

STATA board issues statement

Publisher's note: The following was sent to the media at 6:15pm (the meeting was at 10am) from STATA via Dennis Oliver who works for Tahoe Regional Planning Agency. He put BlueGo Communications on the press release even though he is not on their staff. Board member Stacey Dingman, who was supposed to be the spokesperson, returned LTN's call at 5:45pm, saying to call before 8pm. LTN offices were closed during that time period.

To increase operational efficiency and cost effectiveness in fiscally challenging times, the South Tahoe Area Transit Authority Board (STATA) today approved an organizational restructuring. STATA has secured the services of the consulting firm Transit Resource Center for an interim period. Moving forward, the authority has eliminated its transit administrator position and will apply budget savings resulting from this change to hire a permanent Executive Director to guide the growing transit system through increasingly complex challenges while focusing on improving service for its riders and the community.

BlueGO is a service of the South Tahoe Area Transit Authority which consists of members representing the City of South Lake Tahoe, El Dorado County, Douglas County, Tahoe Regional Planning Agency, Tahoe Transportation District, The Ridge Resorts, Harrah's, Harveys, Lakeside Inn, MontBleu, Horizon and Heavenly Mountain Resort. Collectively, these partner agencies provide a coordinated transit system to reduce vehicle miles traveled on the south shore of Lake Tahoe and to improve the quality of life through the implementation and management of innovative transit solutions.

County manager weighs-in on future of Stateline casino

To the Douglas County commissioners and community,

The county has received a number of inquiries recently as to whether an adult characterized business would be allowed at the building in Stateline formerly called Bill's Casino, now under new ownership.

The potential proposed use, as we understand it, is an adult interactive cabaret. This use is identified in chapter 5.36 of Douglas County code. In the Tahoe Basin, this type of use is restricted to the Stateline Community Planning Area, which is where Bill's Casino is located. Therefore, this type of business use could be allowed with the proper licensing.

The owner must submit a completed application for a license to the Douglas County Sheriff's Office which completes an investigation and then makes a recommendation to the board as part of a public hearing. At a minimum, the board must consider the following in granting or denying the license:

1. Whether the applicant has complied with all rules and regulations in preparing and submitting the application.
2. The impact the adult characterized business would have on the area in which it is to be located.
3. That locating an adult-characterized business in the selected area will not contribute to blight or reduced property values in the area.
4. The impact the adult characterized business will have on possible criminal activity in that area.

Further, if the owner plans to make changes to the exterior of the structure, the parking area, or signage, the owner must

apply to the county for the proper design review and building permits, as well as, acquire Tahoe Regional Planning Agency approval, if applicable.

County code restricts the display of pictures, graphics, etc., on the exterior of the building, windows, or display areas. In addition, windows must have an opaque covering that prevents viewing into the interior of the building. Lighting is required on the exterior of the building to minimize criminal activity and to provide safety for patrons.

The county has not received a license application to operate an adult cabaret at this location. If we do receive an application, it will go through the process identified above.

The county will not speculate about the outcome of any matter that may or may not come before the Board for a decision.

Please contact me at (775) 782.9821 if you have any questions. Have a great day.

Michael Brown, Douglas County manager

Forest Service talks about BMP effectiveness in basin



Dear concerned citizens,

Each year, the U.S. Forest Service Lake Tahoe Basin Management

Unit (LTBMU) evaluates its temporary and post-project completion best management practices in terms of successful implementation and effectiveness in preventing sediment movement.

The temporary BMP and BMP monitoring reports for 2009 are now available by navigating to the LTBMU's website, clicking the link on the left for maps and publications, then the link for publications, and look under Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit monitoring Reports.

The overall results show the overwhelming majority of both BMPs and temporary BMPs were implemented as prescribed and were effective in preventing sediment transport, but a significant storm in October 2009 presented some challenges. BMP failures occurred at Valhalla Pier and Tallac Creek Bridge, where BMPs had been correctly implemented but were overwhelmed by the heavy rainfall over a short period of time. At the Angora Hazard Tree project, BMPs were not implemented as prescribed. This failure, combined with the network of user-created trails crisscrossing the project area, resulted in sediment transport to an SEZ.

