

Rash of car burglaries in Stateline

Since Aug. 24 there have been 13 attempted burglaries in the Stateline area.

The Lower Kingsbury area is being hit hardest; mostly unlocked vehicles.

The suspects work after dark targeting vehicles parked in driveways and on the street. All the vehicles that were involved were left unlocked. The losses include cash, wallets, an iPad and checkbook.

One witness reported seeing on a surveillance recording a white male 5-feet-10, wearing shorts, a T-shirt, and a baseball cap, carrying a backpack who was trying to open a car door.

People are asked to call 775.782.5126 or 911 if they see someone suspicious.

Locking doors is the best deterrent.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

\$4B water, parks bond may be before Calif. voters

By Angela Hart, Sacramento Bee

As torrential rains and dangerous flood waters pummel large swaths of Texas and parts of Louisiana, California lawmakers

are eyeing legislation to prevent similar damage from from the state's own disasters.

Senate Bill 5 from state Senate President Pro Tem Kevin de León would ask voters this upcoming June to approve a \$4 billion bond to fund water, flood and parks projects across California.

To make it to the governor's desk, it would need to clear the Assembly, where another water and open space bond from from Assemblyman Eduardo Garcia, D-Coachella, is under debate.

Read the whole story

Slinkard Fire at 6,241 acres, no containment

Updated 4:05pm:

The Slinkard Fire is estimated to have burned 6,241 acres, with zero percent containment as of Thursday afternoon.

The fire has burned to Highway 395 and crossed Highway 89 to the north.

The power outage in the Coleville-Topaz-Walker area due to fire burning poles and wire. Approximately 30 customers had power restored along 395 south of the state line near agricultural inspection station.

"Fire continues to threaten utility structures. Crews on the scene ready to make repairs when allowed access. Positioning generator near site for possible use if outage is multi-day," Liberty Utilities spokeswoman Kathy Carter said. An extended

power outage is likely.

Wednesday night, fire crews focused on the eastern flank of the fire along Highway 395 and engine crews were dedicated to structure protection in northern Topaz. There have been no injuries and no structures lost at this time.

Topaz has been evacuated north of Highway 89 to the Nevada state line.

North of the fire, Highway 395 is closed in both directions at Highway 208. South of the fire, 395 is closed in both directions at Highway 182 in Bridgeport. In Topaz Ranch Estates, Highway 208 is now open.

The fire is located in Slinkard Valley and the west slope of Antelope Valley, west of Topaz in Mono County.

Lightning started the fire on Aug. 29.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

No easy answers to Tahoe's homeless issue



Cheyenne Lane with Tahoe Youth & Family Services talks about homelessness on Aug. 30. Photo/LTN

By Kathryn Reed

No one ever said they wanted to grow up to be a homeless person. And, yet, today a growing number of people are finding themselves without a traditional roof over their heads.

Twenty-six percent of the people who stayed in South Lake Tahoe's warm room last winter were employed. Eighty-seven percent of the warm room users were locals. There are 25 million housing units in California to accommodate 40 million people. Every 5 percent increase in rent in Los Angeles equates to another 2,000 homeless people. Eighty-five percent of the homeless in the United States are not the street people the public sees. In El Dorado County, on average, \$35,000 a year is spent on each homeless person when it comes to law enforcement, hospitalization and social services. California has about 25 percent of the country's homeless population.

These were just some of the statistics presented Aug. 30 by six panelists talking about the growing homeless problem here and elsewhere. The 90-minute presentation at Tahoe Beach Retreat in South Lake Tahoe was hosted by Tahoe Regional Young Professionals.

Speakers were: Marissa Muscat, a physician with Barton Health who runs the local warm room; Cheyanne Lane with Tahoe Youth & Family Services; South Lake Tahoe police Lt. Dave Stevenson; rabbi Evon Yakar; Benjamin Henwood, a licensed clinical social worker who is a faculty member at USC; and Daniel Del Monte, El Dorado County deputy director of Community Services.

“Homeless at its core is a housing issue,” Del Monte said.

In other words, there isn’t enough housing for everyone.

Del Monte said that for every 100 people California has added to its population in the last 40 years, there have been 32 housing units built.

Affordable housing is one thing, lack of housing is another. The Lake Tahoe Basin is contending with both.

Mental health issues and addiction are not uncommon in the homeless world. But in many ways those are the more visible and certainly stereotypical members of this group.

One of the nearly 50 people in attendance asked whether the warm room, which opened in 2015, is bringing these people to Tahoe. The overwhelming answer was no.

As Henwood put it, “People don’t identify as homeless and then look for the best place to be homeless.”

