

South Shore fireworks shows in jeopardy



Fireworks may not light up the sky this summer on the South Shore. Photo/Howie Nave

By Kathryn Reed

It's likely the South Shore will not have a sanctioned fireworks display this Fourth of July, or even Labor Day weekend.

It all has to do with a lawsuit that was filed last year because of the trash that continues to this day to spill forth on beaches in Nevada – more than eight months after the pyrotechnic display – and the fact that the sponsoring agency refuses to seek a permit for the show.

The Lake Tahoe Visitors Authority board has scheduled a special meeting for March 27 at 4pm. The agenda calls for first talking about the July 4 and Labor Day fireworks in open session and then going into closed session to do the same. The meeting is at 169 Highway 50, Stateline.

“At that time, we will be commenting on the severely harmful economic and environmental ramifications of the Truxler’s action,” LTVA Executive Director Carol Chaplin said in a

statement.

Joan and Joseph Truxler filed a lawsuit last year against LTVA and Pyro Spectaculars, the company that puts on the show.

"We do not want the fireworks show discontinued. We want to protect the lake. And we do not get any money from this," Joan Truxler told *Lake Tahoe News*.

The two sides had been mediating until this week when it was clear a resolution could not be found.

"We felt that the settlement didn't occur because what was presented wasn't really in the best interest of protecting the lake," Truxler said. "And it wasn't really in line with our principles that we think are important to protect the lake. We want a legally, enforceable permit."

The LTVA has until Thursday to respond to the original lawsuit. The board could ask for a motion to dismiss or file a response that leads to discovery, depositions, and all the legal dealings – potentially ending with a trial.

Chaplin said all of this is "unfortunate" but said she could not add more than the official statement.

"There is middle ground. They don't have to stop the show, but they should be getting a permit and they have not applied for a permit," Mike Lozeau, attorney for the Truxlers, told *Lake Tahoe News*.

He added that even if the permit were not in hand, but that the process had started, it would show good faith on the LTVA's part.

The Truxlers want an agency to be regulating what is put into Lake Tahoe – including fireworks. Their goal is to have this done via the Environmental Protection Agency regulations under the Clean Water Act. It issues NPDES, or National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System, permits to control water

pollution.

The lawsuit claims the Clean Water Act is being violated. Court documents state, "Both the state of California and the state of Nevada have established water quality standards strictly prohibiting floating debris on Lake Tahoe and other waters. California's water quality standards provide that '[w]aters shall not contain floating material, including solids, liquids, foams, and scum, in concentrations that cause nuisance or adversely affect the water for beneficial uses.'"

Truxler said she finds debris multiple times a week. It comes in the form of paper or cardboard, hard plastic and fuses. Some has writing in Chinese, some has the name of the company that launches the fireworks.

She first started calling agencies July 8. She said TRPA is the only one to return the call. But they don't regulate fireworks.

"None of the agencies have walked the beach or discussed what we have found," Truxler said.

The lawsuit does not impact the other fireworks shows around the lake.

The South Shore show has been going on for 30 years. Fourth of July, next to New Year's Eve, is the busiest time in the area. The economic impact of losing the \$100,000 pyrotechnic show would remain to be seen, but in the past tourism officials have said it brings in millions of dollars. The question is whether people would still come if the fireworks show were canceled.

Neither the July 4 nor the Labor Day fireworks shows is not on the LTVA's website.

S. Tahoe woman hurt in motorcycle accident



This motorcycle was destroyed March 22 when it hit a pickup. Photo/Provided

Two people on a motorcycle were seriously injured Saturday when the bike they were on collided with a pickup.

Nevada Highway Patrol troopers said Andrey L. Gallegos, 20, of Sparks was traveling at a high rate of speed when he went through the intersection of Fairview and Roop streets in Carson City on March 22 at 10:45pm. Gallegos and his passenger, Audrey G. Rugamas, 21, of South Lake Tahoe were taken to Renown Medical Center in Reno.

They were both ejected when the vehicles hit each other.

The truck driver, Donald McKean, 60, of Gardnerville, was not injured.

Anyone with information about the accident is asked to call 775.689.4661 or email ckelly@dps.state.nv.us.

Placer County supes contemplate pay raise

By Richard Chang, Sacramento Bee

Placer County supervisors are weighing whether to ask voters for a raise after a county panel suggested pay hikes are long overdue in the fast-growing region.

Placer supervisors have made \$30,000 a year ever since voters passed a ballot initiative in 1992 to cap salaries. Unlike their counterparts in other counties, Placer supervisors don't receive any retirement or health benefits. And they don't receive any other perks like a vehicle allowance or a discretionary fund.

