

Survey: Voters open to LTCC bond measure

By Kathryn Reed

Voters would approve a \$55 million bond for Lake Tahoe Community College, according to a phone survey.

Shakari Byerly, vice president of Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin, Metz & Associates, on Tuesday went over the survey results with the board of trustees. The survey was taken by 350 randomly selected voters between March 20 and March 30. Landlines and cell phones were called.

The college is looking at asking voters in November to approve a facilities bond. This would be the first bond the college has issued in its 40-year existence. The board is likely to vote on bond language at the end of May.

“The primary objective was to assess the community’s attitude toward the bond issue,” Byerly told the board April 8. “Many of the voters have a direct connection to the college. Eight in 10 households have taken a course.”

Sixty-eight percent of respondents say LTCC has a great or some need for additional funding.

Asked if they would vote for a \$55 million bond – 36 percent said definitely yes, 23 percent said probably yes, and 5 percent said they lean that way. On the flip side, the total no votes were at 28 percent. Eight percent are not sure.

“We asked about lower bond level amounts and we didn’t see much change,” Byerly said.

The college has a slew of projects it would like to come to fruition.

Ideas include:

- The three capital outlay projects have been submitted to the state. The first priority is a remodel for efficiency that would include an overhaul of the science labs, student services and technology. This will include a university center. This is needed as the college looks at offering four-year baccalaureate degrees. The next project is for a regional public safety training facility. This could include having a city fire station on campus. The third idea is either an adaptive physical education or a sustainability center to go with environmental studies.
 - Safety improvements would be made throughout the campus.
 - Technology upgrades.
 - Improving the trails people use so they are clearly marked and in good condition.
 - Dorms.
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Woman fatally hit by train in Truckee

A Union Pacific cargo train struck and killed a woman in Truckee on Wednesday.

The victim's name has not been released pending notification of family.

Truckee police officers said the April 9 accident occurred underneath and east of the Highway 267 overpass.

Witnesses are asked to call the Truckee Police Department at 530.550.2320.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Sandoval slams BLM for 'First Amendment Area'

By Laura Myers, Las Vegas Review-Journal

Gov. Brian Sandoval on Tuesday accused the Bureau of Land Management of violating Nevadans' constitutional rights to protest a BLM roundup of cattle on federal land and slammed the agency for creating an "atmosphere of intimidation."

Sandoval called on the BLM to dismantle a so-called "First Amendment Area" the agency designated to allow demonstrators to protest the gathering of rancher Cliven Bundy's 500 head of cattle. The federal government is rounding up the cattle around Bunkerville because Bundy has refused for 20 years to pay grazing fees.

"Due to the roundup by the BLM, my office has received numerous complaints of BLM conduct, road closures and other disturbances," Sandoval said in a statement. "I have recently met with state legislators, county officials and concerned citizens to listen to their concerns."

"I have expressed those concerns directly to the BLM," he added. "Most disturbing to me is the BLM's establishment of a 'First Amendment Area' that tramples upon Nevadans' fundamental rights under the U.S. Constitution."

Read the whole story

U.S. gas exports not a quick fix

By Clifford Krauss, News York Times

HOUSTON — As congressional pressure builds on the Obama administration to quicken gas exports to Europe to reduce its dependence on Russia, it may be tempting to gaze upon a marshy, alligator-infested Louisiana inlet of the Gulf of Mexico.

There 3,000 workers are installing a huge set of turbines, pipelines and refrigeration units, building a terminal that will send American natural gas around the world by the end of next year. By 2017, the facility built by Houston-based Cheniere Energy could handle roughly a sixth the amount of gas that flows from Russia to Europe every day.

The Cheniere plant will be part of a new surge of liquefied natural gas supplies coming from not only the United States but also Australia, Africa and the Middle East. That surge, perhaps along with increased production in Europe itself, promises to keep the Continent flush with non-Russian natural gas at the end of the decade.

But for the short term, the United States can offer little hope for Europeans eager to diversify their gas sources as Russia occupies Crimea and may threaten other parts of eastern Ukraine.

Read the whole story

Barton Ranch on path to be destroyed



The multiple buildings that once were the Barton Ranch are slated to be demolished. Photo/LTN

By Linda Fine Conaboy

Sometime soon, if family members have their way, the iconic cluster of buildings at the South Lake Tahoe Y known as the Barton Ranch will become nothing more than a heap of historic rubble. Slated for demolition are the barn, ranch house, guesthouses, cabin, cottage and shed.

