

Letter: Douglas Rotary gives back at B&B

To the community,

As an all-volunteer, nonprofit organization, Bread & Broth greatly values the many partnerships that have developed over the 28 years that it has been feeding the needy in the Lake Tahoe South Shore community. These partnerships involve volunteering, donating food and funds and sponsoring Monday Adopt A Day of Nourishment dinners.

Beginning in August, the Douglas Rotary Club began hosting the first of five Adopt A Days and on Oct. 2, hosted its second meal. Over the course of the five sponsorships, the Rotary Club will be helping B&B to feed over 500 meals to individuals who attend B&B's Monday meal at St. Theresa Grace Hall. The generosity of the Rotary Club members and their commitment to bettering the lives of food insecure members of our community is very much appreciated and lauded by B&B.

Representing the Rotary Club members at the dinner were Randy Butler,

Ellen Dauscher, Penny Echan, Keith Endlich and George Sariego. According to B&B volunteer, Gail Clair, they were a joy to work with. "Working at Bread & Broth was so inspirational and gratifying," wrote Dauscher. "It serves a great need in our community. We would all be happy to help again anytime.

Carol Gerard, Bread & Broth

Opinion: The idea of 'Main Street' in America

By Miles Orvell

In the United States, Main Street has always been two things—a place and an idea. As both, Main Street has embodied the contradictions of the country itself.

It is the self-consciousness of the idea of Main Street – from its origins in a Nathaniel Hawthorne sketch of New England, to Walt Disney's construction of a Main Street USA, to the establishment of ersatz Main Streets in today's urban malls—that makes it so essentially American. Main Street has been used in myriad ways to describe many different things—from the crushing power of convention to the thrill of new entertainment, from the small town to new big city neighborhoods.

Main Street's meaning could change quickly. In the 1920s, to invoke Main Street was to call up an image of the dullness of provincial life. By the 1930s, Main Street represented the bedrock of America's embattled democracy. For decades, Main Street stood for the local; today it's an importable model of planning and development that can be set up almost anywhere.

Main Street bears double political meanings that in turn raise complicated questions about whether the United States lives up to its ideals.

As public space, the American Main Street has always represented an ideal of community, where persons from different surrounding neighborhoods and social classes come together as rough equals. But Main Street also has a history of discriminatory practice going back more than a hundred years. Northern "sundown towns" in the late 19th century and first half of the 20th century policed their Main Streets by

warning and expelling anyone who didn't "belong" after the sun went down. And historically Main Street usually has been defined by the ruling class of the area, with outsiders—by class, ethnicity, religion, color—not particularly welcome.

So even as we celebrate the ideal of Main Street as a space of democratic equality, we should remember—and rue—the reality.

Part of the reality is this: America's small towns and their Main Streets have died a thousand deaths, but Main Streets also live on and multiply now as never before, as we recreate them in wealthy suburbs and big cities. Over the past 20 years, America has seen the growth of ersatz Main Streets, facsimiles of the real thing, in private shopping places everywhere.

As the malls of America have become deserted, those shopping centers still clinging to life have strived to emulate the amenities of what they had rendered obsolete: Main Street. They have installed benches, street lamps, grassy areas, and even band stands, providing the feel of public space in the open air, the feel of a community. These facsimiles of Main Street, creations of commercial landscape architects, can be more successful than actual Main Streets, since the national retail brands in ersatz Main Street attract shoppers in the massive numbers needed to make a public space seem genuinely "public."

If we prefer the authentic to the ersatz, then this new Main Street poses a challenge to the original article. What's the best response to such a challenge? To do what the ersatz Main Street can't: provide the individualized shops and restaurants that you won't find in the ersatz space. The real Main Street also must work harder to draw in people from outside the community, with street fairs and festivals, art galleries, craft shops, and other one-of-a-kind attractions.

Meanwhile, the ersatz Main Street carries its own double

meaning: it represents a corporate usurpation of the idea of Main Street—and also an expansion of the idea. Indeed, since the Great Recession of 2008 and 2009, Main Street has taken on a broader meaning and wider constituency than it ever before possessed. It is not just small businesses that Main Street represents. The phrase has become a substitute for what we all share, the American commons. We are either Main Street or its opposite, Wall Street. In this polarized time, we belong to one pole or the other.

