Truckee hiker falls to death in Granite Chief Wilderness

By Sarah Heise, KCRA-TV

A Truckee man who was hiking with two other men at night near Squaw Valley fell more than 100 feet down a cliff and died, Placer County sheriff's officials said Thursday morning.

The trio was hiking Wednesday night in the area of Granite Chief, just west of Squaw Valley, when search and rescue crews were called to the area about 10pm for a fallen hiker.

Read the whole story

Travel writing award for Lake Tahoe News



Manzanar is a reminder of one of the darkest times in U.S. history. Photo Copyright 2018 Carolyn E. Wright

Lake Tahoe News Publisher Kathryn Reed on Feb. 7 received third place from the North American Travel Journalists Association in the "historical travel" category for her article on Manzanar.

The **January 2017 story** is about the Japanese internment camp on Highway 395 in the Eastern Sierra.

Photos accompanying the story are from Carolyn Wright, a regular contributor to *LTN*.

"I share this award with Carolyn because her ability to capture the starkness of this encampment brought the story to life in a way my words couldn't," Reed said.

This is the 26th year for the NATJA awards, with more than 1,000 entries. All online entries are judged together, with all publication sizes lumped together.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

S. Lake Tahoe city manager taking time off

By Kathryn Reed

After a marathon closed session Tuesday, it was decided South Lake Tahoe City Manager Nancy Kerry would take some time off.

Kerry told *LTN* she was planning to take a couple weeks off.



South Lake Tahoe Mayor Wendy David and City Manager Nancy Kerry Photo/LTN

Mayor Wendy David would not say whose choice it was for the time off – the council's or Kerry's. This means it is not known if the entire council is in favor of this or a select few who have been gunning for her to leave. None of the other council members would speak with *Lake Tahoe News*.

"They did their evaluation and there was no reportable action," Kerry said.

David also said there was no reportable action regarding the

evaluation. This, though, contradicts saying Kerry is on paid leave. David said she did not know how long the leave would be.

The irony about the time off is that at **Kerry's June review** the council said one of Kerry's biggest downfalls was that she did not take enough time off. It was at that review that Kerry received a glowing review and salary increase.

The biggest change since then is Councilman Austin Sass and interim City Attorney Nira Doherty targeting Kerry for reasons that have not been publicly disclosed.

David would not speak to the mystery closed session item that was listed as "pending litigation." Nor would she speak to the mystery woman who was in closed session at the Jan. 23 meeting.

David said the council decided Fire Chief Jeff Meston would be the acting city manager. At this point he will not be receiving any extra pay for the added responsibilities.

"I was called by the mayor and asked on behalf of the City Council to fill the roll," Meston told *Lake Tahoe News.*

In the past Meston and Police Chief Brian Uhler have filled in for Kerry when she has been out of town.

"I've been told it's indefinite. I don't know the definition of indefinite yet. I'm still trying to wrap my head around it," Meston said.

Feb. 6 marked the second meeting in a row that Kerry's performance evaluation was on the agenda.

Until now, every council Kerry has worked with has been ebullient about her performance in the more than five years she's been city manager. This has been during reviews and at council meetings.

Kerry is responsible for saving the city more than $60 million in her short tenure. Forty million of that came in retiree health benefits, $10 million in refinancing debt, about $7 million through redevelopment and then money in other areas.

She has also been asked by cities inside and outside the state to speak about health care reform, having become an expert of sorts. More than once she has been a speaker at the League of Cities conference.

When Kerry took over from Tony O'Rourke, who was known at the hatchet man, she turned the morale around to where people actually like working for the city, services have been restored and the city is in good shape financially.

Pay is lagging in a tight job market

By Ben Casselman, New York Times

Over all, average hourly earnings were only 2.5 percent higher in December than a year earlier, barely outpacing inflation. It's part of a stubborn pattern that is one of the mysteries of a recovery now in its ninth year. These are a few factors that may be playing a part.

A collapse in the rate of union membership for private-sector employees — to 6.5 percent last year from the upper teens in the early 1980s — appears to have played a key role in holding down wages. This is partly because unions benefit workers directly: Average pay for workers represented by unions tends to be higher than for those who aren't, even after controlling for education and other characteristics.

But unions also benefit workers indirectly. In industries and regions where unions have a larger presence, pay tends to be higher for all low- and medium-wage workers, not just those represented by unions.

Read the whole story

Chance of normal snow-rain year grim

By Paul Rogers, Bay Area News Group

Hoping for a March Miracle to bail out California's dry winter? It's not likely.

A review of more than 100 years of rainfall records of major cities in California – including San Jose, Los Angeles, San Diego, Santa Rosa, Redding and Fresno – shows that none have ever finished the rainy season with normal rainfall totals after ending January with the amount of rain they've had so far this winter.

In Eureka, it's happened three times since 1885. In the rest of the cities, not once, even though their weather records also date back to the late 1800s.

In other words, California winters are like Olympic ski racers. Stumble at the beginning of the race, and its very difficult to catch up by the end.

