

Editorial: LTUSD board – Davidson, Turnbull

Publisher's note: *The following endorsement is from Lake Tahoe News after a team of seven community members gathered to discuss who should be on the Lake Tahoe Unified School District board.*

This will be the first election in which Lake Tahoe Unified School District residents vote for board members based on areas – aka, where they live – instead of everyone being at large. Two contested races are going on, with a third area only having one filer.



Bonnie
Turnbull



Annie Davidson

In choosing who to endorse *Lake Tahoe News* gives a great deal of thought as to the total makeup of the board. Normally, building a cohesive, well-run board is the goal. But with this election we believe it's time to shake things up a bit.

For too long the LTUSD board has been a puppet for Superintendent Jim Tarwater. He controls the board instead of the board controlling him. After all, the board is his boss, which is often lost on these electeds. This is not to unequivocally say what Tarwater and the board are doing is bad. What we are saying is that those who disagree with him have found themselves silenced in some manner. This is never a good thing.

All entities need to have open dialogue, be able to agree to disagree without being disagreeable, and to welcome new ideas.

Two of the more innovative ideas to recently come into being in LTUSD – two-way immersion at Bijou Community School and growing domes at Sierra House Elementary School – were the inspiration of parents. Tarwater was initially against them and started to lead the board that way. But the parents were tenacious. Eventually they won, and therefore the students were the ultimate beneficiaries.

Tarwater also did not bring the issue of the community play fields to the board, but instead made it a staff decision not to be a partner with the city and Lake Tahoe Community College. While the outcome may have been the same, a stronger board likely would have demanded the topic be agendized for discussion and a vote.

Lake Tahoe News believes Bonnie Turnbull for Area 3 and Annie Davidson for Area 1 are the change the LTUSD board needs.

Turnbull, while she can be aggressive and difficult to work with, is a woman with conviction who has tremendous ideas. We hope she will be able to temper her personality just a bit in order to be a productive member of the board, while at the same time challenging the status quo.

She would be replacing Mike Doyle, who admits he is the quietest board member. At meetings he appears uninterested, unengaged and a rubber stamp for the administration. The

community deserves better representation. He also chose not to respond to *LTN's* questions by the deadline, saying he was too busy.

While Davidson and Larry Reilly are both well respected in the community, Davidson brings more to the table. In August she had already read the district's Education Technology Plan, the 2014-15 and 2015-16 budgets, Local Educational Agency document, Local Control Accountability Plan and Measure G bond projects information. And she said she was able to discuss any of them in detail.

Reilly when asked the same question – What do you know about the strategic plan, finances, debt, goals of the school board? – told *LTN*, “Again, I am currently reviewing the data.”

There isn't time for that – we need someone who gets the intricacies of the district now. Being a classroom teacher and coach are much different than being a board member.

Another strike against Reilly is that his wife is a high school counselor. This could present a conflict of interest when it comes to voting on staff contracts and other issues. The district several years ago had this same problem with the Romagnolos – one was on the board, the other a principal. Eventually the board member stepped down.

We would like to take this opportunity to commend Troy Matthews for asking to answer *Lake Tahoe News's* questions even though he is running unopposed in Area 4. This shows he wants people to know who he is, that he is conscientious, and cares about the community and district.

Letter: Martis Valley West cannot go forward

Publisher's note: *The following letter regarding the Martis Valley West Project was sent Oct. 7 to the Placer County Board of Supervisors on behalf of Sierra Watch and Mountain Area Preservation.*

Dear Supervisors,

We respectfully submit this letter on behalf of Sierra Watch and Mountain Area Preservation ("MAP"), with respect to the above referenced matter in advance of the Oct. 11, 2016, Board of Supervisors meeting.

As an initial matter, we note that the county cannot approve the project until it holds a full public hearing, including public comment, on the currently proposed approval documents. The Brown Act states: "Every agenda for regular meetings shall provide an opportunity for members of the public to directly address the legislative body on any item of interest to the public, before or during the legislative body's consideration of the item." Gov't Code § 54954.3(a).

