

Animal shelter puts out call to cat lovers

To the community,

It's one of the worst seasons for cat turn ins at Tahoe according to Lt. Robert Gerat, senior officer at the El Dorado County Animal Services shelter in Meyers.

Every cat condo and cage in the annex is occupied with one or two adoptable cats. Many are homeless due to owner financial crisis.

If you have room in your heart and home for a feline friend, now is the time to take advantage of a complete selection. There are beautiful bonded pairs, handsome exotic mixes, short, medium, and long coats in every color and blend.

The \$80 adoption fee includes the cost of the surgical sterilization of the animal, leukemia/FIV test, first distemper vaccination, deworming (as needed), flea prevention, rabies vaccination (if appropriate) and a microchip.

The shelter is open Monday through Saturday. Call (530) 573.7925 or drop by 9:30am-noon and 1-4:30pm.

Available pets can be viewed online, however the population changes daily and web listings are not always current. It's best to visit in person to find just the right feline companion for your home. Please help if you can.

Dawn Armstrong, Lake Tahoe Humane Society and S.P.C.A.

Opinion: Withholding lawmakers' pay the correct decision

Publisher's note: *This editorial is from the June 22, 2011, Sacramento Bee.*

Controller John Chiang's bold decision to withhold pay for lawmakers because they passed an unbalanced budget could prompt a constitutional showdown for the ages.

Some lawmakers are already charging that Chiang's decision violates the constitutional separation of powers and sets a perilous precedent. Some are no doubt urging their leadership to take the controller to court.

Yet if lawmakers were to roll up their sleeves instead of rolling out the lawyers, they could avoid a public relations nightmare that would only further sully their reputations. By focusing on the budget instead of lawsuits, they could avert a costly game of chicken, quickly get their paychecks and – mostly importantly – help California right its fiscal ship.

Lawmakers, particularly Democrats, reacted strongly to Chiang's decision. Assembly Speaker John A. Pérez said the controller was allowing the GOP minority to control the budget process. Assemblyman Bob Blumenfeld, D-Woodland Hills, said Chiang “was acting without clear legal authority.”

Read the whole story

Opinion: City-TRPA rules hurt prosperity, art community

By Robert J. Schimmel

City policies and regulations are often beyond my logic. We need government, of course, especially the kind that enables quick decisions and the ability to take on unique and timely projects that embellish South Lake Tahoe's atmosphere. Common sense and productivity are wellsprings of a healthy economy and engendering new life to this endangered community.

And it is the arts that transcend seasons and economic levels, and attract people to Tahoe consistently year-round.

So why should it be seemingly impossible to simply paint and beautify an eyesore or create an atmosphere of excitement and innovation that attracts people? Current cases are the convention center fence-mural and Matthew Welter of Timeless Sculptures – chain saw and finished wood carver, mentor, full-time artist and promoter of Tahoe. I've been involved with both and don't understand why the city didn't resolve the fence painting and now can't find a way to help install Welter's performance art venue that will benefit South Lake Tahoe's artistic, arts-friendly image and, therefore, its economic base.

Mr. (Tony) O'Rourke appears to be a city manager who wants to pump life into South Lake Tahoe and must know that a real opportunity exists here for new excitement and noise that will energize others. The late Dennis Oliver demonstrated wisdom and determination when he pushed relentlessly on the TRPA and others to allow Welter's "Hand of Order" (30-foot-tall, abstract, cedar sculpture of Liberty) to reign over the meadow and precedent-setting sculpture garden at Ski Run Marina beginning last summer. That 4th of July celebration began the

“Liberty (R)evolution Convergence” event signaling a hopeful new direction this city needs to set itself apart, thereby attracting more people and an affluent clientele to our area.

Welter now seeks to carve a huge, futuristic Minuteman with old-fashioned musket at the intersection of Highway 50 and Ski Run Boulevard on city-owned property. The proposal has great support from surrounding businesses since the summer-long “performance” will attract people to it and the shops, restaurants and galleries in the area.

Currently, regulations that encumber many are grinding the approval process to a halt with a classification of “small scale manufacturing” for Welter due to his set-up request of longer than 14 days for his interactive, entertaining, and educational art form. Art production and display for the purposes set forth deserve their own classification or to be considered individually. No doubt there is valid reasoning for the 14-day limit (four times a year), but why not set up regulations that allow permission on a case-by-case basis, make them flexible, not limit the number of times per year, and allow the 14-day periods to be linked?

Yes, change takes time, but the will of the people can speak succinctly to our leaders. So any and all reading this who believe as I do, please call or email immediately your input to the city planning office at (530) 542.6020 or torourke@cityofslt.us. This is urgent regarding the project proposed by Welter that needs to be initiated by this July 4th Independence Day weekend.

Robert J. Schimmel is a professional artist, art teacher and consultant.

Opinion: League's mission should involve using facts

By Patrick Enright

The city of South Lake Tahoe understands the League to Save Lake Tahoe has filed suit against the city for adopting a General Plan update as required by state law. The League's actions once again demonstrate their willingness to mislead the public and now the courts in a way that redirects the public's very limited resources defending legal complaints rather than spending resources on improving the infrastructure that is in fact contributing to lake clarity degradation.

