

Tahoe drowning victim dressed only in jeans

By Kathryn Reed

The identity of the man found on the bottom of Lake Tahoe in 7 feet of water by a fishing captain could be released today.

A captain with Tahoe Sportfishing in South Lake Tahoe spotted the man who was wearing only jeans just after 7am Thursday. He called his boss John Shearer, who then notified authorities.

It was close to 12:30pm before divers brought the body of the man to shore at Ski Run Marina. He victim is described as Hispanic or Native American, 25-30 years of age, dark brown short hair, 6-feet and 180-200 pounds.

The Tahoe Queen paddle-wheeler had to cancel two of its cruises, as authorities shut down the marina until about 3pm. No watercraft were able to come or go for most of the day.

Employees with the fishing charter company said Thursday night that the Queen had hand prints near the waterline as though the victim may have tried to climb up.

Police would not say if foul play is involved. The El Dorado County Sheriff's Department is expected to perform an autopsy today.

This is the first drowning of the year at Lake Tahoe. There were two in 2008, seven in 2007, nine in 2006 and eight in 2005.

Man found floating in Lake Tahoe



People returned to the water at Ski Run Marina late Thursday afternoon after a body was found floating by the Tahoe Queen early in the morning. Photo/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

A captain of a fishing boat found a man face down early this morning in the shallow water of Lake Tahoe near the Tahoe Queen paddle-wheeler.

The captain called his boss, John Shearer, owner of Tahoe Sportfishing, who then called the South Lake Tahoe Police Department about 7:15am.

“They were backing out and they saw the body,” Shearer

said. "There was no movement. I have no idea who it is. Hopefully, we don't know them."

The local police as of 4:15pm had not identified the man they describe as being between 25 and 30 years old. Nor do they know where the man is from.

It is too early in the investigation to know if foul play was involved.

Ski Run Marina, where the body was found, is in the middle of South Lake Tahoe and is a bevy of activity most days. The marina was shut down until about 3pm. The Tahoe Queen had to cancel its 11am and 2:30pm cruises.

Chris Joyner of South Lake Tahoe had his wakeboarding plans changed. He arrived at the marina about 7:30am to find about nine police cars in the area, and the marina off-limits to watercraft.

He said the body was found near the Queen.

For the fishing boats, they had to dock at Timber Cove when they returned. Captains were retrieved via kayak and customers had to walk back along the beach.

Drowning reported

South Lake Tahoe police are currently at Ski Run Marina on reports of a drowning.

More details as they come in ...

Camp Rich bike trail slated for overhaul



Cyclists one day may enjoy a wider, longer Camp Rich trail. Photo/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

The most heavily used bike trail in the Lake Tahoe Basin may undergo a face-lift in the next few years.

The U.S. Forest Service is looking at tearing up the existing route in and around Camp Richardson and possibly replacing the 8-foot wide path with asphalt 10-feet wide, plus 2-foot shoulders.

All of this and more are part of the Fallen Leaf Trail Access and Travel Management Plan. Wildlife, botanical and other surveys are being conducted as part of the necessary federal environmental review. Public comments could be sought by spring 2010. A final document is expected in winter 2010 or

spring 2011, with construction to follow once funding is secured.

Boundaries of the plan are from the edge of the Angora Fire to Lake Tahoe, then from where Highway 89 is four lanes to Desolation Wilderness.

“We may re-route trails. There are a lot of user created trails, some managed trails and some roads that will be reconfigured,” explained Garrett Villanueva, assistant forest engineer. “We will be looking at the trails from the visitors center to Camp Richardson – all the trails in there including the ones that go to the beaches. We want to make those work as effectively as possible.”

The idea is make it so people can bike from one place to another and not have to drive.

Today the paved Camp Richardson path dead-ends on the north at Highway 89. Villanueva said the Forest Service has not given up on the idea of having a bike trail around Emerald Bay.

“It’s very challenging with resource issues and private property,” Villanueva said.

Another idea is to resurrect plans from the 1980s to create a loop by crossing Highway 89 and going behind the stables at Camp Rich.

The dam at Taylor Creek at the eastern edge of Fallen Leaf Lake currently requires mountain bikers to dismount unless they are adept at stairs. Villanueva said his agency is studying how to link the trails in a logical manner to the dam. Constructing a crossing that is easier to maneuver and one that looks better are part of the equation, too.

