

# Incumbents retain LTCC seats

By Susan Wood



The three incumbents on the Lake Tahoe Community College board pulled off a decisive win over a challenger in the quest for three seats in the El Dorado County election Tuesday.

Molly Blann, Roberta Mason and Kerry David, respectively, took 1,926 votes or 28.1 percent, 1,904 or 27.8 percent, and 1,891 or 27.6 percent with all 10 precincts reporting as of 11pm. A little more than a fifth of registered voters turned out for the election punctuated by only local races.

Mary Jane Sanchez, a relative newcomer to town and the college's inner workings, raked in 15.8 percent. Official results are expected to be tabulated in the next few weeks.

The incumbent trio has more than a half century of experience with South Lake Tahoe's academic hub, a fact that resonated with all three when asked what the voters were seeking.

"It looks to me from the results that people were voting for incumbents, and they're happy with what's happening. Of course, we have challenges and that experience helps," Blann said, relaxing quietly with her family at home.

Blann, a real estate agent who has served as the South Shore's original Chamber of Commerce president among other activities, excels at building relationships and pulled no punches on what she planned to do this morning given the favorable news. She had prepared to thank her supporters.

Despite the nod for experience from voters, Mason admitted she was a little surprised at Sanchez's loss when she was out in the community so much.

"It's because I know she was out there campaigning and put a lot of effort into it. I thought she might unseat me. It was interesting to see her style of campaigning," said Mason, while gathered Tuesday night at the home of David. He and wife Wendy won their respective races " she for the Lake Tahoe Unified School District board.

Having served since the board's inception in 1974, Mason was modest, but certain on what lay before the board during "the worst economic state" the community college has faced. State funding is in such a state of flux it's hard to plan for budget cuts because the amount fluctuates in the millions as the Legislature struggles with plunging tax revenue.

Difficult cutbacks have already been made including the closure of food service in the main cafeteria kitchen, leaving students to hit the vending machines, coffee cart, bookstore or go off campus.

It's this kind of creative challenge that has David, a certified public accountant, ready to roll up his sleeves for another term.

"With the economic situation, the strength of experience on the board has been key in this election. (The results) tell me the voters want to see the continuation of the board. We've had to cut courses, but that's just been the reality," he said.

Along with the fiscal constraints the college is dealing with now, David hopes the worst of these troubling financial times is over and wonders if the state figures the college banks on will be accurate from one month to another. He also hopes Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger stands by his commitment to keep higher education strong.

A planning session has been slated by the board for Friday.

*Susan Wood is a freelance writer based in South Lake Tahoe.*

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## David secure; Cefalu tops Wallace by 5 votes

**By Kathryn Reed**

Wendy David is the clear winner of one of the two Lake Tahoe Unified School District board of education seats, while five votes separate newcomer Judy Cefalu and incumbent Duane Wallace.



Wendy  
David

This will be David's fourth term on the five-member board.

"I look forward to creating things instead of eliminating things," David said as she watched the returns come in Tuesday night. As a board member for the last 12 years she knows about eliminating jobs, programs and schools.

With construction well under way at South Tahoe High School, she knows these next four years will be about building facilities and programs.

She admitted she was more relaxed this go-round.

“I feel really good about where the school district is so I feel good about running as an incumbent,” David said.

It was like night and day the difference between the David and Cefalu residences on Election Night.

The Davids, Wendy and Kerry, are both veterans of nights like this; with a computer logging results and friends in attendance watching anxiously.

Judy Cefalu didn’t know the results until *Lake Tahoe News* called just after 11pm. Her husband, John, who spearheaded Measure B was already in bed. Son Chris, a South Tahoe Public Utility District candidate, couldn’t be reached.

With 100 percent of the precincts counted, David had 40.12 percent of the vote or 1,967 votes; Cefalu had 29.66 percent or 1,454 votes; and Wallace had 29.55 percent or 1,449 votes.

Having not been aware the votes were in, Cefalu did not have much to say beyond “my goodness.”

Wallace was off to bed knowing a handful of votes separated him from Cefalu.

“Either way I will be OK. I have enjoyed being on it so far,” Wallace said. “If Judy wins, I think she will do a good job.” Wallace was appointed this summer to fill the rest of Angela Swanson’s term.

