

Editorial: Dalton is right choice for LTCC

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 Community College board of education.*

Forthright, informed and prepared to serve – that's Nancy Dalton.

Those are some of the reasons why *Lake Tahoe News* is endorsing her for the Area 4 seat on the Lake Tahoe Community College board.



Nancy Dalton

As a math teacher at South Tahoe High School she will be able to be a bridge between the college and Lake Tahoe Unified School District. As the two institutions continue to develop career and technical education programs that are linked, it is critical to have someone on the inside who gets what high school students are going through and understands their needs.

The two entities are losing the current link with Larry Green leaving the LTUSD board.

Ironically, he is a math instructor at LTCC. As a numbers guy, he has been able to use his expertise when it has come to financial matters on his board. And while understanding

algebra and geometry at the high school level does not mean someone understands the nuances of a multi-million budget with restricted and unrestricted dollars or the management of a facilities bond, we are hopeful Dalton will have an awareness that someone with a different discipline would not likely have.

And while it can be difficult to have a full-time job and be an elected official, Dalton has proved that she is up to the task. She has been attending LTCC board meetings for most of this year, so she understands the time commitment, the amount of reading involved and the demands beyond the meetings.

The board and college as a whole will benefit from Dalton's leadership experience with other boards, as department chair at STHS and helping manage her husband's construction business. While education is her primary background, her diverse interests and past will help her make decisions as a college board trustee.

We agree with her when she says the main priorities of the board should be:

- Hire a competent superintendent/president
- Fulfill the improvements stated in Measure F
- Work within the budget.

While her opponent, Dave Hamilton, has impressive credentials and is passionate about the college, as a former instructor he also has baggage that we don't believe would be conducive for making a harmonious board.

Letter: Supporting Exline for STPUD board

To the community,

South Tahoe Public Utility District has two seats up for election this season, and, even with presidents, senators and congressional representatives dominating the headlines, I may be most excited to vote Nick Exline for STPUD board. It feels good to know I will get to vote for a local candidate who sees and clearly articulates so many possibilities for positive change in our community.

Nick has been out and about at just about every public event to talk about STPUD policy and his platform – a main tenant of which is to work to keep water and sewer rates stable by encouraging the district to develop renewable energy sources for operations. Identifying means to avoid rate hikes is generally sound economic policy, but even more important, finding ways to avoid fossil fuel as an energy choice should be a key task of every leader in this country if we are to avoid worst-case climate change scenarios.

I am proud to support a candidate that is finding a way to be the change we must see in the world. Nick is informed, interested, enthusiastic, a good listener and a friendly leader. He truly is solution oriented – the kind of candidate we need more of in our community, in our state and in our nation. Nick Excline for STPUD.

Sincerely,

Patricia Sussman, South Lake Tahoe

Editorial: Vote no on SLT's Measure U

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 U.*

South Lake Tahoe's City Council and staff are adamant they've gotten their fiscal house in order and that is why they feel secure in going to the voters for a sales tax increase. But if the house were truly in order, then a basic thing like roads would not require a special tax.

On the Nov. 8 ballot is a measure to raise the sales tax in the city limits by one-half cent. This would bring the total to 8.5 percent. Projections are it would raise \$2.5 million annually. There is no sunset for the tax, so it would go on indefinitely.

Raising the sales tax was already done once. It was increased by one-half percent after voters gave the go-ahead in November 2004. All of this "extra" revenue goes right to South Lake Tahoe, whereas the bulk goes to the state. The same thing would happen with this increase – it would go straight to the city.

Therein lies the problem for *Lake Tahoe News*. That pot of cash would go directly to the General Fund. When staff comes up with the budget each year, the sales tax money could be going toward anything. It would take a diligent council to ensure the money is allocated "appropriately." Then it would take a hawk-eye public to oversee the council's decision.

While there is a second component to Measure U that asks voters where the sales tax dollars should go, the city is under no obligation to actually spend the money as the voters wish. Other than possibly being voted out of office, there are

no consequences to not listening to voters' desires.

And because management has said it's time to give staff a raise and there was no money in the fiscal year's budget that started Oct. 1 for those increases or money allocated in future years, we are nervous that this new pot of money from Measure U could find its way into paychecks instead pavement.

We also cannot unequivocally say the three choices are worthy. They are roads, housing and facilities. The advisory measures (Q=housing, R=Roads, S=Facilities) are so poorly written. One has to wonder if this was done to confuse voters. They are not well thought out, precise or concrete. The ambiguity is alarming.