One paradox is that the public space of Main Street, regulated spaces that must be open to all, may be harder to police than the ersatz Main Streets, which are private spaces where certain standards of decorum can be swiftly enforced. We don't usually notice the limitations on our behavior in private spaces, but they exist, often in a sign posted as you enter the space.

Is it possible that the private space of the ersatz Main Street, which welcomes shoppers of all religions and colors, is a more hospitable space than the public space of Main Street? Is the private Main Street more tolerant of difference (as long as you keep your shirt on and wear shoes) than the public space of warring statues and demonstrators armed with torches or guns, where intimidation can be masked as self-defense? If this is the case, it argues for the democracy of the marketplace, which embraces anyone, regardless of creed or color, who has the money to make a purchase.

Today, Main Street faces what some see as an existential threat: e-commerce, which has made any physical shopping space increasingly a luxury. The real Main Street has a future in this digitally dominated marketplace—it is not competing with e-commerce—but the ersatz Main Streets of malls may have more to worry about. Will they evolve as hybrid showrooms where consumers can touch the merchandise before buying it cheaper online? Or as places to pick up merchandise ordered in advance and delivered locally? Or will e-commerce fall victim to its

own success and be defeated by Main Street—the infinity of choices and merchandise reviews consuming so much of the shopper’s time that it’s simpler to just go shopping in a store with limited, pre-selected, merchandise?

If Main Street means anything today, it signifies an idealized space where American society can practice its highest values, which include civility, tolerance, and yes, commerce. And Main Street’s endurance, as an idea, demonstrates the authority of myth to nurture a sense of community, even in a society as fragmented as ours.

Miles Orvell is professor of English and American Studies at Temple University and the author of “The Real Thing: Imitation and Authenticity in American Culture, 1880-1940” (John Hope Franklin Prize); “The Death and Life of Main Street: Small Towns in American Memory, Space, and Community” (Zocalo Public Square Book Prize Finalist. He wrote What It Means to Be American, a project of the Smithsonian and Zócalo Public Square.

Opinion: SLT being illogical about VHR rules

By Jim Morris

I hate to waste my time, but I cannot let the erroneous propaganda put out by the emperor of City Hall go unrebutted. The city will not let go of this “nuisance” problem as it diverts focus on the dismal road conditions that the city has neglected for years. Also, city management has totally failed to provide a reliable snow removal system as we experienced last winter.

Austin Sass couldn't hold a private enterprise job in this town, but is lecturing our real estate and VHR community on how to make a living after all of the unconstitutional actions taken by this council. Sass's musings will bite the city in the future as he is feeding information regarding lawsuit material "taking of property rights."



Jim Morris

Get ready city of South Lake Tahoe as Mr. Sass nor Nancy Kerry is not keeping up with state decisions in state and appeals courts. City, check out the Aug. 22, 2017, ruling in Austin, Texas, which states that short term renting does not change a property from residential to commercial as is implied by the special use conditions recently enacted by the city.

Mr. Sass championed the new requirement that a property owner cannot get a VHR permit if his property is within 150 feet of an existing VHR. He then talks about destroying the lives of 1,350 families who "did nothing wrong." I ask the question, what wrong did the unfortunate owner who can't rent because of the geography of an adjacent rental, or an arbitrary cap? What wrong did they do?

The city manager, council, and police chief were asked the question about whether a concentration of VHRs was more impactful than a dispersion. They could and would not answer because they failed to evaluate the complaint and citation information at their disposal.

The mayor asked for patience for the sake of our community and to give this new compromise a chance. What compromise? I see

no concession by the biased city manager and mayor in the imposition of:

1. 150-foot barrier to obtain a VHR permit.
2. Artificial cap with no objective criteria.
3. Hiring three new compliance officers when there is not enough work for the one they have now. (Thirty-nine verified VHR violations for noise, parking, and trash through the busiest summer Lake Tahoe has seen in years)
4. Raising fees to defraud permit holders and violating the VHR ordinance by collecting more revenue than needed to administer the ordinance.

