

The



BASS LAKE BULLETIN

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HIGHWAY 50 HOV LANE COMPLETION DELAYED



Work continues on the Bass Lake Road and Highway 50 overcrossing, with crews working at night on the lower portion of the structure so as to reduce congestion on Bass Lake Road during the day. Delays have pushed the completion of the HOV lane project to the middle of 2011.



The HOV lanes themselves are substantially complete and await the completion of the bridge work. This picture shows the end of the newly-paved eastbound HOV lane and the new median barrier near the Cambridge Road exit sign. The westbound HOV lane on this stretch will be constructed sometime in the future.



BUDGET WOES MAY FORCE COUNTY FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT CONSOLIDATIONS

The El Dorado County Board of Supervisors, facing less financial support from the state, are looking at reducing the subsidies paid to small fire protection districts (FPDs) in the county, and encouraging the smaller fire districts to consolidate with the larger FPDs in a move to save money.

The county subsidy is currently about \$1.3 million annually. Naturally, the smaller FPDs are resisting such consolidations, fearful of losing their local character and autonomy. El Dorado County fire officials maintain that ending county financial assistance to FPDs would result in layoffs, fire station closures and longer response times.

The County Grand Jury examined the issue of the number of fire districts in the county in its 2007-2008 report. The grand jury found that El Dorado county has on the average more fire districts than comparable California counties. The grand jury found

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Happy
Valentine's
Day



FOLSOM PLANNING COMMISSION TO HEAR EIR STUDY REPORT ON SOUTH OF 50 PROJECT

The City of Folsom will hold a study session that will inform the public of the progress of the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) now being prepared for the South of 50 Project. The session will be held on March 2, 2011, at 6:30 p.m. at the regular Planning Commission meeting, which will be held in the Folsom City Council chambers at 50 Natoma Street, in Folsom. This will be an informational meeting only, with no action to be taken. The meeting is not intended to be a forum on adequacy of the EIR. Interested members of the public are cordially invited to attend.

Readers will recall that the South of 50 Project will entail annexation of the property there to the City of Folsom and the subsequent development of mixed uses on approximately 3,500 acres south of U.S. 50 currently in Folsom's sphere of influence. Development of the specific plan area would include approximately 1,533 acres of single family and multi-family residential housing, 451 acres of commercial/industrial uses, 121 acres of parks, 1,053 acres of open space, five elementary schools, a joint middle school/high school, and a municipal services facility (e.g., fire station, police station, library, etc.).

The project also includes infrastructure necessary to serve the proposed development including but not limited to drainage facilities, sewer lines and lift stations, roads, and electrical and natural gas lines. The project also requires off-site water conveyance lines, and either off-site or on-site water treatment. Adoption of the project contemplates approval of the following City entitlements: certification of the EIR/EIS and Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program (MMRP); amendment of the Folsom General Plan; adoption of the Folsom

Plan Area Specific Plan (SPA); potential approval of development agreements between the City and project applicant(s); and pre-zoning of the SPA.

Future City entitlement approvals may include, but are not limited to, use permits, approval of tentative parcel and subdivision maps, design review, and development agreements between the City and future project applicant(s). ~



Happy Valentine's Day

FIRE CUTS *(continued)*

that the operations of eight of the smaller fire districts are being subsidized out of the county general fund, generally because the tax base in these sparsely populated fire districts is not great enough to cover operations. The grand jury felt that considerable money could be saved if the smaller fire districts were to be consolidated into the larger districts. It was felt that economies of scale and elimination of redundant administrative costs would save considerable money.

In fact, to an extent, all of the fire districts are already consolidated through the county central dispatch system. Responses to all fire and medical emergencies on the west slope of El Dorado County are dispatched from the Emergency Communications Center (ECC), operated by the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) located in Camino. Three communication specialists and a captain are on duty 24/7 utilizing a state-of-the-art computerized facility.

The EEC personnel track in real time the location and availability of all fire and medical response equipment and crews from all of the nine fire protection districts and Cameron Park CSD. Tracking and dispatching services are financed under a Joint Powers Agreement, representing the County and fire districts. Most of the calls are for medical emergencies.

The Camino ECC dispatches equipment and crews to each emergency site, choosing the closest available and most suitable equipment and personnel, regardless of the fire district owning the dispatched equipment and crew. Operationally, boundaries

between west slope County fire protection districts are transparent. With respect to emergency response, they act together as one fire department. All of the County fire management officials interviewed praised this central dispatch system as efficient and working well. When asked, there were no complaints voiced about it by any of the interviewed officials.

