

# Slide closes Emerald Bay; Caltrans issues warnings



Highway 89 around Emerald Bay will be closed for next few days.

Photo/Caltrans

A snowslide on Wednesday and a storm that should bring additional snowfall to the area over the next few days prompted Caltrans to close Highway 89 around Emerald Bay.

The March 21 slide dumped snow as high as 15 feet that stretched 160 feet.

Rain in the Lake Tahoe area is expected to turn to snow on Thursday. Light snow is expected at pass levels through Thursday morning, with heavy snow possible beginning Thursday afternoon.

A colder system will drop in Friday night with heavier snow at lower elevations.

The biggest travel impacts for mountain travelers will likely be Friday night, according to the National Weather Service's Sacramento office.

The storm is expected to continue into Saturday and bring up

to 18 inches of snow to Echo Summit. Donner and Echo summits are expected to be severely impacted by this storm. Gusty winds are also are expected with this storm, possibly creating white-out conditions.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

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## **S. Tahoe in search of city manager, city attorney**

**By Kathryn Reed**

South Lake Tahoe is looking for at least one recruiting firm to search for city attorney and city manager candidates.

While the issue of the city attorney was on the March 20 agenda, both positions were discussed at the meeting. This is just another violation of the Brown Act – talking about a non-agendized item.

The council realizes it needs a bit of a refresher or education in the state's open meeting law. Councilmember Tom Davis requested someone be brought in to explain the rules, which others were in support of.

Acting City Manager Jeff Meston told the council he had already sent out requests to search firms, with the hope something could be brought to the council in the next month or so.

“I think it is my job to anticipate what you want,” Meston said Tuesday.

However, the council at no time in open session discussed

wanting him to do this. Nor was it announced after a closed session that this was the route the council wanted to go down.

The selection process could take months. What the council hasn't discussed is if they want to leave an acting manager in place during this process or bring in someone else in on an interim basis who doesn't already have a full-time job.

Meston envisions three groups – professional, City Council, and community panels – interviewing city manager candidates.

As for the top legal position, interim City Attorney Nira Doherty has given her notice, wanting to be out in the summer. Her firm will continue to work for the city at a rate not to exceed \$33,000 a month.

If the need for legal services exceeds that amount, Doherty said her firm “would eat those costs.”

Doherty told the council that financially she believes a firm like hers is more efficient, but that this city “would be well served by an in-house city attorney.”

There was no real discussion by the electeds as to the route to take – in house, or an outside firm to be hired.

It was just assumed that a recruiting firm needs to be hired, and then the unanimous vote was taken.

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## **Rain brings flooding concerns in Tahoe, Truckee**



South Lake Tahoe crews assess the Whole Foods project site on March 21.  
Photo/LTN

### **By Lake Tahoe News**

The National Weather Service in Reno has issued a flood warning for the greater Lake Tahoe area, including South Lake Tahoe, Truckee, Stateline and Incline Village. The warning is in effect through late Thursday.

“Right now the city is looking good. We have cut snow berms in known zones and have a team clearing drains and pipe in low areas. We do not anticipate river or creek flooding, just the normal low zones and micro areas,” Jim Marino, South Lake Tahoe deputy public works director, told *Lake Tahoe News*.

According to the Weather Service, “A warm and wet winter storm with a deep tap of sub-tropical moisture will bring moderate to heavy rain to areas below 7,500 feet tonight and early Thursday. The snow levels fall to 7,000 feet Thursday, but the moderate to heavy rain continues into Thursday evening. Rainfall amounts of up to 3 inches are possible below 7,000 feet around the Tahoe basin.”

The added problem is this is rain on snow, which means all that snow is being turned into water. As this happens, creeks, rivers and streams start to rise even faster.

Jason Burke, the storm water manager for the city, and another official were at the Whole Foods site at Highway 50 and Ski Run Boulevard the morning of March 21. Burke told *LTN* everything there is holding up, with the bulk of the water being clear – which is a good thing.

City officials will be talking to Tahoe Regional Planning Agency officials and other regulatory agencies to brief them on how things are working.

Infrastructure was put in last summer/fall in this area to help with what is a known area for flooding. A significant part of the project is environmental improvements.

City crews will also be out clearing drains and pipes to ensure water flows where it should.

In low lying areas and places with poor drainage sump pumps are at work.

**Sand bags are available** for residents.

The rain is expected to turn to snow later on Wednesday, with a winter storm warning issued from 5pm March 21 through 5am Friday. The Weather Service says 2 to 3 feet could fall above 7,500 feet, with localized amounts up to 4 feet near the Sierra Crest.