In May 2009, an earlier significant storm resulted in the failure of a temporary grade control structure at the Blackwood Stream Channel/Floodplain restoration. This BMP was implemented correctly, however, and work already completed to restore the stream channel and floodplain has resulted in an overall decrease in sedimentation from the project area.

The LTBMU was created for the purpose of safeguarding water quality by improving the health of the forest ecosystems surrounding the Lake. With this in the forefront of our minds, staff quickly remedied deficiencies once they were identified and are identifying steps to prevent future failures. The unit is already implementing some of these, such as an improved storm forecasting and communication process. We will continue to evaluate our BMP implementation and ensure we are doing our

best to preserve water quality as we implement projects to restore forest health, reduce hazardous fuels, restore streams and meadows and provide high-quality, sustainable recreation opportunities.

Cheva Heck, public affairs officer LTBMU U.S. Forest Service

Praise for STPUD's fiscal oversight

Publisher's note: The letter writer is wrong about the rate increase. On Wednesday, all board members except Mary Lou Mosbacher were in favor of increasing sewer and water rates by 4 percent starting July 1 and to have it brought back for a formal vote. This would equate to an average increase of \$2.70/month for residential customers. The increase is not a done deal. Ratepayers will have 45 days to comment on the proposal starting April 1 after a letter is sent to them.

Letter to the publisher,

On March 3 at 1pm, I attended the South Tahoe Public Utility District Budget Workshop. For the public, this was the first time to see the 2010-2011 budget. The STPUD staff used a slide show to show every detail of the proposed budget. Two hours later I had to leave before getting a chance to speak, so I want to speak now.

The slide show started with a slide showing the proposed rate increases for some neighboring districts: Tahoe City 85 percent, El Dorado Irrigation District 18 percent, Placerville 72 percent. This is not good when the unemployment rate in our area is 17 percent. These districts are not as good as our

district when it comes to “prudent financial planning. STPUD has excelled in this area and as a result, our community is now the recipient of many benefits.

For example: our infrastructure is in good shape, our drinking water tastes good and it is reliable, the district has a prudent reserve for emergencies, the district will probably never need to levy a special assessment like Lukins might have to do, the district has very low employee turnover, they have a great health plan and a great retirement plan that has attracted many high-quality employees. The district is able to deal with large disasters and long droughts, the district continues to obtain large state and federal grants, the district has won several national award for excellence, and most important of all the district has many happy customers.

Because our district has excelled at “prudent financial planning” for so many years they are now in a position to give us customers another zero percent rate increase for the second year in a row. I thank God I do not live in Tahoe City or Placerville and I thank God for the staff at our district. They have developed our district into an outstanding organization able to withstand two years of zero rate increases while continuing to maintain the highest quality of services. We owe them our deepest, most sincere expression of gratitude.

Hats off to STPUD.

Ernie Claudio, South Lake Tahoe resident and former STPUD board member

Reasons to support extension for developer

Publisher's note: *This was written by SLT Councilman Hal Cole prior to the March 2 decision by the bankruptcy court to give Randy Lane until June 2 to come up with an plan, but was received by LTN on March 3.*

By Hal Cole

Much has been made lately about a possible investor for the stalled Convention Center project. I offer the following observations on the likelihood of any progress in the bankruptcy courts and on the action the City Council took on Feb. 15.

Currently the project site consists of 29 separate parcels owned by 17 different entities – the creditors. All of them are owed money by the developer Randy Lane dba Lake Tahoe Development) and are secured by deeds of trust. When the developer stopped paying on the notes, the creditors filed notices of default, which is the first step in foreclosing.