Although the board considered the Martis Valley West Parcel Specific Plan ("MVWP" or "Project") at its Sept. 13, 2016, public hearing, at that time, it was considering the Planning Commission's recommendation to deny the project. Thus, the public has not been given an opportunity to comment on the resolutions, ordinances, and findings as presented in the agenda for the Oct. 11, 2016 meeting. By way of illustration, the item listed as "to adopt findings and fact and statement of overriding considerations" in the agenda did not appear in the prior agenda for this matter, and thus members of the public were not on notice that the prior public hearing would cover such a topic. Indeed, the final proposed

findings, resolutions, and ordinances had not been prepared in advance of the Sept. 13, 2016, hearing and thus a member of the public could not comment on such topics.

Even if the prior hearing could be viewed as covering the same "item of interest" as the upcoming public hearing (which, as explained, it cannot), the item has undergone substantial changes that require the county to hold an additional public hearing. As discussed, the currently proposed findings, resolutions, and ordinances are substantially different than those provided as attachments to prior staff reports. Among other changes and language modifications, these documents: (1) add an approval of onsite work force housing units, (2) add an approval of the Water Supply Assessment ("WSA"), and (3) include substantial modifications to the development agreement.

These are not minor changes, and the public has not been given an opportunity to address the supervisors on any of these important issues. Given the project's significant environmental impacts in an area of regional and statewide importance, the project both requires and deserves a full public vetting.

In addition to the lack of proper public notice and comment, Sierra Watch and MAP wish to reiterate that, for the reasons set forth in their prior comment letters and oral testimony, project approval would be unlawful under the California Environmental Quality Act ("CEQA"), California Planning and Zoning Law, and the Government Code.

The groups' prior comments are hereby incorporated by reference. Sierra Watch and MAP submit these additional comments for the Board of Supervisors' consideration on the proposed findings, resolutions, and ordinances provided with the agenda packet for the Oct. 11, 2016 meeting.

I. The county's proposed CEQA findings are inadequate.

The staff's proposed CEQA Findings of Fact and Statement of Overriding Considerations (collectively "findings") are inadequate under CEQA. The findings are not supported by substantial evidence and do not supply the logical step between the findings and the facts in the record, as required by state law. As the Planning Commission correctly understood, any benefits of the project do not outweigh the severe environmental and safety impacts associated with the project, including but not limited to the exacerbation of fire hazards, traffic and air pollution, and impacts to treasured Lake Tahoe.

A. "Permanent Preservation" of the East Parcel is illusory. The county's findings rely on conservation of the east parcel as a primary and fundamental reason for approval of the project. However, true conservation of the east parcel is currently illusory. The county has stated that "[t]he sale of or recordation of a conservation easement on the east parcel would be carried out by private parties, and does not require approval or action by Nevada or Placer Counties." See County Staff Report (Sept. 13, 2016). Yet, the Truckee Donner Land Trust and Trust for Public Land, the private entities to which the county refers, have recently explained to the county that conservation of the land is still highly speculative, and the needed funds cannot be raised at this time (even with the discount offered by the developer). See Letter from P. Norris and D. Sutton (Oct. 3, 2016), attached hereto as Exhibit A. Thus, substantial evidence does not support a finding that there will be "permanent preservation of the entire 6,376-acre east parcel" by private entities. See County Staff Report (Oct. 11, 2016), Ex. 1 at p. 51.

The proposed approvals do offer an alternative to private parties conserving the east parcel, which is that the "Developer shall record on the east parcel a conservation easement (conservation easement) that permanently prohibits commercial

and/or residential development of the East Parcel.” County Staff Report (Oct. 11, 2016), Ex. 9 at Section 3.11. While developer control of the east parcel is the likely outcome given that the land trusts have noted the unlikelihood of a private party conservation deal, notably this fall back provision does not require or provide funding for “conservation” of the land. Prohibiting commercial and/or residential development does not equate to “preservation” or “conservation” of land. There are other intensive uses that could be permitted under this scenario that could, and likely would, lead to destruction or degradation of the biological resource values of the site. These include uses such as timber harvesting and campground sites that either are currently occurring or have been proposed in the area, and thus are likely on the East Parcel. Indeed, a Timber Harvest Plan was approved for the East Parcel in 2013 and SPI has been working to enact that Plan.

“Permanent preservation” requires a deep commitment, including at a minimum a requirement for a restrictive conservation easement, and a monitoring and funding plan, in order to maintain and enhance the biological resource values of the site.

