

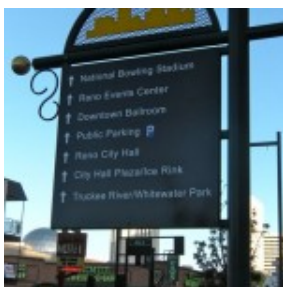
# Meyers without electricity

Sierra Pacific Power says power will be restored at 9pm to residents in the Meyers area.

The company is calling it a circuit lockout.

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## Signs designed to make navigating Tahoe roads easier



Wayfinding signs in Reno have more latitude because of not being on a state highway.

**By Kathryn Reed**

The forces behind creating informational signs on the South Shore that are relevant and prominent will bring what they hope are the final designs to the South Lake Tahoe City Council on Sept. 15.

Then Caltrans needs to give its blessing before installation

begins next summer. A maintenance agreement between the city and Caltrans will be part of next week's discussions.

Wayfinding, as the national movement is called, is about creating signs with words and symbols to help direct people to various destinations. The problem with doing it on Highway 50 is Caltrans has a whole lot of rules without much wiggle room.

This means from Meyers to the state line the signs will be blue, brown and green, with white lettering. They have to be a certain number of feet high, lettering height is regulated and other state highway rules apply.

Signs on Pioneer Trail, Ski Run Boulevard and other city-county streets allow for more latitude in creativity.

Symbols on the highway will be somewhat generic – a skier, hiker, tent for camping, swimmer for beach access, fork and knife for restaurants. No fun stuff like San Francisco where an outline of Italy symbolizes North Beach.

In 2007, the Lake Tahoe South Shore Chamber of Commerce was given an \$88,000 grant from the city and \$42,500 from El Dorado County to create the program. Nancy Kerry when she was at the chamber was the lead on the project and continued to be so when she became a city employee.

When the new signs are in place, what is in place now will be taken down.

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**Barnes and Noble coming to**

# South Tahoe

By Kathryn Reed



LTCC's bookstore will be operated by Barnes and Noble as of November.

South Lake Tahoe is about to have a real bookstore again – sort of.

Barnes and Noble is taking over the running of Lake Tahoe Community College's bookstore in November. The board approved this decision Sept. 8.

"It's premature to say they would expand the bookstore, but it's not out of the realm of possibility," said Christina Proctor, LTCC spokeswoman.

Part of the college's capital improvement plan for 2011 is to improve the bookstore. With the national retailer coming in, the expense could fall on their shoulders if they so desire. It's possible the bookstore could be relocated on campus.

When the bookstore first opened Stanford Inc. was the operator. When they went out of business, the college took over.

In the agreement with Barnes and Nobles, LTCC will receive a

percentage of the gross sales that will go into the general fund. Gross sales in 2008-09 were \$753,000.

The retailer plans to upgrade the computer system and stock the store with different merchandise than what's currently available.

This endeavor could bring a good chunk of change to the college, provide students with less expensive texts and give the South Shore a place to buy new books without leaving the hill.

Barnes and Noble is not new to college campuses – this will be the 27th one.

The board agreed to other improvements earlier this summer when it updated its five-year capital outlay plan.

Remodeling of the admissions and records area as well as the bookstore are slated to occur in 2011. Combined, the two projects will cost about \$130,000. Of course the Barnes and Noble deal is likely to change the bookstore component.

The money is not in hand for those improvements. It's something the college will have to fund.

The state will pick up the \$1 million-plus cost of building a warehouse and vehicle storage. Plans aren't expected to be drawn until 2013.

A parking lot is also on the to-do list. However, this will be something LTCC must pay for. The state pays for parking lots at the K-12, UC and CSU levels, but not for community colleges. This is a reason most two-year schools charge for parking. It is slated to be constructed in 2014-15.

Still on the list are the classroom building/faculty offices and tennis courts. But the reality is they keep getting pushed into the future and seem to be ideas more than anything else at this point.

