Nev. officials cracking down on marijuana testing labs

By Colton Lochhead, Las Vegas Review-Journal

Nevada regulators are cracking down on marijuana testing labs, as nearly half of the state's marijuana labs have had their license suspended in the past five months.

Since the Nevada Tax Department took over the marijuana regulation on July 1, four of the state's nine cannabis testing facilities have had their license suspended – three since late-December. The Tax Department has never suspended the license of any marijuana retail store, cultivator or producer.

"Our aim is to address issues early – well before anything rises to the level of a public health or safety concern," Tax Department spokeswoman Stephanie Klapstein said. "Independent testing labs serve an essential function as quality assurance before products reach the public. We want them to understand we have a zero-tolerance policy when it comes to regulatory noncompliance, even in cases where good lab practices are not followed but there is no imminent public health concern."

Read the whole story

Placer County making strides with affordable housing

Placer County last week approved a contract for a company to develop an affordable housing strategy.

The $186,860 deal with BAE Urban Economics Inc., whose nearest office is in Davis, includes four main tasks:

· assess and identify affordable housing needs and development opportunities

· make recommendations about any current housing standards and policies that may be hampering development

· develop a site evaluation tool to help determine the profitability of potential projects

· review recent state housing policy changes to ensure Placer's policy remains consistent.

BAE's work is designed to support the county's housing work plan that supervisors approved last August. The work plan's main focus includes: creating more incentives to build affordable and workforce housing, changing regulations to make building easier, advocating for state and federal assistance, and furthering partnerships for meeting regional housing needs.

"We've been working with the Mountain Housing Council and making positive steps toward workforce housing in North Lake Tahoe," Supervisor Jennifer Montgomery said. "It's not just those with low income who are struggling. We have folks who make a good living who can't find anywhere to buy. So we continue to be focused on tangible steps to get new housing inventory on the ground."

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Hikers find human remains in Placer County

By KCRA-TV

A body was found by hikers Saturday morning along Foresthill Road, the Placer County Sheriff’s Office said.

The body was found in an area of brush about 200 feet from Foresthill Road between Upper and Lower Lake Clementine Roads.

Deputies said the body had been there for a while and had degraded to skeletal remains.

Read the whole story

In Tahoe, a wild intersection of golf and celebrities



Serious golf is only for a few at the ACC; mostly it's about partying/gambling off the links. Photo Copyright 2017 Carolyn E. Wright

By Malika Andrews, Joe Drape and Karen Crouse, New York Times

STATELINE — The 17th hole is the party spot. Nearby is a dock where fans motor up wearing swimsuits.

The football coach Herm Edwards remembers playing with the talk show host Maury Povich when his tee shot landed on a boat. Is that out of bounds? Povich asked. Edwards laughed. "No," he said, "you can hit from there." And so he did.

They were competing — or perhaps simply participating — in the annual American Century Championship, a celebrity golf tournament at Edgewood Tahoe Golf Course, a loose affair in

its rules and its atmosphere. It’s not so much a sporting event as a gathering of famous and not-so-famous athletes and Hollywood talent on the shores of Lake Tahoe.

The tournament, entering its 29th year, sits in the not-taken-seriously corner of the sports landscape, with a reputation among golf-mad celebrities as a first-class frat party where short days give way to long nights at gambling tables and nightclubs.

This month the event got a new claim to fame, or infamy: According to the *Wall Street Journal*, a pornographic-film star was paid $130,000 before the 2016 election to conceal a past relationship with President Trump that began at the tournament.

Read the whole story

Stabbing at Y sends 1 to jail, 1 to hospital

One South Lake Tahoe man is in jail and another at Barton Memorial Hospital recovering from non-life threatening stab wounds.

Kifer Chriss, 57, who local police know by multiple aliases, was booked into the local jail on an attempted murder charge. The 27-year-old victim was in stable condition following the Jan. 27, 5:30pm incident at the Y transit center.

“It’s unclear what the altercation was over at this time,” Officer Matt Morrison told *Lake Tahoe News.*

It is not known how many times the victim was stabbed or

where. A knife has been recovered, but details about it have not been released.

Good Samaritans held the suspect down until officers arrived. They were there waiting for a bus. It’s not known if the two involved in the knife fight were loitering or waiting for a bus.