We have seen the city appropriate funds in a manner that leaves us skeptical. There was a time when transient occupancy tax dollars were to be dedicated for tourism promotion. The city gave the visitors bureau and chamber of commerce funds for that cause. Councils changed, trust between the entities evaporated and the checks stopped being written.

Then there were the councils that somehow unknowingly kept spending money to the tune of \$7.2 million to build the Heavenly Village project. These dollars came from the General Fund and to this day are still being paid back.

Think about what \$7.2 million 15 years ago would have bought in terms of road repair. Yes, the village and Cecil's projects are great, and the vision to bring them to fruition is to be commended. But the surreptitious way in how they got funded should never fade from voters' memory.

All of this underscores why we don't universally trust the city's staff or the electeds.

The other problem with a sales tax is that it is a regressive tax, meaning those at the lower end of the economic scale have a greater percentage of their income going to taxes than those

in the upper echelon.

Even so, if the measure were to be written with the dollars going to a dedicated source (roads is our preference), we would be more amenable to it. We realize this would take a two-thirds vote, whereas the current measure only requires 50 percent, plus one to pass. This, though, would ensure the voters would be getting what they would be paying for – roads.

Letter: Why Annie should be on LTUSD board

To the community,

This letter is for anyone interested in seeing students in Lake Tahoe Unified School District (LTUSD) get the best opportunities possible.

Dr. Annie Davidson is a candidate for LTUSD School Board Trustee Area 1. Whether you are able to vote in trustee Area 1 or not, I encourage you to consider Annie's obvious commitment to our community along with her academic and professional resume that make her an ideal board member for success of our children. Yes, I call her Annie, because that's what she prefers to be called and that's how I've known her as my amazing partner and wife of many years – she'll actually blush on occasion when called Dr. Davidson, but that modesty can't disguise her incredible passion, expertise, and experience for public education. As someone with ties to this community throughout 42 years, I need to explain how fortunate we are to have Annie as an option to help lead our schools.

When it's time to vote, remember what sets Annie apart:

1. Commitment. Annie's continued activity in our community and schools is unrivaled by other candidates.
2. Expertise. Annie knows her way around any level of school and stands ready to apply her professional and academic expertise for the betterment of LTUSD.
3. Independence. Annie has no ties to LTUSD, current or historical, and brings a fresh eye to the exciting future for our local schools.

First and foremost, Annie and I have two young children in the school system. LTUSD, with its encouraging improvements in recent years and exciting potential now and forward, is the main reason that we came to the area when our oldest daughter was ready to start Kindergarten. Annie is absolutely committed as a parent to helping create the best educational experience possible for all children – not just our own. She has led enrichment classes in drama and music, volunteers in classrooms regularly, tutored troubled teenagers, and continues to support Tahoe Parents Nursery School.

Annie comes from a family of educators and that devotion to students is apparent in her educational and professional choices. After receiving a bachelor's degree in science from Cornell University, she chose to further study education and teach in high-poverty schools in Burlington, Vt. Why is this important to LTUSD? Over 50 percent of our students qualify for free and reduced lunch according to family income. Annie is not only experienced with diverse economic strata in education, she cares – it was Annie's classroom experience that made her determined to have an impact on a larger scale and obtain her doctorate in education leadership and policy. From there she went to work at McGraw-Hill Education where she achieved a reputation among educational researchers nationally for her interests in equity for student assessment. Annie is a recognized expert in student assessment – that expertise will be incredibly valuable to the LTUSD system in terms of data

interpretation and decision making. Annie continues to do some consulting work with research organizations nationally and keeps abreast of current topics in education.

Vote for Annie, either when you see ballots hit your mailbox later this month, or in November on the general ballot.

Sincerely,

Matt Lucksinger, South Lake Tahoe

Letter: Ex-LTCC trustee backing Dalton

To the community,

When Nancy Dalton informed me she was running for the Lake Tahoe Community College board seat from trustee Area 4, I was extremely pleased. Since there is no incumbent in that area, it is important to have someone who understands both education and our community; Nancy fills these requirements extremely well.



Roberta Mason

She has been involved in education at many different levels, most recently being the chair of the math department at South

Tahoe High School last year.

She has been involved, with her family, in our community for many years including in the construction business with her husband John. I first met Nancy when we were both members of Soroptimist International of South Lake Tahoe over 30 years ago. Since then Nancy has organized and participated in many community activities and events. She dedicates herself to any endeavor she undertakes. She has already been attending LTCC board meetings for eight months so she can be prepared to hit the ground running since the college has many projects and new programs in the works.

