



# BASS LAKE BULLETIN

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The Voice of the Bass Lake Community

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## BLAC HOSTS SHERIFF, CHP AT SEPTEMBER, OCTOBER MEETINGS

Bass Lake Action Committee was fortunate to be able to host two top law enforcement leaders in the county at its last two meetings: El Dorado County Sheriff John D'Agostini, and Lieutenant Chuck King, Commander of the California Highway Patrol Placerville office.



Sheriff John D'Agostini spoke at our September meeting. Following is a summary of John's remarks at that meeting.

John said that things were going well and were as he expected, and that there were no surprises. The Department is working very hard. The budget showed some problems with overtime; as a result, from January 3 to June 30, \$1.9 million in overtime was cut. It was accomplished by simply looking at things a different way. For example, if an officer got sick, they looked to see if someone who was on duty was available to replace him before calling in another officer. Also, the department is making better use of personnel between Placerville and South Lake Tahoe. At the end of the fiscal year, the department gave the county back a surplus of \$1.04 million.

The Sheriff's Office could not run without the help of the volunteers in the Sheriff's Team of Active Retirees (STAR) program. They logged over 27,000 hours of community service last year. We should all recognize the contribution they are making to the community.

Changes were made in the concealed carry weapon (CCW) policy administered by the Sheriff's Office to make the application requirements easier. The process has been

streamlined, and now all a person needs for "good cause" is personal protection or self-defense. In the first six months, the number of CCW holders doubled with about a 2% denial rate. Only 8 people were denied out of about 400 applicants.

John was asked if the change in CCW policy made any difference in the crime rate.

"Not really, we have not seen any. The biggest crime issue is property crime. Recently we created a task force to deal with a few areas with a high theft rate, and within two weeks 10 suspects were identified and 8 were in custody. That worked well, but we are beginning to notice thefts going up again, and it is likely we will put together another task force soon.

"We are also are changing the schedule around to put more deputies on the road. The schedule change will also allow the department to have two Special Enforcement Teams (SETs). One effective method used by the SET is to patrol an area with a high theft rate and stop suspicious cars at times when their presence is suspicious. We find 'good cause' to do the stop (e.g., a tail light out), then, make sure they really belong there. For example, you can expect to be stopped for trivial violations if you live in one of those high crime areas and are coming home at 3:00 in the morning."

The department is applying for a grant to do a Total Policing Project. Several communities have gone to the concept with good results. Total Policing is where all community resources are brought to bear, not only to solve problems, but to address community needs using all levels of the local government, with law enforcement

officers being the enablers. Depending upon the jurisdiction, this may be city services or county services. The goal of Total Policing is a long-term and lasting solution of not only eliminating the problem, but seeing to it that the problem goes away, and that what is left, is properly maintained.

John asked if we have a community watch program. Bridlewood folks said that they have some security, and some BLAC members replied that they tried, but did not have enough time to get it off the ground. However, the neighbors do look out for one another.

John said that the program can be as formal or informal as one likes, but the important thing is vigilance. As an example, a lady was working at her home office and heard a noise. When she looked up, a strange man was there. He bolted for the door, but she was able to get a description of him and the car. A few weeks later, a neighborhood watch captain spotted a car with the same description and called the Sheriff's Office. The deputies arrived in time to see a female suspect come out of the bushes with a pillowcase of stolen goods. So it works!

John was told that some of us are concerned over the medical marijuana stores in the area.

John replied that he believes the current dispensaries are going way beyond what the law allows: "I am meeting with County Counsel and the District Attorney on this issue. We are working on the issue but I can't talk about it at this time."

He was asked what, if anything, has the Red Hawk Casino done to the crime rate?

"The Sheriff's Office has been keeping statistics on casino-related crimes since it opened," John replied. "Currently the Sheriff's Department gets \$500,000 a year from the casino. But our statistics show a cost of well over a \$1,000,000 per year. So there is a significant expense incurred as a result of the casino."

John was asked to tell us about the helicopter.

"It is a fantastic resource," said John. "There are some little bugs to work out, but it is going to work fine. All of the costs are

*(continued on page 2)*



## PRESIDENT'S LETTER



Hello Everyone,

This month's Bulletin has a big article devoted to the views of our two top law-enforcement officers in the county: Sheriff John D'Agostini and CHP Lieutenant Commander Chuck King in Placerville. Together they are responsible for most of the civil and vehicular activities of those county residents that do not live in the cities of South Lake Tahoe and Placerville, who have their own police forces.

