Letter: Placer County must stop Squaw development

Publisher's note: ***This letter was sent to the Placer County Board of Supervisors this week and is reprinted with permission.***

To the Placer County Board of Supervisors,

We are local businesses and nonprofit organizations writing to encourage responsible decision-making for Squaw Valley and the Tahoe-Truckee region.

Each of us shares a deep commitment to the natural resources, recreational opportunities, local businesses, and visitor experience that define life in North Lake Tahoe.

Those values, however, are at risk.

KSL Capital Partners is proposing development in Squaw Valley of a size, scale, and scope North Lake Tahoe has never seen.

Their application to Placer County asks for entitlements to develop more than 1,500 bedrooms and the equivalent of four city blocks of 100-foot tall buildings – as well as a 90,000 square foot indoor amusement park with fake rivers, waterslides, an arcade, indoor skydiving, and more.

All told, the project is so big, it would take 25 years to complete.

Squaw Valley is not an island; it's an integral part of the greater North Lake Tahoe community, economy, culture, and environment. And any development approved for Squaw Valley would impact the entire region:

- KSL's proposal would have unacceptable impacts on our natural resources, including Squaw Creek, Granite Chief

Wilderness, our starry night sky, and even the clarity of Lake Tahoe itself.

- Proposed development seeks to funnel visitors indoors– to an indoor water park designed to "compete with the Lake", instead of celebrating and respecting the region's greatest asset: the great outdoors.
- Local businesses, many of which already struggle to survive slow winters and ongoing drought, would be eclipsed by 300,000 square feet of new commercial development.
- And the famed Tahoe visitor experience would diminish under the weight of new highrises and the estimated 8,000 new daily car trips they would add to our region's roads each summer Sunday.

Our opposition to KSL's proposal is echoed by hundreds of comment letters submitted to Placer County in response to the project's Draft Environmental Impact Report. Of the 338 comment letters submitted by local jurisdictions, regulatory agencies, private organizations, and individual citizens, nearly all – 97 percent – expressed either outright opposition to KSL's proposal, pointed out flaws in the environmental analysis, or both.

Those letters represent a widespread understanding of what's at stake here in North Lake Tahoe and, also, a deep commitment to securing a better outcome.

We do not oppose all development. But the question before us is: do we want this development? Our answer is no.

We urge the Placer County Board of Supervisors to reject KSL's proposed development and, instead, encourage landowners and the community to work together to create a blueprint that makes sense for Squaw, Tahoe, and beyond.

Sincerely,

Tom Mooers, Sierra Watch and 42 other entities

Opinion: Exercising self-discipline matters

By David Mochel, Huffington Post

I do not consider myself religious in any traditional sense, nor would I say that I am deeply patriotic, but I am tired of "American" and "Christian" being used as descriptors of what is happening in the popular discourse.

I am tired of letting the loudest among us be those who call for un-American behavior in the name of patriotism. I am tired of letting the dialogue be monopolized by those who pass off prejudice as faith. Compassion matters. Dignity matters. Exercising self-discipline when we are scared and angry matters.

Human beings are biological creatures with lots of biological impulses. But we also have the capacity to see beyond our temporary urges for violence and oppression. We have the ability to anchor ourselves in, and act out of, enduring and inspiring principles. If we do not use the wisdom we have access to, then what exactly makes us human?

Read the whole story

Opinion: When Muslims admired the West and were admired back

By Nile Green

Is it right to talk about friendship in a time of hatred? More specifically, is it right to consider Muslim affection for the West when, from Boston to Paris to perhaps San Bernardino, Muslims appear to be saying we hate you?

Security analysts have looked at the social profiles of the terrorists in London, Madrid, Paris, and Boston, and there is no clear pattern of poverty, no pattern of poor education, no pattern of training in terror camps. But it's clear to me, as a historian, that what the murderers have in common is a narrative.

It is a story they share in which the West has always oppressed Muslims, in which the West is inherently against Muslims. I've traveled to the Muslim world every year for 25 years, and have heard that narrative a thousand times. Like most acts of political violence—from Nazism in the 1930s to Serbian nationalism in the 1990s—Islamist violence claims justification through stories of oppression.