The Forest Service is looking at using native surface and pavement in the project.

A bike path along Fallen Leaf Road is being talked about that

could connect with Tahoe Mountain Road. El Dorado County is responsible for maintaining (or letting it be in a state of disrepair) – not the feds.

LTUSD students post double-digit test score gains



LTUSD test scores are rolling forward.

By Kathryn Reed

Superlatives were rolling off educators'™ tongues when the annual test scores were officially released Tuesday.

Lake Tahoe Unified School District surpassed everyone's™ expectations as well as state and federal minimums.

If Tahoe Valley Elementary and South Tahoe Middle schools maintain this level of performance for one more year, they will no longer fall under "program improvement" status.

Of the district's™ six schools, half met the state's™ Academic Performance Index goal of a score of at least 800. Sierra House hit 799.

All of this testing is part of the federal No Child Left Behind. Instead of following the progress of a class of students, one third grade is compared to the next third grade " so improvements are not an apples to apples comparison.

However, the district has the capability to do that type of longitudinal analysis to know if a class or individual student is regressing, progressing or at a plateau.

Students in grades 2-11 take the language arts-math tests.

One thing Superintendent Jim Tarwater points to as being a plus is all-day kindergarten and preppie K.

"The second-graders were the first class with full-day kindergarten and they scored about 20 percent better than the other grades (without all day K)," Tarwater said.

Tarwater, who is in his fifth year at the helm of the academically challenged district, said it would take three years to see improvements once the district and most of the schools hit PI status. His prediction was spot-on.

Teaching, looking at how well a student learned the material, and then re-teaching made the difference, Tarwater said.

He said during the last year more intensive math instruction was part of the game plan. Using a pacing guide so the instruction was completed before the standardized tests were given also helped.

A component that is missing for many students because of all this testing is instruction beyond English, language arts and math.

Tarwater hopes if test scores keep going up, social sciences, arts, science and the other disciplines that make for a well-rounded student will be incorporated back into the curriculum.

He admits that without learning science or subjects at middle

school “ and many are not “ that those students are at a disadvantage when they reach high school.

Because South Tahoe High School is now in year three of being PI, it’s possible a District Assistance Intervention Team will come in to assess what the school is doing. It could mean losing a bit of autonomy.

Tarwater believes the 20-point API gain when only five were required will show the powers that be that the school is on a corrective course.

All eyes are also on Washington because President Obama has said he wants to overhaul NCLB because the goals are unattainable and funding for mandated programs was never in place.

2009 API results:

Bijou went from 625 to 689, gain of 64, state had set a minimum gain of 9;

Magnet went from 881 to 919, gain of 38, no gain required;

Sierra House went from 768 to 799, gain of 31, state had set minimum gain of 5;

Tahoe Valley went from 743 to 820, gain of 77, state had set minimum gain of 5;

STMS went from 772 to 800, gain of 28, state had set minimum gain of 5;

STHS went from 730 to 750, gain of 20, state had set minimum gain of 5.

“I don’t think we’ll always make double digit gains like this, but we won’t ease up,” Tarwater said. “We will continue to increase, but probably not as dramatically as this.”

Redevelopment plan goes to the people



Empty storefronts are considered economic blight.

By Kathryn Reed

On a 3-1 vote, the South Lake Tahoe City Council on Tuesday said it's time to release its latest redevelopment plans for public review.

Councilman Hal Cole lives close the project area so he had to recuse himself and Councilman Bill Crawford had too many issues with the proposal to be able to vote yes.

It's not just about the Y or Tahoe Valley anymore. The plan covers the better part of the city. It includes Harrison Avenue down to Glenwood Way.

Multiple times city officials reiterated that eminent domain will not be a component of this project. Taking of land, albeit at fair market value, is something that happened on both sides of the highway in the Stateline area.

“The whole goal of the project is to create a financing tool,” explained Gene Palazzo, SLT Redevelopment Agency manager.

(City councilmembers also act as Redevelopment Agency members. The meetings are continuous, with no action taken to distinguish between the two entities voting on particular matters.)

Palazzo’s presentation forecasted the ability to generate \$178 million in tax increment in the next 45 years.

Crawford’s contention is that even though everyone boasts this money will stay in the city and not go to the state, he says it foresees most of it going to pay debt — like the \$7 million a year the city pays for the Heavenly Village project.

Councilman Bruce Grego raised concerns about this being on the books for so long.

