

Tallac Association needs money for 2010

Dear Friend of Valhalla,

It's been a blur since the first June event of the 2009 Valhalla Arts, Music, and Theatre Festival. It was a great Thirtieth Anniversary season, but we're already looking to the future. Visit our website at www.valhallatahoe.com to learn more about our festive Holiday Faire November 20-22 and the elegant Holiday Gala on December 5.

Looking a little further ahead, we already know that next year's Festival will feature five theatre productions, the return of the Tibetan Festival and the second annual Latino Day. A great concert series, visual art exhibits, artists-in-residencies, and arts education programs for children and youth will round out the schedule.

We depend on a variety of income sources to support the Festival, and your membership contributions are crucial in two ways. First, cash flow tends to drop in the fall and winter, so your membership contribution will help right now. Second, your membership will provide valuable matching funds for the many grants we receive, greatly multiplying your contribution. TTA received over \$45,000 in corporate, foundation, and government grants this year. Several more grants are pending, and grant proposals are written continuously. Having a strong membership support base gives TTA an edge in the competitive grant market.

This year we've added a \$25 "Novice" category for seniors, teens, military, and students and we've greatly increased the membership benefits at the "Friend" (\$50) and "Thespian" (\$100) levels. Don't worry, though, if you can contribute at the "Patron", "Star", or "Buscaglia" level, you're still

getting the best deal!

Here's another approach to consider: Maybe you can only afford \$25 right now. If you add to your membership periodically, we'll give you the benefits of your total membership contribution when the 2010 season begins. For example, you can send us \$25 for four months and get a \$100 "Thespian" membership for a total of seven tickets. That's three extra tickets for Festival events. Plus, for any membership contribution of \$25 we'll send you a bookmark that will remind you of the Valhalla Festival each time you read. For membership contributions of \$100 or more received by December 31, we'll send you a 2010 desktop calendar featuring Tahoe photography. The bookmark and calendar are designed by our Cultural Arts Store manager Sandy Ruacho.

Call us at (530) 541.4975 and we'll charge your membership to your credit card.

Steve Farnsley, executive director

Halloween precautions

By Sallie Ross-Filgo

I would like to encourage everyone buying costumes for Halloween to check the labels and make sure they are made of flame retardant materials.

Materials made of 100 percent polyester are best suited for Halloween costumes. These costume materials may be purchased at most local fabric stores.

The use of commercial flame retardant sprays is not recommended.

Avoid Halloween costumes that are loose or baggy to prevent fabric from coming in contact with any open flames.

Children should carry flashlights or use battery operated lights. Jack-O-Lanterns that have an open flame device should be placed up off the ground so that long or full costumes and young Trick-or-Treaters hands cannot come in contact with the flames. The use of masks that obstruct vision should be avoided. Costumes should incorporate reflective tape in their design so children can be easily seen at night.

Trick or Treat while it's still light outside, and stay in your neighborhood, visiting only the homes you know.

Finally, always check your children's candy before allowing them to eat any of it.

Have a fun and safe Halloween.

Sallie Ross-Filgo works at the South Lake Tahoe Fire Department.

Cefalu: Setting the record straight on Measure B

Dear Publisher,

It is truly disappointing to read the comments of the Publisher of the *Tahoe Mountain News* regarding Measure "B" and the opinions expressed in the Editorial in the latest edition. It can only be classified as a short-sighted, narrow minded viewpoint. Not only is the information distorted and exaggerated, it is simply untrue as to the motives of the many residents of this community who have come forward to pledge

their effort to support the re-building of the playing fields at Rufus Allen Blvd. It is unfortunate that the *Mountain News* has not informed themselves as to the provisions of Measure "S" as it was crafted almost 10 years ago. You have chosen to rely on your inaccurate interpretation and the risk of dividing the recreation community.

Measure "S" was very specific as to the allocation of funds for bike trail maintenance to the tune of \$5K per mile of newly constructed bike trails. The failure of the State of California to provide funding for new bike trails should not be a reason to hold the balance of the recreation community hostage and to now suggest that bike trail maintenance is priced at \$18K per mile, is ludicrous.

This effort is not intended to only provide for the "Little Leaguers", but as well, the soccer programs and the "T-Ball" leagues. To suggest that we do not have the youngsters to participate in these activities is an illustration of your lack of knowledge of the demographics of this community.