The League is well aware and fully informed that the City's General Plan does not contain provisions to build six-story buildings over 100 acres, yet they have knowingly released several statements to the contrary and those misleading statements remain on their website. The League is fully informed that the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency has never required a municipality to submit their General Plan for formal approval, yet argues in their complaint to the contrary. In their lawsuit, the League included unsubstantiated statements that the city's General Plan update will harm lake clarity without evidence to support such claims.



Patrick
Enright

The League is fully aware and has heard directly from the South Lake Tahoe City Council of the city's intent to modify its General Plan in the event there is a conflict with the TRPA's updated Regional Plan, which is expected to be completed in December 2012. In the meantime, where the General Plan is inconsistent with the TRPA's Regional Plan, the Regional Plan will prevail. The city could have simply removed sections where there was inconsistency, but that would have resulted in incomplete General Plan, which is not consistent with state law.

More important, the city's General Plan is the public's plan. It was developed over several years with input from many community members who spent countless hours pouring over neighborhood maps, visioning their future and deciding what their community should look like and how it could best meet environmental goals.

We need solutions. We need collaboration. We need to improve the built environment because it is destroying the natural environment. We need to improve Highway 50, local streets and infrastructure because that is where the majority of the solution lies. The city's General Plan update provides the road map to implementing solutions, but it is just a plan, it is not an actual project even if one argues it meets the definition of a TRPA project. The General Plan update by itself does not approve a single project. Every project will still be required to follow the ordinary course for approval and obtain the required permits. Not a single project can be built without appropriate regional and local approvals.

While the League's modus operandi is to file lawsuits, which gains them publicity and donations, their lawsuits do not help improve water quality or lake clarity. They would be more effective at preserving Lake Tahoe if they dedicated funds to do just that, improve, redevelop, remodel and restore the lake and there are plenty of opportunities for the League to do so. The League could put its resources to improving the roads,

which have been estimated at a cost of several million dollars per mile to achieve the premium environmental thresholds. The total cost to restore the City's roadways is estimated at \$300 million (the city is accepting donations). The League could fund and dedicate several miles of roadway "on behalf of the League." The League could contribute to erosion control projects to control runoff, most projects cost many millions. One or two dedicated by the League would make a difference in lake clarity far more than one or two more lawsuits do. The city offered to meet with the League and its entire board of directors to resolve issues and discuss ideas to work together on these and other solutions, but the League declined. The mayor and mayor pro tem offered repeatedly to meet with the League's representatives, but the League declined multiple offers to meet.

The TRPA Compact was written to provide local communities the opportunity to decide for themselves under their form of government what their community should look like. The Compact provides that, "Whenever possible without diminishing the effectiveness of the Regional Plan, the ordinances, rules, regulations and policies shall be confined to matters which are general and regional in application, leaving to the jurisdiction of the respective States, counties and cities the enactment of specific and local ordinances, and rules, regulations and policies which conform to the regional plan." (Article VI). In its lawsuit before the federal courts, the League will need to prove how the city's General Plan diminishes the effectiveness of the Regional Plan. The League will need to prove how the General Plan by itself harms the lake. The League will need to prove how TRPA's Compact and regional approach is undermined by the city's local approach to land use regulations.

We, who live here at the lake work very hard to protect water quality and lake clarity. We need to improve the built environment, fix Highway 50 and restore the natural

environment now. We need partners, not combatants. We need a cohesive and clear vision, not murky accusations. We need solutions, not roadblocks. We ask the League to Save Lake Tahoe to help the community save the lake and save our community by working with us and other agencies rather than against us.

Patrick Enright is city attorney for South Lake Tahoe.

Opinion: State budget is more bitter than sweet

Publisher's note: *This editorial is from the June 28, 2011, Sacramento Bee.*

Judged purely on the straitjacket they've been forced to wear, Democrats were on their way Tuesday toward making the best of some bad budget choices.

Yet judged on California's needs and ambitions, there isn't much to celebrate. Our standing as a state that invests in its future and protects its most vulnerable is about to take a horrible beating.

It could have turned out differently. Republicans and Democrats could have found common ground on a combination of spending cuts, budget reforms and tax extensions. They could have acted like true public servants.

Yet all the posturing and no-tax pledges and pressure from vested interests poisoned whatever common ground might have existed. This week, Gov. Jerry Brown and his party decided there was no deal to be cut with GOP lawmakers, whose votes

were needed for tax extensions. So Democrats came up with a Plan B that cut the minority out of the action. Republicans gained nothing – no pension reforms, no regulatory reforms, no spending cap – even though their constituents will share in the pain.

It is ugliness heaped upon ugliness. More cuts to higher education, driving up tuition costs. More cuts to Healthy Families. Less help for children whose parents are trying to find jobs. Less help for the developmentally disabled. More cuts to the judiciary. The list goes on and on.

