

Overhaul at South Tahoe rec center will save city millions

By Kathryn Reed

Unbeknown to swimmers, those at the front counter, people working out on the gym equipment and employees, the boiler which heats the facility was replaced Monday with one that makes the old one look like a relic from the Dark Ages of technology.

The new one weights 750 pounds; the old one 8,000 pounds. The new one is about one-fifth the size of the old one. It will be up and running in a couple weeks.



Jim Fisher, left, and Duc Le begin installing the rec center boiler Aug. 23.

Photos/Kathryn Reed

Two boilers date to when the South Lake Tahoe complex opened in the 1970s. One will remain as a backup to the spiffy new one.

“We are going to save \$1.6 million over a 24-year period,” explained Gary Moore, director of the city’s Parks and Recreation Department, of the retrofit at entire facility. That is a net savings.

The total savings is \$2.4 million. The cost of the equipment is \$850,000. The money to pay for this comes from a 15-year 3 percent loan from the California Energy Commission.

With the retrofit to the center that houses the community pool and the neighboring ice rink, a savings of \$65,000 is expected in the first year.

Aircon Energy out of Sacramento is doing the bulk of the work, with local contractors being used when possible. On Aug. 23 it was a truck from local contractor Dale Rise that was hauling away the old boiler. It will be recycled.



The new blue boiler is a fraction of the size of the old white boiler.

Next up is digging the trench between the pool and ice rink. The turbine being installed to heat the pool will create electricity. That electricity will then be used to operate the ice rink.

The air handler for the pool bubble will be installed this fall.

All the lighting changes were done earlier this summer. New fluorescent bulbs and sensor devices were installed.

"We spent \$60,000 for lighting to retrofit this site. The payback is \$18,000 a year, so it doesn't make sense not to do it," Moore said. "The lighting is cool. It is brighter in the gymnasium, but it's using half the wattage."

Savings from the entire project will be used to pay off the loan.

"Once the equipment is paid off, whoever is sitting at this desk should lobby hard to keep it in this department," Moore said. He is retiring Oct. 1.