

South Tahoe's paid parking turns a profit

By Kathryn Reed

Paid parking in South Lake Tahoe is working – based on when it comes to revenues being greater than expenses.

Paid parking in South Lake Tahoe is not working – based on the nine people who spoke Nov. 5.

Paid parking in South Lake Tahoe is evolving and will continue to – based on the direction the council gave staff.

Paid parking has been contentious for the 15-plus years the issue has been discussed here. More than \$80,000 has been paid to consultants in that time period to study how best to manage parking. The studies finally stopped and action was taken. Most of the kiosks for paid parking went online in the city after the busy July 4 weekend.

For about two hours the City Council on Tuesday heard about what is working and what isn't, as well as what the public thinks.



Many people just don't like paid parking no matter how much money is generated. It would be difficult to find anyone in any town – local or visitor – who wants to pay a dime to park their vehicle on a slab of asphalt. So it could be a fact

when the people who are against the parking fee say everyone is against paid parking for some reason.

The people who aren't weighing-in are those who pay for it

whether they like it or not. After all, 42,342 people paid to park in South Lake Tahoe in the three-plus months the kiosks have been working. Most were at Lakeview Commons – 20,876; then Lakeside Beach – 16,796; Venice Drive – 3,347; and Paradise – 1,223.

Bellamy Court kiosks have been in for a couple years, with 9,161 transactions during the same time period.

Of the 3,551 tickets issued in fiscal year 2012-13, 1,507 were in the paid parking areas. Other tickets include being in front of a fire hydrant, in a handicapped spot, snow removal or other reasons.

The ticket at the parking kiosk costs offenders \$55. If there is no challenge to the ticket, the city pays the Southern California collection agency \$3. That dollar amount goes up through the appeals process, so then the city is generating less income.

According to the staff report, the compliance rate at kiosks is 97.5 percent.

The city collected \$190,976 off the kiosks in the 12- to 15-week period it was operational and another \$211,183 from tickets. After expenses, some being one time, the net revenue for 2012-13 was \$180,783.

The city is projecting net revenue of more than \$1.37 million in five years beginning with the fiscal year that started Oct. 1.

Still, Lakeside Beach area people have been fired up and angry about the parking and remain so.

Andy Engelhardt of Lakeside told the council, “You have created disgruntled, not delighted customers.”

He keeps saying Lakeside lost money ever since the kiosks went in. But what he doesn’t publicly say is that the fee to access

his beach went up and Lake Tahoe Resort Hotel no longer buys beach tickets for its guests. The former Embassy Suites was Lakeside's best customer in years past. There has also been a change to who is operating the restaurant on the beach and that contract is now being negotiated.

Most of the other beach areas on the South Shore that the city has nothing to do with have paid parking during the summer season – such as U.S. Forest Service beaches, Ski Run and Camp Richardson.

Kings Beach is following South Lake Tahoe's lead with year-round parking. The North Tahoe Public Utility District voted this fall to charge at Kings Beach State Recreation Area and North Tahoe Regional Park. The park alone has more than \$1 million in deferred maintenance.

Councilman Hal Cole in his support of the program said the city needs to create cash to pay for the operation and maintenance of places like Lakeview Commons, as well improvements to other areas like Lakeside.

The council agreed to have the parking program come back after the first of the year to further look at the entire program, whether kiosks would be removed from Paradise Avenue, how to improve Venice Drive – including possibly adding a trail for pedestrians and cyclists and bringing trailer parking back, hours of operation, lighting on kiosks, signage and a season pass.

Already the paid parking on Venice Drive has been suspended until May 1.

S. Tahoe getting booze, shoes, auto parts stores

By Kathryn Reed

Three businesses that have never operated in South Lake Tahoe are expected to open their doors in 2014.

Auto Zone is going in next to Izzy's Burgers on Highway 50. The martial arts building will be torn down. That used to be the garage where Buzz Springmeyer worked. His widow, Marjorie Springmeyer, still owns the land.

Construction on the new building will start in the spring.

The closest Auto Zone stores to South Lake Tahoe are in Gardnerville and the two in Carson City.



The building on the left will come down and a BevMo will be built; while on the right a shoe store is slated to go in adjacent to T.J. Maxx. Photo/LTN

Another building in South Lake Tahoe is also going to be razed next year. That is at the Y next to T.J. Maxx where a bike shop, standup paddle and Laundromat are located. In its place will be a 10,000-square-foot building for BevMo.

