

# **Driver accused of attempted murder in crash on Hwy. 50**

**By Cathy Locke, Sacramento Bee**

A man whose van landed in the American River after he allegedly drove into oncoming traffic on Highway 50, causing a head-on collision, is in El Dorado County Jail accused of attempted murder.

California Highway Patrol officers responded about 6:35pm Monday to a two-vehicle collision on Highway 50 near Randall Tract, in the White Hall area , with one vehicle submerged in the south fork of the American River.

Jacob Shay, 22, of Alameda was driving 2005 Freightliner Sprinter van westbound on Highway 50 when he allegedly intentionally crossed over double yellow lines, head-on into a 2017 GMC Yukon driven by a 29-year-old South Lake Tahoe woman, according to a CHP news release.

**Read the whole story**

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## **Report on controversial inquiry divides SLT council**



The South Lake Tahoe City Council is doing a lot of talking behind closed doors. Photo/LTN

**By Kathryn Reed**

It's as though the South Lake Tahoe City Council is unraveling one thread at a time, with the holes of incompetency and distrust exposing themselves a little bit more each time the electeds meet.

Tuesday was the latest episode of "Dysfunction at 6,200 feet." On the May 1 agenda was the MRG contract. This is the firm led by Mary Egan that was hired last fall to do a cultural assessment of the city. The contract, though, until this week had never been brought before the council in open session.

By the time the agenda item came up for discussion Councilman Jason Collin had left the meeting, citing a work obligation.

It was impossible for the remaining four to have an honest, open conversation because the contract was first OK'd in closed session and those discussions must remain confidential.

In reality what the council was being asked was to approve

paying an invoice. Even interim City Attorney Nira Doherty said it wasn't really a contract, instead she called it an agreement. The first agreement sent by Egan to Doherty stated the work would not exceed \$10,000, with another \$1,500 for expenses. The Nov. 16 amended agreement asked for another \$2,500 based on additional work.

Only the November agreement was in the council packet on Tuesday. Councilmembers Wendy David and Austin appeared flummoxed when Councilmembers Tom Davis and Brooke Laine knew about the October document and had a copy of it.

The first agreement said, "All participations (sic) will be told that their comments will be included in a summary written report that identifies important themes, and not include information attributable to any individual."

That report has never materialized. That is one argument Laine and Davis cited in not voting to authorize payment of the bill; they said the scope of work was not completed. David and Sass voted to approve payment of the original agreement. That motion failed on a 2-2 vote.

Ultimately it was decided that the mayor (David) and mayor pro tem (Davis) would work as a subcommittee of sorts to decide whether a written report should be provided by the firm as was stated would be done in the original agreement.

Doherty or someone from her law firm will provide the pros and cons of asking for the written report. Then the council as a whole will decide how to proceed.

Doherty told the council Egan's written report is likely to be a public document.

Depending on what is in the report, it's possible sections would be redacted based on it being a personnel issue.

Sass raised the specter of a lawsuit by former City Manager

Nancy Kerry if information were released. This is based on a threat made by her attorney Jacqueline Mittelstadt regarding Sass potentially breaking the city's settlement agreement with Kerry with his comments at an April council meeting. Neither side is supposed to disparage the other.

Still, the report would be based on information gathered before Kerry's separation with the city earlier this year, so it would not likely be protected by the settlement agreement. It could just fall under normal personnel privacy.

One of the glaring things about this agreement is that the council agreed to hire MRG in closed session under an agenda item that had nothing to do with Kerry or the city in general.

The Sept. 5, Sept. 19 and Oct. 3 closed session items each stated: "(b) Public employee appointment and employment pursuant to Government Code Section 54957(b)(1) Title: City Attorney." At the Sept. 19 meeting it was announced that Doherty had been hired as interim city attorney to replace Tom Watson. On Oct. 3 the contract was approved and Doherty began her job.

It was at her first meeting that she learned of the directive by the council in one of those September closed sessions to hire MRG. The council did this with Watson in the room; Doherty was not there.