Hal Cole

On Oct. 5, 2009, Mr. Lane filed for protection in bankruptcy court. During the first 120 days of bankruptcy, the developer has the exclusive right to propose a plan to settle with the creditors and emerge from bankruptcy. This period expired on Feb. 2. Mr. Lane has asked the court for an additional 150

days to prepare his plan. On Feb. 9, the City Council met to discuss our position on his request and decided to write an opinion letter to the court opposing any extension. The council was also informed that Mr. Lane had a potential investor, Michael Rosenfeld, who wanted to meet with the mayor and me. By consensus, the council directed staff, the mayor and myself to meet with Mr. Rosenfeld and, if there were sufficient evidence of his ability to finance the project, the council was to meet again to reassess our position, hence the meeting on Feb. 15.

At our meeting, our city attorney presented us with four options:

1. Support Mr. Lane's request to extend for an additional 150 days his exclusive right to present a plan to satisfy the creditors and build the project;
2. Remain neutral and make no recommendation to the court on his request;
3. Oppose his request altogether;
4. Support an extension for a shorter period of time.

It was my feeling that this was the first time any viable investor had come forward to build the project and that allowing a shortened period of time for his plan to be presented to all of the creditors and the court was the appropriate action for our council to take. Other council members felt that Mr. Lane had been given enough time already and wanted us to recommend no extension of time at all.

On a 3-2 vote, with council members Bill Crawford and Jerry Birdwell in opposition, the City Council agreed to write a letter supporting an additional 30 days for Mr. Lane and Mr. Rosenfeld to meet with the creditors and present their plan. After the project had languished for years with no apparent outside interest, I felt an additional 30 days would not

significantly delay the ultimate outcome, but could reap the result our whole town is hoping for: a completed hotel/retail/convention center complex.

No matter what the court ultimately decides, one thing is certain, time is running out for Mr. Lane and some movement will occur soon. Whether it results in the foreclosure by 17 property owners or an emergence from bankruptcy with a new developer remains to be seen. I look forward to working towards the latter outcome and hope the economy is on the rebound and we can rebuild our city.

Hal Cole is mayor pro tem of South Lake Tahoe.

SLT Women's Center on letter writing campaign

Dear South Lake Women's Center Supporters,

As many of you know, last year the governor cut 100 percent of the state domestic violence funding from the budget via line-item veto.

As a result of this cut, many shelters in California had to close their doors or severely reduce the services they provided victims of domestic violence and their children. For our center, we lost \$220,000 in funding – about 15 percent of our overall budget. This caused a public outcry and the community of domestic violence supporters began working to find ways to reinstate the funds.

Thanks to the outcry of supporters in California, the Legislature reinstated about 70 percent of the funds for one

year. These funds will end as of June 30, 2010.

In an effort to find a long-term solution the California Partnership to End Domestic Violence (CPEDV) has created a postcard campaign with the goal of securing state funding for life-saving shelter services.

How can you help?

Mail postcards to our representatives in the Legislature:

Sen. Dave Cox

State Capitol

Sacramento, CA 94248-0001

Assemblyman Ted Gaines

State Capitol

Room 4144

Sacramento, CA 94249-0004

All postcards must have a 44 cent stamp and not a postcard stamp.

We also encourage you to pass on the postcards to your friends and allies who understand that supporting domestic violence shelter services benefits the whole community and state.

Thank you for all your support,

Sarah Sanchez, development coordinator South Lake Tahoe Women's Center

Cities struggle to deal with infrastructure needs



Publisher's note: *The following is reprinted with permission from South Lake Tahoe City Manager Dave Jinkens.*

Mayor and Council:

Darin Dinsmore of Sustainable Community Strategies was kind enough to pass along study results from the U.S. Conference of Mayors. The study can be accessed [here](#).

As you proceed with your City Council meeting on March 2 that includes a discussion of city public infrastructure needs, the report confirms a lot of things we know.