"We have not received an application for BevMo, however, we did have a pre-application meeting with them to tell them what would be required should they apply," Judy Finn, associate planner with the city, told *Lake Tahoe News*.

However, two other officials with the city have told *Lake Tahoe News* that the Bay Area company is going to expand its operations here next year. BevMo – which is short for Beverages and More – has 146 stores based near San Francisco, Sacramento, Los Angeles, San Diego, Phoenix and Seattle.

No one from the corporate offices in Concord returned phone calls. However, city officials said the goal is for BevMo to open in November 2014.

There is a property dispute concerning the building that exists today. The owners of the T.J. Maxx building allege about 3 feet of the building are on their property. But because it will be demolished and a new one built it could be moved down Emerald Bay Road and still work.

Both buildings are owned by out of town landlords.

The space next to T.J. Maxx is going to be occupied by a shoe store, according to Mayor Tom Davis. He announced this at the Nov. 5 City Council meeting.

The exact store has not been made public, but unofficially it will be DSW, a designer shoe warehouse.

"I just spoke with the Garfinkle rep last week and they are still trying to resolve the water pressure issue with STPUD and Lukins before they can rent the tenant space," Finn said. The shoe store has not submitted any paperwork to city planners.

While an agreement has been worked out between South Tahoe Public Utility District and Lukins Brothers Water, a contract has not been signed for the Garfinkle (aka T.J. Maxx building)

to become a STPUD customer. It was supposed to be finalized in October.

Prop. 30 working for California

By Jessica Calefati and Josh Richman, San Jose Mercury News

SACRAMENTO – A year ago this week, Californians were still locked in a fierce battle over Proposition 30, Gov. Jerry Brown’s ballot initiative that raised income taxes on the wealthy and the sales tax on everyone.

One side argued that the state needed a temporary infusion of cash to keep schools and vital state programs afloat until the economy fully recovered. The other side countered that new tax money would simply line the pockets of school bureaucrats and unionized teachers – and that thousands of overtaxed “job creators” would flee California and throw the state’s still-recovering economy into reverse.

But today, few Californians are arguing that Proposition 30, which to the surprise of many political observers sailed to an easy victory in last year’s Nov. 6 election, hasn’t been a good thing for the state.

It stabilized school funding in California for the first time since the Great Recession began, allowing school districts to avert thousands of teacher layoffs. It helped the Legislature balance its budget for the first time in years without slashing social programs. And it helped a state whose fiscal

mismanagement used to be fodder for late-night comedians suddenly become a poster child of sound budgeting that some say Washington, D.C., politicians should model.

“I don’t know that taxpayers much appreciated it, but it helped the state cover its costs,” said Joseph Henchman, a vice president at the Tax Foundation, a nonpartisan tax research group based in Washington.

Read the whole story

\$4 mil. Lake Forest Water System upgrades complete

After six years and nearly \$4 million, Tahoe City Public Utility District has completed the acquisition and full replacement of the Lake Forest Water System.

Most of the money to upgrade the 80-year-old system came from grants. The state and Placer County were integral partners.

The water system suffered from poor water quality, lack of fire suppression, inadequate storage, and shallow, undersized water lines. In 2007, these safety problems spurred 72 percent of the customers of the Lake Forest Water System to petition TCPUD to acquire and rebuild the water system.

The court had to intervene after negotiations with the owners failed.

In 2011, TCPUD began construction and the final phase of the project was completed this October. The system includes 27 fire hydrants and more than 10,000 linear feet of new water lines serving 123 businesses and residences.

Scientists oppose logging bills in Congress

By Scott Sonner, AP

More than 200 biologists, ecologists and other scientists are urging Congress to defeat legislation they say would destroy critical wildlife habitat by setting aside U.S. environmental laws to speed logging of burned trees at Yosemite National Park and other national forests and wilderness areas across the West.

The experts say two measures pushed by pro-logging interests ignore a growing scientific consensus that the burned landscape plays a critical role in forest regeneration and is home to many birds, bats and other species found nowhere else.

"We urge you to consider what the science is telling us: that post-fire habitat created by fire, including patches of severe fire, are ecological treasures rather than ecological catastrophes, and that post-fire logging does far more harm than good to the nation's public lands," they wrote in a letter mailed to members of Congress Friday.

One bill, authored by Rep. Doc Hastings, R-Wash., would make logging a requirement on some public forestland, speed timber sales and discourage legal challenges.