Doherty told the council on May 1 she had issues with how all of this went down. After the meeting, though, she would not elaborate other than to tell *Lake Tahoe News*, "I think it is best practice to have contracts approved in open session."

She would not say why the topic was not brought out into the open until now.

Sass was mayor at the time and in a battle with Kerry because he wanted more power than what comes with the ceremonial position.

Watson in a farewell salvo was in cahoots with Sass to have MRG evaluate Kerry. However, it was sold to the other council members as a cultural assessment of the whole city and to study a succession plan. That didn't happen.

Per Kerry's contract she had the right to know when she was being evaluated or investigated, and there were protocols in place to inform her. That didn't happen and it's something she could have sued the city over. In June 2017 she received a glowing review by this very council that voted to oust her.

Ultimately the Egan debacle became a witch hunt that resulted in Kerry being shown the door.

It was on Jan. 23, after Egan's work was completed, that a closed session item pertaining to Kerry's evaluation was placed on the agenda.

After weeks of turmoil, the council agreed to pay Kerry the nine month's severance in her contract based on there being no actual cause for the separation.

Beyond taxpayers' dollars being used to pay Kerry, the city is now in talks to hire an interim city manager who will make about \$100 an hour.

Still, though, what was uncovered by Egan has never been disclosed to the public. Nor were the allegations alleged ever substantiated by anyone. The council received a verbal report from Egan, that's it.

There are public records that might shed light on what happened, but the city is withholding those documents as was illustrated in this **April 30 Lake Tahoe News** column.

On a related note, the council was to discuss **Laine's allegations** about Brown Act violations that were first brought to light on *Lake Tahoe News*. The council agreed to table that item until the **District Attorney's Office** completes its

investigation.

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# SLT voters may decide competing VHR initiatives

By Lake Tahoe News

South Lake Tahoe residents known as the Tahoe Neighborhoods Group on April 30 submitted 1,651 signatures on a petition to limit vacation home rentals in the city.

The group wants voters to decide in November if short-term rentals should only be allowed in the tourist core. VHRs would be eliminated elsewhere over a three-year period if voters so decide.

The signatures will be validated in the next 30 days by the El Dorado County Elections Department, with 1,036 needed to qualify.

If validation occurs, the South Lake Tahoe City Council would then have to adopt a resolution for the initiative to be on the ballot.

This is the second petition regarding VHRs that has been submitted that could end up before voters in the fall.

The other one is the work of real estate agents Jerry Williams and Craig Woodward, and VHR owner Melissa Wong.

In part their petition says, "Despite their importance to the city's economy, vacation home rentals can result in impacts to the community and the quality of life for permanent residents. As such, a balance must be struck between maintaining the

economic viability of vacation home rentals as an important element of the city's tourism industry, while at the same time placing certain restrictions on the establishment and management vacation home rentals in order to protect and preserve the quality of life in the city's residential neighborhoods."

Their goal is to continue to allow VHRs in neighborhoods, but with constraints. They also want to create a commission that would have some oversight on the industry.

Collateral in all of this is that the recreation center has been put on hold by staff. It's not something that has come before the council. That facility was to be paid for by transient occupancy tax. Voters in 2016 approved a measure to increase TOT by 2 percentage points. That additional revenue is dedicated solely for recreation.

The plan was to seek bonds to fund the facility, with the TOT used to pay the debt. Now with TOT collections in jeopardy if the number of VHRs is drastically reduced, the city's finances are no longer stable.

It's not just the rec center that will be impacted by less TOT, but all city services. TOT is one of the top three revenue sources for South Lake Tahoe. The other two are sales and property taxes. Those, too, would be affected by changes to VHR regulations.

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## **Lake Tahoe Humane Society in**

# rebuilding mode

The Lake Tahoe Humane Society has a completely new board, with the three who had been at the helm during the alleged embezzlement scheme by the former executive director having all resigned.

In their place are: Michael Dalton, president; Sandra DeLeon, vice president of governance and compliance; Chantale Hansen, vice president of operations; Mariel Berei, secretary; and Elizabeth Naylor, treasurer.