Even though the property is on the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency's list of historic sites, family members maintain that

they are subjected to risk and liability from trespassers, graffiti, abandoned cars, mold, mildew and lead-based paint.

The process to clear the property, which started several years ago but has stalled along the way, may now be moving along a smoother path, as the family has jumped successfully through myriad obstacles along the destruction path.

People have until April 25 to comment on the negative declaration. There will be a public hearing before the Planning Commission on May 8 at 3pm at Lake Tahoe Airport, with the panel being asked to approve the negative declaration and plans for demolition of all of the remaining structures associated with the old Barton dairy ranch located at 1080 Emerald Bay Road.

Gary Midkiff, a land use and permitting consultant, is the spokesman for the Ledbetter and Mosher families. They are the property owners and descendants of the Bartons. He explained that the request for removal and destruction of the structures began close to three years ago.

"We've been working with the city of South Lake Tahoe to address the issues that city staff was anticipating would be raised by the community," he said.

"So far, we haven't gotten any comments. The notice was published at the California State Clearing House, where all environmental documents are sent under CEQA. But we're expecting comments from the Clearing House after the comment period closes. If there are questions we need to address, we will address them," Midkiff told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Midkiff said he contacted the Lake Tahoe Historical Society three or four years ago and offered them the buildings for removal or relocation, however, he said he hasn't talked to them lately.

He added, "There is no rule that says because it's a

historical site the buildings have to be retained.”

South Lake Tahoe is an important player in this continuing story, too. Judy Finn, associate planner for the city, said there are problems such as black mold, asbestos, graffiti and people breaking in and attempting to live in the buildings; generally reiterating the owners’ list of grievances.

“The family wants to restore and revegetate the property, and may want to look at more viable uses in the future,” Finn told *Lake Tahoe News*.

The buildings in question, with their green roofs and white exteriors, were once stately. Boarded windows make it look like a forlorn relic waiting for whatever the fates have in mind. The property looks abandoned, even though it’s nestled into an idyllic setting amid tall trees on 4 acres of land next to the Raley’s shopping center.

The history of the legendary Barton family is important to Lake Tahoe. According to a fall 1972 Lake Tahoe Historical Society newsletter, more than a century ago the Bartons spent their summers ranching their property in Hope Valley and on land they homesteaded in Meyers.

In 1915, they moved to the South Shore and settled in an area that is now the Lake Tahoe Airport. There they established a dairy known as Meadow’s Edge. They ran a milk route to Echo Lakes, Camp Sacramento, Twin Bridges, Tahoe Meadow and Beecher’s Country Club, where Harrah’s is now located.

Several years later the property at the Y was developed, when this region was wide-open and the only road in the basin was Pioneer Trail. Through the years South Lake Tahoe has been the beneficiary of the Barton family generosity, including a gift of land upon which now stands Barton Memorial Hospital.

Although clearing of the land is not a foregone conclusion, there are those individuals and entities that are feeling the

crush of an important part of history coming to an end and the need for its preservation.

Lake Tahoe Historical Society spokesperson and board member Lee Vestal is one of those interested parties.

“All I personally want to see with the Barton Ranch is that it gets a fair shake to survive,” he said. “If all the environmental reviews, including hazmat remediation for the suspected contamination, say knock it down, then knock it down. But the ranch needs a fair review and the involvement of the community. If the community wants it saved, it needs to step up and provide financial and emotional support.”

Vestal said the historical society has been working quietly behind the scenes to find out what the property owners really want and to see what options are available to save the ranch.

“We’ve sent letters to the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency and to City Manager Nancy Kerry,” he said. However, he said, to date there have been no replies.

At the very least, Vestal said that everything at the ranch will be photographed and the story will be captured by the historical society.

Catherine Whelan, who is president of the historical society, said the family has a right to sell the land.

“But you would think the city would want to preserve it. There are so few old buildings left. The ranches were big here before the casinos went in. This could show the history of the Tahoe basin,” Whelan told *Lake Tahoe News*. “The city has a perfect opportunity to turn this property into a cultural center showcasing the ranching period of South Lake Tahoe. I think they’re missing a huge opportunity to make money.”

Lake Tahoe News was unable to make contact with the property owners – the Mosher family and members of the Ledbetter

family; however, Jessica Ledbetter, a cousin, had this to say: "I've worked with Gary Midkiff in the past and I think he is an outstanding representative for my Aunt Melba Mosher and my cousins, William Mosher, Faye Krull and Ouida Garms.

