Editorial: Calif. lacks a job-friendly economic policy

Publisher's note: ***This editorial is from the April 7, 2018, Orange County Register.***

Amazon's second headquarters, a shiny object dangled in front of revenue-hungry government officials across the country, appears to be headed for someplace other than California.

The project known as "HQ2" is likely to land in northern Virginia, some observers believe, where Amazon recently located the headquarters of its cloud business a short distance from the site that was pitched for HQ2. It's also close to the 44-acre site where the company is planning a new data-center campus.

Other Amazon-watchers predict that Atlanta will get the nod for the project, which the company says will bring $5 billion in investment and 50,000 jobs, many of them paying six-figure salaries.

Read the whole story

Letter: Marching for climate change

To the community,

Climate change is the defining issue of our time. We are bombarded daily by those who seek to divide us on the issue of climate change. Those that sow the seeds of division

understand the climate science and the catastrophic impacts if it goes unchecked, but yet they still work tirelessly and at great expense to keep us apart and create doubt.



Nick Exline

The decades-long campaign to mislead the public on climate change was done so for one very simple reason, to ensure the profits of a very select few at the cost of “we.”

But we are waking up. We understand that climate change is not a political issue and that we will feel the impacts regardless of whom we voted for in the last election. We understand that the exploding green economy is providing good paying jobs and can save our city, utility and school districts money. We understand that addressing climate change will provide safety and security to our communities and families as we safeguard against wildfires and decentralize our energy grid. Finally, we understand that fighting climate change is the only way to protect the place we are fortunate enough to call home.

On April 28 at 10am we will be meeting at Lakeview Commons for the second annual South Lake Tahoe People’s Climate March, which will end at the Earth Day event at Bijou Park. We are marching to demonstrate that we, as a community, are united in our fight against climate change.

We came together as a community when the city of South Lake Tahoe and the Lake Tahoe Unified School District made their 100 percent renewable commitments. I can’t tell you how optimistic I am about what “we” can accomplish next.

Nick Exline, South Lake Tahoe

Calif. housing bill narrowed before first legislative debate

By Liam Dillon, Los Angeles Times

Ahead of its first legislative committee hearing scheduled for next week, a Bay Area lawmaker has narrowed his bill aimed at building more housing near transit across California.

Under the newly amended Senate Bill 827 from Sen. Scott Wiener, D-San Francisco, cities would be allowed to restrict building heights to four or five stories, down from a maximum eight stories, within a half-mile of rail and ferry stops. Wiener also limited changes surrounding bus stops. The new version of the bill wouldn’t mandate height increases around bus stops, instead allowing for increased density and lower parking requirements. It would also only apply at bus stops with frequent service throughout the day, rather than just during rush hour.

Read the whole story

Opinion: A dilemma has parked in Placerville

By Larry Weitzman

Placerville has a major ongoing problem. Illegally issued parking tickets, and it's not like they didn't know. Because the 2000-01 El Dorado County Grand Jury considered the legality of how parking tickets were issued, to say the city "fathers" didn't know, is like saying "I didn't know it was illegal to steal," which may be exactly what the city of Placerville is doing, stealing from you if you pay those nasty parking tickets.



Larry Weitzman

Some background. During that 2000-01 Grand Jury term an investigation was done with respect to private contractors issuing parking tickets and their validity. For a parking citation, which is an infraction, to be valid, according to California Vehicle Code Section 40202 it "must be issued by a peace officer or person authorized to enforce parking laws" and such a person is further described as the "issuing officer."

Because the California Legislature in CVC 40200.5 expressly allows cities to contract with private companies to process parking citations, which is a process that takes place after the issuance of the parking citation, by clear inference, it means that cities (and other local jurisdictions) must have

express legislative authority for private contractors to issue citations pursuant to California law. There is no such express legislative authority, for California General Law cities, which P'ville is.

By now you have already figured out that P'Ville uses a private company, Espy Parking Service to issue parking violations. P'Ville police officers do not issue parking violations. I have confirmed this fact with Placerville City Manager, Cleve Morris, that Espy Parking Service is the private contractor that does the job of parking enforcement including the issuing parking citations. The P'Ville city budget shows that the prior company, Banner Parking Service contract costs for the 2016-17 fiscal year is $143,828. Morris didn't know, off hand, the revenue from the tickets, but believes they are below $60,000 annually.

Making matters worse, EDC County Counsel Louis B. Green, around the time of the GJ investigation requested an opinion from the California Attorney General's office asking the question of whether a general law city can enter into a contract with a private security company authorizing the company's employees to issue citations for Vehicle Code parking violations?

On April 23, 2002, such an AG ruling was issued, No. 01-1103 answering this exact question. The ruling, which was five pages of legal reasoning, had the following conclusion: "A general law city may not enter into a contract with a private security company authorizing the company's employees to issue citations for Vehicle Code parking violations."