“The best involvement is to be a good witness and be able to safely report what you are seeing to the police,” Morrison said. “Fortunately, our Good Samaritans today were uninjured.”

The transit center doors have been locked since last April because of vandalism and homeless people sleeping there. In **March 2017**, four people were involved in a stabbing at the transit center.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Water companies to convene to discuss PCE

South Tahoe Public Utility District, Lukins Brothers Water Company, and Tahoe Keys Property Owners Association are hosting a public meeting Feb. 7 to discuss the groundwater contaminant tetrachloroethylene, PCE, found in groundwater at the Y area.

This will be an opportunity to find out what the local water agencies are doing about it. This is important because all of their customers use groundwater.

Here is a column about the issue from last fall from Lukins.

While it was stated at the City Council meeting this week that PCE has reached the lake, STPUD and Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control officials after that meeting said that statement was not true.

“PCE has not been detected in the lake,” Doug Smith, assistant executive officer with Lahontan, told *LTN*.

STPUD provided this statement to *Lake Tahoe News*, “The known plume of PCE has entered the groundwater below the Tahoe Keys lagoon area. The PCE contaminated samples in the Keys area are from two of the Tahoe Keys Water Company public water supply wells. This means the samples are from a depth of approximately 100 feet below ground surface. If the water in the lagoons or the lake were sampled, PCE would not be detected. We are conducting an ongoing study of the PCE contamination at the South Y area with partner water agencies to control the spread of PCE and begin removal of the contaminant, design a treatment system, or identify potential alternate sources of water for Lukins and the Tahoe Keys Water Companies. Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board is conducting an ongoing investigation of Lake Tahoe Laundry Works, a potential responsible party. Lake Tahoe Laundry Works is also conducting onsite treatment of PCE.”

In 1989, PCE was found in drinking water wells near the intersection of highways 50 and 89. PCE remains in groundwater and forms a contaminant plume believed to cover more than 400 acres. PCE is a man made chemical that was used from the early 1960s through the mid-1980s as a solvent for dry cleaning clothes and degreasing metal.

The meeting will be from 6-7:30pm in council chambers at Lake Tahoe Airport.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Hikers give USFS static over radio plan for Jobs Peak

By Benjamin Spillman, Reno Gazette-Journal

A proposal by the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest to install a new radio repeater has raised the ire of hikers who say it would be a blight on an iconic Nevada peak.

The proposal calls for a 20-foot tower on a five-foot-high metal building on top of Job's Peak, a 10,633-foot-tall peak located eight miles southwest of Minden.

The solar-powered repeater would improve reliability of radio communications for Forest Service workers in the Carson Range, which towers over Carson Valley to the northeast and Lake Tahoe to the northwest.

Read the whole story

Affordable housing – lots of talk, little action

By Kathryn Reed

An annual salary of $80,000 is what is required to rent a two-bedroom apartment in the Lake Tahoe Basin. Kings Beach and South Lake Tahoe were called the two poverty pockets in the basin.

These dire circumstances were illustrated by Heidi Hill Drum of the Tahoe Prosperity Center.

“At least 30 percent of the community is living at 150 percent of the federal poverty line. That is $36,000 a year for a family of four,” Drum said at this week’s TRPA meeting.

She gave a presentation Jan. 23 to the South Lake Tahoe City Council and then on Jan. 24 to the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency Governing Board. Joining her in Kings Beach at the TRPA meeting were representatives of the Mountain Housing Council based on the North Shore.

“We don’t want people living in motels or in trailers held together with duct tape,” Drum told the TRPA.

The nonprofit she heads up plans to create a demonstration affordable housing project. But like so much in the basin, the wheels of progress move slowly. While the plan is to turn a South Lake Tahoe hotel into affordable housing, no hotel has been selected, no developer is on board, no money has been secured to pay for it, there is no plan to decide who would get to live there, let alone there being an opening day.

“We’re just starting, so all these questions are to be answered during the first year of the process. We want it to be a very high-profile, public process,” Drum told *Lake Tahoe News.*

While there have been endless studies, a litany of meetings and multiple task forces put together, little has been done to solve the issue. (***Lake Tahoe News*** ran an entire series on the topic in 2017.)