As Placer County's population has nearly doubled to 361,682 residents in the last two decades, supervisor compensation remained unchanged. Today, Placer's salaries are the lowest in the four-county region that also includes Sacramento, Yolo and El Dorado.

[Read the whole story](#)

Effort under way to lift Nev. property tax cap

By Sean Whaley, Las Vegas Review Journal

CARSON CITY – Officials from cash-hungry local governments are calling for changes to the property tax cap that was enacted by the Legislature in 2005 when land values were soaring, but state policymakers don't appear ready at this point to entertain wholesale changes to the formula in the 2015 session.

Assembly Speaker Marilyn Kirkpatrick, D-North Las Vegas, said she has had conversations with Southern Nevada governments and the Clark County School District about fixing what she called a loophole in the commercial property side of the tax cap that could generate some additional revenue. But fundamental changes to the 3 percent annual increases allowed for residential property and up to 8 percent for commercial property are not part of those discussions, she said.

Gov. Brian Sandoval said he is not considering the idea of changing the property tax cap law either as he prepares his 2015-17 budget.

Read the whole story

Santiago looks back on time as supervisor and forward regarding El Dorado County's needs

By Kathryn Reed

STATELINE – Lean economic times forced El Dorado County to get smarter, according to Supervisor Norma Santiago.

Santiago, who will reluctantly be termed out of office at the end of the year, gave a recap of her experience to Soroptimist International South Lake Tahoe last week at Harrah's Lake Tahoe.

She said she is against term limits and hopes that regulation will one day be removed or be upped to three terms as a maximum.

"The bottom line is the county is well on its way to be a better partner with the community and finding sustainable solutions," Santiago said.



El Dorado County Supervisor Norma Santiago has a few months left in office.
Photo/LTN

Consolidating departments, she said, has made for a more efficient way of doing business. It also reduced redundancies.

The county is working on technological upgrades so all the systems talk to each other and therefore manual work would be decreased.

"We need an economic strategy. We need a workforce development strategy," Santiago said.

She said county residents are finding jobs elsewhere – including in Douglas, Placer and Sacramento counties.

When it comes to the state, she said it's imperative El Dorado pay attention to decisions about water.

"Agriculture is a big part of our county," Santiago said. Water storage will continue to be a huge issue, she added.

She also said the county needs to be at the table for the gas tax discussions. A mileage usage fee is being talked about in Sacramento to fund road improvements. This is because the gas tax revenue is not enough to cover the costs to repair state highways as vehicles become more efficient and people go to the gas station less often.

When it comes to Meyers, Santiago again took full responsibility for causing angst over what was called the Catalyst Project. This is no longer an option.

But what the community has is a \$250,000 planning grant that will be used to figure out how to make Highway 50 more manageable, and work on improving trails and the connections to them.

What was missing from Santiago's talk was any reference to the county's dealings with the city of South Lake Tahoe. That relationship has for decades been precarious.

Santiago stressed the need for Lake Tahoe to elect one of three candidates from the South Shore. Two are from the Pollock Pines area now that the district has been reconfigured to cover areas outside the basin. (Beginning March 25 *Lake Tahoe News* will be running profiles on the supervisor candidates.)

She said it's not just about representing Tahoe in Placerville, but how this position is also on the boards for the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency, California Tahoe Conservancy, Tahoe Transportation District, Recreation JPA, Waste Management JPA and other Tahoe-centric boards.

However, Santiago said she was not endorsing any particular candidate.

Three of the major challenges for the county, according to Santiago, are how it is going to define itself, building relationships with the state, and the economy.

She briefly touched on the no-growth initiatives being brought forth by West Slope interests that everyone in the county will have an opportunity to vote on in November.

As for her future, Santiago said she wants to take time off to explore the possibility of running for another office in 2016. While she did not specify which one, there is speculation it will be for state Senate.

Tahoe's seismic monitoring being upgraded

By Kathryn Reed

Earthquake stations throughout the Lake Tahoe Basin are being upgraded so the Nevada Seismic Laboratory in Reno can create a shake map for first responders.

The information collected will be able to tell emergency personnel what is happening and where to go to provide help.

Graham Kent who heads the lab – and who is a 1980 grad of South Tahoe High School – gave a presentation March 20 to the California Tahoe Conservancy board. The board OK'd a license agreement for a seismic sensor on one of its properties in Placer County.



Sierra Nevada seismograph station is upgraded by John Torrisi. Photo/Nevada Seismic Lab

The Reno lab is upgrading its sensor vaults with modern broadband microwave communications systems.

Kent explained that the cameras would also be able to provide real-time photos that could be advantageous to fire crews.

The goal is that video would all be available to everyone through the lab's website. This in turn would then ideally be used by the media and through social media to spread information about a disaster.

