Letter: Gore needs to know another side of Tahoe

Publisher's note: ***This letter was sent to Al Gore today and reprinted with permission.***

Dear Vice President Gore,

It is with a great sense of urgency and concern that we collectively write this letter to you. It is relatively well understood in the Basin that the primary environmental and citizen-action nonprofit organizations are the Sierra Club, Friends of the West Shore, North Tahoe Preservation Alliance, Friends of Lake Tahoe, and the North Tahoe Citizen Action Alliance. The Sierra Club and the Friends of the West Shore are currently plaintiffs in a lawsuit, which we support, against the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency (TRPA). The League to Save Lake Tahoe, formerly a member of our group, is absent from the list because most of us no longer consider them an ally in terms of keeping Tahoe blue.

Our primary effort here to convince you that your selection as the keynote speaker at the Tahoe Summit is designed by its sponsors as additional "greenwashing" of their plans for the Tahoe basin. Contrary to their promises, the urbanization through densification of several centers in the Tahoe basin will exacerbate environmental degradation, especially with inadequate measures to reverse the current decline in water quality.

Your presence, essentially, is, we are very sad to report, environmental "window dressing" by the chamber of commerce type of organizations that support the TRPA's Regional Plan update (RPU) that is currently being challenged in court. The association of your prestige would lend credence to their planned resort boom and further their relentless campaign. We

know you are familiar with this type of politics and have witnessed it throughout your career. The best description of how the ski resort development industry operates is chronicled in the Hal Clifford's critically acclaimed book "Downhill Slide".

We hope that this cautionary note will prompt you to look more deeply at the whole truth regarding the environmental status of Lake Tahoe, the incorrect underlying assumptions of the RPU, and how their economic promises are replete with miscalculations. We believe it is important that your remarks may be properly tempered and include that those of us who value Lake Tahoe as one of the few "Outstanding National Resource Water" under the Clean Water Act, oppose the RPU since it will environmentally and economically degrade the region.

A very sustained public relations campaign by the TRPA, ski resort industry developers, chambers of commerce, gaming interests, local governments, and select federal and state agencies have focused on half-truths, significant omissions of "inconvenient truths," and other ploys of deception to manipulate public opinion. Each stands to earn terrific revenues in the short term resulting from over-expansion cloaked with the pleasing environmental rhetoric of "smart growth." Indeed, we, too, support "smart growth principles" but also understand that they don't, can't, and won't work at Tahoe because the region lacks the requisite conditions for their success. Tourists and visitors do not enroll their children in local schools or behave as year-round residents in their shopping habits or work schedules. Since roadway and utility infrastructure is currently at capacity, increased densities carry excessive costs and environmental impacts.

The desire of your sponsors is, essentially, to have your speech writer(s) lace your comments with their talking points, slogans, myths, and stereotypes thereby endorsing their validity. Such terms have emotional appeal and have evolved

due to the lure of federal dollars for metropolitan areas.

If your speech uses terms such as “environmental redevelopment,” “building sustainable communities,” “improved clarity,” “compact, hi-density development,” “culture of cooperation,” “livable, walkable villages,” and so on, then you will have endorsed false claims such as the notion that people will ride a bike in the middle of winter at Tahoe to buy groceries. These terms divert attention from the real causes and parties responsible for environmental damage to Lake Tahoe.

Few people are aware, for example, that throughout the basin heavily contaminated unfiltered stormwater runoff from roadways and parking lots is dumped directly into the lake.

Sadly, here as elsewhere, while the scientific and environmental community knows the truth, the agencies and their consultants are locked into funding mechanisms based upon theories that require the perpetuation of an illusion replete with false claims that ultimately become perceived as reality. Again, we know that you are all too familiar with such phenomena.