I whole-heartedly endorse Nancy Dalton for LTCC trustee Area 4 and urge those residing in Area 4 to vote for her on Nov. 8.

Roberta Mason, South Lake Tahoe

Letter: An idea for bear-people issues

To the community,

I would suggest a volunteer docent program be implemented at the Taylor Creek area – Rainbow Trail during the fall season when the kokanee salmon spawn there and create a bear buffet.

Visitors are blown away by the beauty and the idea of seeing our bears; they are just naive to bear safety. The visitor center could interact with various agencies in Tahoe (Bear League, Wildlife Care, Lake Tahoe Alliance, others or even just the visitor center-Forest Service) and offer a free training to volunteers for a docent commitment at Taylor Creek

during this time of year.

It would be very sad to close Taylor Creek down during this amazing time. The area is educational and beautiful. There is a solution to this problem. The Forest Service needs to get creative here, and solve the problem with docents.

Judi Allen, South Lake Tahoe

Opinion: Sierra trees dying, the forest is not

By Char Miller

The trees are dying. The forests are not.

This distinction is getting lost in all the angst over the tree die-off in the Sierra, coastal ranges and other forests of California. Players ranging from the U.S. Forest Service to CalFire to Sen. Dianne Feinstein, D-Calif., and other public officials are ignoring this key fact in their rush to do something, anything, about the dying trees.

Feinstein, in a recent letter to Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack, urged him to transfer the tidy sum of \$38 million to the Forest Service so that it could immediately harvest thousands of red-needled pine and other dead trees in “high hazard” areas in the Sequoia, Sierra and Stanislaus national forests. “After five years of historic drought,” she argued, “which has led to the death of an estimated 66 million trees in California alone, my state and its people face a heightened and potentially catastrophic risk of wildfire this year and for years to come.”

And that request is but a drop in the bucket, according to Feinstein. In a previous letter to the Office of Management and Budget, she said federal and state officials calculated that 5.5 million of California's 66 million dead trees posed "a particular threat to public safety and must be removed as quickly as possible." The Forest Service's estimate to harvest just its portion of the threatening trees (3.7 million) was \$562 million. There is no way the Obama administration is going to ask for, or that Congress would provide, half-a-billion dollars for such an effort in a single state.

But really, that would be OK. Because the calculation that dead trees equals catastrophe could not be more wrong.

Although the attention-getting figure of 66 million dead trees (or "snags") – widely publicized this summer – seems like a lot, the figure shrinks when set in its wider, arboreal context. As Doug Bevington of *Environment Now* has reported, there are 33 million forested acres in the state, meaning that the recent pulse of tree mortality on average has increased the number of dead trees by a mere two snags per acre: "To put that number in perspective," Bevington wrote, "forest animals that live in snags generally need at least four to eight snags per acre to provide sufficient habitat and some species require even more snags." In short, viewed ecologically, California's forests suffer from a deficit of dead trees, not a surfeit.

Besides, dead trees are not bereft of life. They are essential to the survival of such cavity-nesting species as the endangered California spotted owl and the increasingly rare black-backed woodpecker. Ditto for the little-seen Pacific fisher, a forest-dweller related to the weasel whose diet in part consists of small mammals that take advantage of snag ecosystems. A host of other organisms feast on dead trees upright or fallen, so that what on the surface might seem like a patch of ghost forest in fact is a biodiversity hot spot, a teeming terrain.

While countless living things thrive off the dead trees, fire does not. This seems counter-intuitive, especially when firefighters tell the *Los Angeles Times* "it's going to be much harder for us to stop a fire in these dead forests, as opposed to when they were alive." In fact, fire-ecology research has demonstrated that snags do not burn with a greater intensity than green trees, and their presence does not accelerate the spread of fire. Nor does it increase the chance of wildfire. Even the state's firefighter-in-chief, CalFire Director Ken Pimlott, agrees with the "emerging body of science that has found dead trees don't significantly increase the likelihood of wildfires."

Don't get me wrong: There are legitimate reasons to log some snags located in portions of the wildland urban interface to ensure public safety and protect vital infrastructure. It's entirely possible that Feinstein's requested \$38 million transfer for logging high hazard areas would be a good investment. But slicking off 5.5 million trees – or even just the 3.7 million proposed for harvest in the national forests – cannot be defended in terms of science or policy. And it would break the bank.

