

Meyers plan making incremental progress

By Kathryn Reed

MEYERS – Passion for their community is one thing Meyers residents have in common. Oh, and most also think any future buildings should not be more than 35-feet tall.

What started Wednesday night as a meeting to address six issues turned into a 2½-hour opportunity for about a dozen of the more than 100 attendees to give their two cents about what they want this small enclave at the base of Echo Summit to be.

It all has to do with Meyers trying to create an area plan that will be the planning tool for the next 20 years. It will also be incorporated into the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency's Regional Plan. That bi-state regulatory agency and the El Dorado County Board of Supervisors must each approve the plan.



Dave Reichel of the Meyers Community Advisory Council talks March 19 as fellow members John Garofalos, Rebecca Schwartz and Rene Brejc listen. Photo/LTN

The issues on the March 19 agenda included:

- Should there be an incentive program for developers
- Maximum height
- The number of hotels per acre and where those tourist accommodation units should be located
- The composition of the Meyers Community Advisory Council and how it is selected
- What to do with the Tveten property
- Promoting local businesses.

These subjects came about as the most pressing issues from the more than 100 comments submitted to the county since the Feb. 26 meeting.

By a show of hands people were overwhelmingly in favor of 35 feet being the basic height limit in the commercial and industrial areas.

But when it came to incentives for developers the audience was not as cohesive in its beliefs. However, most came around to believing there could be a time when fewer restrictions on height and density may be needed to attract the ideal business to Meyers. A recreation oriented business or broader tourist entity like a discovery museum had people getting on board with realizing that type of facility would need to be larger in size.

While “variances” was used, that word will have to change. This is because in TRPA’s world variances are not allowed.

And another reason to have “variances-incentives-exemptions” (call it what you will) in the area plan is because if they weren’t, the proposed project seeking the exemptions would have to do an environmental analysis. This is because it would in essence be changing the Regional Plan because the area plan becomes part of the Regional Plan.

County and TRPA reps will devise, again, verbiage for a potential incentive program and the potential types of development that could be allowed outside the 35-foot limit.

Who exactly would determine if the project were “right” for Meyers remains an unknown. But the masses leaned toward a more substantive Meyers Community Advisory Council (MCAC) that would be appointed by Meyers residents. But whether that is legally possible remains to be seen. It is not the common protocol. Nor would it be realistic for MCAC members to be elected because of the cost and time involved.

Normal procedure is for the Board of Supervisors to appoint people to advisory panels.

The goal, though, is this advisory body will be more formal. This includes being subject to state open meeting laws. It’s possible it could have a significant say in design review.

Ultimately, though, projects are the decision of the county and TRPA, depending on the size.

People seemed more amenable to hotels having fewer units per acre – more like 15 units per acre instead of 40.

What were lacking from the presentation were visual examples of buildings of certain heights as well as designs. At the Tahoe Valley Area Plan meeting for South Lake Tahoe last month photographs were shown depicting various types of alpine architecture at various heights, as well as density.

A comment form was passed out Wednesday night asking people their preference on the incentive program, height regulations, and hotel locations and density.

The verbal and written comments will be taken for a limited time that has yet to be determined. After that the county will come up with a final draft document that will be circulated. Then environmental paperwork will be created. Eventually this

all goes for a vote before the governing bodies, with public comment taken at those meetings.

Meyers Area Plan documents and other information are on the county's website. Comments may be emailed to MeyersAreaPlan@edcgov.us.

Women lag behind men in jobs, wages

By Jillian Berman, Huffington Post

America's recovery since the Great Recession has been fueled largely by jobs that typically pay close to the minimum wage, and women are suffering disproportionately as a result.

Between 2009 and 2013, 35 percent of women's job gains have been in low-wage sectors – like retail, fast food and housekeeping – while 18 percent of men's jobs gains were in those fields, according to an analysis released Tuesday by the National Women's Law Center. The NWLC defined low-wage industries as those with a median wage of \$10.10 or less.

The trend has worsened a troubling disparity: Today, women make up 76 percent of the low-wage workforce, but only 47 percent of the workforce overall.

[Read the whole story](#)

Calif. car data bill has manufacturers, insurers butting heads

By Jeremy B. White, Sacramento Bee

Foreshadowing a clash between carmakers and a prominent auto insurance company, Sen. Bill Monning on Tuesday unveiled a bill to loosen car manufacturers' grip on data generated by vehicles.

Framed by a computer-equipped car parked on the steps of the state Capitol, the Carmel Democrat said his Senate Bill 994 would allow consumers to see what data their car emits and decide with whom they want to share the information. The measure is sponsored by AAA Northern California and its south state counterpart, the Automobile Club of Southern California.