The project as currently proposed does not come close to such a commitment. Thus, the county cannot rely on permanent preservation of the east parcel as a benefit that will overcome the project’s significant and unavoidable impacts.

B. The Findings’ Conclusions Regarding the Project’s Significant Impacts Are Not Supported By Substantial Evidence. As explained above and in our prior letters, there is no substantial evidence to support the findings’ conclusions regarding the project’s significant impacts. With respect to traffic, the Oct. 11, 2016, Staff Report (at 12) states that the board expressed support for the project partly on the

basis that "the added traffic generated by the project is a small percentage to the existing holding capacity." This type of rationale is illogical, inconsistent with CEQA, and is not supported by substantial evidence. The board's "drop-in-the-bucket" approach to cumulative impacts has been explicitly rejected by the courts. In Kings County Farm Bureau, the court invalidated an EIR that concluded that increased ozone impacts from the project would be insignificant because it would emit relatively minor amounts of precursor pollutants compared with the large volume already emitted by other sources in the county. 221 Cal.App.3d at 717-18. The Kings County Farm Bureau court aptly stated, "The relevant question to be addressed in the EIR is not the relative amount of precursors emitted by the project when compared with preexisting emissions, but whether any additional amount of precursor emissions should be considered significant in light of the serious nature of the ozone problems in this air basin." Id. at 718. Here, traffic is a serious problem. The EIR determined that the project would result in numerous significant and unavoidable traffic impacts. See DEIR at 2-38 -2-43. The EIR has also determined that the project's contribution to this impact would be cumulatively considerable. DEIR at 2-43. While at the same time finding that traffic impacts would be but a "small percentage," the findings state that the project's traffic impacts are significant and unavoidable. As Sierra Watch and MAP explained, however, the county cannot make this finding without properly considering adequate mitigation. We suggested several measures intended to reduce the number of trips generated by the project including but not limited to: providing covered bicycle parking near the project's retail establishments; providing subsidies for transit use; providing free transit passes to each of the project's residences; providing funding to actively recruit transit riders; distributing transit information to residences, stores and restaurants; operating a transit assistance center; and actively recruiting transit riders by

distributing transit information to each residence and retail establishments in the development. Without explanation, the county rejects the vast majority of these measures. Thus, there is no substantial evidence to support the findings' conclusions that impacts relating to the project-specific and cumulative traffic impacts would be significant and unavoidable.

Likewise, the EIR lacks substantial evidence to support the findings' conclusions that impacts relating to the project's cumulative impacts on light and glare would be significant and unavoidable. The findings conclude that no additional mitigation is possible for these impacts. The facts in the record contradict this finding. Our letter included extensive mitigation measures that would reduce these light and glare impacts. Specifically, we explained that the project proponents could prepare and adopt a lighting plan for the project. We went so far as to attach a sample "Outdoor Lighting Code" that had been prepared by the International Dark Sky Association to curtail the degradation of the nighttime visual environment. The county did not adopt this measure. The findings make the same error with respect to greenhouse gas impacts. Sierra Watch and MAP suggested numerous mitigation measures or reduced density alternatives to reduce this impact, which were improperly dismissed.

As explained in our prior comment letters, there is also no substantial evidence to support the findings' conclusions that other significant impacts have been mitigated to a less than significant level. To take but one example, the findings lack substantial evidence that impacts relating to emergency response would be less than significant. The findings even go so far as to state, "The project will reduce the risk of wildfire in the area through improved access to water and defensible space." County Staff Report (Oct. 11, 2016), Ex. 1 at p. 52. However, as set forth below (infra, Part II) and in our prior comment letters, abundant evidence shows the

Project would increase fire and safety hazards, as well as evacuation times.

Additionally, the findings cannot support its statements that there are no feasible environmentally superior alternatives. As the findings recognize, the EIR did not even evaluate an environmentally superior alternative (other than the "no project" alternative, which under CEQA cannot serve as the sole environmentally superior alternative) that would avoid any of the project's significant environmental impacts, even though others and we proposed such alternatives.