Most people want to stay in the town they know.

Lane would like the South Shore to have a permanent shelter, but doesn’t foresee people moving her to live in it.

Historically, the powers that be would try to get a homeless person off drugs and treated for whatever health issues they had. Housing came next. Henwood said the conventional approach is to secure housing for a person and then address the issues that led them to become homeless.

That approach, though, requires a vacancy sign somewhere, and those are hard to come by here and throughout much of California as well as Northern Nevada.

Knowing why they became homeless could provide the answers to help keep them from returning to that state.

None of the six had definitive solutions for the homeless problem. Muscat would like local regulations changed so it would be easier to build housing. Henwood said if the money saved from the mortgage write off on taxes were transferred to homeless causes, this would be a good redistribution of wealth.

Continuing to talk about homelessness, recognizing that people are on the brink of becoming homeless, erasing the stigma associated with it and working as a community were some of the baby steps suggested in order to move forward.

S. Tahoe man faces child porn allegations



Robert Huckaby

A South Lake Tahoe attorney was arrested Aug. 30 on child porn charges.

Robert Huckaby, 65, faces one felony count of child pornography and a misdemeanor of molesting or annoying a child under the age of 18.

According to the El Dorado County Sheriff's Office, on July 28 a search warrant was served and images of child pornography were located.

Huckaby has posted the \$60,000 bail.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Bodie State Park worker contracts hantavirus

By Cathie Anderson, Sacramento Bee

Citrus Heights resident Curtis Fry, whose son contracted hantavirus at Bodie State Historic Park, said the California Department of Parks and Recreation is putting employees at risk by failing to provide adequate training or housing at the

popular Mono County ghost town.

“It’s just the Wild West out there,” Fry said. “This is the 21st century. They’re just letting these people risk their lives.”

His son Spencer was living and working at Bodie as a park aide in July when he came down with the rare and often-fatal lung infection. Spencer Fry spent 13 days in intensive care at Kaiser Permanente Roseville Medical Center. He permanently lost hearing in his left ear and cannot walk normally because of partial paralysis in his legs and feet, his father said.

Read the whole story

Fire burning out of control near Topaz



Nearly 1,000 acres of sage brush has burned near Topaz. Photo/BLM

Updated 9:15pm:

Douglas County's senior center in Minden has been set up as an evacuation site for residents of Topaz, Holbrook and Spring Valley who are affected by the Slinkard Fire burning south of Topaz Lake.

The 3,000-acre brush fire started Aug. 29 from a lightning strike. There is zero containment on Wednesday evening.

"The fire crossed Hwy 89 and moved east toward Topaz with the afternoon down canyon winds. Fire crews continue to put in dozer line along the eastern edge of Topaz and numerous engines are in place for structure protection. This evening's winds were not as strong as predicted and this is assisting fire crews in their efforts," authorities said.

Highway 395 is closed at the state line. Highway 89 is closed between highways 395 and 4. Highway 208 at Highway 395 is also closed.

High winds are affecting firefighting efforts.

Liberty Energy poles and wires are being destroyed. The companies says to "expect imminent power outage in the Coleville/Walker/Topaz area. Customers should plan for extended outage as access is restricted until fire is contained."

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Lake Valley captain falls from moving vehicle

By Kathryn Reed

A Lake Valley fire captain is lucky to be alive after falling out of a moving truck going at least 25 mph.

The firefighter was released from the hospital Aug. 30, but it is not known when he will be back to work.

The incident happened Aug. 27 on Highway 50 in the Camp Sacramento area. The captain had to be airlifted from the accident site.

"They went to a vehicle accident and were on their way back. They were going about 25 to 30 mph around a sweeping turn. The door flew open and out he went," Fire Chief Tim Alameda told *Lake Tahoe News*.

An internal investigation is going on with the help of CalFire. The state is also involved.

"CalOSHA has been notified of this incident and is currently investigating. This is all the information available at this time," Jeanne-Mairie Duval with CalOSHA told *Lake Tahoe News*.

The state agency has six months to issue any citations. Until findings are made the case is confidential.

The captain, whose name has not been released, was a passenger in the fire engine. It is the law that everyone in a fire vehicle must be wearing a seat belt. Clearly, this was not the case on Sunday. It is a serious violation not to do so. What kind of discipline the captain might face will be determined after the investigation is finished.

It is normal for buzzers to go off when the belt is not on, just like in a passenger vehicle. It is not known if those were tampered with or if the other two people in the fire truck knew the seat belt was not being worn.

Lake Valley is governed by a board of directors. Those elected officials were not formally made aware of this incident.