The outcome of close elections like these has been known to change after provisional votes are counted. Those are the ballots where something about the voter has been questioned “signature, identification, the name isn’t on the electoral roll, that sort of thing.”

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# Jones, Schafer, Cefalu on STPUD board

By Kathryn Reed



Two of the incumbents for South Tahoe Public Utility District soundly won re-election, while one fell to a challenger.

Jim Jones and Eric Schafer are returning to the board. Chris Cefalu is replacing Ernie Claudio.

The utility district race was the most heated of all the issues before South Shore voters on Tuesday. Water is a hot topic in most of California, but the local race had nothing to do with bigger picture facing the state.

Instead, the issues that kept being brought up were accountability, transparency, water meters, rates, and relations between the board and the union.

Jim Jones, a civil engineer, served for 12 years beginning in 1977, was off for four years and has been on since 1993. He garnered 42.65 percent of the votes. Jones was unavailable for comment.

The closest challenger was perennial candidate John Runnels with 24.82 percent; Kenny Curtzwiler with 21.2 percent; and Tod Williamson with 11.08 percent.

One of the more bitter races pitted Schafer against longtime local businesswoman Peggy Ccores. Ironically, it was Scott Swift, a Lake Valley firefighter who was working more than

campaigning, who came in second.

Schafer was out collecting his signs about 9pm when the preliminary results came in. At that time he was encouraged by the numbers.

“I’m certainly looking forward to doing another four years,” Schafer said. He said he has a lot of passion for the district.

Cocores called it “a great learning experience. I have no regrets.”

With all the votes in, Schafer had 38.76 percent, Swift 32.53 percent and Cocores 28.37 percent.

Claudio, who was elected in 2007 to fill out a term, came in last for his seat.

Cefalu unseated Claudio with 33.23 percent of the vote; next was John Adamski at 27.46 percent; Jimmy Martin (who had pulled out of the race for health reasons) at 19.78 percent; and Claudio with 19.12 percent.

Cefalu and Claudio were unavailable for comment.

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## **Measure B defeated**

B apparently is not for baseball, as advocates of the measure put before El Dorado County voters on the South Shore had lobbied.

Measure B was designed to alter the 2000-voter approved Measure S. It would have taken money designated for maintaining bike trails and put it toward renovating ball

fields.

Two-thirds of the voters needed to say yes for it to pass. It garnered 62.12 percent. There were 1,925 who voted for Measure B, while 1,174 (37.88 percent) said no.

No matter how people voted, the \$18 assessment was going to stay in place.

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## **Barton bans young visitors**

For the first time in its history Barton Memorial Hospital is restricting who can visit patients.

It all has to do with swine flu.

“The purpose of this new policy is to protect patients and staff from exposure to the illness and to conserve the supply of masks,” a press release states.

No longer can people under the age of 16 visit patients in the South Lake Tahoe hospital. Anyone younger is restricted to the waiting room of the Emergency Department and the waiting room of the hospital’s front lobby and must be under adult supervision.

This restricted visitation policy is in affect until further notice.

Barton is not the first hospital to implement restrictions on visitors.

Since April, three patients at Barton have been diagnosed with H1N1.

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# \$415 million LT Restoration Act before Congress

By Erin Kelly, Gannett News Service

WASHINGTON – In a bipartisan push to save Lake Tahoe, members of Congress from Nevada and California introduced a \$415 million, eight-year bill Tuesday aimed at restoring the ailing lake.

The Lake Tahoe Restoration Act of 2009 would battle invasive species, improve water clarity, reduce the threat of devastating fires and protect wildlife.



Sen. John Ensign, R-Nev., supports bringing money to Lake Tahoe. Photo/Kathryn Reed

The bill builds on legislation passed in 2000 that began to improve the lake and the surrounding forest and basin.

**Read the whole story**



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# Agreement renders Mittelstadt powerless



By Kathryn Reed

A distinct hierarchy now exists in the South Lake Tahoe city attorneys office. Patrick Enright is Jacqueline Mittelstadt's boss.

On a 5-0 decision Tuesday, the City Council chose to stop the dismissal process against Mittelstadt and instead demoted her and elevated Enright. His contract will be before the council Nov. 17. Mittelstadt returns to work Thursday.