While AG opinions do not have the force of law, they are considered substantial authority which a court will usually rely on when making decisions. This AG ruling is much like a legal court ruling and the case law and legal reasoning upon which it relies on for its conclusion is quite clear. There is no authority within the CVC giving cities the ability to

contract with private companies for the issuance of parking citations.

In a discussing the parking enforcement issue with, Cleve Morris, the P'Ville City Manager on about November 14, 2017, remarked that he has been doing it for years, even in other cities. He was unaware of the Attorney General ruling "prohibiting" the practice.

In reviewing the financials of Placerville, it contracted with Banner Parking Service (now SP+), a private company, to enforce its parking regulations and issue parking citations at a cost of about $144,000 annually, which City Manager Morris, confirmed. The revenue is still being determined, but Morris thinks that it might be somewhere around $60,000 annually or less. That would equate to an average of four citations a day. If the Attorney General ruling is upheld by a court of law and a three-year statute of limitations is applied, the City would have to refund approximately $200,000 to people who paid the "illegally" issued citations. And there may be extensive legal fees as provided by the California private attorney general law.

Hiring perhaps two people to enforce the 60 hours a week (8 am-6 pm daily except Sunday) of when there are parking regulations and limitations in effect within the City might be less expensive than the cost of the $144,000 private contract and give the City much better control and more appropriate enforcement. At $17 an hour the cost would be about $1,000 a week which is about $52,000 annually plus 40 percent or about $21,000 for benefits. That is less than $75,000 annually. Even with 10 hours a week of supervision and administration, it would still come in at under $100,000 annually. And the law regarding the proper issuance of parking citations would be pursuant to the Attorney General opinion.

As with the Mitigation Fee Act litigation which I have written extensively about government either not following the law or

being above the law, here is another cut and dry example of a government misdeed. They knew the law. It would be surprising to think that this parking issue wasn't discussed at some government conference/junket. It was our own County Counsel who requested clarification via an AG opinion. Government chose to ignore it, thinking perhaps no one would notice. "Hey, we are the government we can do anything we want." Their ignorance is going to potentially cost Placerville taxpayers about a quarter of a million dollars, maybe more. It's about time that consequences are enacted against government officials for such malfeasance.

We will see how fast this potential problem is rectified.

Larry Weitzman is a resident of Rescue.

Opinion: California's fear of heights

By Joe Mathews

Want to spook your neighbors this Halloween? Don't bother with ghouls or ghosts. Instead, just decorate your door with a picture of an eight-story apartment building.

Californians are famously fearless. We devote ourselves to extreme outdoor sports, buy homes near earthquake faults, and launch startups against all odds. But in the face of tall buildings, especially multi-family high-rises, we turn into a bunch of scaredy-cats.



Joe Mathews

This statewide acrophobia has created a historic housing shortage that holds back our economy, increases homelessness, and forces us into long, unhealthy commutes.

Taller development creates badly needed housing, and the population density to support robust public transportation and thriving retail corridors. But California is laced with Munsters-era zoning codes that bar tall multi-unit buildings in many neighborhoods. Even where we permit residential towers, our frighteningly complicated regulatory processes produce long delays that make taller buildings expensive.

To their credit, both cities and developers across the state have been advancing plans for taller buildings, often in the dense centers where they're needed. But smart plans are little match for the collective acrophobia of Californians.

If you dare, you can witness the plague of height fears in housing in Oakland, which faces a massive backlog of 18,000 approved but as yet unbuilt units in its pipeline, many of which would be in taller buildings near transit.

In Long Beach, citizens are revolting against a city update of a three-decade-old land use plan to accommodate taller buildings. In Santa Monica, a new Expo Line rail connection should be encouraging taller development, but longtime residents, afflicted with the most haunting case of vertigo since Jimmy Stewart in the Hitchcock film of that name, oppose it.

"Fear is the mind-killer. Fear is the little-death that brings

total obliteration. I will face my fear. I will permit it to pass over me and through me," wrote the late Frank Herbert, a Northern California journalist better known for his Dune novels.

When it comes to tall buildings, we should take his advice and face our fears. Instead, Californians construct self-deceiving justifications for our acrophobic anxieties.

We tell ourselves that earthquakes make taller buildings less safe– even though poorly designed smaller buildings are more likely to collapse and hurt us. We focus too much on the upfront costs of high-rise multi-family buildings–which are more expensive to build than single-family homes because they require stronger materials–and ignore all the hidden costs of single-family housing.