Gaming win declines in July

Stateline's gaming revenue dropped 14.76 percent in July, while statewide the numbers dropped 1.73 percent compared to 2016.

The Nevada Gaming Control Board on Wednesday said the state numbers went from \$1,015,558,545 to \$997,972,643.

Table games and sports books are being blamed for the drop. Slot volume increased.

North Shore casinos posted a 3.65 percent gain.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

SLT council open to future recreational pot sales

By Kathryn Reed

Recreational marijuana won't be for sale in South Lake Tahoe on Jan. 1, but it might be by next fall.

The City Council is taking a slow, deliberate approach to implementing Proposition 64, the 2016 statewide initiative legalizing recreational pot. Jurisdictions don't have to allow sales.

The city must allow the personal use (though it can be banned in public and at private businesses), the growing of six plants for personal use, and transportation. All of that becomes law Jan. 1.

On Aug. 29 the council heard 35 people voice their opinions about local sales of recreational pot during a nearly four-hour meeting that started at 5pm. Most were in favor of allowing pot shops in town.

This was a much different meeting than **last December** when the city trotted out a cadre of people who were totally against recreational marijuana and didn't allow for another point-of-view to be heard.

More than 57 percent of the voters said yes to Proposition 64. In El Dorado County the initiative barely failed with 50.07 percent saying no. However, 65.26 percent of the voters in South Lake Tahoe said yes to recreational marijuana. In district five of El Dorado County, which encompasses the entire South Shore west to parts of Pollock Pines, 62.4 percent approved the measure.

On Tuesday night, only people from the Drug Free Coalition and NAMI believed there should be a total moratorium. They echoed much of what Police Chief Brian Uhler said in his presentation – this isn't what the town needs, it's a gateway drug, it's horrible for kids, and that there are already enough drugs in town without adding a legal source.

They and others had buttons that said "Not Here Now!"

Those who spoke in favor of recreational marijuana shops agreed with the naysayers in that children must be protected. The state law prohibits the sale to those younger than 21 – just like alcohol.

Rules for how close an establishment can be near a school or day care center are outlined by the state. The minimum is 600

feet. The city could make it more rigid.

Education was urged – mostly for kids.

Ultimately the council agreed to impose a temporary moratorium on recreational pot shops. This is because the state doesn't have all of its rules in place. At the same time, if the city doesn't have any regulations on the books by 2018, it's possible the state could permit businesses in the city limits. That's why there is a need to take action, even if it's temporary.

The emergency measure will require a four-fifths vote by the council. This will likely be on the November agenda. It will be good for 45 days. It may be extended once for 10 months and 15 days.

Based on all the regulatory procedures, the city will have about four months to come up with an ordinance.

There are more than 20 types of licenses per state law that the city could allow – ranging from cultivation to sales to edibles. The city will have to determine what it wants to allow and then the rules surrounding them.

Because the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency governs land use in the Tahoe basin, it's likely that board will have a say. This is because amendments to the city's area and community plans will be required.

Councilman Jason Collin had several questions pertaining to whether TRPA would allow the changes since it is a federal organization and the U.S. government deems marijuana illegal. A precedent, though, may have already been set with the pot shop that opened earlier this month in Incline Village – which is in the basin.

The city is allowed to put an excise tax on recreational marijuana sales. However, the voters would have to agree to

this. If the city goes this route, it is likely to be November 2018 when that vote would be cast. The city could write the ordinance saying without the tax there would be no recreational pot sales in town.

Where that money would go could also be a component of the ordinance. Uhler is an advocate of using those dollars to resurrect the South Tahoe El Dorado Narcotics Enforcement Team. Education could also be a beneficiary.

The council at its Sept. 5 meeting will discuss further creating a subcommittee of the council to work with the community to devise an ordinance. Where the shops can be located, the number of retail outlets, criteria for ownership, taxes, allowable advertising, distance from schools and other issues need to be worked out.

It was pointed out by speakers that even if the city bans the sale of pot permanently, it doesn't mean people won't be using. People can bring it in from elsewhere. Plus, the medicinal marijuana outlet plans to keep operating.

For now, the city's neighbors are saying no to recreational pot.

Douglas County has already said it will not allow recreational marijuana sales.

El Dorado County CAO Don Ashton told *Lake Tahoe News*, "The county has not taken a position at this time. The board has established an ad hoc committee (of supervisors Sue Novasel and Mike Ranalli) to work on this issue. We are on schedule to have a decision by the full board prior to the end of the year." (Novasel attended a portion of Tuesday's council meeting.)

DeDe Cordell with Placer County told *Lake Tahoe News*, "The board's actions thus far have been to ban all commercial activities, regardless of recreational or medical."