The original contracts for the two were identical except Enright had assistant in front of his name. They were to act as equals. Not anymore.

The seven-page settlement agreement says, "The City Attorney will prepare proposed written performance evaluations of Mittelstadt, which will be reviewed in person with Mittelstadt, the City Attorney and the Transition Subcommittee prior to being finalized."

She will be evaluated every three months. No other employee has been scrutinized like this before.

The transition team is Mayor Jerry Birdwell and Mayor Pro Tem Kathay Lovell. These are the same two who made up the transition team this summer when it was obvious no one had thought about how much different the city attorneys office

would be by doubling the number of attorneys on staff, nor had anyone asked what the newcomers might need.

One might conclude their oversight was ineffective since on Sept. 8 the council on a 3-2 vote decided it had had enough of Mittelstadt. Birdwell and Councilman Bill Crawford wanted to keep her.

What led to the majority of the council – Lovell, Hal Cole and Bruce Grego – to decide less than two months later to keep her is a mystery.

The public won't know if it was cheaper to keep Mittelstadt than incur a lawsuit; the public won't know if losing the Johnny Poland case last week played a role in Tuesday's decision; the public won't know who to believe anymore because the truth is not being disclosed.

### **Public in the dark**

One policy the city does seem to have in place is censorship.

The five elected officials seem to have forgotten who they work for – the 25,000 or so residents of South Lake Tahoe.

They chose to tie their own hands in not being able to disclose the details behind the Mittelstadt ordeal.

“Mittelstadt and the City acknowledge that this is a confidential personnel matter and that neither party will discuss or disclose the terms of the Agreement unless required to do so by law or to operate the City's government. The Parties therefore will not discuss with the public and/or press the terms of this agreement,” the document reads.

The document is public. But how it was reached and the reasons behind the words are still a mystery.

All the bravado of transparency and openness various councilmembers talked about in the weeks leading up to this

point seem like a failed campaign promise – how ironic for that rhetoric to be quieted on Election Day.

Because neither the city nor Mittelstadt is talking to the media it's unknown if it will ever be made public why the city has been behaving seemingly so recklessly with taxpayer dollars, staff time and people's lives.

Without the facts, how is the public to know if the council is acting in the public's best interest? Some on the council have said to trust the majority – it knows what it is doing.

History tells us that deferring to elected or self-anointed leaders without question is a fatal, costly error in judgment.

The city government has been working under a veil of secrecy that needs to be lifted.

This agreement is just another layer of muck that clouds the clarity of what is going on at city hall.

### **Now what?**

Mittelstadt's new job duties render her little more than an underling to Enright. She is only supposed to do what she is told by Enright.

"Mittelstadt will not hire staff or outside legal counsel, will not make purchases on behalf of the city or direct other city employees except support staff employees in the City Attorney's office," the agreement says. "Mittelstadt will perform any and all assignments given to her by the City Attorney. Mittelstadt will not speak to the public and/or press regarding matters of City business unless authorized or directed by the City Attorney."

By taking away all of her authority, the council clearly questioned her leadership ability and capability to work well with others.

The agreement goes on to say, "Mittelstadt will participate in counseling and training designed to enhance her communication and interpersonal skills to the extent deemed necessary by the City."

Why just her? That's one of the many questions not being answered. City Manager Dave Jinkens and the former city attorney kept their titles when they were ordered to counseling.

Jinkens' role in this whole matter is still not completely evident. The council is not reprimanding him for his actions in regards to personnel issues like disseminating information to councilmembers about claims that have been filed.

Part of the agreement is Mittelstadt must drop all claims she has filed against any city staff member.

No one is saying where the claim Finance Director Christine Vuletich filed against both city attorneys is. Some speculate it will just disappear.

No one in the city has ever explained why Enright was not fighting for his job.

When Mittelstadt and Enright arrived, grumbling was heard in city hall about both attorneys wanting upgrades to the work environment – such as privacy and not sharing equipment with other staff when what they work on is confidential information.

Personality conflicts sprung up. Back biting comments seemed to be the norm.

In closed session on Tuesday the council talked about creating a formal grievance policy. It does not have one to date, which is part of the problem that the city found itself in.