Instead, those kinds of harvest numbers sound disconcertingly like political logrolling. In this case, agencies and their allies may be spreading fear of imminent, ecosystemic collapse that can only be averted via a massive infusion of tax dollars that would also prop up the timber and biomass industries. (The latter turns board-feet into kilowatts, a process as inefficient and CO₂-spewing as coal, accelerating the planet's warming. Not climate-smart.)

So let's take nature seriously. Even those who mourn the loss of the iconic, pine-scented uninterrupted sweep of green trees in the Sierra should remember that the "death" we perceive in California's forests presages their regeneration. John Muir, the troubadour of all things Sierra, said as much in 1878. After years of field research, he concluded that sequoia

regrowth depended on natural disturbance. Erosion and floods, “some pawing of squirrel or bear,” and the “fall of old trees” cleared the way for successive generations to flourish. Even fire, “the great destroyer of tree life” prepares “bare virgin ground ... one of the conditions essential for [sequoias’] growth from the seed.” Muir’s penetrating insight was controversial in the late 19th century, but it shouldn’t be today.

The trees are dying. The forests are not.

Char Miller is a professor of environmental analysis at Pomona College and is the author of the just-published “Not So Golden State: Sustainability vs. the California Dream.” This column was first published in the Los Angeles Times.

Opinion: Election season Lake Tahoe style

By Garry Bowen

As I watched from the sidelines the proceedings of the Lake Tahoe South Shore Chamber of Commerce’s council candidate forum last week, several thoughts occurred in its aftermath, the first being that we are indeed fortunate to be able to witness in a civilized form the thought processes of our citizens in trying to make a difference, whatever that difference happens to be, in running for office at a local level.

For that, we can indeed be thankful.



Garry Bowen

As President Obama said right here in our own town – I know, I know: Harvey’s is in Nevada – but his inspiring talk of conservation recognized that political boundaries, like some others, are not recognized in or by the nature that surrounds us, so, as the president said, the positive changes we’ll “continue to make are going to be in all of our hands, as citizens. I always say that the most important office is the office of citizen. Change happens because of you. Don’t forget that.”

In “not forgetting that,” listening to sincere efforts at what might constitute reasons to be elected, there were of course some recurring themes, the most prominent of which is the growing issue of affordable housing, which by its emotional nature vitally needs to be reframed as a policy of “housing affordability,” as unless it’s designated as a very particular platform, it will, in too many minds, end up as it has many times before, heated conversation about “rusted cars, trash all-around” by those who care a bit too much about any reduction of their property value, instead of the very real issue of our municipal servants (police, fire, nurses, teachers, along with many other citizens) not being able to live in their own chosen place of work.

This issue has been and continues to be in the forefront, particularly in resort-mountain environments that thrive only because of a visitor-based economy, inevitably leading to the second issue, that of diversifying the economy, usually associated with higher income jobs, and recruiting interested companies to move here, presumably bringing those better jobs

with them.

As these identified answers have been touted before in many places, for me the third (and intrusive) thought, came about – as a shadow of once-famous Erhard Seminar Training (EST), whose founder Werner Erhard used to relate: “You can never get enough of what you don’t need.”

EST focused on transforming “one’s ability to experience living so that the situations one had been trying to change or had been putting up with, clear up just in the process of life itself.”

To be clear, rearranging the musical chairs of SLT’s municipal government is not necessarily sufficient, unless new substance “brings to the forefront and realizes the ideas of transformation, personal responsibility, accountability, and possibility”, something within the purview of trust and transparency, to assure a dialogue with the whole community, not just colleagues on the council.

Initial EST sessions were “painfully enlightening, as it became obvious that much of human misery is a function of broken agreements – not keeping your word, or someone else not keeping theirs.”

The changes alluded to above will never come about, absent solid new ideas to pursue that lead to successes that can be replicated, as it is trust and transparency that establish the creds to lead, and, as Michael Bloomberg, the eminent former mayor of NYC recently said: “transparency is itself an economic engine”, which has not always been the case with South Shore politics, leading to a conclusion that one of the drivers of any SLT candidacy always carries trust in its background, the lack of which ends up clouding motivations for change, and in losing the ability to learn what the best change is.