II. The Additional Required Findings Are Not Supported by Substantial Evidence.

There is also no substantial evidence to support the findings required by law for each of the project approvals. For example, there is no evidence to support the findings required by Government Code section 51134(a) for the immediate rezoning of the West Parcel. Given the project's safety hazards and significant environmental impacts, the rezoning is not in the public interest, the property is not suitable for the proposed uses, is not necessary, and does not comply with State law. Similarly, there is no evidence to support the findings required by State law or Placer County Code section 17.58.240 for the development agreement, including but not limited to the finding that the agreement "will not be detrimental to the health safety and general welfare of persons residing in the county."

Likewise, the county cannot make the requisite findings pursuant to Government Code section 66474.02 for areas in a state responsibility area or very high fire hazard severity zone. As county staff recognized, the project site is particularly risky as the combination of dense forests, heavy fuel loads, low humidity, potential for high winds, and the steep terrain can rapidly turn even small fires into lethal,

major disasters. Placer County, June 30, 2016 Staff Report at 7, 8. Staff also determined that these problems “would complicate any emergency evacuation operations.” Id. Inadequate access, i.e., gridlock conditions on SR 267, would significantly contribute to the inability to effectively evacuate residents during a disaster and provide necessary emergency access for fire fighters and other emergency personnel. The mixture of all of these factors creates the perfect situation for a serious threat to the safety of both the public and firefighters as well as the area’s natural lands.

Our letters requested that the vounty prepare a site-specific analysis that would take into account the site’s topography, fuel loads, atmospheric conditions, and fire intensity and evaluate how the project would affect emergency access and emergency vehicle response. The vounty was required to do just that as a result of a settlement agreement with the California Clean Energy Committee in connection with the Homewood Mountain Resort Ski Area Master Plan Project. The settlement required the preparation of the Homewood Evacuation and Life Safety Report (Homewood Safety Report) which examined the site-specific constraints at Homewood and identified standards, measures, and procedures to ensure that the Project would not result in any significant wildland fire impacts. See Homewood Evacuation and Life Safety Report, Sept. 25, 2016, attached as Exhibit B (emphasis added).

According to the Homewood Safety Report, several elements would be needed to protect the project and the nearby community from the threats of a wildland fire. The report determined that “irrespective of the cause of the disaster, every viable emergency response plan must include a shelter-in-place concept.” Homewood Safety Report Plan at 5 (emphasis added). Recognizing that sheltering in place goes beyond simply requiring residents to stay and defend their homes during a wildfire, the report requires establishment of:

(1) an on-site central fire control facility and (2) a new fire station in a central location that will allow crews and equipment to be pre-positioned, i.e., essentially on or adjacent to the Project site on a 24/7 basis.

The relevance to the Martis Project is clear, as the site constraints at Homewood and Martis are very similar. Evacuation of both sites may not be feasible due to events or conditions outside of the control of the authorities, let alone the projects. The Homewood Safety Report further confirms the need for the county to evaluate the site specific constraints associated with the Martis Project, and to identify and require the specific elements needed to protect the public's safety. In particular, given the estimated 9 to 10 minute response time for firefighters to reach the proposed Martis project site, viable shelter-in place measures are critical. See DEIR at 17-17. It is certainly conceivable that a Safety Report for the Martis Project could also require a new on-site fire control facility or a new centrally located fire station. Yet, because no site specific study has been conducted, it is not possible to determine the specific measures and specific procedures that are necessary to protect the public. The time to require this study is now. Once the Martis project is approved, the county will no longer have the leverage to require that the developer implement these critical public safety measures.

In sum, there is simply not enough evidence to support the required findings for project approval. Further, additional public notice and comment is required.

For these reasons, we respectfully request that the board either (1) postpone its decision and schedule a further public hearing and comment on the matter, or (2) reverse its tentative approval and deny the project, as recommended by the Planning Commission.

Letter: A Brush With Kindness says thanks

To the community,

Habitat for Humanity–A Brush With Kindness in South Lake Tahoe would like to thank the following businesses and organizations that donated time, materials and financial support to our 2016 projects:

Ed Cook Tree Service

El Dorado Community Foundation

Kelly-Moore Paint Company

Lowe's Home Improvement in Folsom (Paint Dept.)

Meeks in Meyers

Soroptimist International of Tahoe Sierra

South Tahoe Public Utility District

Valspar Paint.