The opportunity to re-build this complex is the one opportunity this community will have to provide a facility that the community and participants can be proud of. As we travel to surrounding communities and witness the facilities that are available to their youth, we should be ashamed that we do not provide better for our young people, nothing more than a complex that is approaching 50 years old. We are not merely seeking to have all of the funding provided by "Measure S", but a partnership to be formed with the community to match the funding that we may realize from the passage of Measure "B". The issue of long-term maintenance money was never a concern nor were we expecting any funds to maintain this facility, it will be taken care of as it has in the past, by the City of South Lake Tahoe and volunteers of the various "team sports". That issue is no more than a "ruse" by the opponents to make us appear as though we are "pulling a fast one".

Measure "B" WILL NOT ALTER NOR RAISE TAXES TO ANYONE. With over \$20 million of taxpayer money spent for bicyclists in recent years, it is not too much to ask that Measure "S" funds be used to up-grade an existing facility, the youth of our community deserve it. VOTE YES ON MEASURE "B".

John N. Cefalu, South Lake Tahoe

Miner: Don't touch bike path money

Dear Publisher:

Bike path maintenance monies should be spent on bike path maintenance, not on construction of ball fields. Personally, Iâ€™m all for ball fields, but just not with bike path maintenance monies. If you needed an initiative to allow bike path monies to be spent on other bike paths not covered by Measure S, then you could have worded Measure B to allow that.

But there must have been ball field interest groups in attendance at whatever meeting made that decision, and bicycle advocates were expressly not invited. As Ty Polastri stated in his letter, this is not a tactic that encourages collaboration, inclusiveness and trust. The bicycle community, which has the most to loose, should have been included in the discussions.

When the City was awarded the Bicycle Friendly Community Award a few years ago, Hal Cole remembered that I came before this council back in 2001 (or something like that) to suggest that we work at becoming more Bicycle Friendly. After much hard work and organization on the part of the bicycle community and

the City we received that award. We now proudly display those signs on all City entrances. The sign signifies that while we may not be perfect, we are steadily working to improve our town's bicycle amenities. The award is the outwardly manifestation of an inward quality that we as a city care about attracting visitors who cycle and are committed to making commuting to work and play more pleasurable and safer for visitors and locals alike.

But that designation comes with a cost. We have to really pursue bicycle friendliness and make the hard choices to train our police force in bicycle law enforcement, incorporate bicycle lanes on roads within the city, and yes, keep bicycle maintenance funds for maintaining bicycle paths. Or do you think you can maintain that award in name alone? If you want to make a change in how Measure S funds can be spent, make that change. Ball field advocates should go after their own funding and not steal it from bike paths when there is plenty of bike path maintenance yet to do.

I have 4 points to make about Measure B:

1. Ball field improvements are a good idea. If you have ever flown into Phoenix you can see how from the air how a city plans for its recreation with common facilities at the center of multiple fields. The question is: Where should the money come from?

2. With the award of the Bicycle Friendly Community designation a few years ago, the City has made a commitment to improving bicycle facilities. We all worked hard to get that award and it would be a shame to lose it. Bicycling is how many people get to the ball fields and other recreation opportunities in this town and bicycle facilities and bike paths should be maintained and safe.

3. The writers of Measure B had one thing in mind: Taking unused bike path maintenance monies to fund ball field

improvements. They did not seek input from the bicycling community about the money they were taking, they just saw an opportunity to further their goals, and took it. Had they been a little more inclusive they could have written into their measure that some of the money would be used to repair existing bicycle paths which would have made both the ball field advocates and the bicycle advocates happy. But they wanted all the money for themselves. When is the last time any of you have ridden on the Al Tahoe bicycle path by the college? That's the kind of dangerous bike path that Measure S money should have been used to repair.

4. The City Council and the Measure S Committee have a higher standard to uphold. You have to ensure that all members of the community are heard and included when public monies are allocated. Both the Council and the Committee did a poor job of making sure that bicycle advocates were included in the conversation and this is where the main my problem lies. You did not do a good job of representing and hearing from all members of the community on this topic. There is some complaint that bicycle advocates never had a chance to write an opposition response to Measure B on the ballot. This type of partisanship should not be tolerated by City committees or the Council. The end may justify the means to one political group, but the City Council has a higher calling. I think you dropped the ball on this one.

Jeff Miner, South Lake Tahoe

LA or Tahoe? Both can feel

like home

By Steve Lopez, Los Angeles Times

Do you ever think about other places you might move to if you could, or if you had to?