The city failed to answer pertinent questions regarding metrics involved in determining when “enough regulation is enough,” but this group of “rulers” has no appetite for restricting their rule-making, even though the mayor admits that the city saw an “improvement” after the last ordinance change 18 months ago. We don’t know how he comes to that conclusion as the city has admitted their mistake in exaggerating the VHR complaints by 400 percent and passed that on to the creators of the much heralded “socio-economic” study.

We expected more from the two new council members as we didn’t think they would succumb to the biased pressure as clearly evidenced by Nancy Kerry’s evasion of pertinent questions on how she constructed the 27 pages of changes to the VHR ordinance.

Jim Morris is a 30-year resident and president of Lake Tahoe Accommodations, a company producing 10 percent of the total VHR transient occupancy taxes to the city and managing 80 city properties without a VHR fine in 14 years.

Editorial: Will Calif. ever pay off its debt?

Publisher's note: *This editorial is from the Sept. 27, 2017, Orange County Register.*

Last month, we questioned whether Congress would ever get serious about paying down the national debt. Now we pose a similar question of our state elected officials.

There have been some successes, like the adoption of some much-needed, albeit modest, pension reform measures in 2012, and nearly eliminating the “wall of debt,” as Gov. Jerry Brown described a number of short-term liabilities that once totaled nearly \$35 billion. But even these efforts have put only a small dent in the state’s total debt.

This point was crystallized by a new study from financial watchdog group Truth in Accounting, which just released its annual “Financial State of the States” report. The study found that “41 states do not have enough money to pay all of their bills, and, in total, the states have racked up over \$1.5 trillion dollars in unfunded state debt.”

Not surprisingly, the Golden State did not fare well in the analysis, ranking 43rd in terms of debt per taxpayer, and comprising one of nine states to earn an “F” grade.

Read the whole story

Letter: Elks give time, money to B&B

To the community,

Working the serving line at Bread & Broth's Monday meal on Sept. 25 were members of the Tahoe Douglas Elk Lodge No. 2670. J.J. Clause, Steve Kurek, Jim Plamenig and Gary Wendt came prepared to represent their fellow Elk Lodge members at the organization's Adopt of Day of Nourishment.

This enthusiastic group did a fine job hosting the 94 dinner guests who arrived at St. Theresa Grace Hall for the evening's meal.

"So gratifying to see the hungry being fed," said Steve Kurek. "We feel lucky to be able to help."

B&B is so very fortunate to have the Elk's organization be so involved in partnering with us to help ease hunger in the Lake Tahoe South Shore community. For the past several years, the Elks have been hosting three or four adopt a days annually, which means that they are providing meals to 300-350 people in need yearly through B&B's Monday meal sponsorship program.

In addition to the Monday meal, B&B also provides soup and a simple entrée at Lake Tahoe Community Presbyterian Church on Fridays, weekend food for LTUSD students during the school year and a Summer B&B 4 Kids food program thanks to a very generous donation dedicated to feeding children throughout the summer.

All of these programs which support the food insecure are only possible due to B&B's generous sponsors and donors who so generously give of their time and monetary donations. Thank you to all of the members of the Tahoe Douglas Elk Lodge No. 2670 who help us in our mission to ease hunger in our

community.

Carol Gerard, Bread & Broth

Opinion: Good vegan, bad vegan

By Jane E. Brody, New York Times

I have no argument with people who adopt a vegetarian or vegan diet for health, religious, environmental or ethical reasons. But I object vehemently to proselytizers who distort science or the support for dietary advice offered to the more than 90 percent of us who choose to consume animal foods, including poultry and red meat, in reasonable amounts.

Such is the case with a recently released Netflix documentary called “What the Health” that several well-meaning, health-conscious young friends have urged me to watch. And I did try, until I became so infuriated by misstatements – like eating an egg a day is as bad as smoking five cigarettes, or that a daily serving of processed meat raises the risk of diabetes 51 percent – that I had to quit for the sake of my health. While the film may have laudable goals, getting the science wrong simply confuses the issues and infuriates those who might otherwise be supportive.