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## **Chateau project on track to be completed**

**By Kathryn Reed**

In less than four years it's possible the much maligned

Chateau project in South Lake Tahoe will be completely built out with a hotel that includes a rooftop pool, condos that come with another pool, a high-end bowling alley where the convention center once was planned, outdoor movie theater showing family-friendly films, restaurants and retail.

Developers for the site were before the South Lake Tahoe City Council on Tuesday requesting 15,770 square feet of commercial floor area to help bring the project to fruition. After much discussion, the council agreed to set aside the CFA for the project with the caveat that if the project isn't developed, the CFA returns to the city.

CFA is something the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency came up with years ago as a way to curtail development. Instead these commodities just escalate the price of a project.

Midkiff and Associates, the local planners representing the developers, contend the CFA was part of earlier deals and that there should be no charge today because it was already promised for this project. While the city had no proof one way or the other, staff and electeds relied on what was presented and gave the CFA to the project.

Now being called the Resort at Tahoe, the plan is for a \$500 million infusion of cash into South Lake Tahoe. The goal is to have a second village on the other side of Highway 50 near the state line.

Developers say the project will bring in \$13 million a year in transient occupancy tax and \$1.4 million in sales tax. The hotel tax is based on 14 percent TOT on hotel rooms that could go for \$550 a night, a one-bedroom condo for \$850/night and possibly \$2,500/night for a four-bedroom condo. They are expecting to be priced competitively with neighboring Zalanta.

"The project is ready to start the first phase this summer. We are intending to submit to design review to staff in the next week or two," Gary Midkiff with Midkiff and Associates told

the council March 20. This would be 16 units above the current retail.

According to the developer, the preliminary parking analysis calls for there to be enough parking already planned to accommodate what they want to do.

This is surprising considering when the project was first approved the plan was to use casino parking lots to handle overflow from the site. It's a much different world today with the Stateline casinos charging for parking at various times and no longer wanting non-patrons leaving their vehicles there.

Planning consultant Lyn Barnett was at the meeting representing neighboring Stardust hotel. He said that property has about 50 vehicles a year towed because they've parked there illegally. He is worried parking will just get worse with more development.

"Until there is an application and some type of analysis of the application, it's hard to know the impact on neighbors in the area," Barnett said.

That's one of the unusual things about what transpired on Tuesday. This item was brought to the council just days after being requested by the planner and there was no application. This is practically unheard of in the planning world, especially in the Lake Tahoe Basin.

Barnett was with the TRPA as a planner when the two amendments were made to the operating agreement for the Chateau project.

"We have concerns about the 1998 document even being valid. I think it's stale. We have a new Regional Plan, a new city General Plan, we have a community plan that replaces an area plan," Barnett said. "There should be a scoping for an environmental document if there is a third addendum."

The developers believe because they have a valid building permit they can go forward without further review even though changes are being made to the project.

When the project was first approved it was to include two hotels, a convention center, retail and open space. The city was going to be the operator of the center and take care of the common areas. Since the original developer filed for bankruptcy the city no longer has a financial stake other than collecting taxes.

But the city does have the responsibility to ensure the project conforms to approved permits, to ensure further analysis is not required, and to insist financing is in place before construction permits are issued.

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## **Free sand bags available in Tahoe-Truckee**

With heavy rain and snow in the forecast for Wednesday and Thursday, South Lake Tahoe and Truckee officials are reminding residents where they can get sand bags.

The snow level is expected to be at 7,500 feet and above.

In South Lake Tahoe bags are available at the city's public works yard at 1160 Rufus Allen Blvd. as well as fire station No. 3 located at 2101 Lake Tahoe Blvd.

To pick up sand bags, proceed through the gate at 1160 Rufus Allen Blvd. and drive to the back of the lot. At the back of the lot is a large sand mound, shovels and bags. Residents fill their own bags and transport back to their own



residence.

Truckee provides self-service sand bag stations after 5pm at Truckee Fire Protection District Station No. 92 at 11473 Donner Pass Road and at the U.S. Forest Service parking lot at 10811 Stockrest Springs Road off Donner Pass Road.

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# **Nev. woman sues, fears missing horse could be slaughtered**

**By Scott Sonner, AP**

A Nevada woman who fears her missing horse could end up at the slaughterhouse has joined a lawsuit challenging state plans to transfer ownership of thousands of free-roaming mustangs to private hands

Lawyers for the California-based American Wild Horse Campaign and Cynthia Ashe of Silver Springs filed the lawsuit Monday in state court in Carson City seeking an injunction to block what they say would be “a giveaway of a valuable and cherished Nevada asset.”