The dividing line between the jurisdictions of the Placerville and Rancho Cordova CHP offices is currently Bass Lake Road. It appears that sometime soon the Placerville CHP station will take over all of western El Dorado County, to include El Dorado Hills. The dividing line will then be the county line, which will be much more rational.

Those of you who live around Bass Lake should be aware that the EID no longer uses the lake in its water operations, and will shortly declare it to be redundant property. As such, it will probably offer the lake and its surrounding land, with the exception of its maintenance yard below the Dam, to the El Dorado Hills CSD as a recreation area. In anticipation of the recreational use, the EID is contemplating opening the lake up to youth fishing in the near future, and is in talks with California Fish and Game to stock the lake with fish.

I hear that the EDH Chamber of Commerce, after being vehemently against the El Dorado Hills cityhood movement five years ago, is contemplating joining with local developers and others to push an El Dorado Hills cityhood project. What has changed? Current cost estimates for incorporating a new city are in the half-a-million-dollar range. We shall see what happens.

Sincerely,

*John Thomson*

President

SHERIFF, CHP *(continued)*

going to be paid by the helicopter owners except the gas, which will be paid for out of Federal Forfeiture Funds. It is a wonderful policing resource, and it is free to the county. The gentlemen that own the helicopter are paying the high cost of maintenance."

Someone wanted to know if there is a problem with gangs, and whether they are related to the casino.

John replied that we do have gang members in the county. They are targeting us not so much because we are a wealthy community but because they want to recruit our children into their gangs.

He also spoke about the jail situation: "The realignment of the jails is going to be a big issue for us. By order of a three-judge panel the state prison system must reduce its population by 32,000 over the next two years. So to reduce the burden of the state prison system, incarceration will be shifted to local governments. For El Dorado County it means an increase of about 120 to 150 inmates over the next few years. There is a bill in the State Assembly to provide funding for the realignment, but it has not yet passed. Even if it is enacted, it will only cover about 25% of the additional cost.

"This is a new way to operate, and it is not good for counties. Some inmates could be in the county jails for 3, 5, 10 or 15 years. There are a lot of issues that have not been resolved."

That being the end of the presentation, BLAC members expressed their thanks for Sheriff D'Agostini's presentation and gave him a big round of applause.



Lieutenant Chuck King, Commander of the Placerville CHP office, spoke at the October meeting. Following is a summary of Chuck's remarks at that meeting.

Kathy Prevost introduced Lieutenant King and referenced topics from Sheriff D'Agostini's recent visit and asked how things had gone since Lt. King's presentation to BLAC last year.

Chuck said that he will have been Commander for two years in November. Those have been challenging times because of the budget. The Police Academy has been closed down for about a year. Statewide, jobs that become vacant through attrition are not being filled. Fortunately, they are

only down one officer. The Governor has approved them to reopen the Academy in January, and Chuck expects that he will eventually have 240 officers out on the road.

Regarding current issues in the area, Chuck said that there have been some kids putting cars into skids near Sienna Ridge at night. The CHP is aware of it and are on the lookout.

Chuck said that he spoke with the El Dorado County Department of Transportation regarding Silver Springs Parkway. They expect it to be done all the way to Bass Lake Road in about five years. They will start at the Green Valley Road end and work toward Bass Lake Road.

Right now CHP patrol on Bass Lake Road is split between Rancho Cordova and Placerville, according to Chuck. A year from now, responsibility for El Dorado County to the county line could shift completely to Placerville. He will get additional officers in Placerville if that happens.

Chuck said that last time he visited BLAC we asked how the Red Hawk Casino would affect crime in the area. He said that since January 2009, there have been 41 DUI arrests coming out of Red Hawk Casino. That is not a significant increase in DUIs, he said. The CHP doesn't receive any extra funding from the Sheriff's office. If the CHP provides policing for special casino events, they do charge, but there haven't been many events of that nature recently.

Regarding reportable traffic accidents on Bass Lake Road, Chuck had the following statistics: in 2008 there were sixteen reported accidents, in 2009 fifteen, in 2010 eleven, and in 2011 five accidents. He said that the County DOT conducts a traffic survey periodically to determine whether a road is a high traffic call area. They do not currently consider Bass Lake Road to be one; however, the DOT will conduct their next traffic survey on Bass Lake Road in 2012.