"Whatever decisions my aunt and my cousins have come to, I know it hasn't been easy. It's been an extremely emotional decision for them. We've recently talked about all the wonderful times we've spent on the property and all the wonderful memories. I support any decision they make."

Midkiff added, "They are not a development family."

But the question remains, where will the final journey take the old Barton site?

"There are no plans for use of the property at this time," Midkiff said. "They're watching the area plan that is being drawn up by the city and TRPA closely to see the outcome. Based on that, based on the economy, and based on interest by any commercial entity, they may make future plans."

No suspect nor cause in S. Tahoe house fire



Not much could be salvaged from this house after it burned in January.
Photo/Denise Haerr

The cause of a fire that completely destroyed a house in South Lake Tahoe in late January remains unknown.

“We are investigating it as an arson. It has been characterized as suspicious,” South Lake Tahoe police Detective Jeff Roberson told *Lake Tahoe News*.

His agency is working the investigation with Lake Valley Fire because South Lake Tahoe Fire doesn’t have an arson investigator.

The modified A-frame on Long Avenue was being repaired because of damage from burst pipes earlier in winter, so no one was living there. Days before the fire a repairman reported to the fire department and Southwest Gas that he smelled natural gas and saw gas valves on various appliances had been turned on.

Evidence from the fire was sent to a lab for analysis. The main thing to determine is what type of accelerant was used. Roberson is not revealing what the lab found because at this time there is no suspect and releasing the info could jeopardize the investigation.

Roberson would like anyone who saw anything suspicious in the neighborhood or at the house the week prior to Jan. 29 to call him at 530.542.6100.

WHS test scores on a steady decline

By Kathryn Reed

STATELINE – Despite the show of support from staff and board members, the news out of Whittell High School is not good. Student test scores are going down.

Principal Crespin Esquivel delivered the numbers April 8 at the school board meeting. Math and reading scores have been tumbling at all grade levels to the point that most are not at the proficient level in reading, math or science.

Esquivel said in part it has to do with seventh- and eighth-graders being in some combined classes. This is because the student population is so low – there are 208 kids in the 7-12 school – grade levels have to be combined. It means the rigor is not there for all students.

The Zephyr Cove school in many ways is run as though it is two schools – as a middle school and high school.

Asked by board member Cindy Trigg if there is one thing that could make a difference to help turn things around, Esquivel said a vice principal. He also said it's imperative teachers are retained even if fewer students are on the attendance roll. He said having someone else on board would give him more time to focus on critical issues, even visit classrooms more often.

While hiring another administrator is not likely to happen

based on budget constraints, money is being spent to assess some of the issues that are going on and to help come up with solutions. Ray Sidney's entire donation for the basketball renovation was not spent and he said it would be fine to use it on other things.

One of those other things was hiring consultant Bev Ducey to "examine successful small schools and identify several for further research into their keys to successful student learning outcomes."

Those schools that Esquivel will be contacting are in Telluride, Colo., Chester and Quincy. The goal is to dig deep to see what they have done to be successful and to ideally find ideas that would work at WHS.

Esquivel also recognizes the need to get some mentoring for himself to help learn how to satisfy the ongoing mandates from the state, balance the need for better oversight of teachers, and focus on getting students the help they need to achieve at a higher level.

The positive info delivered Tuesday afternoon was that in 2013 93 percent, or 40 of the 43, students graduated. This year the school earned state championships for the girls' ski and boys' basketball teams for the first time.

In other news:

- Nancy Cauley, principal at Zephyr Cove Elementary, said her students are making progress in growth and proficiency on standardized tests.
 - No offers have been made to purchase Kingsbury Middle School. The item will be back on the agenda in May.
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More homeowners becoming landlords

By Tim Logan, Los Angeles Times

The real estate market has long worked on a simple system: If you want to buy a new house, sell the old one and use the equity for a down payment.

But the last few years of low ownership costs and rising rents have some move-up buyers trying a new approach: Buy the new house. Keep the old one. And rent it out.

Real estate firm Redfin recently asked 1,900 prospective home buyers nationwide what they planned to do with their old house when they bought a new one. As you'd expect, the majority said they would sell. But 39% said they'd rent it out. In Western markets like Los Angeles that have seen big price growth lately, the percentage was even higher.

It's the first time that Redfin has conducted this kind of study. But real estate agents and property managers say they're seeing the same thing: a noticeable uptick in the number of home buyers who want to rent out their old place.