Twenty-eight volunteers worked on one or more of the homes. Thanks to their support and assistance, A Brush With Kindness was able to provide five qualified low-income homeowners in our community with much needed maintenance and repairs.

Habitat for Humanity–A Brush With Kindness in South Lake Tahoe provides exterior home improvements to qualified homeowners who cannot complete the work themselves. Volunteer teams work to improve the condition of homes by completing necessary painting, yard work and minor repairs.

Applications are currently being accepted for the 2017 summer

project season. Interested homeowners who could meet income criteria can contact Norine Hegy at 530.544.2620 for more information and an application.

Pam Barrett

Editorial: Measure P good for everyone

Publisher's note: *The following endorsement is from Lake Tahoe News after a team of seven community members gathered to discuss the merits of Measure P.*

Recreation is what the South Shore is all about. And while the natural environment provides ample opportunity to play outdoors, that isn't sufficient. For many athletic endeavors there needs to be a built environment.

This includes swimming, basketball, hockey, tennis, pickleball, as well as soccer, football and baseball. Even cyclists need defined dirt or asphalt to ride on.

It's no longer good enough to say, "We live in a forest, therefore we don't need to spend money on recreation."

Not only is it time, but we're overdue. That is why *Lake Tahoe News* enthusiastically supports Measure P on the South Lake Tahoe ballot. It will increase the hotel tax from 10 to 12 percent for most properties, while those in the redevelopment area will pay 14 percent instead of the current 12 percent.

We recognize there is going to be a limit as to what tourists will pay. But on the flip side we need to assess some of the reasons they are not coming.

A big reason is that the athletic facilities are subpar for tournaments. Those tournaments – for a variety of sports – could bring thousands of people a year to the area. Collectively, the smaller events already do. The sporting community and hotel operators believe the larger event organizers would bring their teams (along with fans and money) to South Lake Tahoe if they could play here.

Those people also need some place to sleep. And the local lodging association is excited about that prospect, which is why that group is behind this tax proposal.

In many ways the tourists will be paying for the facilities they will be using and the locals will reap the rewards.

What *LTN* likes about this tax is that the money raised must go to recreation and cannot be squandered for some other use. We like that rebuilding the 1970's era recreation complex is the first item on the to-do list. It's a relic from the past. The maintenance costs are staggering. It's like duct tape is holding the facility together.

The city would be able to borrow money against the projected income from the additional transient occupancy tax so the improvements could start almost immediately instead of waiting to collect enough TOT to proceed. The city's debt ratio is rather low and bond rating is high, so this should not be difficult to do.

We know those using the pool – including the community swim team – are apprehensive about the pool being closed for a significant period. We hope the talks with the Tahoe Keys to fill the gap will be realized so there is no interruption in aquatic activities.

We also like that Regan Beach is part of the mix when it comes to upgrades. That is an underutilized piece of property that could offer locals (and others) so much more.

South Lake Tahoe deserves to have state-of-the-art facilities – first for locals, second for tourists.

Editorial: Rice, Sears, Allen for LVFPD board

Publisher's note: The following endorsement is from Lake Tahoe News after a team of seven community members gathered to discuss who should be on the Lake Valley Fire Protection District board.

Lake Valley Fire Protection District will be 70 years old next year. One would think with that kind of history it would run like a well-oiled machine. Not so.

A five-member board oversees the operations of the 86-square-mile district that covers most of the unincorporated area of the South Shore on the California side. Therein lies the problem. Much of the board has been entrenched for years, thus creating a good ole boys' club.

Three positions are open, with four people running. The second longest serving board member – Greg Herback since 2003 – is stepping down. That leaves Dave Huber (on since 1990), Bob Bettencourt (2004), Rob Rossi (2010) and John Rice (2011). Bettencourt and Rice are running for re-election.

These five men stood by while former Fire Chief Gareth Harris had two votes of no confidence from staff. They stood by while the El Dorado County Grand Jury investigated the chief. They drew a line in the sand when it came to working with South Lake Tahoe on the ambulance joint operating agreement. The buck stops with them when it comes to having let some key

staff leave, for morale to have tanked and for a once prideful department to spiral into dysfunction.