The lawsuit accuses Nevada’s Department of Agriculture of breaching a contract that called for the wild horse group to manage the nearly 3,000 mustangs in the Virginia Range east and south of Reno through 2020 in a humane manner under a joint agreement emphasizing fertility control.

**Read the whole story**

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# SLT council pushes pot discussion back 1 week

By Kathryn Reed

The recreational marijuana item on Tuesday's South Lake Tahoe City Council agenda was a bit of a cluster.

It was initially on the agenda as one sentence without any supporting material. Two presentations were added to the city's website on March 20, however the council and public had no opportunity to review the documents.

One presentation is from the Development Services Department. It includes information from public safety.

The other document that arrived after the meeting started included 95 questions the council members were expected to answer without being given time to review them.

Councilmember Brooke Laine at the start of Tuesday's meeting questioned how this item ever got on the agenda without supporting material. The agenda item said possible action, aka a vote, could be taken. But legally that could not have happened based on the public not being given enough information to know what was being voted on. Direction would have been possible.

Interim City Attorney Nira Doherty defended how it was agendaized, but said it was highly unusual.

At 3:20pm, when it came time for the item to be discussed, acting City Manager Jeff Meston said it could take three hours to hear the item. He enlightened everyone about all the questions that needed to be answered.

Councilmember Jason Collin suggested the questions be sent to the electeds through something like Survey Monkey so they could be answered and collated. However, doing so might be deemed a serial meeting and would therefore be a violation of the Brown Act.

The council decided to move the item to March 27 at 4pm; it is designed to be the only issue that will be on the agenda that day.

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## **SLT's VHR fines redefining town's image**

**By Carolyn Said, San Francisco Chronicle**

The knock on the front door of the South Lake Tahoe vacation rental was a surprise.

It was the first family getaway together for Gus Pries and his extended family. With six adults, four children ranging from 3 months to 5 years old, suitcases, snow gear and groceries, the San Jose residents took three cars for their Presidents Day weekend trip.

A police officer said they were receiving a \$1,000 ticket for having one too many cars on site, and the property's owner would be fined an additional \$1,000. The family members' explanation that it was just temporary and they planned to move the third car fell on deaf ears, Pries said.

"It's preposterous and unfair," said Pries, a San Jose dentist. "I've never been treated so poorly as a tourist. It's not like we were having a big party or the 3-year-olds were

doing a beer bong.”

**Read the whole story**

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## **4 feet of Sierra snow possible this week**

**By Benjy Egel, Sacramento Bee**

An atmospheric river is predicted to dump more rain on Southern California and the Central Coast than any other storm this year, and is expected to drop up to 4 feet of snow in the Sierra Nevada and 2 inches of rain in Sacramento before dissipating over the weekend.

The National Weather Service expects a weak preliminary storm to hit Tuesday afternoon. Light rain and snow above 5,000-6,000 feet elevation is expected before a short break Wednesday morning, followed by a second system’s arrival that afternoon.

**Read the whole story**

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## **Bodies found at Fallen Leaf Lake identified**

Officials have positively identified the two bodies found last year in Fallen Leaf Lake. One had been there since 2004, the

other since 2001.

The body of Cynthia Ellis, aka Cynthia Prehoda, of South Lake Tahoe was retrieved Aug. 29, 2017.

Her son, David Ward, had drowned at this South Shore lake in 1996. Five years later his 71-year-old mother left a suicide note saying she was "going to join her son," according to the *Reno Gazette-Journal*.

A forensic anthropologist was unable to determine a cause of death.

Two months later the crew from **Bruce's Legacy** found the body of 74-year-old Michael Whalen.

Whalen went missing in 2004 after traveling to the Lake Tahoe area from Florida. He arrived on the South Shore in his van carrying a brown, wood colored canoe. Whalen's van was located near Fallen Leaf Lake in late 2004. The whereabouts of his canoe are unknown.

The small anchor and rope around Whalen's legs were consistent with an anchor used for a canoe, according to El Dorado County sheriff's detectives.

His cause of death remains unknown. There was no evidence of foul play.

Anyone with information on Whalen, the location of his canoe, or any canoe found at Fallen Leaf Lake in 2004 or 2005 is asked to call El Dorado County sheriff's Detective Rich Horn at 530.642.4729 or Detective Damian Frisby at 530.573.3022.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*