If this trend holds, it could mean even fewer homes for sale in an already tight market. But for a certain type of homeowner, becoming a landlord could make a lot of sense.

Read the whole story

Brown: 'Promote tourism and clean industries'



Kevin Brown

Publisher's note: *Lake Tahoe News asked the six El Dorado County supervisor candidates a series of questions. All are the same except for one that is specific to each candidate. The responses are being run in the order they were received by LTN. One candidate chose not to answer the questions.*

Name: Kevin Brown

Age: 50

Occupation: Business owner

Education: Graduated Del Mar High School, San Jose 1981, AS Degree in electronics, Condie Jr. College, Campbell 1989

What elected, civic, nonprofit boards or groups are or have you been affiliated with and in what capacity?:

- El Dorado Union High School District board of trustees, president 2013, 2014.
- El Dorado County Chamber of Commerce board 13 years, president 2006.
- El Dorado County Economic Development Advisory Committee,

2006-08.

- Pollock Pines Design and Review Committee 8 years, vice chair.
- MORE Board 2006-13.
- El Dorado County Child Abuse Prevention Council, vice chair.
- Placerville Economic Advisory Committee, chair.
- Cub Master Pack 104, 2002-06.
- Scout Master Troop 170, 2006-11.
- Big Brothers/Big Sisters volunteer.
- Prevention Works, volunteer.
- The Center for Violence Free Relationships, state certified volunteer.
- Kiwanis, Shriner.

* Partial list.

Traffic is horrible on Fridays and Sundays throughout the county. Will you commit to not voting for any big subdivisions unless there is a plan to widen Highway 50? Why or why not?: Highway 50 is a state highway and our TIM fees would be insufficient to cover such improvements. We'll need help from our state and federal officials, as well as regional governments to forge a solution for Highway 50. I would favor development plans that value businesses over rooftops and believe development must pay its share of traffic mitigation.

What is your opinion on a proposed November initiative to control growth?: I don't think a ballot-box moratorium is the right path. Instead we need to elect leaders with a commitment to support sensible policies that create jobs. The county needs revenue to provide the services our residents want and

deserve like public safety, snow removal. Those costs continue to rise, so it is essential that El Dorado County encourage job-creating economic development.

What are your thoughts of making Lake Tahoe its own county?: I am not aware of a serious proposal to create a separate county and would not likely support a split. I recognize that SLT has been underrepresented by the county, but I would prefer to heal that divide rather than split the county. Many of the fiscal challenges facing counties are created by unfunded mandates from the state, and a big part of the county budget is spent administering state programs. Forming a separate county would result in diverting funds to pay for law enforcement (county jail), prosecution, fire, road maintenance, health and human services, and other services that would not be sustainable.

What entities would you not take money from?: I think everyone who gives money is a “special interest” and it is cynical to single out specific interests for political purposes. Instead, I have made my position clear – decisions will be based on my vision for El Dorado County. If you agree and want to contribute, you are investing in my vision; if you disagree, money won’t change my mind.

What would you do to boost the economy?: We need to promote tourism and clean industries like programming, entertainment and medical records management. I will fight for more TOT dollars be spent in the basin to increase tourism. I would use my experience in economic development to find businesses that fit the environment and culture of the basin to bring jobs and tax revenue. We should be working with groups on infrastructure investments, like high-speed Internet that can spur technology investment in South Lake Tahoe.

What is the No. 1 issue facing District 5 and how do you propose to resolve it?: In the past, I would have said high unemployment. But after talking with many people I have found

the biggest concern is that South Lake Tahoe feels isolated by and from the county. Some feel that regardless of whom they elect, their needs are not heard or met in Placerville. "Resolve" makes it sound like a one-time fix; but I think it takes an ongoing commitment. I will use relationships I have built over the past 15 years to ensure SLT issues are heard, I will fight to unite our communities so we can work to solve problems that many of us share and I will maintain a supervisor's office in South Lake (even if I need to raise the funds to pay for it) and hold regular office hours. The basin will be heard and represented.

Supervisors meet only once a year in Lake Tahoe. Do you believe this is fair representation? Why or why not?: Absolutely not. I would fight for a more equitable arrangement – and would require hearings in SLT on issues that impact SLT.