None of the four candidates – Tony Sears and Leona Allen are the challengers – chose to respond to *Lake Tahoe News*' questions. The media is a conduit to the elected body's constituents. Not wanting to answer difficult questions or be political are pathetic excuses for not being accountable to the people they represent.

The board members need to realize they work for the people of the fire district, not for the employees of the district.

The comradery at board meetings where the electeds are eating dinner with staff before business commences shows a lack of division.

While the district appears to be on a better path with Jeff Michael temporarily being at the helm and the hiring of Tim Alameda as the next full time chief, the board clearly needs to change.

Lake Tahoe News is endorsing Rice, Sears and Allen.

Bettencourt is too much of an obstacle and old guard. The district can't afford to keep operating under his leadership, as he is the current board chair.

Rice has been in this community for quite some time, with a stellar reputation as the head honcho at Sierra-at-Tahoe ski resort. With new blood on the board, his voice should become louder and stronger. We hope he'll assert himself to be a leader on the board and restore the district to a prestigious level. That board needs a dose of the professionalism he brings to his day job.

Sears, we hope, will keep the board on the straight and narrow. The group could use an attorney among its ranks. The board functions in a loose fashion, with a lack of

understanding of the Brown Act. While Sears is a deputy district attorney for El Dorado County, clearly his expertise of the law is different than what the board will need, nonetheless, he is ethical – a label that today cannot be applied to the board as a whole.

Allen might be a bit of a wildcard on the board. She has been called the mother of the department. For several years she was the administrative secretary as well as the public information officer. She is chummy with the rank and file members. That isn't always a good thing. What is good is that she is familiar with the workings of the board, the budget and how a fire department functions. Plus, she has the experience of being the key person at the Lake Tahoe Basin Fire Academy at Lake Tahoe Community College. Hopefully, being a board member will not present a conflict of interest.

It is *Lake Tahoe News'* hope that Rice, Sears and Allen will restore Lake Valley Fire Protection District's reputation, instill a sense of professionalism and abolish the good ole boy status of the board. The community and staff equally deserve this.

Editorial: Byer deserves to be on DCSD board

Publisher's note: The following endorsement is from Lake Tahoe News after a team of seven community members gathered to discuss who should be on the Douglas County School District board.

Parents of students in Douglas County schools at Lake Tahoe have for years had a love-hate relationship with the board of

education and administrators in Minden.

The lake and valley in many ways are worlds apart – and geography is only one component. Course offerings, class sizes, student demographics, the number of schools – they are different to the point that in some ways it's like two school districts in one.



Keith Byer

While education should be the common denominator, that isn't always the case. Whittell High School parents in 2014 challenged the board to the point a special committee was convened to address their needs. While suggestions were made, little action has been taken.

This is why it is so critical that the person who represents the lake on the Douglas County School District board of education be someone who can speak for everyone here as well as be a bridge to the valley.

Lake Tahoe News believes Keith Byer is unequivocally the best qualified candidate to do the job. He has had one child go through the school system in Douglas and has another enrolled at Whittell High School.

Byer has attended board meetings besides during times of discontent. This shows he is engaged in the issues beyond when there is a crisis. He is an objective thinker who as a certified public accountant will bring a financial mindset to the table.

Even though each board member in theory represents the entire district, many of the four from the valley only make it to the lake once a quarter when the board meeting is here. That is why it is so critical to have the lake board member be strong.

Plus, Byer has experience as a board member. He spent eight years on the Anglo-American School of Moscow board. He was also on their finance committee. (He has lived in four countries.)

Byer would bring a worldly perspective to the board that it hasn't had. This is perfect for a small district, representing even smaller schools to have someone with such a unique background who can provide leadership for his colleagues and inspiration for staff and students.

The seat is vacant because of term limits. Not only is the lake losing Cindy Trigg, but Teri Jamin as well. While Jamin lives in the Carson Valley, for years she worked for the city of South Lake Tahoe. She understood the nuances of the lake in a way others did not. This, too, adds to the importance of voting for Byer because he will in many ways be the lone voice for the lake on the board.

Byer's opponent, Mike Kiger, chose not to answer *Lake Tahoe News'* questions. He said he was too busy building houses. We believe someone who can't take the time to tell potential constituents where he stands on issues will not be engaged enough to listen to their needs as a board member.

