Letter: Overdeveloped Lake Tahoe in the works

To the community,

There are currently numerous large projects being planned that would forever change the Lake Tahoe Basin, destroying the natural beauty for future generations. The Lake Tahoe Basin is a national treasure, and we should band together to protect it from overdevelopment.

It is imperative that we preserve the wilderness areas so that generations to come can enjoy the natural scenery. In just one small area, Squaw Valley and Alpine Meadows, the following projects are in the planning stages:

· Approximately 94 acres in Squaw Valley to include 1,500 bedrooms and over 200,000 square feet of commercial development, including an indoor amusement park, all constructed over a 25-year building period – The Village at Squaw Valley project is planned by KSL Capitol Partners LLC.

· A gondola from Squaw to Alpine, cutting across the Five Lakes Trail and the Granite Chief Wilderness – a project planned by KSL Capital Partners LLC, in cooperation with Troy Caldwell.

· White Wolf development – 38 homes and supporting structures in Alpine Meadows – a project planned by Troy Caldwell.

· Alpine Sierra Subdivision – a 38 home project planned by Chris Nelson of Capstone Partners LLC.

Can you imagine roads, houses and the grinding of an overhead gondola as you hike the Five Lakes Trail? Do we want future generations attending an indoor amusement park instead of

enjoying the peaceful great outdoors? We must work to stop this development by private interests, motivated only by profits. This overdevelopment will destroy the very thing that has attracted people to Lake Tahoe. Let’s work together to keep natural areas for the enjoyment of future generations and for the wild animals whose habitats are rapidly diminishing.

If you are interested in helping, please contact **Sierra Watch** and **Protect Granite Chief**.

Judy Bruner, Tahoe resident

Letter: Lake Tahoe faces constant gridlock

To the community,

“Gridlock.” “Don’t leave your home.” “Stay off the roads.” Do any of these terms sound familiar to you?

As we observed this summer, with an improving economy comes the return of more traffic on our roadways. Yes, we want visitors to come enjoy Lake Tahoe and help support our local economy. But at the same time there is a risk of “Loving Tahoe to death.” More vehicles, pollution, crowding, and noise impact our environment, quality of life, and visitor experience. Proper planning is needed to ensure we don’t exceed what Tahoe can handle.

But are we already there? Several approved but not-yet-built projects will draw thousands more vehicles to the basin’s already congested roadways (i.e. Homewood Mountain Resort and Boulder Bay). At the same time, major population increases in

California and Nevada will mean more people (think: millions more) living within just a few hours' drive to Lake Tahoe. Extreme increases in greenhouse gases (GHGs) seem unavoidable. Unfortunately, TRPA, Placer County, and corporate developers continue to push for even more large developments in the region.

The pressure for significant growth in the Tahoe region threatens not only the health of Lake Tahoe and surrounding mountain areas, but also our quality of life and economy. Will future generations know what was so special about Lake Tahoe, or will they only see intermittent glimpses of a murky lake through large buildings, cluttered ridgelines, and glaring nighttime lights, all surrounded by a sea of vehicles? If we want to protect what is special about the West Shore and Lake Tahoe, we can not sit idly by and let profit-driven developers call the shots. We need to get involved and demand better for our environment and community.

Sincerely,

Susan Gearhart, president Friends of the West Shore

Opinion: EDC fire district wants its money

By Larry Weitzman

El Dorado County CAO Larry Combs, wrote a letter to El Dorado Hills Fire Chief Dave Roberts on Oct. 8 informing Roberts that Board of Supervisors resolution 064-2014 had "errors of a technical nature that occurred in the adoption of the transfer." What happened is that EDH Fire District through

this resolution annexed the Latrobe Fire Protection District and the existing property tax revenue of Latrobe Fire was supposedly transferred to EDH Fire. In addition, Latrobe Fire was dissolved. No big deal, right?


Larry Weitzman

Not when you have Terri Daly, Kim Kerr and Mike Applegarth handling the paper work. We are talking about employees earning combined salary and benefits of more than $500,000 a year.

What Combs was referring to was that for the last two tax years since the BOS adopted the resolution on June 10, 2014, EDH Fire has not received a penny of the annual property tax revenues of about $257,000 annually. EDH Fire has annexed and accepted responsibility of Latrobe Fire, but isn’t getting paid for it. And to make matters worse, it is not recoverable. How could this happen? Aren’t the high ranking county officials, a CAO, an ACOA and a principal administrative analyst supposed to know what they are doing? Apparently not.

According to a memo in the BOS package apparently written by Kim Kerr and Mike Applegarth shows that this annexation which had file number 14-0428 was started at least by March 17, 2014, to adopt a resolution for the aforementioned annexation. Conceptually it was approved by the BOS on March 25, 2014, and a final version two was approved June 10, 2014. The title of the action according to the Kerr/Applegarth document titled Legislation Details was “CAO recommending the Board adopt Resolution 064-0214 agreeing to the exchange of property tax

increment, and a property tax base adjustment pursuant to Section 99.02 of the California Revenue and Taxation Code for the dissolution of the Latrobe Fire Protection District and the annexation of the dissolved district by the El Dorado Hills Fire."