And we are highly selective in our fears. We fear the apartment building downtown and not the elaborate home surrounded by brush on a hill. We block tall buildings in our town centers because we worry about new crowds of new people–claustrophobia and xenophobia are cousins to our fear of heights–and then complain about all the resulting freeway traffic at rush hour. We oppose new housing on the grounds that it will change the character of our neighborhoods, and then lament the appearance of homeless encampments down the street.

Our fears literally distort our vision. Many Californians oppose tall and thin buildings, even though they actually are better for our views.

During a recent interview, a leading Los Angeles architect took out his Smartphone. Holding the thin phone vertically, he explained that he could design a tall and thin building that is easy to see around. But because of fear of heights, he said, turning the phone horizontally, buildings are often made much shorter and squatter, effectively becoming walls that

block more views of more people. “We’re building a bunch of fat boys,” he lamented.

Which is too bad, because the few areas of California with high-rise housing are successes. Fear somehow has blinded us to the vibrancy of high-rise-heavy precincts in the downtowns of L.A. and San Diego. The benefits of pursuing a taller, denser housing future, particularly in coastal urban areas, would be considerable: higher annual economic growth, more tax revenue, and fewer greenhouse gases.

But it’s hard to have a conversation about this fear when there is so much else for Californians to be afraid of now, from a spike in property crime in the state to the nuclear-armed madmen who run Pyongyang and Washington.

The current gubernatorial campaign might provide an opportunity for reassessing the altitude of our development. The top two contenders, Gavin Newsom and Antonio Villaraigosa, pushed to make their cities more vertical when they were mayors of San Francisco and Los Angeles, respectively.

But both got hammered for doing so. And now the two former mayors are surrounded by protective political professionals who, when it comes to the highest and hardest issues, are perpetually scared to death.

Joe Mathews writes the Connecting California column for Zócalo Public Square.

Alleged sexual predator

arrested in SLT



Omar Oceguera

A 27-year-old Tracy man was behind bars on seven felony counts related to sexual relations with a 16-year-old girl.

Omar Oceguera was arrested July 2 in South Lake Tahoe. He was transferred to a jail in San Joaquin County on Monday because that is where the alleged crimes occurred.

Bail has been set at $1.515 million.

Oceguera and the teenager had been missing since June 18. The girl was in the car when they were stopped by local officers. She has since been reunited with her parents.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Reno’s Jitloff returns to racing with 20th place

By USSA

GARMISCH-PARTENKIRCHEN, Germany – Tommy Ford (Bend, Ore.) picked up his third Audi FIS Ski World Cup top-15 giant slalom

result of the season, finishing 14th on Sunday.

Austria’s Marcel Hirscher skied to his 20th career World Cup giant slalom victory by a massive 1.50 seconds ahead of Matts Olsson of Sweden in second and 1.95 seconds in front of Stefan Luitz of Germany in third. With his victory, Hirscher pulled farther ahead of Norway’s Henrik Kristoffersen, who finished seventh Sunday, in the overall World Cup standings.

Tim Jitloff (Reno), who is returning to form following a back injury last month, posted his first top 20 of the season, finishing 20th on the demanding and dark Kandahar course.

“Considering I couldn’t walk two weeks ago, I’m pretty damn happy about today,” Jitloff said. “It was a solid effort, and the skiing was not bad at all – the second run I just had an unlucky mistake there that cost me probably a top 15.”

Ford started 26th and finished 10th in the first run. In the second run, he made a slight mistake, but kept charging to the finish.

Sunday’s race was the final World Cup giant slalom before next month’s FIS Alpine World Ski Championships in St. Moritz, Switzerland.

Truckee Community Christmas drives in motion

The Truckee Community Christmas senior program and toy, food and coat drives are all under way.

Collection bins can be found all over town for toy donations. Coats may be donated at Church of the Mountains in downtown Truckee, Mountain Hardware, Starbucks and Tahoe Forest Church on Hirschdale Road. Food items are being collected at local grocery stores.

Recommended food lists may be found at the collection barrels placed near the front of grocery stores. Look for the red, square Truckee Community Christmas logo, which marks items that directly go to local families in need. Program recipients have been identified by area agencies, schools and churches, and are screened and approved.

To make an online donation, find out where collection bins are located, how to volunteer and more, go **online**. For questions, call 530-587-2757.

Cave Rock tunnel, paving complete

Cave Rock tunnel and Highway 50 upgrades were finished one month ahead of schedule.

All travel lanes through Cave Rock are now open.

The $6 million project extended the westbound, lakeside Cave Rock tunnel entrance. The new approximately 60-foot long and 27-foot tall structure is designed to enhance safety by catching rock fall before it reaches the roadway.

Lighting and white paint were added inside each tunnel for better visibility. Two radar-activated overhead signs installed to automatically notify drivers of bicyclists or

potentially icy conditions in the tunnels.