

Bundle up – winter is back



The bulbs better be in the ground by now because winter is going to be back in Lake Tahoe starting tonight. White stuff is likely to be covering the ground Tuesday morning.

Winds are picking up now, with a lake wind advisory in effect until Wednesday at 5am. Winds are from the west in the 20-30mph range, with gusts of 45mph. Wind gusts could hit 100mph on the ridges.

A couple of inches of snow are expected to accumulate at lake level or a little higher starting tonight and into Tuesday.

It's expected to be windy all week, with more moisture coming in Friday.

Dress warm – Tuesday's high in Lake Tahoe is expected to be 38 degrees.

Student population changing at ZCES



By Kathryn Reed

ZEPHYR COVE – Demographics are changing at Zephyr Cove

Elementary School.

This is one of the things Principal Nancy Cauley highlighted in her report to the Douglas County school board this month. This is the first time in her four years at the helm of the K-6 school that it has students who fit two subgroups when it comes to federal testing – free lunch and limited English proficiency.

To be a subgroup there has to be at least 25 students who fit the criteria.

–They are reading below grade level,– Cauley said of the LEP students. –We are looking at ways to implement strategies to meet their needs.–

Giving students double and triple doses of the subject matter they are weak in is being done. Whenever possible, instead of pulling students out for specialized work, a tutor-instructor is going into the classroom to address the needs of students.

Despite having more students operating below grade level, Zephyr Cove still has the designation of a Nevada High Achieving School.

Using flexible groupings, especially in math, is another tool of Cauley’s. Students are not stuck in a certain group all year – placement is re-evaluated and dependent on their capabilities.

High-achievers are going to Whittell High School for seventh-grade math.

Enrichment activities this year include spelling and geography bees for some of the grade levels. Beginning and intermediate band is offered to fifth- and sixth-graders. Sixth-grader also have a sports program. More than 70 students participate in after school programs.

Robot another tool for bomb squad



Douglas County officials stand clear of the robot that can blow things up.
Photo/DCSO

Douglas County officials got a lesson in how to blow things up.

Tahoe-Douglas Fire District employees showed off the Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) vehicle and other equipment that was recently bought with a Homeland Security grant.

The fire department has donated its old EOD to the Douglas County Sheriff's Office Search and Rescue team. It will be used as a command operations vehicle.

Tahoe-Douglas Bomb Squad Cmdr. Jim Antti demonstrated how the mechanical robot works at the sheriff's substation in Stateline. The robot will be used to investigate and handle suspected bombs and explosives.

Courthouse dispute pits city v. county

By Kathryn Reed

Back room discussions are going on regarding the El Dorado County courthouse in South Lake Tahoe, with the public being kept in the dark.

Marjorie Springmeyer, whose family donated the land for a city hall that never got built, pleaded with the council this month to come clean.



Marjorie
Springmeyer

“I have asked for a complete accounting on the government center,” Springmeyer said. “You sued me for city hall and then you abandoned it. I’m going to ask again or have my attorney ask for a chain of title on the government center.”

Now in her 80s, Springmeyer wants this resolved. Documents dating to the 1970s when the transaction occurred are not complete and much of what was agreed to was done verbally.

The Johnson-Springmeyer clan expected a city hall to be built where the government center is. Instead, a courthouse is there.

Another issue is a 5-acre land swap between the city and county that may not be complete. The city believes the county still owes it that acreage. Springmeyer also asked for that issue to be addressed.

Councilman Hal Cole, who owns property with Springmeyer, said he would like to accommodate Springmeyer and also wants the chain of title to be made public.

Adding to the confusion of the whole property matter is the 2002 Trial Court Facilities Act that mandates all California courthouses owned by counties become state property. The land becomes the state's as well if the county owns it.

In the South Lake Tahoe case, the deed for the land remains the city's. The portion of the building used as a courthouse will go to the state.

Even though this was supposed to be a simple transfer, the city in the last year has neglected to signoff on the transfer because of reasons that are discussed behind closed doors.

City officials want the 1972 land agreement resolved before signing anything. The county contends one has nothing to do with the other.

The topic was discussed in closed session by the City Council on Oct. 20 and is expected to be back there again on the Nov. 3 agenda. It's possible when the Board of Supervisors has its once a year meeting in Tahoe on Nov. 10, it will be on the agenda.

"We haven't heard anything from the city," Supervisor Norma Santiago said in an Oct. 21 email.

"At this time, I am unable to provide you with information regarding this matter. I am sorry that I cannot be of more help at this time," City Manager Dave Jinkens said in an Oct. 22 email.

Grants to off-set cost of water meters

Matt Weiser, Sacramento Bee

Sacramento-area communities will share \$52 million in federal recovery act funds to install water meters.

The grants, totaling \$717 million for water projects statewide, were announced Thursday by Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger.

The money comes from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act via the State Water Resources Control Board and the Department of Public Health.

Read the whole story

Measure B dividing recreation community

By Kathryn Reed

After proponents and opponents verbally attacked each other, the South Lake Tahoe City Council voted 5-0 in favor of endorsing Measure B.

The Nov. 3 ballot measure is a revision of Measure S, which was passed in 2000 by voters in El Dorado County living at the

lake.



Passage of
Measure B
would renovate
ball fields in
South Lake
Tahoe.

What is dividing the recreation community is the reallocation of bike trail maintenance money for improving the baseball fields near the old South Tahoe Middle School.