To complete a property dissolution and annexation one would think that these two (three if you include the CAO) highly paid individuals and supposedly knowledgeable people could accomplish this ministerial annexation in their sleep, right? Again, apparently not. They even didn't understand the deadlines, never mind Section 99.02, the very code section they cited. That's what happens when you cut and paste some other document without understanding what you are doing.

Their first mistake was when they state "under the R&T code (no section cited), the deadline for all districts to adopt resolutions agreeing to the exchange of property tax is May 16, 2014. Since this resolution was posted to the BOS June 10, 2014, calendar on June 6, 2014, didn't they understand they were already past the annual deadline to accomplish what they wanted to do? If they thought May 16 was the deadline for this year, why did they even put this on the calendar in a haphazard, rush fashion, posting it on a Friday for the following Tuesday's BOS meeting? Even worse was the three-day notice to the public, while legal, not leaving much time for scrutiny.

It becomes obvious that the BOS didn't read or understand the agenda material which consisted of less than half a dozen pages, because if they did, they would have questioned the May 16 deadline date. Maybe they also should have read R&T Section 99.02 as you will come to see, no one in the CAO's office did so either. By the way, where was county counsel in this debacle?

For the CAO's and any other interested party's edification the actual deadline for such a transfer is June 30, not May 16.

The CAO obviously didn't know and never bothered to check. But 99.02 (e) creates perhaps an unsolvable problem, in that to legally do such a transfer requires a noticed public hearing for the BOS, EDH Fire and Latrobe Fire, none of which were held and it can't be cured retroactively. That means the past two years of property tax revenues (about $513,000) are gone.

But there may be another problem, how is Latrobe going to conduct a public meeting as it was dissolved two years ago and now it doesn't exist. That could be unsolvable.

In a letter dated Oct. 22, 2015, from the EDH fire chief he asks for his tax revenue money and acknowledges the Combs letter that there is a problem of "a technical nature." He goes on to say "we … have been patient while being assured that these issues would be rectified and our district would be made whole as per the original agreement."

If those assurances were made recently, then we need to know who made them as no one has even tried to fix the problem according to the law. In addition, what county official is unilaterally making such assurances? One was made by Larry Combs in the above referenced letter when he said, "The county is committed to working with EDH Fire to ensure that the county's commitment to EDH Fire as expressed in Resolution 064-2014 is fulfilled and is in accordance with California law."

We will see.

It is difficult to act within the law when the county officials do not understand the law, especially high ranking county officials who have almost a dozen full time lawyers on staff. Doesn't say much for county counsel, either. But what could be worse is that high county officials think they are above the law and they can do anything they want, just put it before the BOS yes members. It's been over four months since the BOS said they wanted Pam Knorr to correct a salary and

benefits resolution. If not corrected, Knorr and County Counsel Robyn Drivon will receive a large benefit as a result paid for by the taxpayers. Maybe they are purposely letting it slide while the BOS is silent.

This property tax revenue transfer problem needs resolution for next year but that still concerns only future tax revenues. I doubt that anyone in the county has done anything since being notified of the problem. Perhaps we just don't need a new administration, but a new BOS that takes care of business instead of the platitudes about how the administration does such a good job. Maybe the administration has other things on their mind.

Larry Weitzman is a resident of Rescue.

Opinion: Laxalt, Sandoval remain frosty

By Glenn Cook, Las Vegas Review-Journal

The nasty Republican divisions in Washington appear to have nothing on the party's infighting in Nevada.

The split between fiscally moderate and fiscally conservative Nevada Republicans, exacerbated by this year's GOP-supported tax increases and an incompetent state party organization that's incapable of raising money or registering voters, is as wide as ever. But the big story now is the chill between Republican Gov. Brian Sandoval and GOP Attorney General Adam Laxalt – and that amid last week's exceptionally public rift over Laxalt joining a lawsuit that challenges new federal land-use restrictions across Nevada, the state's four

Republican members of Congress leapt to Laxalt's side, not Sandoval's.

Sandoval, long the unquestioned leader of Nevada Republicans, hasn't been happy with Laxalt since shortly after the attorney general took office in January. In one of his first acts as the state's top law enforcement officer, Laxalt joined 25 other states in suing to block President Barack Obama's "executive amnesty" for undocumented immigrants. Sandoval didn't support the move, and he let Laxalt know as much, saying immigration policy was a federal matter.

Read the whole story

Opinion: Hunts don't decrease bear-human interactions

By Toogee Sielsch

Just like Nevada, in the history of Florida no one has ever been killed by a wild black bear.