One car in five sold this year can disseminate such information and connect with personal devices like smartphones, Monning said, and estimates suggest all new cars will have the capability by 2025.

Read the whole story

Calif. paves way for U.S. to reduce carbon emissions

By Stephen Siciliano, Bloomberg

State actions on climate change are reducing emissions and

offering templates for effective federal standards, according to Mary Nichols, chairwoman of the California Air Resources Board.

Currently, Nichols said, climate regulation is on dual tracks, one state and one federal.

California, she said, is on pace to achieve the 80 percent emissions reductions by 2050 called for under its greenhouse gas emissions law, AB32. Its 33 percent of energy supply mandate, “now begins to look like business as usual” while cap-and-trade allowance auctions have become routine.

Read the whole story

Early retirement incentives for LTCC faculty

Lake Tahoe Community College is offering instructors a chance to retire early.

The college board this month approved the package based on number of years taught.

“The district retains the right to determine if the actual retirement is cost effective,” LTCC President Kindred Murillo told *Lake Tahoe News*. “When you offer early retirement and you are paying out money to someone to leave it is required by law that if you are not saving money, you can’t do it. The most effective early retirement is when you are not going to replace the retiring positions.”

It’s possible a faculty member high on the pay scale could retire and that position would be filled by someone making

much less. But recruiting and getting people up to speed are added costs.

The South Lake Tahoe institution is hoping people in disciplines where the student enrollment has declined will be the ones applying for early retirement.

The retirements would be effective June 30.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Nev. struggling with student literacy issue

By Trevon Milliar, Las Vegas Review-Journal

The vast majority of Nevada students struggle to read, conceded several local education officials on Tuesday.

They didn't debate the data. They focused on how to change it.

Federal assessments show only 30 percent of Nevada eighth-graders read at the level they should, slightly more than the 27 percent of fourth-graders who are proficient in reading. Trace Nevada's high school dropouts back to fourth grade and nine out of 10 of them were behind in reading skills, according to the Nevada Department of Education.

"The statistics in Nevada are unacceptable," said Nevada Deputy Superintendent of Student Achievement Steven Canavero to 175 people representing a who's who of state lawmakers and public school leaders gathered to hear about the battle against illiteracy.

Read the whole story

DNA at center of Swanson murder trial

By Kathryn Reed

PLACERVILLE – DNA, motive and crime scene tactics will play a prominent role in the prosecution and defense of Andrew Sanford.

Nearly two years to the day after being arrested in the 1980 murder of Richard Swanson, Sanford went on trial March 18 in El Dorado County Superior Court before Judge James Wagoner.

Swanson was a 16-year-old South Tahoe High School student working the graveyard shift at the former Shell station at the Y when he was bound with duct tape and left to die of asphyxiation.

Until March 2010 no one had been arrested in the murder that took place Aug. 14, 1980.



The local Secret Witness program was started because of the Richard Swanson case.

The District Attorney's Office believes DNA, which was not used in cases at the time, will prove 52-year-old Sanford is the murderer. The defense believes there is no proof Sanford committed the murder because the crime scene was so contaminated and that with Sanford regularly working on his vehicle at the station proves his DNA would be at the scene.

For Swanson's parents, who now live in Sonora, they are grateful that nearly 33 years after their son's death someone is standing trial.

Swanson's father, Ronald, told *Lake Tahoe News*, "It was a great relief (when an arrest was made)." Mother, Sharon, said of her son's death, "You learn to live with it, but it won't go away."

Their son, Bob, who is eight years younger than Richard, was with them in the Placerville courtroom. Mostly they were expressionless as they sat behind the assistant district attorneys.

Sanford, dressed in a gray pinstripe suit, sat next to his attorney at times taking notes, other times reading legal documents.

The trial is not expected to be over soon.

On Tuesday the eight-woman, four-man jury heard opening statements from both sides and testimony by the first five prosecution witnesses.

"Andrew Sanford – he is a thief. He stole money from the Shell

station and more important he stole Mr. Swanson's life," Trish Kelliher, El Dorado County assistant district attorney, said in her opening statement.

"The evidence will be insufficient to demonstrate that Mr. Sanford was responsible for this criminal offense. You will ask yourself, 'Is that all there is?'" defense attorney Erik Schlueter said in his opening remarks.

The prosecution says: Sanford lived in South Lake Tahoe at the time of the murder. He left shortly thereafter. He was convicted in 1982 for stealing a truck. At times he used a different name.

The defense says: The South Lake Tahoe Police Department used a maintenance man to collect evidence. At times gloves were not used, other times they touched multiple items. Pictures show evidence was moved.