Per the bylaws, it was the former members who picked their successors.

The phrase the new board has embraced is – Restart, Rebuild, Restore, and Re-engage.

In a press release, Dalton said, “Unfortunately we were welcomed by a significant amount of debt that we will need to reduce through changes that we will need to make. The intended outcome of the new plan is to re-engage the community, through transparency clear and regular communications, new operating principles, checks and balances, and reducing the operating overhead, while increasing services to the Lake Tahoe community that have been compromised by the actions of the past executive director.”

Questions, recommendations, or concerns may be sent to [feedback@laketahoehumanesociety.org](mailto:feedback@laketahoehumanesociety.org).

Anyone wanting to be added to the volunteer list should download the form from the **website** and send it to: [volunteer@laketahoehumanesociety.org](mailto:volunteer@laketahoehumanesociety.org).

There are no longer regular office hours.

Food pick up will be available on Fridays from 9am-noon.



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## **Stateline casino win down, statewide numbers up**

Stateline casino revenue took a dive in March, with revenues down 12.84 percent compared to 2017. Revenues came in at \$14.57 million.

Statewide the numbers were better. The gaming win was up 3.3 percent to \$1.024 billion. This is the third straight month Nevada casinos have posted a win of more than \$1 billion.

Even with March's numbers, Stateline casinos are up 2.1 percent for the fiscal year.

*– Lake Tahoe News staff report*

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## **Bachelor's, teaching credential available at LTCC**

Lake Tahoe Community College and Brandman University are hosting free information sessions this week about a four-year degree option coming to the South Lake Tahoe campus this fall.

The two-year community college and the private nonprofit university will offer a bachelor's degree in liberal studies, leading to a multiple subject teaching credential. This bachelor's degree, which can be earned entirely on LTCC's South Shore campus in the Lisa Maloff University Center, will start Sept. 4.

California is in the midst of a teacher crisis, with thousands of K-12 teaching positions left unfilled. The state has an annual shortage of 40,000 fewer teaching credentials being issued than is required to meet its K-12 teaching needs. Locally, the Lake Tahoe Unified School District has hired nearly 80 teachers in the past five years to keep up with the demand.

There will be information sessions about the program in LTCC's Student Center on May 1 from noon-1pm and 5-6:30pm, and May 2 from 5:30-7pm. Information is also available by calling 916.789.6901, or email Amy Crown at [acrown@brandman.edu](mailto:acrown@brandman.edu) or Barbara Bartels at [bartels@brandman.edu](mailto:bartels@brandman.edu).

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## **Nev. transparency site graded B for accessibility**

**By Ramona Giwargis, Las Vegas Review-Journal**

When it comes to shedding light on state spending and making those details accessible to taxpayers, Nevada ranks near the top of the class.

A new study by the United States Public Interest Research Group Education Fund ranked transparency websites for all 50 states based on content and user-friendliness. Nevada was tied

for 10th nationally and scored a B for making its open government site informative and easy to navigate.

Officials from the Nevada Policy Research Institute, the think tank that publishes public employee pay and benefits, said the B grade is not a reflection of overall government transparency in the state.

**Read the whole story**

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# Summer driving going to be wallet drainer

**By Alex Veiga, AP**

Get ready for a little bit more pain at the pump this summer.

Crude oil prices are at the highest level in more than three years and expected to climb higher, pushing up gasoline prices along the way.

The U.S. daily national average for regular gasoline is now \$2.81 per gallon. That's up from about \$2.39 per gallon a year ago, according to Oil Price Information Service. And across the U.S., 13 percent of gas stations are charging \$3 per gallon or more, AAA said last week.

**Read the whole story**

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# Caltrans resuming work on Hwy. 50 in SLT

Work will resume this week on a two-mile stretch of Highway 50 in South Lake Tahoe from the Y to the Trout Creek Bridge.

The \$56.9 million Caltrans project includes building drainage systems to treat storm water runoff. The project also is widening the road to provide 6-foot shoulders for bike lanes in both directions, replacing traffic signals, rebuilding curbs, gutters and sidewalks, and improving the pavement cross slope.