Palazzo said because landowners will be asked to come to the city instead of the city going to them, he expects redevelopment to be a slow process.

Per state law, an area must be deemed blighted before it can be called a redevelopment area.

“I’ve learned blight is in the eye of the consultant,” Crawford said.

He worries about what it will do to property values if an owners want to sell and prospective buyers learns the parcel is in a blighted area.

Crawford made much of the report that says tearing down the Mikasa-Millers Outpost buildings and starting new is cost-prohibitive.

“There is no real plan. It’s just hoping someone will come in and buy the land to put up some buildings,” Crawford said.

Palazzo said that's why it's even more important to deem make it a redevelopment area so a financing tool is in place to help would-be developers.

The document will be available for public review for 90 days. A public hearing will be scheduled in February at the earliest. The plan was not on the city's website (www.cityofslt.us) late last night. Redevelopment Manager Gene Palazzo may be reached at (530) 542.6044.

The council may have created more work for Palazzo when on a split vote the agreement with Urban Futures for nearly \$26,000 in consulting work on the project was nixed. Cole and Mayor Jerry Birdwell abstained because of conflicts, Crawford said no.

Hotel fees may increase in South Tahoe

If hotel owners have their way, it will cost a little more to spend the night in South Lake Tahoe.

The Tourism Improvement District is rallying its membership to raise the special hotel tax by \$1 for hotels and motels to \$3 a night, and for property management-time shares by \$1.50 to \$4.50.

These charges are on top of what the city collects for the tourism occupancy tax.

To proceed, the TID needs to get 50 percent of its members to agree to the hike. It was reported at this month's South Lake Tahoe Lodging Association that 43 percent are on board.

“I think the only hesitation is because of the economy,” said Jerry Bindel, TID leader and general manager of Lakeland Village.

His belief is a down economy is the time to raise funds for marketing – which is what the tax goes toward.

To increase the fee, the City Council will have to give its approval. The subject is slated to be discussed by the council Oct. 6.

SLT General Plan a 20-year road map

More parking – that is the main issue South Lake Tahoe City Council members wanted to make sure was added to the multi-page draft General Plan that was approved 5-0 this month.

“We have places where parking doesn’t meet the demands,” Councilman Hal Cole said. Cole said it’s ridiculous in a drive-up tourist market without a good public transit system to expect people not to drive to their destination.

He took issue with the word “adequate” to describe the amount of parking needed. He added that the success of proposed growth depends on people being to park at the project.

The city’s Sustainability Commission focused its concerns on green building incentives, creating a sense of place and continuing with the sustainability plan.

A series of meetings were conducted this year to gather public input for the General Plan.

The 20-year blueprint being developed for the city is now under environmental review. A draft environmental impact report should be ready for public comment in a few months.

The council and Tahoe Regional Planning Agency will have to sign-off on the final document.

More info is at www.sltgpu.com.

Harrah's buying Planet Hollywood's debt

By **ARNOLD M. KNIGHTLY, LAS VEGAS REVIEW-JOURNAL**

Harrah's Entertainment is buying up the Planet Hollywood Resort's debt in what an analyst said could be a bid to take over the financially troubled Strip resort.

Sources confirmed this weekend that Harrah's has purchased a portion of the resort's \$860 million debt that is leveraged against the property.

Officials from Harrah's and Planet Hollywood Resort declined to comment (Sept. 14).

The Planet Hollywood restaurant at what was Caesars Tahoe, and is now MontBleu, closed years ago.

Brian Gordon, a principal at Applied Analysis, said Harrah's could be following the recent trend of acquiring casino properties through debt instead of a buyout.

With covenant and debt defaults looming around for some of these properties, it's a potential way to gain eventual

ownership of a property,â€ Gordon said.

[Read the rest of the story](#)

Garrido's bail set at \$30 million



By Sam Stanton and Denny Walsh, Sacramento Bee

PLACERVILLE – Phillip Garrido was ordered held on \$30 million bail today by an El Dorado County judge who also said that Garrido posed too great a flight risk and was a danger to the community.

The ruling came at a bail hearing for Garrido and his wife, Nancy Garrido, who are accused in the 1991 abduction of 11-year-old Jaycee Lee Dugard.

Judge Douglas Phimister also approved a request by Garrido's attorney that he undergo a psychiatric evaluation. Nancy Garrido's attorney reserved the right to also ask for one for his client.

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