Robert Blasier, DNA expert for the defense, said it's impossible to detect when DNA got on an item or if was transferred there unknowingly.

Ronald Swanson was the first witness of the day. He relived what it was like to be contacted by officers at work at Coldwell Banker, to have to go home and tell his wife their son had been killed, and then go the mortuary to identify him. As a former Ventura County sheriff's deputy and officer with the California Highway Patrol, Swanson knew the protocol of a crime scene. Even though he went to the Shell station, he said he didn't cross the yellow crime scene tape to see where his son had died.

By the time Swanson got to the mortuary the duct tape that had covered his son's mouth and nose, and bound his hands behind his back were removed. He stayed there for about a half hour.

"It was hard to leave," Swanson testified.

Then Timothy Deal, who worked at the Shell station at the time, talked about what it was like to work there and the different procedures. He swung by the station about 2 the morning of the murder to do some paperwork. Deal said everything was fine at that hour.

Rodney Jones was working a construction job back in 1980 and staying at the KOA campground in Meyers. Almost daily they filled up at the Shell station. When Kelliher asked him if he recalled telling officers that there was no one to pay that morning he had no recollection. Reading the police report didn't jar his memory either.

Kelliher kept trying to ask if Jones had a propensity to lie to cops. The judge didn't allow the line of questioning.

Frederick Hudson was spending that August in Meeks Bay with his family, but he still had to drive to Watsonville on occasion to work. Aug. 14 was one of those days. He filled up at the shell station about 5am.

"(The officer) said I was one of the last people to see the young man who took my credit card. You don't hear that too often," Hudson said.

Hudson gave his statement to police over the phone; never met them in person. He testified that he was never shown a picture of Swanson.

Patrick Riley was the pathologist who performed the autopsy on Swanson. He was working for Reno-based Laboratory Medicine Consultants. He relied on his written report at the time for details about what he found during the autopsy.

"There was a laceration from the middle left of the scalp extending from the top of the head to essentially to the left ear," Riley said.

Several black specks were found in the laceration, which he

said were pieces of bone from the skull.

Officers at the time had asked him if any wood fragments were found. "No" was the answer. Schlueter, in his opening statement, said a pipe was found a few days after the murder but that it was later destroyed.

The device used to whack Swanson over the head has not been recovered.

Riley testified that Swanson died after the blow to the head.

He said death would have occurred three to four minutes after Swanson's mouth and nose were taped.

Testimony continues today at 8:30am.

Broc's Puppies owner skips out on court hearing

Dennis Franks is making a habit of being a no-show for court appearances.

The former owner of Broc's Puppies in South Lake Tahoe didn't appear for his March 18 preliminary hearing. In June 2011 he failed to appear for an arraignment.

Retired El Dorado County Superior Court Judge Jerry Lasarow, who now acts as a visiting judge throughout the state, issued an arrest warrant for Franks. Franks now lives in Las Vegas.

The pet store had been controversial since almost the day it opened. Several dogs bought there later died. It was also linked to puppy mills. The store led South Lake Tahoe to

create an ordinance banning the sale of dogs and cats in the city limits, which was a ground breaking law at the time. Several cities have followed suit since then.

Franks faces numerous grand theft and forgery charges.

Broc's Puppies and its sister store in Carson City, Lil' Pups, closed in April 2010.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Loose dog that bit man being sought

Authorities are looking for a dog that bit a South Lake Tahoe man.

The man, whose name has not been released, saw the Husky-type dog on March 16 about 6pm near Tahoe Keys Boulevard and Washington Avenue. When he went to read the dog's tag it bit him.

El Dorado County Animal Services said the man was treated and released, but did not disclose the extent of the injury or where the bite occurred.

The dog is described as medium-sized, with gray and white fluffy fur, wearing a blue collar and tags.

Officials want to speak to the dog's owner to verify it is current on its rabies vaccination so the man does not have to have post-exposure rabies treatments. Anyone with information is asked to call 530.573.7925.

Warmest winter on record worsens Calif. drought

By Laila Kearney, Reuters

SAN FRANCISCO – California is coming off of its warmest winter on record, aggravating an enduring drought in the most populous state, federal weather scientists said Monday.

The state had a average temperature of 48 for December, January and February, an increase from 47.2 F in 1980-81, the last hottest winter, and more than 4 degrees hotter than the 20th-century average in California, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration said in a statement.

Warmer winters could make the already parched state even drier by making it less likely for snow to accumulate in the Sierra Nevada Mountains, NOAA spokesman Brady Phillips said. That snow, melting in the spring and summer and running down through the state's rivers, is vital for providing water in the summer, when the state typically experiences little rain.

[Read the whole story](#)