A few years ago, my wife and I drove up to the beautiful Central California coast thinking the area might be a great place to live in 10 years or so, when our daughter goes to college and we have to decide between downsizing and robbing banks.

In the end, though, we came to the conclusion we always do when we think about living someplace else: Sure, we'd enjoy the slower pace, the natural beauty and the slightly less insane real estate market. But the grass is greener here, even when it's brown.

Read the whole story

SLT city manager disputes LTN story

Oct. 21

Dear Ms. Reed:

The following comments were put together by staff in regard to published comments made in your column on October 15, 2009. The accuracy of comments made in this response below have been checked and verified by City staff. Some statements made to you in the story are at best inaccurate. While my preference

has always been and will remain to protect the privacy of parties to personnel actions, inaccurate statements and characterizations of innocent employees cannot remain unchallenged.

Thank you for the opportunity to reply.

David Jinkens, (South Lake Tahoe) City Manager

Actual Clarification of Statements in October 15, 2009 Lake Tahoe News article: SLT city attorney requests public airing of grievance

1. Statement Re: Amount of money spent on outside legal counsel.

In the article, Mayor Birdwell is reported to have said that before the attorneys came on board he repeatedly asked for those figures from the City Manager and Finance Director. He and Councilwoman Lovell asked for the numbers when they were acting as the hiring subcommittee and were given the budgeted amount of \$196,000, and assumed we were working within budget. The City Attorneys discovered that \$800,000 had been spent in a single year out of undesignated reserves.

Clarification: Nothing was "uncovered". The \$196,000 did not include legal services budgeted in the Redevelopment Agency's convention center project. All expenditures for legal services were within City Council approved budget, and no undesignated reserves were expended. Over the last several years the Finance Department and City Manager's Office have responded to several requests by Council Members for reports on the amount of money spent on outside legal services on a City-wide basis.

In January 2007 the Finance Department prepared, and the City Manager distributed to then Council Member Birdwell, upon his request, a summary of outside legal expenses for all departments for the fiscal years 2003-04, 2004-05, and

2005â€"06. The amounts averaged approximately \$700,000 annually each year. At the time, then seated Council majority was considering contracting out all legal services and not having a full-time city attorneyâ€™s office.

In February 2009 the City Managerâ€™s Office, upon request from Mayor Birdwell, prepared an analysis of budgeted amounts for contracted services expenses in fiscal year 2008â€"09, which included outside legal expenses.

The hiring subcommittee requested the amount spent on outside legal counsel in connection with the recruitment of the new City Attorney. Staff provided the amount budgeted for outside legal services that appeared ongoing. The amount provided to the committee (\$193,600) did not include the amount budgeted for legal services in the Redevelopment Agencyâ€™s CIP budget for the convention center project that were one-time in nature and reimbursed by the developer. In retrospect, this exclusion should have been mentioned.

In June 2009, the City Attorneyâ€™s Office requested data from the Finance Department on the budget and expenses for outside legal services for fiscal year 2007â€"08 and yearâ€"toâ€"date fiscal year 2008â€"09. The City Attorney presented a report to the City Council on June 30, 2009 that indicated that the total amount expended over the 18 months of data by the City, less â€œpass through feesâ€ paid by the developer of the convention center project, was \$842,601. This may be the number referred to in the article, where it is incorrectly characterized as a discovery that the budget was over spent and undesignated reserves were used.

In August 2009, the Finance Department did an analysis and reconciliation to the Cityâ€™s General Ledger of outside legal expenses over the same period (fiscal year 2007â€"08, and yearâ€"toâ€"date through June 30 for fiscal year 2008â€"09), including a detailed sorting by project, service, vendor, City, Redevelopment Agency, and Waste Management JPA

In 2007-2008 a total of \$777,183 was expended for legal services. Of this amount \$530,716 was expended by the RDA (\$433,386 of which was paid by the convention center project developer).

Year-to-date 2008-2009 expenditures totaled \$432,939. Of this amount \$112,185 was expended by the RDA (\$70,857 of which was paid by the developer).

2. Statement Re: City TOT revenues budgeted \$1 million higher than actual.

Clarification: Who would have known 1 ½ years ago that the Nation and State would experience the worst economic downturn in modern history? Certainly, no one at the Federal or State government level predicted this situation. This is the worst economic recession since the 1930's and major declines in actual revenues vs. amounts budgeted currently are the norm for cities, states and other public agencies nationwide.