Read the whole story

Opinion: Kids don't know democracy

By Ming W. Chin

To those of us who care about preserving America's democracy, a recent report on civics is cause for alarm. The National Assessment of Educational Progress found that 3 out of 4 U.S. students lack a basic understanding of democracy.

The study adds to a disturbing body of research showing that most people cannot identify the three branches of government and that, of the three branches, the public least understands the judicial branch and its role in our system of government.

Our Founding Fathers realized that an impartial and independent judiciary is necessary to serve as a check on the other branches of government, to promote equal justice and the rule of law and to protect individual and minority rights. In

appointment letters to our nation's first Supreme Court justices, President George Washington described the judiciary as "the chief pillar upon which our national government must rest" and "the keystone of our political fabric." The late Chief Justice William Rehnquist once remarked that "it is not enough to have an impressive catalogue of individual rights in the Constitution if the judges who are called upon to enforce these rights are not truly independent."

About 12 years ago, the truth and wisdom of these words were brought home to me when I met Emil Constantinescu, then the president of Romania. At the time, he was in the midst of forming a fragile democracy. He told me he once had been a judge under former President Nicolae Ceausescu but quit to become a geologist because he got tired of Ceausescu telling him how his decisions ought to come out.

Ming W. Chin is an associate justice on the California Supreme Court.

Read the whole story

Opinion: Education cuts shortchange future of all Californians

By Mark Paul

When pollsters ask, most of us say California is going in the wrong direction. We've been saying so, with the rare exception, for almost a decade. So we have to consider an unhappy possibility: California, after trekking off-course for

so long, may have crossed over into unfamiliar and dangerous territory. Call it the State of the Dimming Dream.

Not everyone agrees, of course, on what's wrong. To some of us, California remains a place of bloated government, rampant spending on the poor and punishingly high taxes. As is so often the case in a state where change is the only constant, the old stories lag behind the news and the numbers. A generation ago, when graybeards like me were starting out, California rivaled New York as a high-tax state. No more.

The top personal income tax rate is lower than when some fellow named Ronald Reagan was governor. The corporate tax has been cut and the code turned into a Swiss cheese of credits and exemptions. The estate tax has been abolished. Proposition 13 cut and capped property tax rates and limited reassessments. The vehicle license fee has been halved. The sales tax rate is higher but its yield has fallen because the items on which it is levied – mostly tangible goods – make up a declining slice of our consumption.

So it should be no surprise that the budget fight this year in Sacramento is not over whether state government will be big or small. It's about whether the state government will be small or smaller.

Mark Paul, formerly deputy editorial page editor of the Sacramento Bee and deputy treasurer of California, is the co-author, with Joe Mathews, of "California Crackup: How Reform Broke the Golden State and How We Can Fix It."

Read the whole story

Opinion: Boat inspections the right thing for Nevada

Publisher's note: *This editorial is from the June 17, 2011, Reno Gazette-Journal.*

By this time next year, an ambitious program to inspect boats statewide to protect Nevada's lakes and streams, rivers and reservoir from aquatic invaders is expected to be underway.

Some boaters undoubtedly will find the inspections an added hassle that they'd rather avoid. Some surely will complain about the cost, which will be determined in the coming months by the Nevada Wildlife Commission, as the agency works out the details of the plan approved by the Legislature and signed into law this week by Gov. Brian Sandoval.

But make no mistake: If Nevada doesn't take action to stop the advance of such invasive species as the quagga mussel, the potential damage the invaders from Eastern Europe will cause much greater hassles, and much greater costs.

Read the whole story

Opinion: California's budget probably not the last

By Dan Walters, Sacramento Bee

So did Democratic legislators accomplish anything on the state budget crisis Wednesday other than protect their paychecks?

Probably not.

Instead, by whipping a gimmick- and debt-based budget through both legislative houses lickety-split, Democrats appear to be petty and self-serving, thus adding to their already poor public standing. And they may have weakened Democratic Gov. Jerry Brown's hand and bolstered Republicans in the budget game.

The precise consequences are unclear because this is uncharted political territory. It's the first time in decades that the budget could be passed by a simple-majority vote, thanks to voters' passage of Proposition 25 last year, rather than the long-standing two-thirds margin.

Read the whole story

Opinion: Caution is best policy when looking for conflicts

Publisher's note: *This editorial is from the June 15, 2011, Reno Gazette-Journal.*

One of the challenges facing any public official in a small community like this, or even a relatively small state like Nevada, is the likelihood that sooner or later you're going to have to make a decision that involves someone you know, someone you've worked with or someone who's donated money to your campaign.

Making the challenge even greater is that no one who's been elected to office wants it said that he or she can't put aside

parochial interests to make a fair, reasoned decision on any issue. They can't be swayed, they insist, by campaign contributions or friendship.

That's no excuse, however, for ignoring the possibility of a conflict of interest. Rather, it makes it all the more important that public officials be especially alert for the possibility of a conflict and take whatever action is necessary to avoid it.

Read the whole story