It wasn't always that way. In my research on the earliest Muslim encounters with the West, I discovered a journal written in Persian by a young student who, with five fellow Iranians, came to the London in the early 1800s. The diary reveals that Muslims certainly lived peaceably in the West in the past—they admired the London of Jane Austen, and moreover, were admired there in return. Their story offers a counter-narrative to the founding myth of Muslim (and non-Muslim) neo-cons that Islam and the West are irreconcilable.

Finding Mirza Salih’s diary felt like unearthing a lost testament to coexistence.

Salih came to England with the others to learn the advanced sciences—engineering, medicine, and chemistry. He wanted to bring knowledge back to his home country. At the time, Iran was trying to defend itself from invading Russians. Reaching London in the fall of 1815, Salih and his fellow students first struggled to make sense of the culture. Women went unveiled and mixed freely with men; moreover, women received education and wrote books that men both read and admired.

Through their own curiosity and the good will of their hosts, the young Muslims came to understand, and admire, this strange land – with not a single mosque in the whole country. Rather than regarding the Christians as their enemies, the students saw them as people from whom they might learn, morally and politically, as well as scientifically.

One of the most moving scenes in the diary occurred when the students made a kind of feminist pilgrimage to pay respect to the novelist and social reformer Hannah More, the high-minded rival of Jane Austen. As the author of numerous books—some of them huge bestsellers—she seemed the epitome of the England that Salih called the vilayat-i azadi, or “land of freedom.” The students praised her learning and library; she gave them signed copies of her books, which they promised to print when they returned home.

On another occasion, they passionately discussed the parallels between Christianity and Islam with the Unitarian minister Lant Carpenter, whom they begged to found a Sunday School for the poor children of his parish. They saw the value of a Christian education and of Christian values. England’s charity schools were one of the things that most impressed Salih.

This year we’ve been bombarded by stories about people killed in the name of Islam. Even I have personal stories to share

about the violence I witnessed across the Muslim world, from Morocco to Yemen and Afghanistan. But there are enough books about that. There also need to be books about the friendships that are the other half of the historical record. Salih's story can reassure Westerners that Muslims are not inherently opposed to their way of life; and it can show Muslims how their learned forebears admired and respected Western norms. As a historian, all I can hope to do is show how such coexistence was, and still is, possible.

Nile Green is professor of history at UCLA and founding director of the UCLA Program on Central Asia. He is the author of "The Love of Strangers: What Six Muslim Students Learned in Jane Austen's London" and has written numerous books on the history of Islam.

Letter: Timber Lodge helps at B&B

To the community,

It's always exciting to have a brand new sponsor for Bread & Broth's Adopt A Day of Nourishment program. By partnering with B&B, our AAD donors get firsthand experience hosting and serving a hot, nutritious dinner and seeing the impact that their donation of $250 has on those who struggle with food insecurity.

Bread & Broth was pleased to have Marriott's Timber Lodge at Lake Tahoe host its first Adopt A Day of Nourishment on Nov. 30. Marriott's Timber Lodge crew was manned by Gay Colvin, sales manager; Craig Chilton, finance manger; Alex Tenocelotl, accounting coordinator; Sheri Runyon, administrator; and Tinka

Tang, assistant chief engineer. They were a great group to work with.

Timber Lodge's crew arrived in matching blue T-shirts and jumped right in with packing giveaway bags filled with food that would provide meals for later in the week and then ladled out a "killer" meatloaf, mashed potatoes, veggies and salad. They served over 128 meals and Chilton went above and beyond when he donned an apron and helped with the dishwashing duties.

Runyon summed up the teams response to their first experience as a B&B Adopt A Day sponsor when she wrote, "We, the Timber Lodge Team, feel proud and privileged to help out the Bread & Broth program serve our local Tahoe community."

Bread & Broth would like to express our deepest appreciation to Marriott's Timber Lodge at Lake Tahoe for hosting one of our dinners and their crew for taking the opportunity to help people in need.