Also, consolidation of previous small fire districts has already occurred. The El Dorado County FPD resulted from the consolidation of Pleasant Valley, Pollock Pines/Camino and Shingle Springs fire protection districts. In 1993, two additional fire protection districts were added to the El Dorado County FPD: Coloma/Lotus and Northside. Lake Valley FPD covers most of the Lake Tahoe basin located within the County that is not in the City. The Lake Tahoe basin also includes Meeks Bay FPD and Fallen Leaf Lake CSD; both districts are small and geographically isolated.

But some county leaders, including Supervisor Ron Briggs, contend that the fire protection system needs an overhaul to remain fiscally viable. Faced with a \$4 million general fund deficit in 2009-10, Gayle Erbe-Hamlin, El Dorado County chief administrative officer, has recommended ending the aid to fire districts to help balance the county's budget.

But some fire officials oppose the cuts and consolidation, including the El Dorado County Fire Chiefs Association and El Dorado County Emergency Services Authority. The fire chiefs argue that the county has an obligation to assist fire districts that serve large, rural areas but whose tax base is lower than those of other fire districts, due in part to policies in the county's general plan.

The alternative to spending cuts could be increased revenues through taxpayers voting in new local taxes or fees to support the FPDs with additional revenue. However, most advocates of this plan say that before asking the voters to approve anything, fire officials should be able to demonstrate recent cost cutting actions, and be prepared to argue that their pensions and salaries aren't out of line with the region. ~



PRESIDENT'S LETTER



Hello All,

The recent sunny days sure have been a welcome break from the winter stormy weather, though I hear more rain is on the way. I suspect a lot of you have taken advantage of this clement weather to get your yard work done.

Fran has been out in the yard, trimming and raking to beat the band, and the landscape looks pretty good.

For me, it was an excellent time to prune the vines in the vineyard. Pruning time is a good time to look at how the vines are doing. All the leaves are gone, and the wood has hardened off so you can see the relative strengths of the canes, and you can pick which ones when pruned will become hardy spurs for the spring budbreak.

Alas, the powdery mildew outbreak that we had last summer has left its mark on most of the canes, though hopefully the damage is only cosmetic. Dark streaks remain on the canes, and some of the smaller canes were dead.

On the whole, however, the vines seemed to be in good shape. I think a careful regimen of sulphur spray and other fungicides starting in early spring will keep the powdery mildew at bay.

As I pruned I could see next year's buds on the cordons and the spurs. Each bud will break in the spring and become a new cane with leaves, blooms, and later bunches of grapes.

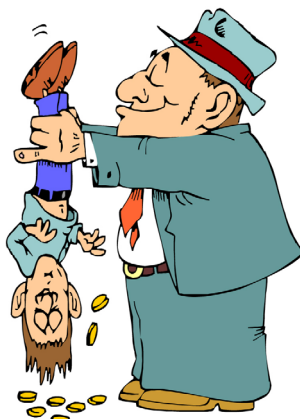
To be a gardener or a wine grower, you can't let setbacks like powdery mildew get you down. There is always next year. As Will Rogers once said, "The farmer has to be an optimist or he wouldn't still be a farmer."

Good luck to everyone in their gardening this year.

Sincerely,

John Thomson

President

CITY OF SACRAMENTO
CRASH TAX DRAWS IRE

Last month the Sacramento City Council approved a "crash tax" to recover costs for emergency response to accidents in the city. Adopted as a new city ordinance, the tax — called a fee or "fire recovery charge" by city employees — will take effect by the end of February.

The fee offers a way for cash-strapped communities to generate revenue to cover budget shortfalls and avoid service cuts or layoffs. Theoretically, it is a cost recovery mechanism, but it is expected to generate between \$300,000 and \$500,000 annually that the city would otherwise have to cover on its own.

The charge only applies to people who live outside the city and are found at fault for a vehicle crash or fire, structure fire or other incident that requires emergency services. Residents are exempt—and in the final version—so are business owners who live outside the city but are majority owners of businesses located on property inside the city. That also includes rental property owners.

The city plans to hire Roseville-based Fire Recovery USA to do the billing in exchange for a portion of the proceeds collected, up to a total of \$775,000 by the end of 2013.

The ordinance comes at a time when legislation is pending in California to prohibit this kind of "car tax."

The fees are controversial because they lead to a confusing patchwork of liability by geographic area.

Senate Bill 49 by Republican Senator Tony Strickland from Thousand Oaks would not cover laws already in effect, however. Strickland says he understands the need, but sees the fee "as nothing more than a double tax" because local taxes that residents already pay are supposed to cover these kinds of services.