Measure S money can be spent on maintaining new trails, not ones in place prior to 2000. The problem is only 7 miles of trail have been put in because lawmakers in the wake of California's budget sinkhole hijacked funding for those projects.

The reality is Measure S will never be able to accomplish what is in the document – mostly because the funds aren't there and the projects cost too much.

When the measure was initially talked about, surveys of local residents said bike trails are of the utmost concern, then ball fields and last was an ice rink.

The ice rink got built first, a multiuse field at Lake Tahoe Community College is in the ground and 7 miles of bike trails that could be maintained with this money have been laid.

The \$625,000 that is collected annually is spent on:

Bond principal and debt of nearly \$400,000.

Tahoe Paradise Resort Improvement District, \$50,000 a year.

Ball field maintenance, \$50,000 year. What isn't spent stays in the account.

Bike route maintenance on trails put in since 2000 at \$5,000 per mile up to 25 miles for a total of \$125,000/year. About 7 miles have been put in to date.

Administrative costs, which includes about \$4,000 a year to John Upton.

Jerome Evans, a former city recreation commissioner, called Measure B a stealth raid on Measure S funds when he spoke before the council Oct. 20. He said the field at LTCC and the one at South Tahoe Middle School that was built since Measure S was passed, albeit without those funds, are the equivalent of the four ball fields promised in Measure S.

John Cefalu, a backer of ball fields for years, accused the biking community of being shortsighted and having a narrow view of the matter.

Accusations were hurtled back and forth about who knew what when and who should have been invited to meetings and whose opinions are more valid.

The *Tahoe Mountain News* published a lengthy story in February about the likelihood of Measure S being revised. The story talked about upcoming meetings. The information has been disseminated other places as well, so the electorate had the opportunity to be informed prior to the revision reaching the ballot.

The joint powers authority, which is made up of a city representative, a county person and a member of the Tahoe Paradise board, met several times earlier this year before getting the revision on the ballot.

It will take a two-thirds majority to revise the \$5.8 million bond measure and special tax. No matter how people vote, single family residences in the district will continue to be assessed \$18 a year on property taxes through June 30, 2030. Larger properties pay on a sliding scale.

Horizon owner granted gaming license

Publisher's Note: *Horizon and MontBleu casinos at Stateline are no longer operated by the same parent companies. William Yung's Tropicana company owned Horizon and MontBleu before the parent company filed for bankruptcy. Splitting ownership of the two Lake Tahoe properties is one of the outcomes of the bankruptcy.*

By Richard N. Velotta, Las Vegas Sun

Nevada Gaming commissioners didn't hide the fact that they were a little nervous about granting a license to LV Casino LLC to operate Lake Tahoe Horizon Casino.

After all, William Yung, a top executive with the company, had his gaming license revoked in New Jersey and frequently feuded with the Culinary Union during his operation of the Tropicana in Las Vegas. He also had regulatory scrapes in Indiana.

Read the whole story

Placer County questions cost of keeping Tahoe blue

By Gus Thomson, Auburn Journal

Is the price to keep Tahoe blue too high?

A \$1.2-billion estimate for getting Lake Tahoe closer to its original blue is being met with little enthusiasm by Placer County government.

With no end to tight budgets in sight, County Executive Officer Tom Miller and Granite Bay-area Supervisor Kirk Uhler questioned how the county could come up with its share of funding for work to restore the Sierra lake's historic clarity.

[Read the whole story](#)

Bad Tahoe construction loan hurts financial institution

By Rick Stouffer, Pittsburgh Tribune-Review

First Commonwealth Financial Corp. today reported a \$3 million third-quarter loss, resulting from losses on problems loans.

For the three months ended Sept. 30, the Indiana, Pa.-based financial institution's loss equaled 4 cents a share. A year ago, the bank reported a profit of \$10.2 million, or 14-cents-a-share, in the July-September time period.

[Read the whole story](#)

Local contractors want to be working at STHS



Crews transform the landscape at South Tahoe High.
Photo/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

Local carpenters are likely to be at Tuesday's Lake Tahoe Unified School District when an update is given on the construction at South Tahoe High School.

Three members of the local carpenters union spoke before the board at the Oct. 13 meeting requesting future contracts involving the \$64.5 million Measure G bond include language guaranteeing a certain percentage of locals be hired as well as an apprentice program be added.

Joe Stewart with SMC Contractors and LTUSD Facilities Director Steve Morales will give a status report to the board at the 6pm Oct. 27 meeting at the district office in South Lake

Tahoe. The facility master plan and Measure G's schedule are on the agenda.

Even though SMC, the general contractor, has said it would hire as many locals as possible, out of area subcontractors often use the guys they are used to.

Morales believes much of the problem has to do with there not being enough construction work to go around, so those in the construction trades are sitting idle.

"We are here to ask the district and the board to add unequivocal language to guarantee a percentage or certain number of locals in future contracts," Paul Moniot said. "This is not a new idea. Other districts do it."

Joe Imbach, a 1978 local graduate, talked about being in an apprentice program 25 years ago and how it helped him get into the industry.

"Our community is really falling downhill. Everybody is leaving because they can't make a living here," carpenter and 1980 STHS grad Craig Johnson told the board earlier this month.

The agenda for next week does not specifically say their concerns will be addressed.

Morales gave a brief update in his report on Oct. 13, stating the underground work for the STHS buildings is complete. Roofs are expected to be on by mid-November. The buildings will be shrink wrapped so work continues on the inside through the winter.

Any day the state is expected to release the \$6 million matching grant dollars for buildings at the high school.