Chuck said that a press release will be going out shortly from the Placerville CHP warning that winter weather is coming and encouraging drivers to slow down, leave early, increase traveling distance between cars, and carry chains, blankets, and extra water.

Hal Erpenbeck said that people are probably not aware that windshield wiper solution sold outside of El Dorado County probably does not contain antifreeze. He found out when he bought solution in Sacramento County and had the liquid freeze to his windshield on a winter trip to Lake Tahoe. He believes that windshield wiper

*(continued on page 3)*



I told you that bullet train was trouble!

## THE END OF THE LINE FOR HIGH-SPEED RAIL?

Congress is about to cut the money for high speed rail (HSR) development, which will probably derail the proposed California bullet train.

In September, the Senate Appropriations Committee ended rail boosters' hopes of getting a meaningful appropriation for high-speed rail in the new (FY 2012) fiscal year budget. By including only a token \$100 million for high-speed rail as a "placeholder" in their FY 2012 budget recommendations (a sum that is likely to be further cut in the House-Senate negotiations on the FY 2012 appropriations), Senate appropriators have done more than merely declare a temporary slowdown in the high-speed rail program.

Along with their House counterparts who had denied the program any new money, the Senate lawmakers have sent a bipartisan signal that Congress has no appetite for pouring more money into a venture that many lawmakers have come to view as a poster child for wasteful government spending.

Meanwhile, the one true U.S. high-speed rail project – California's LA-to-San Francisco bullet train – is beset by mounting political and financial problems. Nearly three years after the passage of the enabling Proposition 1A and less than a year before construction is scheduled to start on the first line segment in the Central Valley, construction costs have doubled the 2008 estimate.

There is no evident source of where the additional funds to complete Phase One (LA-SF) system will come from since the prospect of both further federal money and private risk capital is remote. As one recent report put it, the project is being pursued "in the confident hope of a miracle."

The systems' first stage – a \$10-14 billion

160-mile line segment in the Central Valley from Bakersfield to Merced – has run into determined opposition from local residents and farming interests during the ongoing environmental impact review.

At the policy level, the project has been subject recently to several analyses. First came a critical report by California legislature's fiscal watchdog, the non-partisan Legislative Analyst's Office (LAO). It questioned the Rail Authority's cost estimates and its decision to build the first segment in a sparsely populated region where travel demand is not expected to be sufficient to cover operating expenses.

The LAO concluded that if the total cost of building the Phase One system were to grow as much as the revised Authority estimate for the Central Valley segment (an increase of 57%), the whole system would cost not \$43 billion as originally estimated, but \$67 billion. Concern about escalating costs and overly optimistic ridership forecasts were echoed by an independent Peer Review Group and numerous newspaper editorials.

(From an article by Ken Orski, *New Geography*.) ~



## PROPANE PRICES CONTINUE HIGHER

Wholesale propane prices continued to trend higher than this time last year. The latest wholesale price at Benicia California is \$1.82 per gallon. The benchmark Mont Belvieu Texas wholesale price is currently \$1.45 per gallon. Last year the Mont Belvieu wholesale price was 1.27 per gallon.

The current delivered price to JS West contract price customers in Woodridge, Bridlewood Canyon and Sierra Crossing is \$2.38 (1.82 + .06 transportation + .50 markup) per gallon. Last year at this time the JS West contract price was \$1.90 per gallon.

The difference between this year and last year for JS West contract customers is the higher wholesale price, not any increase by the supplier. Previous articles in the Bulletin have described the tighter propane market in the United States, due in part to lower inventories and increased U.S. propane exports to Asia and Europe. ~

## SHERIFF, CHP (continued)

solution purchased in El Dorado County still contains antifreeze, but he advised asking the vendor.

Kathy Prevost asked about marijuana and drug issues in El Dorado County. Chuck said that his department supports the Department of Justice during the growing period for marijuana. They send CHP officers into the forests to eradicate any marijuana they find. They cut it and burn it in the fields. Chuck said that it is rare that they find anyone to arrest.

Regarding marijuana dispensaries, Chuck said that he knows that the Sheriff would like not to have them in the county, but he cannot legally bar them.

Regarding gangs, Hal Erpenbeck said that someone he knew told him that West Sacramento gang members are coming to El Dorado County to rob homes as a "rite of passage." Chuck said that he had not heard about this, but that the CHP does have meetings regarding gang activity, and they work closely with the Sheriff's office on gang-related issues.