Byer is beyond qualified and the best choice for the Douglas County School District board of education.

Opinion: Medical care now Calif.'s biggest industry

By Dan Walters, Sacramento Bee

Four of the 17 measures on the Nov. 8 state ballot relate directly to financing Californians' health care, and collectively they would have tens of billions of dollars in impact.



Dan Walters

But in a sense, that's just peanuts, which takes a little explaining.

Propositions 52, 55, 56 and 61 indirectly symbolize a massive, if often misunderstood, transformation in California's economy over the last few decades.

A UCLA Center for Health Policy Research study reveals that we Californians are directly or indirectly spending a mind-numbing \$367.5 billion a year on our physical well-being, equal to 15 percent of the state's \$2.5 trillion economy.

Read the whole story

Editorial: Vogelgesang, Exline for STPUD

Publisher's note: *The following endorsement is from Lake Tahoe News after a team of seven community members gathered to discuss who should be on the South Tahoe Public Utility District board.*

Water and sewer are not sexy topics. However, in today's world water is only going to become more important. That is why it is vital the best people possible are in charge of overseeing the operations at South Tahoe Public Utility District.

The board needs to be comprised of people who understand the intricacies of the operations and have a vision for the future. *Lake Tahoe News* believes Randy Vogelgesang and Nick Exline have those qualities.



Randy
Vogelgesang

Vogelgesang is the current board chairman and is finishing his first four-year term. Being a civil and structural engineer have helped him to grasp the finer details of the largest water-sewer district on the South Shore.

He has consistently been fiscally conservative. In 2014, he voted against giving employees a raise. "I felt that I needed to try to keep any pay increases as low as possible considering the economic situation of the ratepayers,"

Vogelgesang told *Lake Tahoe News*. While he was on the losing end of that vote, we appreciate that he was considering the people he represents – the ratepayers, not the workers. When it comes to employee benefits, he said, “I would prefer a defined contribution over a defined benefit plan as a way to control costs.”



Nick Exline

Exline is a breath of fresh air. His energy is infectious and his ideas plentiful. While he is running on a platform to increase renewable energy, he will likely soon learn that economically it could be an uphill battle. Nonetheless, we applaud him for bringing ideas to the table.

After all, it is the board that is supposed to be the policymaker and staff is there to do the work. Maybe it's time for South Tahoe PUD to look at different policies. Providing clean water and treated effluent that is near pristine are in some ways doing the minimum. That is not to take away from the hard work involved to make all of this happen. But the status quo from the board needs shaking up a bit.

There needs to be more vision. That is one reason we cannot endorse Kelly Sheehan for another term.

While South Tahoe PUD has **enough water** for the next 30 years, that doesn't mean the district can ignore what is going on in the rest of the state and in Nevada when it comes to drought, domestic water and farming needs; nor can it turn its back on climate change; and it's scary to acknowledge with the 10-year anniversary of the Angora Fire coming up next June that the

service area still does not have adequate water lines for fire suppression.

There is much more for the district's board to do than worry if a toilet flushes and if clear water comes out of the spigot. We need leaders with vision on the South Tahoe Public Utility District board. Vogelgesang and Exline fit that description.

Opinion: More people should retire like Vin Scully

By Joe Mathews

If only more Californians could retire like Vin.

Vin Scully, that is. The Hall of Fame announcer for the Los Angeles Dodgers called his last game Sunday, a month shy of his 89th birthday. That retirement has touched off a national celebration of Scully's announcing mastery and his contributions to baseball through 67 years with the Dodgers.



Joe Mathews

But what deserves more attention—including from Californians who couldn't care less about sports—is the smart, progressive way he planned his retirement.

In this country, retirements are often abrupt. People depart the workforce suddenly and at a time decided by numbers—a company rule, a buyout, Social Security calculations or retirement benefit formulas—not what’s best for retirees or the workplaces they’re leaving.

Scully’s retirement, by contrast, was anything but abrupt. He phased in his departure over two decades. Back in the mid 1990s, as he approached the age of 70, Scully—who in his prime announced not just Dodger games but also national football, baseball and golf—pared back his duties. He focused solely on baseball, then dropped national broadcasting. Then, a decade ago, he gradually reduced his Dodger obligations, mostly by limiting his travel to road games. In his final year, he has worked home games almost exclusively.