Sophisticated propagandists in support of resort planning that delivers high profits to distant owners and destroys local businesses have already done a relatively good job at selling inapplicable planning principles to many of your colleagues. They are already on the wrong side of history politically, environmentally, and economically. Not unlike Gov. [Jerry] Brown’s comment at the summit two years ago about the problem at Tahoe being one of “squaring the circle,” while few readers will understand this analogy, need we mention Samantha Power’s analysis of an avoidable debacle that you are personally well aware of? You do not want to join those who have been duped with false claims and who will sadly acknowledge years from now that “they simply didn’t get it” at the time.

We would be delighted to meet with you or your staff to provide substantive evidence, which can also be found in the legal complaint, in support of our position.

Sincerely,

Roger Patching, president Friends of Lake Tahoe

David McClure, president North Tahoe Citizen Action Alliance

Ann Nichols, president North Tahoe Preservation Alliance

Letter: Thanks for successful parade

To the community,

Golden Bear Events and the American Legion Post No. 795 and Auxiliary would like to thank the community of South Lake Tahoe for a successful Fourth of July parade and event.

Visitors and locals alike joined the parade and the hundreds of spectators to show appreciation for our fallen soldiers, veterans, active duty military, and our independence. Many joined the vendors after the parade and celebrated at the Legion post.

Special thanks to Tahoe Valley Pharmacy for allowing us to stage the parade in their parking lot. Thanks also goes out to Brooke Laine for arranging for the Lake Tahoe Soroptimist Club International and members of the South Tahoe Alumni to provide convertibles and vintage vehicles to carry our soldiers from

World War II, Vietnam, Desert Storm, and other conflicts. Thank you to the fire departments and law enforcement for their help to maintain safety.

We appreciate those business owners who took the time to participate in the parade and the event to celebrate the Fourth of July, honor our military, and support the American Legion in this fundraiser. A big thank you to Wally's Hot Springs Resort and Spa, who was a Gold Sponsor for this event. All proceeds benefited our local American Legion Post No. 795.

The parade can be viewed online.

JoAnn Conner, Golden Bear Events

Editorial: CEQA overhaul won't be easy

Publisher's note: ***This editorial is from the July 30, 2013, Santa Cruz Sentinel.***

Demonstrating just how difficult it will be to reach any political consensus on reforming the California Environmental Quality Act, some interesting opposition to the effort popped up this week.

Was it environmentalists, unions or the liberal Democrats who have been arguing that changes to the act would no doubt weaken valuable protections against pollution, environmental damage and health threats to residents that have been in place for more than 40 years?

Nope.

The warning shot fired this week was delivered by a coalition of business, housing and local government leaders. They say the plan to rework California's landmark environmental law could actually backfire, leading to more lawsuits and making it even harder to approve responsible projects, the opposite of what lawmakers seeking the overhaul say they are trying to do. The group, according to the Associated Press, includes such powerful organizations as the California Chamber of Commerce, the Southern California Association of Governments and the California Association of Realtors.

Read the whole story

Letter: City Council ruining South Lake Tahoe

To the community,

South Lake Tahoe is an amazing place. We have the most awesome lake in the world, the best tree skiing on the planet, an outstanding hospital and an extraordinary police force that focuses on real crime with real victims.

Best of all, we have the most awesome people you will ever meet. From world-class athletes, to entrepreneurs, artists, musicians and writers, South Lake Tahoe is teeming with culture and vitality.



Steve Kubby

Unfortunately, we also have a City Council that has a long and miserable record of failure. Centrally planned economies have been a failure in places like North Korea, but that hasn’t stopped our City Council from seizing private property and pushing their authoritarian redevelopment schemes down our throats.

When the El Dorado Grand Jury investigated the council they found criminal negligence and a culture of ignoring the public. This is the same City Council that has an annual deficit of $1 million, made illegal transfers and is at least $300 million underwater in unfunded liabilities.

South Lake Tahoe deserves and urgently needs a City Council that is honest and truly represents us. It’s up to the voters in this extraordinary town to elect new council members who can better serve us. We also urgently need a forensic audit to untangle the convoluted and deceptive financial records currently being kept by the city.