Despite the demotion in title for Mittelstadt, it does not come with a reduction in salary. It does mean Mittelstadt

won't have to attend City Council meetings. Her contract expires in May 2011.

Someone might want to update the city's website. Tuesday night it still said Mittelstadt is the city attorney.

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## **USFS faces violations for practices in Angora burn area**

**By Matt Weiser, Sacramento Bee**

The U.S. Forest Service has been cited for water quality violations at five Lake Tahoe projects, including a controversial logging operation in the 2007 Angora fire burn area.

Several violations caused significant erosion into Lake Tahoe streams, according to the Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board, which issued the notices. Erosion is a key cause of declining clarity in the storied alpine lake.

**Read the whole story**

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## **Thieves snatching full recycling bags**

**By Kathryn Reed**

Something that wasn't anticipated when South Tahoe

Refuseâ€™s blue bag recycling program started earlier this year was the value people would see in the full bags left at the edge of driveways.

People are stealing full blue bags to take out the material that is worth money. In fact, on one Tahoe Keys routes on Oct. 30 no blue bags were out. This wasn't normal.

A woman called STR reporting seeing a vehicle taking them.

The problem is then replacement bags are not left for customers. The other problem is not knowing where the waste that doesn't have a buy-back value might turn up â€” dumped somewhere or stuffed in a dumpster that a business then pays for.

â€œWe caught one guy in the county who did it,â€ said STRâ€™s John Marchini.

The thievery could be tied to the economy â€” people needing a way to get cash.

â€œOur volume has tripled or more at the buy back center,â€ Marchini said of people turning in recyclables for cash.

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## Flu vaccine running out



By Kathryn Reed

Roll up your sleeve fast, El Dorado County is just about out of flu vaccine – the regular flu shot, not the H1N1

concoction.

“We’re hoping we’ll get more vaccine, but all counties are in the same boat. There was a larger turnout than last year,” said Cathy Dunbar, immunization coordinator with El Dorado County Public Health.

Flu vaccination clinics are being canceled because the supplies are not available.

Dunbar said the county’s allocation is based on last year’s numbers. The problem is the demand is greater this year, not that the supply is less.

She believes the awareness of the swine flu is leading people to want to be vaccinated against the regular flu.

This may mean fewer sick people out and about because more people have been immunized. Only time will tell if people who didn’t get a shot will storm clinics and emergency rooms this year fearing what they have is more serious than the basic flu.

Barton Memorial Hospital is also running out of vaccine for the seasonal flu – and it ordered more than it had a year ago. The number of doses Barton had at the start of the season or what’s left was not available late Monday.

County officials did not have figures either.

Barton vaccinates all students in Lake Tahoe Unified School District who want it – which in the past has been 65 percent of the population. Barry Keil, director of pharmacy for the South Shore health care system, requested more vaccine this year in anticipation of more people wanting a shot.

Still, Barton, like the county, is canceling flu clinics because the supplies can’t meet the demand.

“At our last flu clinic on Friday at Stateline there were over

60 people there. That's a very high number for this time of year. Usually it's more like 40," Barton spokeswoman Denise Sloan said.

By this late in the fall, the number of people seeking out that needle usually tapers off.

Remaining seasonal flu clinics:

Barton will have one more seasonal flu clinic. It is Nov. 14 from 9am-1pm in the Barton Cafeat Barton Memorial Hospital, South Lake Tahoe. Cost is \$20, free with a Medicare card. Shots will be given until supplies run out.

El Dorado County Public Health has one more clinic in South Lake Tahoe. It is Nov. 10 from 9:30am-12:30pm at the Senior Center, 3050 Lake Tahoe Blvd.

How much swine flu vaccination will be coming to the county is not known. Dunbar said the first shipment arrived – the baby mist and that the county is waiting for the next shipment.

As of Monday, Barton had not received its first shipment of the H1N1 vaccine. It's expected to arrive any day. Schoolchildren and health care workers will be first in line for it because as they are the groups most at-risk.

Officials in El Dorado County are not as worried about the swine flu as their colleagues in Sacramento County. The Board of Supervisors there is expected today to discuss declaring a state of emergency because of the rapid increase in H1N1 cases.

For more information about seasonal flu clinics or the H1N1 flu, go to [www.edcgov.us/publichealth](http://www.edcgov.us/publichealth).