The three-year project is scheduled to be completed in fall 2019.

Caltrans also is coordinating with the city to incorporate signal and operational improvements at Sierra Boulevard.

The second phase of the project this year will be from Winnemucca Avenue to Silver Dollar Avenue as well as repaving the Y intersection. Work is scheduled to begin today from Winnemucca Avenue working east. The work schedule through May will be from 6am-6pm.

The contractor is allowed to work around the clock Monday through Thursday and until 11am Friday before Memorial Day and after Labor Day and until 8am Friday between Memorial Day and Labor Day. At least one lane will be open to traffic in each direction at all times and two lanes of traffic will be open during the day from Memorial Day to Labor Day. No lane closures will be permitted on weekends or around major holidays.

Motorists may experience delays of up to 30 minutes traveling through construction zone during peak traffic when the highway is reduced to one lane in each direction.

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# STPUD budget includes sewer, water rate hikes

By Kathryn Reed

Water conservation comes with a double-edged sword – it saves the commodity and throws off budget projections.

For South Tahoe Public Utility District, conservation has led to a \$900,000 shortfall over 10 years based on the 2014 rate study. Still, the district is doing better than many of its California counterparts because only 20 percent of metered water rates are based on consumption. For districts that reversed the 20-80 percentages, they are in a financial conundrum.

The district is preparing to adopt its 2018-19 budget, which takes effect July 1. In the budget are a water rate increase of 5 percent and sewer rate hike of 6 percent. Those, too, would become effective in two months. This will be an additional \$15.04 per quarter for residential customers.

Quarterly rates for STPUD (\$276) remain the lowest in the basin, with the average being \$367.

These increases were part of the five-year rate increase plans. This is the last year for the increases as approved in the Proposition 218 notice. It is possible for the board to approve lower increases; the electeds just can't make them higher.

General Manager Richard Solbrig told *Lake Tahoe News* he expects the board this fall to begin another Proposition 218 process in order to plan for future rate hikes.

The district relies on sewer and water payments for about 70 percent of its \$40 million budget, with property taxes accounting for just more than 20 percent. Investment, grants and capacity fees make up the bulk of the remainder of revenues.

One thing the board is looking at is to allow for sewer transfers in order to foster work force housing construction. Today, sewer units stick with a property and cannot be traded, so to speak.

The budget calls for a 22 percent increase in capital projects compared to the current fiscal year. Many of these are one-time expenditures:

- Proposition 218 campaign – \$50,000
- Rate studies – \$60,000 (The last water one was five years ago, and about 15 years for sewer.)
- Sewer crossing assessment – \$100,000
- Groundwater management plan – \$150,000
- Well destructions – \$120,000
- South Y PCE analysis – \$310,000
- Wastewater treatment plant master plan – \$75,000.

The district has two years left to install water meters, with another 1,600 planned for this season.

A concern of the district's is that 10 percent of the water lines are still below capacity to fight a major fire.

"We need to have a conversation about price, water and fire," Solbrig said. "Until a few years ago fires were not the responsibility of water agencies. That has changed. Water companies are now named in lawsuits."

On the sewer side the district will be using cameras to better assess the system.

“If you wait until it collapses, the cost is 10 times more than if you rehabilitate it,” Solbrig told *LTN*.

The goal with the new technology is to avoid surprises like the **Tahoe Keys sewer collapse** and the Al Tahoe manhole issues in the last year.

The employees have a four-year contract that expires in June 2021. Of the 115 positions, about 100 are represented by a union. A consultant has been hired to do a salary study. Everyone will be receiving a 2.5 percent cost of living allowance, with a 5 percent step increase for many of the newer employees. CalPERS will cost the district an additional \$116,000 in the next year.

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**Notes:**

- STPUD public hearing on the budget is May 3 from 6-7:30pm.
- Board expected to vote on 2018-19 budget on May 17 at 2pm.
- Meetings are at 1275 Meadow Crest Drive, South Lake Tahoe.