Steve Kubby, South Lake Tahoe

Letter: Lack of memory

hurting South Lake Tahoe

To the community,

In his book “Lasso the Wind” Timothy Egan wrote, “There is no institutional memory in the West, only dawn.” That statement fits the city of South Lake like a glove, a perfect fit.

That’s true when one considers the City Council lifers, Hal Cole and Tom Davis. Had they remembered the troubles with redevelopment, the scandal of the $7 million that was quietly lifted from the city’s general fund for redevelopment, and the failure of the city’s parking garage, and the bankruptcies, Cole and Davis should never have blessed the Chateau’s promises of a grand tomorrow. But they thought only of the dawn. And dawn arrived with more failure and sorrow.



Bill Crawford

Instead of memory guiding city government, we have administrators and council members puffed up with imagination. But when imagination isn’t tempered with prudence, too many city attempts to create a new dawn are a gambler’s hope, a roll of the dice, betting with other people’s money.

And an important item to remember is that city government is a representative institution, government by consent that means city councils should be good listeners. But when council hears citizens contrary, council turns off its hearing aid. Thus, a lack of trust creeps in.

And a troubling fact is in the last 12 years the City Council has hired four city managers. Two of the hires were from out of state. The same two resigned only after serving about two years of their contract. So it's difficult to think that that office has an institutional memory. If there is a memory, it's short. Also, city managers bring their baggage of what to do. Ideas that do not fit the history and experience of the city. They bring a "new dawn" i.e. SnowGlobe and parking meters to name a couple. The Greeks believed that without memory we live in hell.

Bill Crawford, South Lake Tahoe

Opinion: Red-light camera controversy growing

By Dan Walters, Sacramento Bee

One of San Diego Mayor Bob Filner's first acts this year – before he became preoccupied with other affairs – was to end the use of cameras to catch motorists running red lights, labeling them "the San Diego version of a traffic trap."

It was the latest in a string of recent setbacks for the devices, indicating that they may be on the way out of California.

Redflex Traffic Systems has dominated the red-light camera industry, claiming they improve safety and persuading cities and counties to install them in return for a share of fines, typically about $500 each.

However, critics say the cameras mostly snag motorists who

don’t come to a complete stop before making turns, rather than those running through intersections, and therefore aren’t the lifesavers that boosters claim. Opponents have also accused cities of setting yellow lights at camera- protected intersections on minimal times to ensnare more motorists.

Read the whole story

Opinion: Reinforce doors, windows to keep bears out

By Dan Sheehan

Lake Tahoe is certainly a beautiful area with its magnificent alpine lake like no other. The Lake Tahoe Basin also has some great wildlife. The black bear or Ursus americanus is a longtime indigenous resident of the area and has become a controversial topic of debate around the lake.

There is plenty of food in the wild for the bears; and many bears eat nothing but wild food. However, some of those bears whose territory borders (and encases) the human neighborhoods are the ones of discussion. These bears have been lured in over the years by tourists and residents who are careless and uneducated about wildlife. Garbage left unsecured or doors and windows left open with food wafting about has been the enticing draw.

Once a bear has learned that the big boxes in the middle of the woods (we call them houses) are a place where food is available, it is pretty tough to stop them from getting in. Momma bear may smell the food and teaches baby bear that this is where we can forage. So this baby bear grows up learning to

break into homes regardless if it has the smell of food or not.

It is our responsibility to try and reverse this trend that we are primarily responsible for. Educating ourselves and others about these awesome animals is paramount. The BEAR League is a nonprofit whose sole purpose is to educate and help people live alongside bears. They do so through constant education and intervention.