Read the whole story

Opinion: Trump's staff could save him from himself

By Drew Mendelson

The stupefying deeds of the Trump White House are passing in such a blur these days that it is hard to parse the incompetence. From policies foreign and domestic that churn without solidifying, to presidential tweets that seem the products of insult comedians, to an obsession with fixing blame before even knowing results, this seems more a Three Stooges comedy than a functional administration.

One piece that is driving me absolutely nuts is the complete lack of any coherent White House staff structure. I spent nearly five years as a deputy communications director on the staff of California Republican Gov. Gray Davis. Despite turmoil, I happen to think we did pretty well in the middle of a political shooting gallery.

Whatever our administration's faults, we had a well-ordered staff structure of the sort that a governor or a president needs. The required elements include a specific set of duties for everybody, an efficient process for analyzing and guiding legislation, smooth information dissemination, a polished rapid response system, and a smooth flow of staff internal communication.

Davis was accessible to all of us on staff. But you knew damn well you'd better not skip steps in moving a piece of the agenda. Any competent high-level elected official's staff works the same way. I've experienced as much working for others.

Trump's staff, by contrast, has no visible structure that I can discern. On Davis's team we had a chief of staff, Lynn Schenk, who was tough, decisive, and stood just below the

governor in the command structure. She was absolutely in charge as far as we were concerned.

If she issued a directive, it was as if it came from Gov. Davis himself. We could discuss it, even offer suggestions. But when the decision was made, we carried it out to the letter. It was not just that people had job titles; Trump's staff have titles. It was that each of us was an expert in her or his field, and the staff stayed within its assigned parameters. The communications department, where I worked, dealt with press relations, speechwriting, op-ed writing, and public relations—period. I was not assigned unexpectedly to vet potential judicial appointments, or construct an economic policy.

Nor did we get assignments because we were cronies of the governor. Yeah, we respected him; we worked there because we believed in his philosophy of governing. We were trusted because we did our jobs, not necessarily because we were friends.

Harry Truman supposedly said, "If you want a friend in Washington, get a dog." We weren't the governor's or the chief of staff's friends. But we were collegial. So, despite the insanity of the energy crisis of 2000-2001, and the subsequent recall election, we accomplished a lot.

As to leaking—we didn't. Why would we? Leaks were unauthorized information going out before it should be released. All that would do would be to sow seeds of disruption for our policies. My boss, the communications director, who had a long history as a news reporter, said that on his first day at the governor's office he found himself with information on so many policies that he was in agony over not being able to write about them. He joked that he spent his whole first week just leaking stories to himself.

What did we do then in emergencies? For most, we had prep

already in place. Part of my job was to run our rapid response system. That didn't mean having a line of bull ready to release. It meant learning of dangers before the fact and preparing. I ran a call every morning with staff statewide to learn about potential issues. We then informed appropriate responders and prepared an action plan.

Sometimes we were slow off the mark, because complex issues, even when learned about early, take time to respond to. For this we got accused of being slow or too careful. But we were thorough, consulted subject experts, and looked for the best plan. The announcement of our actions always followed our consideration. We didn't rant first and act later, if at all.

And we didn't act in secret or hide the ball. We didn't act vindictively. You can't govern that way. At least not for long. Sadly, Davis got tagged with being reluctant to act and got thrown out for it in the recall. In truth, he and the rest of us were simply careful and deliberate.

Trump's operation (I hesitate to call it a staff), appears to be a collection of yes men and women, who in his presence answer to him only, but who, away from Trump, conduct their business as if they were ministers without portfolio, doing and saying as they please until they get caught at it. You are Trump's trusted dog's body until he tires of you or needs a patsy, then off with your head.

One thing striking to people who work in an office environment is how various officials, including the short-lived Anthony Scaramucci, got a license for direct access to Trump. In any sane organization, there is a chief of staff who is the gatekeeper to all. Nobody (absolutely nobody) should have such special access. Such arrangements smack of mafia dons giving access to a secret consiglieri. Who else has secret access? Well, it's a secret, so we don't know.

I have long thought that Trump to be mentally unstable. His

paranoid Twitter rants, his attraction to conspiracy theories, his attachment to unsavory characters with no business in politics, his love-hate affiliation with Vladimir Putin, his sudden shifts of temper against China and NATO and many other allies, his belief (real or purported) that all news and news sources are fake, all point to mental instability.