The lack of affordable housing is not an issue that is unique to the Lake Tahoe Basin, but there are constraints here other locales don’t have.

Tahoe has limited land to build on. It also has some of the

most restrictive development requirements in the country, along with high permit fees. This in part is where TRPA might play a role in affordable housing. It could be through development rights or bonus units.

“We need to look at our own policy and development rights to make sure we are not a hindrance or at least we’re not the reason projects are not going forward,” TRPA board Chairman Jim Lawrence said.

California voters will be presented with an affordable housing bond in November. Thirteen counties will also have housing bonds on the ballot.

The day before the TRPA meeting the Nevada Legislature’s interim affordable housing committee met for the first time this year.

The *Las Vegas Review-Journal* reported, “U.S. Census Bureau data from 2016 shows nearly half of all renters in Nevada are cost burdened, meaning they spend more than 30 percent of their income on utilities and rent or mortgage. And recent reform of the federal tax code has devalued tax credits that incentivize private investors to help build apartments for low-income families.”

Austin Sass, who is South Lake Tahoe’s rep on the TRPA board, said, “We literally need close to 1,000 units to satisfy the hourly workers in this community. That sounds like projects or a big apartment. Given the density requirements, I’m not sure where we go. At the end of the day it doesn’t seem like there is a solution to put a dent in the housing problem.”

Affordable housing advocates have an eye toward Colorado, which is considered a leader in this arena. Ski resorts there have started to put tiny houses on campgrounds for employees.

Of the four members of the public who spoke to this issue at Wednesday’s TRPA meeting, one from Tahoe City said affordable

housing has been a problem since the 1970s. He added that he's trying to put a project together, but the "process is cumbersome." Someone else said it's time the ski resorts are held more accountable.

With the Lake Tahoe-Truckee area being a tourist destination, the problem is exacerbated with people wanting a second home here that stays vacant much of the year or is rented out to tourists – not locals.

In the Truckee-North Shore area, it was stated that 50 percent of the single family residents sit vacant 68 percent of time.

But this isn't new. Twenty years ago it was reported that 70 percent of the homes in South Lake Tahoe were not occupied by full-time residents.

Never part of the affordable housing discussion is wages or whether employees should expect to live and work in the same town.

Vehicle strikes pedestrian in S. Lake Tahoe



Emergency personnel tend to a pedestrian hit by a car in front of the Americana in South Lake Tahoe on Jan. 25. Photo/SLTFD

A 27-year-old South Lake Tahoe man is recovering from injuries sustained Thursday night when he was hit by a vehicle on Pioneer Trail.

The name of the driver and victim have not been released.

According to South Lake Tahoe police officers, the driver turned onto Pioneer Trail from Highway 50 at about 11pm Jan. 25. The driver told officers he did not see the person in the road. It is not known if the person was crossing the street or along the side.

It is not known if the slick roads contributed to the incident.

The driver is cooperating with officers. The investigation is ongoing.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

North Shore biomass facility stalled

Placer County has put the kibosh on negotiations with Liberty Utilities regarding the Cabin Creek biomass energy facility between Tahoe City and Truckee.

Placer and Liberty have been in negotiations for several years on an agreement for Liberty to buy energy from the facility and possibly agree to buy the facility after its completion.

To remain eligible for a U.S. Department of Energy grant that has helped fund the project, the facility needed to be complete by May 2019, which required a deal to be struck by next month.

Because Placer and Liberty could not reach a deal, the Board of Supervisors this week directed staff to cease negotiations and explore other opportunities.

“I think it’s critically important to recognize that we still have an approved project at Cabin Creek and my full intention is to do everything I can to make sure it gets built, just with a different partner,” Supervisor Jennifer Montgomery said.

In 2008, the Department of Energy awarded Placer County $492,000 to study the feasibility of building a biomass facility. The Board of Supervisors in 2015 approved a grant agreement with DOE that provided $2,919,250 for the project, which would have also helped fund its construction. The estimated cost to build the facility was $7.2 million, with $1.5 million coming from the DOE grant and the remaining $5.7 million to come from the county and possibly Liberty.

The county won’t have to reimburse funds that have already been spent.

The project’s conditional use permit is still valid, allowing the project to proceed as conditions allow. Other partnerships may be explored.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report