To partner with B&B as a donor or sponsor, contact me at 530.542.2876 or carolsgerard@aol.com.

Carol Gerard, Bread & Broth

Opinion: Brown Act not stopping illegal meetings

By Daniel Borenstein, Bay Area News Group

The principle underlying California's local government open-meeting law is simple: The public's business must be conducted in public. Yet 62 years after the passage of the Brown Act,

some elected leaders still don’t get it.

The most recent example comes from Emeryville, where a majority of school district trustees met privately with the superintendent and construction manager before a board meeting last month. They say they reviewed costs for a joint city-school district project for which the board later that night approved issuance of another $4.5 million of bonds.

It’s amazing that elected officials hold such closed-door gatherings more than six decades after Gov. Earl Warren signed legislation outlawing them. Indeed, these are the very sorts of meetings that led to the Brown Act.

Read the whole story

Opinion: Federal highway bill good for Tahoe

By Carl Hasty

The five-year, $305 billion federal transportation bill passed by Congress and signed into law Dec. 4 by President Obama includes a provision that will steer additional money to Lake Tahoe communities for roadway improvements and enhanced public transit service.

The Fixing America’s Surface Transportation (FAST) Act is the first long-term federal transportation bill in nearly a decade. The bill will provide greater certainty and stability for state and local governments working to improve their transportation networks.



Carl Hasty

Unlike other designated metropolitan planning areas, Lake Tahoe’s rural classification left it at a disadvantage for federal support due to a technical flaw in the rules. The new legislation amends current law and will steer formula based federal funding to Lake Tahoe for road improvements and transit service. This key measure will allow the Tahoe Transportation District and Tahoe communities to upgrade transportation infrastructure to improve the environment, enhance public recreation, and revitalize communities.

This changes the metrics for us. The heavy urban use of the basin did not align with limited transportation funding so critical to the protection and vitality of Lake Tahoe.

The diligent effort of the TTD to modify the status was supported by the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency and transportation partners as well as delegations from California and Nevada.

This bill will help to create an inter-regional transit system in the next five years as well as corridor improvements related to safety, environment, economy, and quality of life.

Research has proven Tahoe is one of the most heavily visited national forest areas. Previous studies also indicate that over 70 percent of the particulates impacting lake clarity originate from the transportation system and built environment. Fine sediment pollution from roads and developed areas is the leading cause of declines in Lake Tahoe’s famed water clarity. Vehicles are also a major source of emissions

that pollute the air and fuel algae growth once in the Lake.

“For years, federal regulations have put Tahoe at a disadvantage because of our small, year-round population. This bill changes important formulas to take into account the millions of people who visit Tahoe’s extensive public lands,” said Joanne Marchetta, executive director of TRPA. “TRPA and our transportation district partners have been working together with our congressional delegation for years on this critical fix in order to upgrade our transportation infrastructure and transit services.”

“Tahoe Transportation District’s leadership has redefined the approach and execution of projects in a timely manner,” said Carlos Monje Jr., assistant secretary for transportation policy at U.S. Department of Transportation. “We are looking forward to growing our partnerships with the Basin, and to additional projects in Nevada and California.”

Carl Hasty is executive director of the Tahoe Transportation District.

Letter: SLT needs to keep banning plastic bags

Publisher’s note: ***This letter was sent to South Lake Tahoe City Council and is reprinted with permission. The council meets Dec. 7 at 9am with the plastic bag ban on the agenda.***

Dear City of South Lake Tahoe Council Members,

I am strongly opposed to the possible repeal on single use plastic bags for small businesses in South Lake Tahoe. It is a

bad solution in search of a problem that does not exist.



Rosie and John Friedrich

The Lake Tahoe South Shore Chamber of Commerce has repeatedly communicated to the council that the 70 percent or more of its small business members support the plastic bag ban. People in the community have largely embraced the ban, which has helped our community reduce waste and demonstrate our environmental awareness and commitment. Rarely are businesses, environmental organizations and the community so aligned on any issue.