What to do in this case? There is, of course the complicated process of impeachment. But if the president is incapacitated, the 25th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution provides a well-defined replacement structure, empowering the vice president and the majority of cabinet or congressional leaders to remove the president. No impeachment needed.

Angry tweets may be red meat to your base. But they mainly signal turmoil. A leader can only be as effective as the information he/she receives. And that comes from a trusted and well-ordered staff that works as a team, especially in troubled times.

Drew Mendelson is a Sacramento-based political speechwriter and novelist.

Letter: Explaining SLT's money for roads

To the community,

I am writing this letter to the editor in response to the *Lake Tahoe News* editorial publicized Oct. 2, 2017.



Jim Marino

First and foremost, I am writing this letter outside of my position of assistant director of Public Works of the city of South Lake Tahoe. I have always trusted and admired the straightforwardness and factual information provided in your articles/editorials, and will continue to do so.

The information you provided in your editorial against Measure C was factual though perhaps unintentionally misleading. Please allow me the opportunity to provide my perspective.

1. *"When looking at the city's budget for this fiscal year, which began Sunday, there are zero dollars for roads."* This is typical. The city's annual roadway rehabilitation appropriation is usually accomplished at mid-year budget adoption.

2. *"Still, from 1995 to today the city has spent \$11,792,473 on pavement rehabilitation. That is an average of \$512,716 in each of the last 23 years."* The amounts are correct, though we should associate the appropriation toward the total value of the asset. We currently value the roadway network as is at roughly \$119 million to \$127 million. So an \$11 million investment over a recorded 23-year period represents less than 11 percent of total asset value that has been maintained over a span of 23 years. As roadways age and if not maintained, the deterioration increases rapidly after a certain point. In most cases, a roadway that has not received adequate preventative maintenance will begin to deteriorate three times faster after 15 years of life.

This rapid deterioration curve is what we are experiencing now and is occurring over roughly 62 percent of the roadway network.

3. *“That is an average of \$512,716.22 per year in each of the last 23 years.”* While the average of \$512,716 is accurate, it is a bit misleading as it clearly does not define an amount appropriated by year. Each fiscal year had varying appropriation amounts, thus dictating the rehabilitation productivity by year. Furthermore, from 2012 to 2017 the City’s General Fund contribution was \$6,215,942, indicating that 52 percent of the entire appropriation over the 23-year period has occurred during the last five years. From 2012–2017 the city averaged \$1,243,188 toward roadway rehabilitation. As reported many times to City Council and the public, approximately \$2.5 million to \$2.9 million is required annually to slow the deterioration curve and begin the process of stabilizing the network. Over time, this annual funding will raise the overall network condition. Even though the last five years of funding averaged \$1,243,188, it represents only 42 percent of what is actually required annually to stop the network decline.

4. *“Measure C on the November ballot is projected to bring in \$2.5 million annually. The proposal would have money going toward complete streets – meaning more than an overlay. It would include curbs, gutters and striping for bike lanes where appropriate.”* Would Measure C funds be utilized to fund complete streets? Possibly, but not likely. Approximately 62 percent of the roadway network is in serious decline. Most of the 62 percent comprises of collector and residential class roadways. Funds would go straight to correcting this category of the network, with the premise being to rehabilitate the roadways in poor condition to gain the most productive increase in network condition over the shortest time period possible. What this means is most, if not all, of the funds would go to directly working within the asphalt travel way.

All of the city's complete streets projects to date have been funded primarily through state and federal transportation grants. Ski Run Boulevard, Al Tahoe Boulevard, Pioneer Trail from Highway 50 to Larch; were all built with very minimal General Fund dollars (typically 11 percent of project). The city's next project; Sierra Boulevard is at this time 100 percent funded through outside fund sources.

Thank you for allowing me to provide some clarification to the figures provided within your editorial. I appreciate and understand your opinion.

Sincerely,

Jim Marino

Opinion: GOP's latest assault on public lands

By Wes Siler, Outside

Here's the weekly reminder that the GOP is gunning for our land: a new bill introduced to Congress seeks to remove federal oversight of oil and gas drilling on public land, thereby allowing that industry to circumvent environmental regulations. It could also limit public access to that public land. The Federal Land Freedom Act does for freedom on federal lands what the Patriot Act does for patriotism.