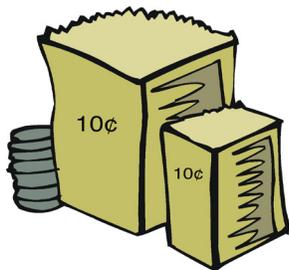
When asked how many miles in his automobile a CHP officer averages, Chuck said that on a ten-hour shift, an officer would average 200 miles per day. They average fifteen to twenty traffic stops per day.

Fran Thomson asked Chuck what a driver should do when pulled over by a CHP officer. Chuck advised keeping one's hands on the wheel, turning on the interior light if it is at nighttime, and waiting for instructions from the officer.

Members asked what they could do to assist the CHP. Chuck said that the best thing residents could do is to inform the CHP's Public Information Officer, Dan Stark ([d.stark@CHP.CA.Gov](mailto:d.stark@CHP.CA.Gov)) to make him aware of any issues.

BLAC members expressed their thanks for Lt. King's presentation and gave him a big round of applause. ~





## LAWSUIT FILED OVER LA GROCERY BAG BAN, RECYCLE CHARGE

When government creates a policy, citizens pay for it. In this case, government has decided that grocery stores should not be allowed to give its customers plastic or paper bags.

The legislature has prohibited cities and counties from imposing fees on plastic bags. As a result, there is now a patchwork of local bans, which causes headaches for supermarket chains that have to follow different rules in different places; the bans also unnecessarily reduce consumer choice.

Recently the California Supreme Court ruled that cities may ban plastic grocery bags. Many cities that held off on imposing bans until the case was decided are now expected to move ahead.

A major lawsuit using the provisions of Proposition 26 to protect taxpayers from hidden taxes has been filed in Los Angeles Superior Court against the L.A. County ordinance banning the use of plastic carryout shopping bags. The lawsuit will be filed by Neilsen, Merksamer, Parrinello, Gross & Leoni on behalf of plastics manufacturer



October

October's the month  
When the smallest breeze  
Gives us a shower  
Of autumn leaves.

Bonfires and pumpkins,  
Leaves sailing down—  
October is red  
And golden and brown.

Hilex-Poly and several individuals.

The Los Angeles County ordinance prohibits stores from providing customers plastic carryout bags in the unincorporated areas of the county. Under the ordinance, stores that provide recyclable paper carryout bags to customers must charge 10 cents for each bag provided by the store. The suit charges that the 10-cent charge for using paper bags is a violation of Proposition 26, which requires that a fee cover only the cost of a service. "The county is requiring a 10-cent charge for a bag that stores used to give away for free," said attorney Steve Merksamer who represents Hilex-Poly."

Proposition 26, passed by voters in the November 2010 election, was intended to stop hidden taxes by setting standards to prevent taxes from being disguised as fees.

Merksamer said the county thinks it insulated itself from the Prop 26 provisions because the retail stores collect the fee rather than a government entity. However, he says the ordinance requires the retailer to keep the money and do with it what the government tells it to do. Monies retained by the store can only be used for costs associated with complying with the ordinance, actual costs of providing recyclable paper bags, or educational materials or campaigns for reusable bags.

In effect, the retailer is acting as a surrogate for the government. The County is using the retailers to promote its recycling program. At issue: Can businesses be required to collect monies and spend them on programs mandated by the government that requires the charge? Is that not another way to tax? If the measure is indeed a tax for a specific purpose, it would require a two-thirds vote of the people under Prop. 26.

Plaintiffs hope for a relatively quick hearing from the court. (From an article by Stephen Frank.) ~

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## NOVEMBER BLAC MEETING, DECEMBER CHRISTMAS PARTY SET

The next BLAC meeting will be held at the home of Hal and Barbara Erpenbeck, 9045 Orchid Shade Drive (Woodridge) El Dorado Hills, on November 7, 2011, at 7:00 PM. No speaker is scheduled. Pursuant to the Bylaws, nominations for officers for 2012 will be entertained, and the candidates set, at this meeting. Persons wishing to attend may call Hal or Barbara at 530-677-5533 for directions. All BLAC members are cordially encouraged to attend.



The December meeting will be our annual Election Meeting and Pot Luck Christmas Party, and will be held at 6:00 PM on December 5, 2011, at the home of John and Fran Thomson.

For further information regarding meetings, please contact Kathy Prevost, 530-672-6836. ~

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