“It’s a very real possibility that those time lines could be pushed to a further date,” Proctor said of all of the projects.

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## Gaines brings constituents up-to-speed



Assembly Ted  
Gaines speaks  
to  
constituents  
at Riva Grill.  
Photo/Kathryn  
Reed

**By Kathryn Reed**

State parks, releasing prisoners, budget woes, water and concealed weapons. Those were some of the topics broached by Ted Gaines and his South Shore constituents.

The assemblyman who represents the California side of the lake was in South Lake Tahoe last month for an informal coffee and chat with locals.

“I think we get too polarized when we are trying to solve

problems,” Gaines said of the Legislature. He believes legislators get caught in ideological quagmires that prevent them from moving forward for the greater good of California.

With that said, the Republican didn’t hold back on criticizing those on the other side of the political aisle.

“We have a huge water crisis in the state of California,” Gaines said. “Democrats don’t want anymore surface water storage. I think they don’t want more growth.”

When it comes to cutting state departments such as state parks he wishes it were handled differently.

“Sometimes it’s like using a meat cleaver when we should be more precise,” the assemblyman said.

He didn’t have any insider knowledge into which state parks in the Lake Tahoe Basin may be closed. Sept. 18 is the date the names of the 100 state parks to be shuttered, which is more than one-third of the whole system, will be announced.

Gaines questions why the state pays for a prisoner with sleep apnea to be hospitalized and receive 24/7 guard service at taxpayers’ expense.

“I know government is inherently inefficient,” he said.

He pointed to being a supporter of consolidating 11 state boards or commissions as an accomplishment in the last session.

About 20 people turned out for the morning gathering at Riva Grill. Representatives from South Lake Tahoe, El Dorado County, Lake Tahoe Unified School District, Lake Tahoe Community College, Lahontan Water Board, South Tahoe Fire and El Dorado Sheriff’s, along with residents were in attendance.

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# **Stateline casinos biggest losers in Nevada in July**

July is usually one of the best months for gaming revenue at the Stateline casinos because all of the celebrities in town are dropping big bucks at that tables after a day on the links at the American Century Celebrity Golf Tournament. Not so this year.

The South Shore casinos came in with the largest decline in gaming revenue for Nevada casinos, with a drop of 33 percent.

Statewide, casinos reported a drop of 12.4 percent in gross revenue or gaming win compared to July 2008, according to the Gaming Control Board. The gross was \$872 million in July, while a year ago it was \$997 million.

The board reported today that this is the 19th straight month Nevada casinos have reported a drop.

Indian casinos in California are grabbing gamblers before they reach Tahoe or Reno.

North Shore's revenue fell 19 percent in July and Reno casinos were down 21 percent.

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# **Poland gets his day in court**



**By Kathryn Reed**

After 45 minutes of back and forth testimony from opposing counsel, the judge didn't decide if Johnny Poland should be given back his badge to resume work as a South Lake Tahoe police officer.

The city is fighting his reinstatement, which counters the recommendation a three-person panel made nearly a year ago. A former South Lake Tahoe police chief, former mayor and independent arbitrator were on the panel.

Poland, a 10-year veteran of the force when he was terminated in June 2007, is accused of inappropriate behavior during the Nov. 20, 2006, lockdown at South Tahoe High School.

He appealed the decision. The panel ruled in his favor. The city is contesting that ruling. The city has spent close to \$100,000 fighting the case.

It is up to El Dorado County Superior Court Judge Steven Bailey to make the final decision. At the court session Sept. 9 he did not indicate when he would rule.

Cynthia O'Neill with Liebert Cassidy Whitmore represented the city in court. One of her biggest arguments is that Poland is a dishonest cop.

"Officer Poland created a false impression a gun was not found," O'Neill said. She further stated, "Mr. Poland violated the most basic of police duties. He did not collect evidence. He did not tell his supervisor."

O'Neill's reference is to the non-operating BB gun that was



found in a student's vehicle that day. Poland did not confiscate it, nor did he immediately tell anyone about it.