Describing this long phase-out, Scully once said, “I would like to disappear like the Cheshire Cat, where ... the only thing left is a smile.”

The Cheshire Cat Strategy has been a success. Scully has remained robust, his sharp, wide-ranging observations carrying nine innings of a game—solo—with characteristic ease. The myriad tributes to him now emphasize how his knowledge and long memory have made him a back-office resource to the nation’s second most-valuable baseball team. And fans treasure how he’s connected them and their families across more than three generations.

Could Scully’s phased retirement be a model for other Californians? The question might seem daft. After all, this state famously thinks little about its older citizens (Scully is a special case), preferring to celebrate younger technologists and stars who “disrupt” the established. And retirement has become one of California’s nastiest legal and political minefields, especially when the conversation turns to pensions and retiree health care for government workers.

These pension wars leave little room for a conversation about how we might make the so-called golden years better for all of us—for retirees, for businesses, for governments. But that's precisely the conversation California needs to have.

Our state is rapidly aging; the number of people 65 and older is projected to nearly double by 2030, while immigration is flat and our birth rate declining. So California urgently needs its most senior citizens to be more productive.

Instead, we watch as valuable baby boomer workers retire, leaving huge voids of knowledge and skill that can't easily be filled. Government agencies in particular are finding it hard to hire and retain replacements for retirees who had specialized knowledge and high-level skills. New hires too often leave after they're trained, because they can make more money in the private sector.

Part of the answer to this problem lies in Scully's example: we must make it possible for valuable workers to stick around into late old age. The central principle is flexibility: the ability to mix varying levels of work with life in a way that makes both better.

But our retirement and work systems aren't agile enough. To the contrary, they're highly complicated, so full of rules that designing a flexible schedule, while legally possible, can be more trouble than it's worth.

Legal scholars advise me that legislation would be needed to establish a new category for workers who want flexible, phased retirements in the public sector. So I hereby propose that California governments create the Vin Scully Phased Retirement Plan. When employees reach retirement age, they should be able to enter into a phased plan, subject to the approval of their supervisors, which could be altered by mutual agreement. The details could get complicated, but one goal of the Scully Plan should be to ensure that phased retirement neither hurt, nor

spiked, the employee's retirement benefits.

Phased retirements are hardly new. Just ask emeritus professors or senior-status judges. And they make sense. Why should a state that has paid employees for so long completely lose the benefit of their experience and knowledge? And maintaining connections to work and colleagues can be good for retirees, keeping minds sharp and even extending lives, some research suggests.

"Hang in there," is cliché, in sports and life. But it would represent real progress as a principle for reorganizing how we work late in life. "All I know," Vin Scully recently said, "is I'm eternally grateful for having been allowed to work so many games."

Joe Mathews writes the Connecting California column for Zócalo Public Square.

Letter: Kirkwood gives back at Bread & Broth

To the community,

On Sept. 12, Tim Edison, a member of Kirkwood Mountain Resort's security team, spent three hours volunteering at Bread & Broth's dinner serving folks who struggle with hunger.

"Having this opportunity to help the community and the less fortunate, has been an amazing experience," said Edison. "Bread & Broth sends people away with a full belly and a smile. This is an experience I will always remember and want to do again."

Due to Kirkwood Mountain Resort's Adopt A Day sponsorship, Edison along with fellow sponsor crew members Jarret Morgan, Chris Hostnik, and Verge Soteco volunteered to work alongside B&B's volunteers to provide a hearty meal featuring a chicken cacciatore entree served with roasted cauliflower, cheesy roasted potatoes and green and fruit salads. In addition to serving dinner, this enthusiastic crew helped dry dishes and stayed until after 6pm helping with the dining and kitchen area cleanup.

Thanks to the generosity of Kirkwood Mountain Resort and this very helpful sponsor crew, B&B was able to help food insecure folks in our community. Unfortunately, folks who live on fixed incomes, work at minimum wages jobs, struggle with physical and mental issues or have fallen on difficult times often desperately need help obtaining just the basic needs in life. B&B Adopt A Day sponsors are the heroes in their lives.

For more B&B information, contact me at 530.542.2876 or carolsgerard@aol.com.

Carol Gerard, Bread & Broth