, library, ball fields, Bijou Community Park and surrounding businesses.

After this week's meetings there will be a workshop in November where alternatives will be presented. The final plans and projects will be chosen, with appropriate design and engineering work done so construction funding could be applied for in May.

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Notes:

- LTUSD board meeting, Oct. 14 at 6pm at the district office on the corner of Highway 50 and Al Tahoe Boulevard.
- Outreach meeting, Oct. 16, 7-9am at STMS.
- Public workshop, Oct. 16 from 5:30-7:30pm in the STMS multipurpose room.
- Public workshop, Nov. 19 from 5:30-7:30pm in the STMS multipurpose room.

Firm to look at Olympic Valley incorporation

Placer County LAFCo unanimously voted last week to award RSG of Santa Ana a contract to develop a comprehensive fiscal analysis of the possibility of incorporating Olympic Valley.

The \$85,360 fee will be paid for by Incorporate Olympic Valley.

“A comprehensive fiscal analysis is required for any incorporation proposal. It shows us whether the proposed town will have sufficient revenues to operate, and shows potential impacts to the county to help insure these are mitigated,” Kris Berry, LAFCo executive director, said in a statement.

The analysis is designed to provide a foundation for revenue neutrality negotiations between representatives of the proposed town and Placer County. If LAFCO approves the application, the measure will be put on the ballot and decided by simple majority of registered Olympic Valley voters.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

McClintock, Moore to debate

By Jon Ortiz, Sacramento Bee

The on-again, off-again debate between 4th Congressional District incumbent Tom McClintock and challenger Art Moore is

back on.

A day after McClintock backed away from a one-hour debate that would have been hosted by the League of Women Voters next week, the Elk Grove Republican's camp issued a press release that he had accepted an debate invitation from the Auburn Chamber of Commerce's "Meddlers" forum at 7am on Tuesday.

Moore will be there, his campaign strategist Rob Stutzman said, although he thinks McClintock was more an organizer than an invitee to the debate.

As proof, Stutzman forwarded a Friday morning email from McClintock campaign manager Jon Huey to Auburn Chamber board member Steve Galyardt thanking him for "taking my call and trying to help us set up the debate."

Read the whole story

CalFire tankers OK'd to fly again

By Sam Cohen, Fox 40

SACRAMENTO – CalFire's tanker fleet can fly again, following a deadly crash last week while fighting a fire near Yosemite National Park.

The National Transportation Safety Board released their initial findings, saying they found "no structural failures or aging aircraft issues involved in the crash".

CalFire then decided to resume normal flight activities.

Read the whole story

Stateline fatal crash victim identified

Updated Oct. 12 12:13pm:

The man killed in Friday's car crash in Stateline has been identified as Larry Dean Wells, 71, of Oregon.

His passenger, Roxane Jean Freeman, 68, of Oregon was taken to Renown Medical Center in Reno with non-life threatening injuries.

"He went off the right shoulder for unknown reasons, up a tree and rolled over," Nevada Highway Patrol Trooper Dan Lopez told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Lopez said he does not believe speed or alcohol were factors in the 7:40am Oct. 10 accident. It occurred on Highway 50 east of Kahle Drive. The man was headed east. There were no skid marks leading from the road to the tree.

Anyone who saw the crash is asked to call 775.687.0400.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*