She tried to make a case that Poland is a liar and therefore the Brady ruling would come into play.

Brady v. Maryland in part says, "Police officers who lie are often called 'Brady cops', because of the Brady ruling, prosecutors are required to notify defendants and their attorneys whenever a law enforcement official involved in their case has a sustained record for knowingly lying in an official capacity."

El Dorado County Sheriff's Department recently had a personnel case where the Brady ruling was cited. The theory is that a cop is no good on the street if their testimony is no good in the courtroom.

Even though O'Neill said the county's district attorney is on the city's side, Poland's attorney Steven Welty pounced on that assertion by saying the DA has not been privy to the details of the case and therefore his opinion is warrantless.

Welty said the cases O'Neill cited were irrelevant to the Poland case because they had to do with "bold faced lies" by an officer.

"Officer Poland doesn't come close to those cases," Welty said.

Judge Bailey had the most questions for O'Neill – asking pointedly why the arbitration panel's ruling was not appropriate. She kept repeating that Poland is a dishonest cop.

A ruling could come any day or weeks from now.

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## **SLT unemployment at 15%**

South Lake Tahoe's City Council had a budget meeting Sept. 8. One of the more alarming things to come out of it is that unemployment stands at 15 percent in the city – which is more than the state and federal numbers.

With the Lake Tahoe Basin entering the shoulder season – when layoffs from summer are the norm before ski season begins – that figure is likely to escalate.

The city's fiscal year begins Oct. 1. In the last budget the city had revenue for hotel taxes going up. The reality is the reverse happened.

Even though other city's and the state have furlough days in place, South Lake Tahoe has been reticent to implement such a policy.

Public hearings on the budget will be scheduled soon.

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## **El Dorado County Health and Human Services struggles to maintain services**



**By Kathryn Reed**

Nineteen out of 33 people who work in South Lake Tahoe for El Dorado County Department of Human Services were told that by the end of September they will be working in the Placerville office.

Most work out of the two buildings on Silver Dollar Avenue the county leases. The county gave the landlord notice it would be severing the agreement at the end of this month.

“We are trying to keep as many people in Tahoe as we possibly can,” county Supervisor Norma Santiago said.

She said the continued budget crunch is forcing consolidation of offices. The county could save a half million a year with these changes.

Santiago also stressed that the goal is to keep people employed even if it means on the West Slope. A commuter bus, possibly BlueGo, is being talked about as a way to lessen the burden of commuting over the hill. Some Tahoe-based employees are already driving from the Carson Valley and farther.

The county owns the building at Takela Drive and Highway 50, which is in the process of being revamped so it can accommodate more people. One of the problems is the basement is not ADA accessible, so it is wasted space.

Another issue the county must contend with is deciphering what the governor’s pen stroke to slash CalWorks means. When Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger signed the state budget he wiped out \$80 million from Human Services that legislators had wanted.

The county is talking with partner agencies to see if office space is available.

The county's Mental Health Commission has a public hearing this month to gather input on the El Dorado County Mental Health, 2009-10 Community Services and Support portion of its Mental Health Services Act Plan. Copies of the draft plan are at [www.edcgov.us/mentalhealth](http://www.edcgov.us/mentalhealth).

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## **SLT city attorney being paid not to work**

**By Kathryn Reed**

Even though Jacqueline Mittelstadt is still listed on South Lake Tahoe's website as the city's attorney, she is not doing the job.

She said she received a call Sept. 8 from special counsel for the city who told her, "I am not allowed to return to work."

Access to her computer has been turned off. The locks on her door have been changed.

Patrick Enright, assistant city attorney-redevelopment counsel, has been appointed interim city attorney.

All of this happened behind closed doors Tuesday. When contacted the next day, Enright was not forthcoming with information about what happened at the meeting, though he said he was in the meeting for part of the discussion.

City Council members are not talking either.