The House approved the legislation 244-173 in September and sent it to the Senate, where it awaits consideration by the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources. The White House has

threatened a veto, saying it would jeopardize endangered species, increase lawsuits and block creation of national monuments.

Hastings, chairman of the House Natural Resources Committee, said wildfires burned 9.3 million acres in the U.S. last year, while the Forest Service only harvested timber from about 200,000 acres.

Hastings' bill includes an amendment by Rep. Tom McClintock, R-Granite Bay, which he also introduced as separate legislation specific to lands burned by this year's Rim Fire at Yosemite National Park, neighboring wilderness and national forests in the Sierra Nevada.

"We have no time to waste in the aftermath of the Yosemite Rim Fire," McClintock said at a subcommittee hearing in October. "By the time the formal environmental review of salvage operations has been completed in a year, what was once forestland will have already begun converting to brushland, and by the following year, reforestation will become infinitely more difficult and expensive."

The Rim Fire started in August and grew to become one of the largest wildfires in California history. It burned 400 square miles and destroyed 11 residences, three commercial properties and 98 outbuildings. It cost \$127 million to fight.

Members of the House Natural Resources Committee remain optimistic the Senate will take up Hastings' bill before the end of the year, said Mallory Micetich, the committee's deputy press secretary.

"We have a lot of hazardous fuel buildup, and it will help alleviate some of the threat of catastrophic wildfires," she said.

The scientists see it differently.

“Just about the worst thing you can do to these forests after a fire is salvage-log them,” said Dominick DellaSala, the lead author of the letter. “It’s worse than the fire itself because it sets back the recovery that begins the minute the fire is out.”

DellaSala, chief scientist at the conservation group Geos Institute in Ashland, Ore., was on a team of scientists that produced the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service’s final recovery plan for the spotted owl in 2008.

Many who signed the opposition letter have done research in the field and several played roles with the U.S. Forest Service and Fish and Wildlife Service in developing logging policies for the threatened northern spotted owl in the Pacific Northwest.

“Though it may seem at first glance that a post-fire landscape is a catastrophe ecologically,” they wrote, “numerous scientific studies tell us that even in patches where forest fires burned most intensely, the resulting post-fire community is one of the most ecologically important and biodiverse habitat types in western conifer forests.

“Moreover, it is the least protected of all forest types and is often as rare, or rarer, than old-growth forest due to damaging forest practices encouraged by post-fire logging policies.”

Ex-Tahoe exec to run Calif.’s

Largest Indian casino

By Peter Hecht, Sacramento Bee

ROHNERT PARK — Anita Silva, 82, never felt deprived by her humble upbringing in a drafty shack with no indoor plumbing on a reservation in Sonoma County. Despite economic hardships, she said simply, “I didn’t remember that there were any.”

Silva, a tribal elder for the Federated Indians of the Graton Rancheria, instead reflects on her years working in Indian health care, on her grandchildren and great-grandchildren — and on how much she loves playing the slots at Northern California tribal casinos. She still talks excitedly about the 94 bucks she won at the Dry Creek rancheria in one glorious payout two years ago.

Now, in the culmination of an improbable journey, Silva and fellow tribal members are about to get their own casino — and the proceeds from perhaps the grandest and most lucrative tribal gambling establishment in California.

On Tuesday, the 1,300-member tribe will open its Graton Resort & Casino, an \$800 million development in the Sonoma County wine country. Situated next to Highway 101 in Rohnert Park, it will be the closest tribal casino to San Francisco and is expected to instantly rival Thunder Valley Casino Resort in Lincoln for supremacy in the California gambling market.

Industry analysts say the new development — with 3,000 slot machines and 144 gambling tables beneath chandeliers that glitter with 24,000 pink glass flower petals — may transform gambling in California, intensifying competition among high-end resorts and the pressure to build casinos near major highways and urban centers.

“This is the bear — no, make that the \$800 million gorilla,” said Ken Adams, a Reno-based casino industry analyst. “It

certainly is going to grow the total amount of gaming revenue in California. It's going to force Cache Creek and Thunder Valley to respond competitively. ... We're off to the races."

Cheryl Schmit, an anti-gambling advocate who is fighting a major casino development another tribe plans near Highway 99 in Madera County, said the Graton resort and its prime location may signal a gambling future far different than voters envisioned when they approved tribal casinos in California.