Read the whole story

Microgrid could bring reliable power to Olympic Valley

A new energy storage system to serve Liberty Utilities' Olympic Valley residential and commercial customers in the event of an electric outage is proposed for the North Tahoe region.

The Olympic Valley Microgrid Project would leverage state-of-the-art battery storage technology to create a new way to store surplus energy and deliver that stored energy to the utility's grid. Liberty Utilities has had initial discussions with Squaw Valley Alpine Meadows to explore a potential site on their property, as well as with Tesla, a manufacturer of the type of energy storage system needed to provide more electric reliability in Olympic Valley.

The proposal includes installation of a battery energy storage system of up to 8 megawatts near Gold Coast at mid-mountain.

The system would be owned, operated and maintained by Liberty Utilities, while Squaw Valley Ski Holdings would provide the land to house the battery storage system.

The California Public Utilities Commission and Placer County need to approve the plans.

When demand is high or the upstream energy source is interrupted, the batteries will discharge to provide power to the grid, offsetting purchases from other sources and thereby reducing costs.

Judge lands Nevada Supreme Court seat after no one else files

By Jane Ann Morrison, Las Vegas Review-Journal

The Nevada Supreme Court had two open seats in this fall's election. Now there is just one. Abbi Silver, chief judge of the Court of Appeals, was elected outright when no one filed against her.

The other seat drew five candidates, requiring a primary election to whittle them down to two and then a November general election.

Why would one nonpartisan seat draw only one person and the other five?

"I'm a hard worker, end of story," Silver said.

Read the whole story

U.S. drought at worst level in nearly 4 years

By Doyle Rice, USA Today

The dry times are back.

Drought has returned with a vengeance across much of the United States, with the worst conditions across southern and western parts of the nation.

As of Thursday, 38.4 percent of the continental U.S. is in a drought, according to the U.S. Drought Monitor. That is the highest percentage since the 40 percent recorded in May 2014.

Read the whole story

Future forest health needs fire to fight fire

By Debbie Arrington, Sacramento Bee

California’s strides toward cleaner air can quickly go up in smoke during one big wildfire.

The constant threat of wildfire calls for a radical shift in attitudes toward forest management, not just to save homes and lives but the state’s overall air and water quality. That conclusion spurred the state’s Little Hoover Commission to recommend a coordinated effort to rethink how California cares for its forests.

“We see what happens when you don’t manage forests,” said commissioner Janna Sidley, who chaired the independent oversight agency’s subcommittee. Its report, “Fire on the Mountain: Rethinking Forest Management in the Sierra Nevada,” was released Monday.

Read the whole story

South Lake Tahoe pot rules blowing in the wind

By Kathryn Reed

Marijuana – it seems to be the high point of so many South Lake Tahoe City Council meetings. Tuesday shouldn't be any different.

The morning will start with the electeds meeting in closed session to discuss the lawsuit with Tahoe Wellness Collective. Last month there was no reportable action when it was on the agenda.

At issue is the medical marijuana dispensary's permit to operate. By court order it is able to. If owner Cody Bass buys the building at the Bijou Center, that could make the issue go away. There is no hearing date for the writ.

Since the first of the year Bass has had trouble stocking the shelves with medicine based on how the state changed its regulations and the city saying TWC is not operating with a valid permit. Multiple patients last month gave the council an earful about how what seems to be a personal vendetta against Bass is hurting local residents.

But **Bass changed his designation** with the state, which has prevented him from being able to get product. Much of the disruption in his business is his own doing despite his desire to place blame on the city.

The next closest dispensary is in **Incline Village**.

At the Jan. 23 meeting the council extended the urgency moratorium on recreational marijuana. The original 45-day

urgency ordinance was OK'd Dec. 12. Last month it was extended by 10 months and 15 days, as the law allows. It is possible for the council to revoke the ordinance before then, likely replacing it with rules to allow recreational marijuana and more medical dispensaries.

There was consensus at that meeting to bring back an amendment on Feb. 6 that would allow development agreements to go forward. However, it's not a done deal until a vote is taken. Councilman Austin Sass was the force behind this, with Councilman Tom Davis saying he was against it.

Development agreements could allow entities to open a pot shop before an ordinance is in place. It's also possible they would have to alter their business practices to comply with any ordinance that might be forthcoming.

On the Feb. 6 agenda is the urgency ordinance, not just an amendment. The change has to do with the development agreement.

Interim City Attorney Nira Doherty, who calls herself an expert in California cannabis law, refused to answer *Lake Tahoe News'* questions.

Those questions included:

· Why does the urgency ordinance for pot look like it's coming back as the whole ordinance and not just an amendment as was discussed at the last council meeting?

· If it's all new, what is new? How does this affect the time line?

· Is this even legal?

Davis along with Councilwoman Brooke Laine have been working with a 15-member group of community members to come up with a framework for a recreational marijuana ordinance. Their last meeting was last month.

This Cannabis Subcommittee at Tuesday’s council meeting will update the rest of the council about its work. It will be informational only, with no vote to be taken. Future public workshops and action will be scheduled.