If we are to recognize the wisdom of making a policy issue of

housing affordability, it will be with the trust and transparency of informed knowledge of how important it is to the ongoing stability of a place that cherishes its outdoors, to strengthen and fortify its ability to make sure its citizens are cared for, not as mere vote-getting devices, but as neighbors that are part of a whole – integral needed parts of a holistically-competent community, one that supports itself as/with a superior business model, not as one that barely functions as “what can we get away with”... one candidate touted his participation in the Citizens Academy, as if finding out how things are done was apt inspiration to do better than what was shown and taught, after sensing better ways than what was observed.

Nationally, internationally, and indeed globally, change is now occurring in ways that we would not have thought about just a decade ago, so the final thought is that we need to be in more control of how our choices come about, as it is also coming true that we are in danger of “getting more than enough of what we no longer need”, while not reaching out well enough for what we do in fact need -comfort zones can themselves become endangered species.

Revisit what it means to be a citizen, or others will decide for you ... and perhaps not to your liking.

Garry Bowen has more than a 50-year connection to the South Shore, with an immediate past devoted to global sustainability, on most of its current fronts: green building, energy and water efficiencies, and public health.

Opinion: Measure P makes recreation possible

By Rich Bodine

On Nov. 8, local voters will have the opportunity to vote on Measure P to expand recreation in South Lake Tahoe without increasing taxes paid by residents and businesses. We encourage a yes vote.

Our stunning natural environment and vibrant community make South Lake Tahoe a wonderful place to live, visit and do business. At its core, our community values the freedom to enjoy the ample recreation opportunities that our city has to offer. Measure P enhances and improves recreation for all residents. Voting yes on P will help protect our quality of life and property values, and will also boost our economy.

Measure P approves a modest 2 percent increase in the hotel tax paid by visitors to South Lake Tahoe. By law, funds from this measure may only be used for recreation in South Lake Tahoe, and priority will be given to the construction of a new recreation and swim complex on Rufus Allen Boulevard. Measure P does not increase taxes paid by residents and businesses by one penny.

Our current recreation facilities are over 40 years old and are in dire need of expensive repairs. Without increasing our taxes, Measure P will replace our aging facilities with a new, year-round recreation and swim complex for use by residents and visitors. This new complex will have space for after school and vacation youth programs to be offered by the Boys & Girls Club and the Parks and Recreation Department to all residents. The competitive sports facilities within the new recreation center will be equipped to host tournaments and attract visitors to stimulate our local economy all year long.

This low-cost event space can be used for celebrations and gatherings, and will provide affordable exercise facilities to our community.

Measure P also requires strict fiscal accountability. No funds can be taken by the state or used for other purposes, and annual audits will ensure funds are used as promised.

We encourage a yes vote on Measure P because we value the opportunity to expand recreation in South Lake Tahoe, protect our quality life and property values and boost our economy. When a yes vote can do all of this without increasing taxes at all for local residents and businesses, the clear choice is to offer our full support.

In addition to being supported by the South Lake Tahoe Lodging Association, Measure P is also supported by city of South Lake Tahoe Mayor Wendy David, Boys & Girls Club President Terri Arnold, and 40-Year resident and active recreation center user Valerie Rudd.

By mail or on Nov. 8, join us in voting YES on Measure P.

Rich Bodine is president of the South Lake Tahoe Lodging Association.

Letter: Elks Lodge takes turn at Bread & Broth

To the community,

Every Monday evening at St. Theresa Grace Hall, Bread & Broth serves hot, full-course, nutritious meals to everyone who stops by between 4-5:30pm. Everyone from the community is

invited to join the dinner guests and engage in conversation while enjoying the wonderful meals prepared by the talented B&B cooks and served by the dedicated B&B setup-serving crews.

All of this is made possible by the generous donations of each Monday evening's Adopt A Day of Nourishment sponsor. On Sept. 5, the Tahoe-Douglas Elk Lodge No. 2670 hosted the AAD dinner by donating \$250 to cover the meal's costs and sending a sponsor volunteer crew to team to participate in the evening meal's preparation, serving and cleanup from 3-6pm.

Hosting their third Adopt A Day this year, the Tahoe-Douglas Elk Lodge was re-presented by the sponsor volunteer crew consisting of Karen and Jim Plamenig and Jeanne and Roger Barragan. As a regular sponsor volunteer at the Elk Lodge AAD dinners, Roger Barragan always states that "the Elks are always willing to help." Providing dinners to 350 to 400 people a year, is a big help to those dealing with hunger and B&B would like to thank the Tahoe-Douglas Elk Lodge No. 2670 for the many AAD sponsorships hosted by this very generous organization.

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

Carol Gerard, Bread & Broth