In Nevada history their have been 26 hunting fatalities over the years, and in Florida between 2000 and 2007 there were 441 hunting fatalities. Yet in both states the agencies tasked with wildlife management and wildlife conservation argued that a bear hunt would decrease the number of human/bear interactions thereby creating a safer environment for humans.

In Nevada prior to getting an OK for a bear hunt state commissioners argued in favor of a bear hunt stating that a hunt might reduce human/bear interactions.

"I'm doing this for the bears," said panel Vice Chairman

Gerald Lent of Reno. “It is better to have them hunted than killed by cars. Gunshots scare bears. Maybe a hunt will take care of some of our problems.”

But NDOW has said that they were wrong to say it would reduce human/bear interactions. They used that mindset first to promote the hunt then they later said, “It’s unfortunate some people said that when it’s not true.”

In short, they used it to sell the hunt, then back pedaled when the hunt was approved.

Richard Corbett, former head of the Florida Wildlife Conservation Commission who approved the plan to hunt black bears in Florida, said of critics that, “Those people don’t know what they are talking about. Most of those people have never been in the woods. They think we are talking about teddy bears: ‘Oh Lord, don’t hurt my little teddy bear!’ Well, bears are dangerous.”

But despite Corbett’s suggestion that killing black bears would make humans safer, a later statement form the FWC states that this is not the purpose of the bear hunt, and hunting is not an effective way to reduce human/bear conflicts.

Is it just me or does anyone else see a pattern of those that are in a position of power in wildlife agencies making ridiculous statements to win the approval of their desired goals not as entrusted caretakers of wildlife management, but rather the statements of blood thirsty trophy hunters?

And what are the unintended consequences of these hunts? Driving more bears out of the backwoods environment they inhabit and sending them running straight for the urban environments that border the wildland areas to seek safety from hunters, thereby actually increasing the number of possible human/bear interactions. It seems the majority of wildlife management agencies in this country love to cherry pick the science that backs up using hunting as a management

tool even though that science has been disproved time and again over the last twenty years. Isn't it time to put highly trained wildlife biologists in charge of these agencies instead of most of them being run by blood thirsty trophy hunters?

Toogee Sielsch is a member of and volunteer for the Bear League.

Opinion: Shift in debate over work-life balance

By Michel Martin, NPR

Have we finally turned a corner?

Has it finally happened that when a man says he is making job decisions around his family we can finally believe him, as opposed to wondering when the email exchanges with his outside honey are going to come out?

This past week, two of this country's most powerful men – who work in a city where power is everything and work is king – both made career decisions with personal and family needs at the center.

In case you missed it, Wisconsin Republican Rep. Paul Ryan, chairman of the powerful House Ways and Means Committee, laid down some conditions for seeking the position of House Speaker – and one of them was that his caucus accept that he would be spending less time on the road, because he needs to spend time with his three young children.

Then, Vice President Joe Biden announced last week that he

will forgo a third try at the presidency, in part because he and his family had needed time to recover from the death of his son, Beau.

Read the whole story

Opinion: Explaining potholes on Tahoe streets

By Richard Solbrig

Potholes in our streets are a popular discussion item in Tahoe. Some potholes are simply holes in the asphalt paving, while others are actually low spots located over a utility pipeline. This summer, several articles have addressed potholes at various lengths.

The South Tahoe Public Utility District would like to provide some information concerning the “utility” potholes. There are multiple types of “utility” potholes:

1. Manhole structure on sanitary sewers (stamped STPUD)

2. Manhole structure on storm drain sewers (usually slotted)

3. Slotted drains on storm sewers (usually on side of road)

4. Valve box covers on water pipelines (smaller lids than manholes)

5. Manhole or steel plates on electrical vaults (stamped electrical).

The district is responsible for manholes on sanitary sewers

and valve box covers on water lines. Storm drains are the responsibility of either the city of South Lake Tahoe, El Dorado County Department of Transportation, or Caltrans.

Due to freeze/thaw cycles in Tahoe, road surfaces move up and down with changes in temperature. This movement can leave the utility cover higher than the surrounding road surface in winter even if it was flush with the surface in summer. These elevated covers can then be hit during snow plowing operations, causing severe damage, or complete removal, of the utility cover, and significant damage to the snow plow and possible injury to the operator.

To reduce the risk of damage and injury, the top of the cover is typically installed one-half inch below the road surface. The county project on Black Bart this year is a good example of this work. On typical county or city paving projects, the district will reimburse the agency the costs of having their contractor adjust the elevation of the lids to the one-half inch depth below the new asphalt surface.