1. 77 percent of cities responding to the survey report their infrastructure budget for 2009 have been adversely impacted by the global economic crisis.
2. 59 percent of cities responding identify the lack of funding to meet infrastructure needs as a serious challenge.
3. Most cities expect to benefit from government stimulus package over the long term â€¦ if they get them, I suppose.
4. 51 percent believe their infrastructure budget will increase by less than 5 percent over the next five years from stimulus funding.
5. 79 percent agree that current federal and state practices must be reformed to give greater decision-making power over infrastructure investment.

6. Most cities (62 percent) agree that climate-friendly technologies represent an “enormous economic opportunity” for their city.

If the city of South Lake Tahoe is to increase investment over time to needed public infrastructure (e.g. roads, storm drainage, fire stations, erosion control, etc) it will need to first keep the state of California from taking local funds to balance the state budget. We will need to generate new revenues through vigorous economic growth programs and strategies that are environmentally friendly and grow the local economy. Creating new retail opportunities to keep local people shopping locally, adding to and diversifying our economic base by creating areas of tech and green technologies in cooperation with schools and our community college [i.e. job training] and other government and private sector partners, and helping and assisting local businesses to expand with incentives, sound and rational land use policies, and regulatory relief will result in more local jobs and more money locally to make infrastructure improvements. In addition, new sources of funding may be needed to make the investment required in ways that minimize the impact on local residents.

We shall overcome!

I appreciate Mr. Dinsmore forwarding this report to us.

Dave Jinkens, South Lake Tahoe city manager

Fighting genetically modified

seeds via petition

To the publisher,

We the people have another opportunity to let our voices be heard with a petition via Organic Consumer's Association concerning genetically modified alfalfa.

It's simply amazing the reach of Monsanto. They have modified all sorts of seeds to be "Roundup Ready" to accommodate their favorite weed killer. Yes, they put this into the seeds of all sorts of crops so that they recognize it and won't be killed off with the unwanted weeds when they're sprayed.

Alfalfa is the latest and perhaps our best tool at the moment to prevent Monsanto's next mutation.

Please go to Organic Consumers Association and you'll find a link to sign the petition and other helpful tools.

Sincerely,

Peggy A. Cooley, South Lake Tahoe

Clarification about comments

To LTN readers,

Some people who have left comments on *Lake Tahoe News* stories have indicated the "Bill" who has commented is South Lake Tahoe City Councilman Bill Crawford. This is not true. Crawford has not made any posts to this site.

As much as it would be great for everyone to put their first and last names to add legitimacy to your words, I realize you

won't do that. But at the same time, for truth and accuracy, please don't guess or assume who has posted, who's is reading, or who isn't reading the comments or LTN.

Thank you for your continued support and contribution to LTN.

Kathryn Reed, LTN publisher

Hight savors Olympic experience

By Elena Hight

VANCOVER – My Vancouver Olympic experience has been absolutely amazing. Since I got off the plane in Vancouver I have not stopped. We were just thrown straight into the craziness that is the Olympics.

Processing where you get all of your gear, media conferences, Opening Ceremonies filled the first two days here. After that we had three days of practice and of course our competition.



South Tahoe's Elena Hight, second from left, is surrounded by

U.S.

teammates.

Photo/Provided

Straight after that it was time to enjoy. Three hockey games, cat boarding, the women's aerials event, the Vancouver aquarium, amazing dinners around Vancouver, and a trip up to Whistler to hangout with friends filled the next six days after my contest.

Sleep has not been a priority ... jamming everything into the short amount of time we have here has been. So I have been fueling the days with coffee and tons of smiles.

While I have already been in Vancouver for two weeks, I feel like it has flown by. There really is nothing like the Olympics, the energy around the village is unprecedented and there really is no way to describe it.

While my competition didn't go the way I had hoped, I have brought away so much from this experience. New friends, an epic pin collection, amazing photos, the feeling of representing my country, and cheering like I have never cheered before.

I am more than happy with what I have experienced here, and it is a couple of weeks of my life that I will never forget.

Elena Hight lives in South Lake Tahoe, rides at Northstar-at-Tahoe and competed in the halfpipe in the Vancouver Winter Olympics.