The question remains whether the council's actions are a violation of the Brown Act, which says action taken in closed session must be reported in open session. Clearly, action was taken.

Mittelstadt said she was not told how long she will be on paid leave of absence.

Sources told Lake Tahoe News it is non-disciplinary leave.

In order to terminate Mittelstadt the council must do so at a regularly scheduled meeting. A council member could seek consensus from his peers at the Sept. 15 meeting to have the item placed on the Oct. 6 agenda.

If that were to happen, she would be given 30 days notice that in another 90 days she is off the payroll and out of a job. This means Mittelstadt, who has only been working since June, would be paid almost five months at more than \$10,000 a month to not work.

Why the council is ready to ax Mittelstadt has not been revealed. Before she was hired on a 5-0 vote the council members were enthusiastic to have her on board.

Earlier this week she told LTN, "The City Attorney's Office noted some internal irregularities in the city and reports of which were not necessarily well received."

Any grievances that may have been filed against Mittelstadt or Enright or by them must be resolved before the council could terminate their employment.

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# El Dorado County strives to be geotourism destination; workshop Sept. 9

By Kathryn Reed

What does El Dorado County have that no place else has?

The answers to that question are being assembled by a coalition charged with the job of turning the entire county into geo-tourism destination.

“Some of you might see marketing for Lake Tahoe and it does not reflect what you like. We know skiing and gambling, but what else can we market?” asked Peter Brumis.

Brumis, founder of Ecomentum.com and international ecotourism expert, along with Jacquie Chandler (messaging specialist and local liaison to National Geographic) and Penelope Curtis (California arts and heritage tourism expert) make up GeoSierra.

The threesome was hired by the Lake Tahoe South Shore Chamber of Commerce to develop a geo-tourism plan. One-third of the \$90,000 grant El Dorado County awarded the chamber is being spent on the consultants.

About \$18,000 will go toward the website, while the remaining \$42,000 is the “capture component” which could be a video or short trailer so people understand the asset and what it connects to.

In July and August, GeoSierra led meetings throughout the county to gather public input. The idea is for locals to weigh-in on the assets they believe represent the uniqueness of the county.

The four county maps laid out on tables at the U.S. Forest Service were covered with reference points – some natural, some not – by the more than 20 people in attendance. Things like the Tahoe Rim Trail, Alpen Sierra Coffee, Desolation Wilderness, star gazing, wineries, wildflower hikes, Explore Tahoe – and hundreds of others were written down.

“With gaming, construction and the tourism economy in decline, what can a destination do to sustain itself? Change the menu – change the result,” Chandler said before the July meeting. “National Geographic has found that when a destination focuses on what is authentic about the place, visitors are more likely to become engaged in our historical, cultural and national treasure story. When you feel connected to something, you care more about it, and caring leads to appreciation that builds stewardship.”

County Supervisor Norma Santiago said the goal is to have National Geographic, whose website she said gets 3 million hits a day, list El Dorado County as a sustainable destination.

Forty-five destinations in the world are at some level of geo-tourism through National Geographic.

Identifying assets is the first phase. People can continue to suggest resources that should be included by going to [www.geosierra.org](http://www.geosierra.org). A steering panel consisting of people on both sides of the county will make the ultimate decision about what is included.

A big part of geo-tourism is linking the assets so people stay in the county longer and spend more money. It's visiting a county winery and then ordering a bottle at a local restaurant. It's having local businesses refer tourists to other destinations in the county. It could be an alpaca farm in Placerville providing wool to a Tahoe business.

Through the Sierra Business Council, geo-tourism may become a

basin-wide endeavor in the future.

The last workshop in South Lake Tahoe is Sept. 9, 3:30-5:30pm, South Lake Tahoe Public Library Meeting Room, 1000 Rufus Allen Blvd., South Lake Tahoe.

The last El Dorado Hills workshop is Sept. 11, 4-6pm, El Dorado Hills Holiday Inn at the Town Center, 4360 Town Center Blvd., El Dorado Hills.