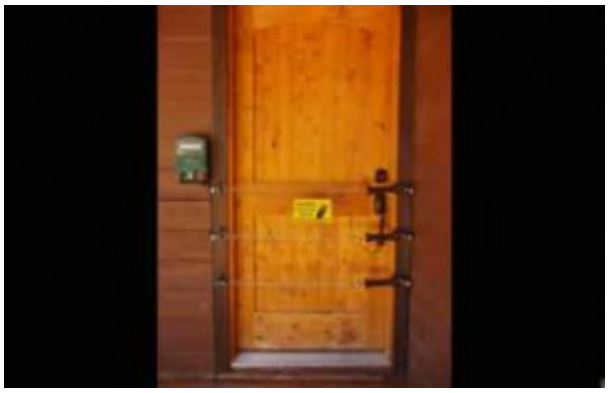
I have been in the Tahoe area for the past 19 years full time and on and off for the past 46 years and have seen and encountered many bears in the wild and in the home. As a master carpenter I have been called to fix many doors over the years due to bears seeking entry into the home. I am pretty good at rebuilding a door jam to be extremely strong. However, a 600-pound bear leaning on most any door is going to reveal the door's weakness sooner or later.

And now the local Ursus has become very proficient in breaking windows as well.

So this has led me and others to modify typical electric fencing components as seen on the farm or ranch to work on a home. For the past three years I have been installing these systems and found that they are the absolute most effective solution to deterring bears from getting inside.

The systems pulse about 10,000 volts through the wires. For comparison, a police taser is about 50,000 volts. The amperage is very low (less than one-tenth of an amp). It is amps which kill. Because the charge is pulsing it allows for the muscle reaction of retraction from the fence. If it were not pulsing and you were to grab your muscles, would contract and not allow you to retract. It is this pulsing which also makes it next to impossible for the fence to be a fire hazard. It is also important to note that the electric fence system is safe to the bears, children, pets and other small animals.

This is what a typical door installation looks like:



The green box is the control or energizer that supplies the power to the system and creates the “pulse.” The springs across the door have a handle on one side which can be ‘unhooked” The springs then simply retract and rest out of the way to the other side.

This is a typical window set-up:



We use a polypropylene twine that is very strong and has nine stainless steel strands braided through it that carry the electrical current.

Tahoe Electric Bear Fencing makes sure that the fences we install are effective first and foremost. Our systems are the absolute least obtrusive of anything on the market. More important, our systems are configured so they are not only extremely easy to use but can always be used with minimal effort while you are inside. Other systems either do not allow you to enable the system while you are home or if they do it is burdensome.

Because our systems are the least obtrusive of all the systems, we highly discourage a “removable” system. Please do not be sold by the idea of a removable system. Once you start removing the wires you become less inclined to replace them when you leave the house to go out to lunch or take the dog for a walk. Our systems are always on the house and are extremely simple to engage at all times.

If you have a bear emergency or questions please call the BEAR League at (530) 525.7297.

For inquiries about electric fencing for your home or securing your home call Tahoe Electric Bear Fencing (DS Construction) at (530) 448.9127.

Dan Sheehan is the owner of DS Construction and Tahoe Electric Bear Fencing. He is also a volunteer with the BEAR League and Lake Tahoe Wildlife Care. Sheehan has been trained in the handling of wild birds and animals.

Opinion: Improvements needed at STHS softball field



Boards make it hard to see the action at South Tahoe High's softball field from behind home plate. Photo/Provided

Publisher's note: ***This letter was sent to Sheri Schimmel with High Sierra ASA. It is reprinted here with permission. It was also read earlier this month by Schimmel to the Lake Tahoe Unified School District board.***

Dear Sheri,

Thank you for doing such a great job on the fields at the SLT high school (July 6). ASA is fortunate having you on their staff for their tournaments. You and your colleagues really worked hard.

The powers that be have made a lot of improvements on the field since we last played there. I do have a suggestion however. Is it possible to remove the top two boards behind home plate? I tried to set up a video camera but was able to get a good angle because of the height of the boards.

I also realized that if someone in a wheelchair wanted to sit behind the backstop they would not be able to see. It appears

there is room behind the backstop for a row or two of seating and would be perfect for the elderly and handicapped.

I would appreciate it if you would forward a copy of this letter to the appropriate decision-makers regarding these suggestions.

Thanks again for your hard work regarding the tournament. We, at Scholars and Champions and Nevada Wildcats, look forward to participating in future tournaments on your fields.