National statistics indicate that tourism has declined over 21% in California this year, and more than that in some other major tourism markets. TOT revenue is always a volatile major revenue source in South Lake Tahoe. It is the most difficult to forecast due to many factors that may affect actual revenues, such as the weather, economic conditions, unemployment, home foreclosures, etc. The City's General Fund unallocated reserve requirement is set at 25% by the City Council as a hedge against economic downturns primarily because of the volatile nature of City revenues related to tourism (TOT and sales taxes). While City revenues are clearly down like they are to businesses, the City's overall financial condition is superior to the condition it was in 2002-2003 and it is better able to survive the economic downturn because of prudent financial planning and policies. Even in these difficult economic times, City government continues to provide essential public services to the community on a day-to-day basis and has not had to resort to

massive layoffs of employees, reductions of services, closure of fire stations etc like in many other California cities.

3. Statement Re: Finance Director Reporting to the City Council

Clarification: This idea was one of the topics at the City Council's Strategic Planning Session August 4, 2009. The City Council discussed this issue again at its August 18, 2009 meeting and decided not to pursue this matter any further. Research into the reporting structures in other cities found that in more than 98% of the cities and public agencies surveyed the top finance position reported to the City Manager or equivalent, rather than directly to the City Council. We have seen the disastrous impact in Washington D.C. and Sacramento when financial matters and estimates become political and the City Council has wisely chosen not to have that happen here.

The Finance Director is a non-political position that is accountable to the City Manager, City Council, and ultimately to the public. The City Manager cannot just "spread cash around with little or no oversight." Spending must be within the Council approved budget, and in compliance with the City's financial policies and internal controls. The City's financial records and transactions are audited annually by an independent auditing firm, and the City has received clean audit opinions. The City Manager specifically recommended to the City Council on June 30, 2009 in a written and oral report, that all warrants and expenditures over a certain dollar amount be approved by the City Council on a City Council agenda and not one person agreed with this recommendation.

4. Statement Re: the \$69,000 invoice for legal services.

Clarification: These legal services in regard to the ATM matter were authorized by the City Council, properly approved

by the City Attorney and within available budget. At the June 30 City Council meeting, the City Attorney erroneously reported to the City Council that this bill was not properly approved. She was wrong. No backâ€up documentation was provided by her to the City Council though the Finance Department had the backup documentation in their files. The Finance Director subsequently reviewed this transaction and prepared a full and complete report justifying the expenditure that was provided to the City Attorney on July 15, 2009 yet she made no correction to the City Council or Council record.

The payment was properly approved by the former City Attorney, Catherine DiCamillo after having received direction and approval from the City Council (during a closed session) to utilize the assistance of the contracted attorney to work with her on the pending termination of the Cityâ€™s contract with ATM. Since neither the City Attorneyâ€™s Office nor the City Transit budget had sufficient budget for these legal fees, they were charged to the Nonâ€Departmental professional service account which had funding available that was not specifically earmarked for other services.

Roberts – Tallac gets a bad rap



Jessica
Roberts

By Jessica Roberts

I just moved to South Lake Tahoe in June. I enrolled in Tallac because some issues came up in Southern California, which is where I used to live.

At first, it was really hard for me to adjust to everything, because I moved my senior year. Now, Iâ€™m acclimating and starting to feel more comfortable.

Tallac works for me because I can work at my own pace, which is a huge advantage seeing as I procrastinate less. Additionally, the teachers are really helpful and understanding.

Even though Iâ€™m new to this school, I already feel the pressure of the stigma that has been attached to attending Mount Tallac. Thereâ€™s an assumption that everyone here is a â€œbad kid.â€ Personally, I donâ€™t think there is such a thing as bad kids. I think there are kids who make bad choices, myself included.

Everyone at Tallac has made mistakes, but they are here to fix them. Some of the hardest working kids Iâ€™ve ever met go to Tallac.

There are some students who are parents, but they go to school to get an education, have a job and take care of their kids. There are other students who have gotten in trouble with the law, but they are no longer involved in those kinds of situations.

Iâ€™m at Tallac because Iâ€™m credit deficient and I want to graduate and be successful. Iâ€™ve messed up a lot in school, but Iâ€™ve come along way.

Iâ€™m working really hard, just as many other students here are. Tallac has this reputation as a school for troubled kids, but I think it should have a reputation as a school for hard working students.

Jessica Roberts is a senior at Mt. Tallac High School in South Lake Tahoe.