A recent Harris Interactive Poll conducted for the Property Casualty Insurers Association of America showed that seventy-six percent of those asked think accident response fees are not necessary because their taxes already cover the cost.

In addition, seventy percent of those polled do not think it's right to charge only nonresidents the charges.

The Sacramento Metro Chamber of Commerce and insurance industry advocates have denounced the move, which follows similar ordinances put into place in roughly 60 other cities and fire districts around the state.

On Sunday, Yolo County Supervisor Matt Rexroad said the board was looking into charging the residents of the city of Sacramento a crash tax if they had a crash in that county.

The city of Roseville, which was one of the region's early adopters of a crash tax two years ago has reportedly repealed their ordinance. When the city approved the policy in February 2009, it expected to collect \$100,000 annually from nonresident drivers but to date, the city has collected \$40,000 through the fee.

Roseville City Councilman John Allard, who is in a crowded field vying for the 4th Assembly District seat that was left open by Ted Gaines' move to the state Senate, spearheaded the Roseville repeal move. ~

MORE PRODUCTS ARE
GETTING SMALLER

Does it seem like some products don't last as long as they used to? From toothpaste to tuna fish, hot dogs to hand soap, companies have been shaving ounces and inches from packages for years. Consumer Reports (CR) is an expert, independent, nonprofit organization whose mission is to work for a fair, just, and safe marketplace for all consumers. In their latest investigation, featured in the February issue of Consumer Reports Magazine, CR found that more and more products are getting downsized.

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SMALLER *(continued)*

CR offers these tips to help consumers shop the aisles with ease: First, look at different brands. Not all manufacturers downsize. Minute Maid still sells its orange juice in half-gallons, and Ben & Jerry's packs its ice cream in pints. Second, compare unit price. Look at cost per ounce, per quart, per pound, per sheet. Promotions change, making one size or another cheaper from week to week. Third, try store brands. House brands are usually 25 to 30 percent cheaper than name brands and are often at least as good. Fourth, stock up and save. Supermarkets sell staples such as paper goods, cereal, and soups at or below cost and rotate them regularly. Many items go on sale at predictable intervals, so stock up until the next sale. Fifth, buy in bulk. Warehouse clubs offer everyday low prices on large sizes or multipacks. Last, contact the company. When Consumer Reports asked customer-service representatives why a product had been downsized, they often offered coupons as an apology.

Use these handy consumer tips to become a smarter shopper. ~



Afternoon in February

The day is ending,
The night is descending;
The marsh is frozen,
The river dead.

Through clouds like ashes
The red sun flashes
On village windows
That glimmer red.

—Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

 *Happy Valentine's Day*

**PROPANE UPDATE**

Propane prices on the West Coast rose slightly recently, no doubt as a reflection of higher gasoline prices, with which the price of propane tracks. Offsetting the upswing in gasoline prices is the slowdown in demand in contemplation of warmer weather this coming Spring.

The Targa San Ramon wholesale price of propane was \$1.62 a gallon on or about February 12, 2011. The JS West contract delivery charge remains 6 cents per gallon for Woodridge-Bridlewood-Sierra Crossing contract customers, making the current laid-in price \$1.68 per gallon.

With well over 300 homes now signed up, the markup over laid-in-price is 50 cents a gallon, making the JS West per-gallon contract delivered price \$2.18 per gallon. Last year at this time the delivered price from Amerigas (including hazmat and fuel charges) was about \$2.89 per gallon.

The US Energy Information Agency reports that as of February 7, 2011, the average retail price of propane East of the Rockies was \$2.83 per gallon (they have no data for West of the Rockies). ~

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**FEBRUARY BLAC MEETING HELD, MARCH MEETING DATE SET**

The regular monthly meeting of the Bass Lake Action Committee was held on February 7, 2011. There was no guest speaker.

The next BLAC meeting will be held on March 7, 2011, at 7:00 PM at the home of John and Fran Thomson, 501 Kirkwood Court, Woodridge, El Dorado Hills, 530-677-3039. The guest speaker will be El Dorado Hills Community Services District's new Covenants, Conditions and Restrictions (CC&R) Compliance Officer, Jeff Routsong. All BLAC members are cordially encouraged to attend. For further information contact Kathy Prevost, 530-672-6836. ~

The Bass Lake Bulletin is published monthly seven to ten days after the regular monthly BLAC meeting, by the Bass Lake Action Committee, El Dorado Hills, California Copyright © 2011. Permission to reproduce unabridged articles is granted if appropriate attribution is given to the Bass Lake Bulletin

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