Sincerely,

Joyce Herceg, Scholars and Champions board secretary

Letter: ADA law makes a difference

To the community,

A great day in history for people with disabilities was marked on July 26, 1987, when the United States Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was signed into law.

Although each state has enacted its own laws to enhance the federal law and protect their own citizens, the ADA remains the primary civil rights law for people living with a disability.



David Kelly

The ADA and state laws protect our citizens with disabilities in nearly all areas of our lives from education, housing and employment, to transportation, recreation, health care and more. Many government agencies have jumped on board to ensure that everyone is treated equally and that all people have access to government and public buildings and areas that were previously inaccessible.

Although there is still much to be done, the multitude of changes and significant progress is a wonderful blessing considering the difficulty of exacting change within our government and citizenry. Twenty-three years does seem a long time – a lifetime for some, but we're still working the problem. Many have fought desperate fights to bring about these changes and to them I offer my heartfelt gratitude for their time, their dedication and their tears. Many more have joined their ranks or taken up the cause in their own towns and counties. Those, too, are sincerely appreciated.

Although we have many aging citizens who will need assistance, they will be able to utilize these services and freedoms that weren't available to some people in the past. The human rights improvements in so many areas of our lives, along with the overall acceptance of persons with differences and disabilities in general will allow us to envelop our seniors, persons with disabilities, and our returning wounded warriors and veterans with understanding, acceptance and many new freedoms that our service people have fought so valiantly to protect.

David Kelly, president Tahoe Area Coordinating Council for the Disabled

---

Letter: Things to think about regarding loop road

Publisher's note: ***This letter was sent to Alfred Knotts at the Tahoe Transportation District and is reprinted with permission.***

Dear Alfred:

I hope that this communication finds you well. I wish you continued success and good fortune.

I am writing to offer a few suggestions to you and leaders of the Tahoe Transportation District (TTD) regarding the review of the Relocation Plan for the proposed Highway 50 Relocation Project. I understand that you have identified a variety of options that will be the subject of the plan.



David Jinkens

My comments below can be summarized by the statement that the proposed highway realignment plan should do the most good for the most people on both sides of Stateline and the least harm to the people who own property and live along whatever is

selected to be the preferred new realignment. I support and want to see the success of large and small businesses on both sides of Stateline and fairness in this process to all concerned parties.

Here are some thoughts regarding the process to ensure fairness and equalize benefit. Some of these ideas you will recognize from past communications and some you may not recognize.

1. No eminent domain – The City Council has expressed its policy that the development of a Loop Road be done without the use of eminent domain, namely the acquiring of private property with compensation but without the consent of property owners and residents. I agree with this statement and the direction of city policy leaders;

2. Fiscal Impact Report – TTD should fund a city-managed study to fully examine the fiscal impacts of the proposed Loop Road on existing city businesses not just in the proposed project area but citywide, identify the least destructive fiscal model, and tell the complete story of how this project impacts the city economy;

3. Mitigation Fund – The developers of the Loop Road project who will benefit most financially from the project should establish a fund in the amount of at least $6 million to be held and managed by the city of South Lake Tahoe (with the assistance of a City Council appointed Area Advisory Committee) to mitigate the impacts of any road constructed on business and property owners and residents. This fund would be in addition to whatever costs and expenses are required as part of state and federal law; and

4. Locals Job Preference – TTD and the developers of the project and the managers of the businesses developed or expanded along the new route should agree in writing to make a good-faith effort to hire qualified city and South Shore

residents for jobs created by this new project to help mitigate impacts and reduce local unemployment. This premise should be applied to all construction work to build the project and permanent jobs created. Developers and operators receiving grant money to build a $70 million plus road need to look out for the interests of city and South Shore residents first and foremost in job creation.

I am requesting that you make these comments part of the public record for this process and project and that copies of it be provided to TTD senior management and board members.

Thank you Alfred for your review and consideration of this matter and for your efforts to do a competent and fair job for all concerned parties.

Best wishes and regards,

David M. Jinkens, South Lake Tahoe