"Here we have this massive Las Vegas-style casino very close to an urban area at the gateway to San Francisco," Schmit said. "Everyone is pushing forward. We're going to wake up in a few years and California will be a full-service gaming state."

A 2012 Standard and Poor's market assessment said the Graton resort, to be managed by Las Vegas-based Station Casinos Inc., could generate annual gambling revenue of more than \$530 million by 2016. General manager Joe Hasson, who formerly ran the Harrah's and Harveys resorts in Stateline, said the opening is being promoted in the Bay Area market with radio and TV spots airing with "such frequency that we could elect someone governor."

Read the whole story

Kingsbury Grade crash victims out of hospital

Three of the four people injured in a two-car crash Friday on Kingsbury Grade have been released from the hospital.

The driver of the vehicle that crossed the center line was admitted to Renown Medical Center in Reno with non-life threatening injuries.

Nevada Highway Patrol troopers told *Lake Tahoe News* that on Nov. 1 at 2pm Dora R. Aranda, 27, was on Kingsbury Grade about three miles east of Highway 50 when her Toyota collided with a Subaru driven by Donna M. Janaczek, 59, of Zephyr Cove.

“For reasons still being investigated, Aranda allowed her vehicle to drift toward the right roadway edge and then over corrected her vehicles steering to the left resulting in her vehicle to travel into the path of Janaczek’s vehicle. The left front portion of the Toyota struck the left front of the Subaru and all four motorists’ sustained injuries,” Trooper Chuck Allen told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Aranda’s passengers, Melissa J Dominguez, 28, of Rialto and Christopher M. Ashlock, 23, of San Diego were treated and released from Renown, as was Janaczek.

The crash is still being investigated and no charges have yet been filed, Allen said.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

Retailers not expecting happy holiday season

By Tiffany Hsu, Los Angeles Times

Count on coal this Christmas.

That’s what researchers at Morgan Stanley are saying in the

first major forecast of a decidedly dour holiday season. Retailers hoping for a respite from a year of so-so shopping can instead expect the worst Thanksgiving-to-Christmas sales since 2008, the financial services firm said Thursday.

Five years ago, the industry was free-falling into recession. This year, a new collection of worrisome economic conditions looms as stores gear up for a period that can sometimes account for 40 percent of annual revenue.

Shopper confidence is low. The recent federal government stalemate and shutdown was a damper. The window for holiday shopping is six days shorter than it was last year.

Read the whole story

Feds, Calif. at odds over education testing

By Sharon Noguchi, San Jose Mercury News

Reinforcing its threat to punish California for dumping its old standardized state tests next spring, the U.S. Department of Education said that decision could cost the state at least \$3.5 billion.

The state could lose \$15 million it receives to administer a federal program for poor children, known as Title I. More critically, a letter sent Tuesday by Deborah S. Delisle, an assistant secretary of education, hinted California risks significantly more money from other federal initiatives, for the lowest-performing schools, English-language learners, disabled students, rural schools, migrant children and teacher

training. Those totaled about \$3.5 billion last school year.

The dispute between state and federal education officials boils down to whether students need to take standardized tests in English and math every year, and whether the public should be able to see those results. Federal officials say the law requires that, but California believes that's unreasonable.

State Board of Education President Michael Kirst said he was surprised that federal authorities would send a threatening letter. He and members of the California Department of Education have been meeting with U.S. officials about reconciling California's new testing regimen with federal law.

He characterized the talks as constructive. "I don't believe we are stuck at all."

The federal threat comes as California begins major changes to the way it teaches K-12 students. It has adopted a new standard for learning called Common Core, which is intended to offer practical and relevant lessons, teaching students to think critically and solve problems.

Read the whole story

Placerville tent city permit about to expire

By Kevin Oliver, KCRA-TV

Three dozen people are wondering where they will go if the Placerville City Council doesn't approve a permit allowing their tent city to continue.

Rebecca Nylander moved into a tent after her mother died and she found herself on the streets. She has become part of the leadership council governing who gets to join the ranks of the three dozen people sharing the space on the outskirts of the city.

“It’s not a joke. It’s really stressful,” said Nylander. “Especially for those of us who know how vulnerable our people are and don’t know how we are going to keep our people safe.”

Nylander fears she will not only lose this temporary roof over her head but the small community that has supported her.

The tent city was set up as a sort of experiment in July 2012. Placerville has allowed it to operate under a temporary permit which expires Nov. 15.

Read the whole story