So it’s puzzling to understand on what basis the council is proposing to move backward on this issue. Before voting in favor of such a regressive move, the council needs to demonstrate the data that justifies such a decision. Have businesses been systematically surveyed to assess the impact of the program? Is there any other data that has been gathered to justify the proposed repeal? If not, it would appear to be motivated by the personal opinions of certain council members, and not on a measured assessment of the desires, or best interests, of our community. Which constituents would be served by voting to flood Tahoe with more plastic waste?

Finally, I can’t imagine worse timing for considering a vote to degrade our environment. Right now, a large California delegation is in Paris, helping lead the push for a strong climate agreement by highlighting California’s example that environmental protection and economic growth go hand in hand. It’s unfathomable that the governing body of one of the

treasures of California, and the world, could meanwhile vote to undo protection of our fragile environment. What kind of message would that send to our visitors who expect Tahoe to be on the cutting edge, not tail, of solutions.

Please keep the plastic bag ban in place, and instead, join the hundreds of cities across California and the U.S. that are moving forward with strong commitments to help protect our planet.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

John Friedrich, South Lake Tahoe

Opinion: The younger you are, the less you support free speech

By Michael McGough, Los Angeles Times

Some interesting news from the Pew Research Center about the attitude of American millennials (ages 18-34) toward free speech.

As part of a global survey of attitudes toward freedom of expression, Pew asked respondents if government should be able to prevent people from making offensive statements about minorities.

In general, as befits residents of a country with a First Amendment, American respondents were more willing than

residents of other countries to say that “offensive” statements about minorities (not otherwise defined) should be legally protected. Two-thirds said people should be allowed to make such statements in public, compared with a median of 35% among the 38 nations included in the poll.

Read the whole story

Opinion: NV Energy aims to meet all customers’ needs

By Kevin Geraghty, Las Vegas Review-Journal

NV Energy has taken great care to keep rates stable while ensuring we are able to meet the energy needs of our state. Between 2006 and 2012, NV Energy engaged in an aggressive building-and-acquisition strategy to increase our owned-generating fleet, in order to shield our customers from unpredictable energy markets.

The result was the addition of 3,100 megawatts of highly efficient natural gas-fired generation that now allows us to supply approximately 80 percent of the energy needs of Southern Nevada and 100 percent of Northern Nevada through our own generating resources, making Nevada virtually energy independent. Our customers can take pride in the fact that our reliable service is delivered by one of the safest employee teams in the country.

NV Energy’s top priority is to create greater value for our customers through increased service and stable rates. We were able to reduce our year-over-year operating and maintenance expenses between 2013 and 2014 by 10.5 percent, without

layoffs and while improving customer service options. We then leveraged these savings during our 2014 general rate case filing, when, for the first time since the 1970s, we reached a settlement agreement that resulted in no increase in revenue for the company.

Read the whole story

Letter: Giving thanks for Second Serving

To the community,

Every Friday for the last six years, Bread & Broth has been partnering with Lake Tahoe Community Presbyterian Church to feed the hungry through the Second Serving program.

Second Serving meals consist of soup and a simple entrée such as pasta dishes, sloppy Joes and chili cheese dogs. They are served from 4-5pm in the family room of the LTCPC. These meals complement the Bread & Broth Monday evening full-course dinners served at St. Theresa Church Grace Hall.

The dinner guests at Second Serving are treated to hot, tasty and nutritious chowders, and tomato, bean and vegetable soups thanks to eight South Tahoe restaurants that prepare and donate their soups to the Second Serving program.

Bread & Broth would like to acknowledge and thank Blue Angel Café, Café Fiore', Freshies, MontBleu, Nepheles, Riva Grill, Ridge Tahoe and Tep's Villa Roma for their participation in the Second Serving program. By donating soups, these restaurants are truly Bread & Broth's partners in easing

hunger in the Lake Tahoe South Shore community.

Finally, Bread & Broth would like to thank the Second Serving volunteers and the LTCPC for all of their support in providing a second weekly meal to those most at risk of dealing with hunger.

Carol Gerard, Bread & Broth