On new waterline or sewer line projects, in addition to repaving the lane where the pipe is installed, the District requires that our contractor install all of the covers. Typically, during the active pipeline installation, the top of the backfilled trench will be covered temporarily with a pliable, cold mix of asphalt. This surface can be bumpy, similar to temporary asphalt used on the trenches this summer on Highway 50, where Southwest Gas installed a new pipeline. Speed should be reduced when driving over these areas. At the end of the project, the contractor returns and replaces the temporary asphalt with a permanent, hot, compacted, smooth rolled asphalt product. The extent can vary, on Highway 50 and in city streets; the district is typically required to pave the entire travel lane, or half the street, respectively. On county streets, just the pipeline trench is usually repaved to match the surrounding asphalt.

While we would all prefer a smooth ride, these “utility” potholes are a necessary evil. As members of the public, you can assist in increasing public safety by notifying the proper agency of an issue with a “utility” pothole. Please report lids that are excessively deep (greater than 2.5 inches), missing lids, or lids projecting above the surrounding asphalt surface. To notify the district of an issue with a sanitary sewer or water valve lines, please call 530.544.6474.

Richard Solbrig is general manager of South Tahoe Public Utility District.

Opinion: My dark California dream

By Daniel Duane, New York Times

California’s over, everything I love about this place is going to hell.

I knew there was something familiar about this thought from the moment it occurred to me in Yosemite National Park. My sister and I started going to those mountains 40 years ago with our parents, who taught us to see the Sierra Nevada as a never-changing sanctuary in a California increasingly overrun by suburban sprawl.

Once we had our own families, we indoctrinated our kids in the same joys: suffering under backpacks, drinking snowmelt from creeks, jumping into (and quickly back out of) icy lakes, and napping in wildflower meadows. Yosemite remains my personal paradise, but the impact of drought and climate change has become overwhelming — smoky air from fires, shriveled glaciers

leaving creeks dry and meadows gray, no wildflowers.

Confusing one’s own youth with the youth of the world is a common human affliction, but California has been changing so fast for so long that every new generation gets to experience both a fresh version of the California dream and, typically by late middle-age, its painful death.

Kevin Starr, a professor of history at USC and author of a seven-volume history of the California dream, told me recently that he considered the mid-1960s — 1963 specifically — the end of modernist California, that period for which it makes sense to speak of “an agreed-upon, commanding” version of the dream. In Starr’s view, around the time I was born, in 1967, California entered a postmodern phase with multiple dreams in parallel: back-to-the-landers on communes; migrant farmworkers organizing in the San Joaquin Valley; gay and lesbian life proudly out in the open; and, of course, the outdoorsy-liberal existence that my parents found in Berkeley.

Read the whole story

Opinion: Colleges will pay for stifling diversity of

ideology

By Patrick Everson, Las Vegas Review-Journal

Colleges and universities are supposed to be marketplaces of ideas, but that’s less and less true today. While higher education systems champion diversity of race, ethnicity and sexual identity, they’re completely unconcerned with diversity of ideology.

Nothing highlighted that better than a story last week from The Cornell Daily Sun, an independent, student-run newspaper serving the Cornell University community.

Phoebe Keller and Emily Friedman reported that more than 96 percent of Cornell faculty donations to political candidates over the past four years went to Democrats. Out of 323 donors, only 15 gave to conservative causes, contributing about $16,000, while nearly $574,000 flowed to Democrats.

Read the whole story

Letter: Moose take a turn at Bread & Broth

To the community,

Bread & Broth would like to thank the South Lake Tahoe Moose Lodge No. 1632 for the Adopt A Day sponsorship for the Oct. 12 evening dinner. Thanks to the Moose Lodge’s generous donation, the 91 folks who came for dinner were served baked salmon with orange sauce, spaghetti with red sauce, a mixed green salad, a lovely strawberry-cantaloupe salad and a wide assortment of

desserts.

Although heaping servings were doled out during the first serving at 4pm, 27 diners returned for the 5pm “second” serving of this tasty and nutritious dinner.

Working the serving line is always a favorite part of volunteering at the B&B dinners and this was the case for Moose Lodge sponsor crewmembers Rick Ainsworth and Scott Blumenthal.

“Many thanks for the opportunity to serve my fellow men, women and children in our community,” said Blumenthal. “This was great!”

Besides serving, Ainsworth and Blumenthal helped pack the giveaway food bags distributed at the dinner. These bags are filled with fruit, vegetables, dairy products, canned goods and breads-pastries. These items are made available through B&B donors and local businesses and stores.

For Ainsworth and Blumenthal, this was their first time volunteering at a B&B dinner. They were great to work with and they stayed to the very end of the event to help with the dinner’s cleanup.

“Thank you for giving me this experience,” was Ainsworth’s comment. “This was quite enjoyable working with a wonderful team.”

What makes B&B volunteer team members so great is the rewarding experience they have of sharing their joy of serving others with the folks and sponsors who make the weekly dinners possible.

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

Carol Gerard, Bread & Broth