To recap, the Republican party is conducting a war against our valuable public lands. Under the guise of states' rights, limited government, and energy independence, they're attempting to sell off public lands for energy

development in a move that would actually reduce state revenue, irrevocably destroy our environment, and lock the public out of the places where we recreate.

Read the whole story

Opinion: A case against VHR limits

Publisher's note: This letter was read at the Oct. 3, 2017, South Lake Tahoe City Council meeting by Sharon Kerrigan Gomez, executive vice president of the South Tahoe Association of Realtors.

Good morning, Mayor Sass, esteemed members of the council and city staff. My name is Sharon Kerrigan and I represent the board of directors and more than 330 Realtor members of the South Tahoe Association of Realtors.

We are generally supportive of the items that you came to consensus on at the Sept. 5 meeting regarding bear boxes, occupancy, enforcement, violations and fines, and the elimination of a minimum home size requirement for vacation home rentals (VHRs), as well as removing the requirement for an in-person, on-site check-in meeting with VHR guests.



Sharon

Kerrigan Gomez

We do have concerns, however, with the proposed restrictions to limit the number of VHRs. We have long maintained that this market will self-regulate, given the opportunity to do so. "Scares" of possible changes and restrictions result in "runs on the bank" pushing the numbers of VHR permits ever higher. The prospect of thousands more VHRs over time is highly unlikely – certainly given the high price associated with permitting, licensing, maintenance and improvements necessary to meet inspection requirements – and of course, enhanced enforcement.

We understand that our position on property rights conflicts with your views. The reality is that the ability to rent a property is a part of the bundle of rights that comes with property ownership – both on a long-term and short-term basis. With proper enforcement, VHRs will be more successfully regulated by the city. But instituting a minimum distance standard between VHRs will reduce the number over time in neighborhoods that are prime vacation spots, such as Heavenly Valley near the ski resort, and Al Tahoe as it is close to the lake, hiking trails in the meadow and two city parks – all with free public access. These are areas that would be negatively impacted by this restriction and should be allowed a higher concentration of VHRs. Hindsight is 20/20 and if we were to go back 50, 60 or 70 years to establish zoning prior to any development, these areas would be ideal candidates for tourist accommodation.

The idea of a cap is also subjective, and arbitrary, no matter what number you choose. Will there be a wait list, and if so, how will it be managed? What will the council do as the financial needs of the city increases and TOT revenues fall? The tourist core at Stateline simply does not have the units available to accommodate what will be lost by proposed restrictions, and the cost per night's stay will be out of

reach to a large number of our visitors. What about falling home values, reduced property tax revenue to the city, and other unintended consequences? We believe that remote home buyers will stop looking to purchase in South Lake Tahoe – we are already hearing about clients seeking vacation homes elsewhere – as concerns about resale value is a large factor. Reactionary, undue restrictions will come with a huge price tag to the city.

Having said this, we do fully support more and better enforcement. We attended the presentation by Host Compliance outlining new VHR management software, service and a call center with optimism! We believe the city should contract for this product and service as it will save time and work by city police dispatch, result in quicker response times and facilitate the collection and compilation of rich, robust data which may be used for future decisions by the city. We would like to see more empowered city personnel – perhaps deputized – who can fully handle complaints on site, including issuance of citations and fines. Combined, these actions should address the needs of city residents who have been disturbed by large parties or unruly guests, a very real problem which we acknowledge must be addressed. It is also very likely that going after unpermitted advertisers of short terms rentals and collecting fines could make this program pay for itself.

Finally, we understand that we have not presented alternatives to the cap and density proposals. In the end, we feel that there is no way to implement these new restrictions and still maintain the flexibility needed to ensure an ongoing, strong and vibrant tourist economy. We want South Lake Tahoe to continue to grow and provide strong employment, business opportunities – and services – for all residents – working or not. We feel city staff, City Council and community leaders are up to the challenges of making the positive changes our city needs – to address its growing pains and the problems that come with successful industry and population growth (what

a great problem to have!). We'd love the opportunity to continue to be a part of developing those solutions.

Thank you for your time.