Would you have voted for Red Hawk to be built and to divert Caltrans funds for interchanges? Those decisions are still negatively affecting the South Shore. Is there anything you would do to change the status quo?: The funding and the approval are separate issues. The county did not have the authority to block Red Hawk. The issue was whether to resist or work cooperatively with them to resolve as many concerns as possible. Either way the casino would have been built, so a no vote would have achieved nothing. In terms of the interchanges, money was not diverted, the casino dedicated about \$110 million over time to pay for the interchange and Highway 50 improvements, however if they were not built, traffic to the casino would have been forced onto Grassy Run Road, Rolling Rock Road and Reservation Road – narrow rural roads with many homes that would have been impacted. In terms of changing the status quo, we need to work better regionally to prioritize transportation funding, focus on job-creating business growth, and expanding tourism dollars.

Would you support having more tax dollars from the county coming to the South Shore? Currently, more dollars leave the

basin than come back.: That is simply not fair, and I would work to for equitable distribution.

The county and city of South Lake Tahoe have a long history of not getting along. How would you propose to improve the relationship?: I have a record of bringing people together and working with others to solve problems. Part of better communication is “showing up” – that is why I will maintain a supervisor’s office in SLT and hold regular office hours. I will sit down with the city to forge plans to together, find our common ground and build a new, better relationship between South Lake Tahoe and the county.

What is your vision for Meyers and how will you make it a reality?: I believe Meyers residents want the current Area Plan reverted to be more like the '93 zoning plan. From what I have learned and heard, they oppose major developments in the Town Center area. They want more input into in the planning process and assurances that the Catalyst Project is dead. I will involve more people in the planning and implementation of the changes and final plan. I believe we can better inform the public of meetings and critical issues. As supervisor, I’ll push for better notification and efforts to engage the community.

Why should someone vote for you over someone else?: I have spent the last 15 years helping solve problems. I have run a business, improved student performance as a school board member, helped create a better plan for creating jobs, and built a foundation of trust and respect throughout the entire West Slope. I will tap those relationships to ensure Tahoe gets the attention and respect it deserves. My relationships with the county, nonprofits and the private sector give me the best chance to unite our communities and bring South Lake Tahoe and the county together.

You have received financial assistance in your prior campaign from Serrano Construction. How do you like their two projects

that are before the county?: First, we should correct the perception – I was featured in joint mailer with another school board candidate paid for by Serrano and Associates Home Owners Association, not the construction company. There were a group of homeowners with children who went to school together from kindergarten to the 8th grade, they played in the same soccer and Little League games – they grew up together. An arbitrary boundary meant some of them would be forced to leave their friends and go to a high school well outside of their neighborhood. I don't care much about the politics – that is just wrong. I proposed a transfer policy that would allow these students to attend the same high school as their lifelong friends. Despite some misconceptions, the policy has no effect on development. The projects you refer to are proposed by Parker Development, who built Serrano. My priority for construction is to focus on long-term, good paying jobs over sprawling development in our rural lands that impacts not only our traffic but our beauty and existing residents.

What do you do for fun?: My wife and I love to hike. We take day hikes often throughout the area. Enjoying our beautiful scenic treasures we call home, El Dorado County.

Tell us something about yourself that people might not know: In March of 2007 I was invited by a friend to play in a Texas Hold'em Tournament at Harrah's Reno. Other than friendly games with my friends I had never played poker, much less in a tournament. Surprising everyone (including myself), I won and went on to play in the World Series of Poker Main Event in Las Vegas in July 2007. I outlasted poker legends like Daniel Negreanu, Mike Matusow, Phil Ivey and Men "The Master" Nguyen, but did not place in the money. It was exciting, and literally a once-in-a-lifetime experience.

Caltrans working on Hwy. 50 in Pollock Pines

Caltrans is closing a ramp and lanes this week on Highway 50 in Pollock Pines.

Beginning Monday tonight, there will be on-ramp and off-ramp closures at Sly Park Road from 7pm-4pm

Ramps won't be closed concurrently, nor will they be closed the entire window of time approved. When the ramps are closed, highway message signs will be used to alert motorists in advance.

A contractor is installing K-rail, water blasting and restriping lanes in preparation for replacing the bridge over Sly Park Road.

The \$7.67 million project also includes building new curbs, ramps and sidewalks. The work is scheduled to be complete by the end of this year.

Eastbound motorists can also expect alternating lane closures from Sly Park Road to Bullion Bend Road from 6am-8pm Monday through Friday for median work. Westbound motorists can expect alternating lane closures from Bullion Bend Road to Sly Park Road Monday and Tuesday from 7am to midnight and the No. 1 lane closed from 6am Wednesday to 5pm Friday.