Cervantes – An example of change



Luis Angel
Cervantes

By Luis Angel Cervantes

We hope our letters serve as a window of knowledge, mutually needed at times by our students, to entice our own community to look past and be fond of our school. With all my aspiration to be me, thank you.

I started my educational years at Bijou Elementary School; I remember a special teacher telling me “it’s okay you’re different” as if she took a glimpse into a whole different world for me. Maybe because she knew that after Iâ€™d leave Bijou School, Iâ€™d take bigger chances and would be

introduced to all kinds of bigger choices and opportunities. Unfortunately in between moving schools, losing my mother to deportation, I made it through school in a logical sense. But when I entered South Tahoe High, I became disconnected.

Students around STHS, I believe, are more inclined to stick to their friends, and not branch out to their peers. This is why I didn't even think about trying to interact with different groups of students from which I was accustomed to. During my years attending South Tahoe High I definitely lost a sense of self, I blended in with everyone and when I wasn't blending in I was trying to be like other people.

I started a change which I now can truly understand. Change was overdue at a perfect time in my life, and all too great to ignore not to apply. I almost lost it all and now I won't stop until I accomplish all without giving in.

Living life and learning fast really taught me a great deal. So with my newly predetermined strongest sense of self I've ever felt, I didn't think twice of joining the leadership team at Tallac High. This team has devoted love for our school, and dislike when people around our community look down at us as if we aren't trying just as hard or even harder to obtain a diploma at the end of the year just like the students at our neighboring school.

Our goal with leadership this year is to establish and leave a part of each one of our leaders at Mt. Tallac High, so that maybe future students can see how we didn't conform and actually stood up for the unheard or the unwilling voices to be heard.

Part of our change at Tallac is choosing our class color as purple and our mascot a Phoenix, a large intriguing bird symbolizing immortality and re-incarnation.

Luis Angel Cervantes is a senior at Mt. Tallac High School in South Lake Tahoe.

Aldana – Tallac was a choice, not a mandate



Karina Aldana

By Karina Aldana

During the time that I attended South Tahoe High School I was your average student. I didn't care much about school, I just went, did what I had to do, then went home. My grades were decent, but not all that great. I have never been on probation nor was I ever credit deficient. I am not a mom and I was not kicked out of school, and I am a Mount Tallac student.

I chose to come to Tallac because Tallac works for me, as it does for many other students as well. I can work independently and at my own pace, but get help when I need it. Ever since I've been at Tallac I have discovered so much about myself; whether it be from my passion for art to realizing how much potential I truly have. Because here at Tallac they give us a chance. They don't give up on us the second we mess up. They keep pushing until we reach success.

As for the future, I plan on attending the community college after I graduate. But I do not know where I will be five years

from now because things change. What I want now may not be what I want in a year or two. I can only hope. Hope to be graduating from and art institute and hope to be pursuing my dream job. But no matter what I end up wanting to do or not do, I know I have the support of my teachers, my classmates, my counselor and my principal.

Karina Aldana is a senior at Mt. Tallac High School in South Lake Tahoe.

Support for LTCC incumbents

Dear Publisher,

As directors at Lake Tahoe Community College, we strongly support the incumbents (Roberta Mason, Kerry David, and Molly Blann) in the upcoming Board of Trustees election. Over the last eighteen months, the community college system has been cut by \$840 million below the voter-approved funding levels. These are the largest cuts ever seen by community colleges, and they are unfortunately being imposed upon us at a time of record enrollment. We are confident that the Board incumbents seeking reelection possess the knowledge, skills, and determination to navigate our college through what may well be the worst budgetary situation in California's history.

These three Trustees have consistently demonstrated their commitment to ensuring that our students receive a stellar education and they are well known for their extremely high ethical standards and willingness to make difficult decisions during trying economic times. Their combined Board experience of over 56 years indicates that they have a deep understanding of the complexities of our educational system. We are proud to be associated with professionals of the caliber of Mrs. Mason,

Mr. David, and Mrs. Blann.

Virginia Boyar, PhD “ Director of Career & Technical Education

Craig Brinkman, MBA “ Title III Director

Julie Cathie “ Director of Financial Aid

Melonie Guttry “ Foundation Executive Director

Bill King “ Director of Computer Services

Marc Sabella, CPA “ Director of Fiscal Services

Michelle Sower, MS “ Child Development Center Director

Susan Walter, MBA, SPHR “ Director of Human Resources