The cameras will be active 24/7.

While some people don't think of Tahoe as being a hot bed of seismic activity, it is.

Kent said more seismic research has been in the Lake Tahoe Basin than any other basin in the world.

"Each earthquake we get here causes minor landslides," Kent told the board.

He showed a simulation of what would happen if there were a major earthquake that then generated a lake tsunami. It wiped out much of what is on land, including Inn by the Lake where the meeting was being conducted.

The West Tahoe Fault hasn't had major action in 4,500 years. Scientists say it's due because history shows it erupts every 4,000 to 5,000 years.

Faults lie under Angora, Cascade, and Fallen Leaf lakes. Plus, there are the Incline Village and Stateline faults.

The seismic stations have an 18-foot triangle antenna mast with a solar panel, antennae, equipment enclosures, seismograph and 32-foot connecting cable. It could be installed this spring.

Lab officials are responsible for installation and maintenance. Although this particular CTC property is slated to be traded to State Parks, the negotiations with that state agency are that all agreements that are in place are to be honored.

In other action:

- The board approved guidelines for a volunteer program.
- It was brought up how non-action items did not have an accompanying staff report. Board members are OK with this because the items for the most part are an update. But for the public that is not previously aware of the issue, they are left in the dark.
- Staff is going to focus on 17 parcels – six near the Y in South Lake Tahoe, nine in Meyers on Highway 50 and two in Kings Beach – to be sold under the Asset Lands Program. The board agreed to notify a wider area, include why the parcel had been obtained and what funds were used to acquire it. Of the 333 lots in the program, 227 are residential. At this time there is no plan to sell the neighborhood lots. Tahoe Vista resident Ellie Waller suggested the board visit the sites before they are sold. The board agreed to do so.

Teens not always choosing cheap alcohol

By Maanvi Singh, NPR

For underage drinkers, it's not always about the cheapest alcohol they can get their hands on. Many of them are brand conscious, researchers say, and they're not drinking the same stuff as their parents.

Young drinkers do go for sweet malt beverages that mask the taste of alcohol with fruit flavors; 17 percent said they'd had a Smirnoff malt beverage, which comes in flavors like grape and frozen strawberry lemonade.

But it's not only about cheap and sweet. Teenagers do favor budget beers like Keystone Light, and 28 percent of teen drinkers said they'd had a Bud Light in the past month. But they also drink pricey hard liquor like Jack Daniels whiskey and Grey Goose vodka.

Read the whole story

Nev. lands drone company, has 15 more prospects

By Laura Myers, Las Vegas Review-Journal

Gov. Brian Sandoval revealed Thursday that Nevada has signed

its first contract with a drone industry company and that state officials are talking to 15 to 20 companies interesting in doing business or manufacturing unmanned aerial vehicles here.

Nevada is one of six states selected last year by the Federal Aviation Administration to develop test sites for drones. They are primarily used for military purposes but are ripe for commercial development.

Sandoval said Nevada officials have one signed contract with a “confidential company” and are meeting with FAA officials in New Jersey, with officials from the five other states in the program. The governor said he wants companies to not just use Nevada as a drone test site but to build manufacturing facilities in the state, which has far more usable airspace than other states chosen by the FAA.

Read the whole story

Movement under way to reverse online gaming

By Karoun Demirjian, Las Vegas Sun

WASHINGTON — Nevada and Delaware’s recent agreement to launch the nation’s first collaborative, interstate online poker zone appears to have drawn a backlash from gambling’s opponents in Congress, who are planning to drop a bill rolling back the legal opinion underlying the recent deal.

Rep. Jason Chaffetz, R-Utah, is planning on formally releasing legislation to roll back the 2011 Justice Department reading

of the Wire Act next week, when Congress returns to Washington.

Unlike many recent online gaming bills, the legislation would include no carve-out for online poker; it would simply undo the Justice Department opinion that determined Internet gaming transactions are legal between states where gambling is legal.

Read the whole story

Growth initiatives before El Dorado County voters

By Tony Bizjak, Sacramento Bee

In El Dorado County, where growth wars have raged for decades, voters may face two or more dueling measures on the November ballot.

A group filed papers Tuesday for a ballot initiative it says will control growth, keep much of the county rural, fight congestion on Highway 50 and encourage more jobs. That petition drive, called Control Growth to Fix Our Local Roads Initiative, is led by Region Builders, a Sacramento group of commercial builders, architects and engineers that recently led the political fight to build a downtown Sacramento basketball arena

The group's petition, if successful, would extend the county's Measure Y slow-growth initiative until 2025, allowing the county to continue collecting traffic impact fees, used to improve roads to match development. It would require the county annually to report on how it is spending road money.

Read the whole story