

Everyone was doing it

- Nearly 84 percent of Nevada County's registered voters cast a ballot on November 2 — the highest voter turnout on record for the county.

- The final voter turnout in Placer County was 84.33 percent, which is a county record as far as recent (post-1970's) elections go.

Armchair hunting

Texan John Underwood has spent \$10,000 setting up a system to allow anyone in the world the chance to hunt on his 330-acre ranch...via the internet. Texas officials are reportedly not quite sure what to make of it.

~ CNN, November 16, 2004

Speaking of hunting

A new video game by Scotland-based Traffic Games gives players a chance to make history...or at least recreate a version of it. In "JKF: Reloaded," players sit at a sixth-floor window (where Lee Harvey Oswald reportedly sat) and well, assassinate President John F. Kennedy. According to Newsweek, a spokesperson for Sen. Ted Kennedy would only say, "It's despicable."

~ Newsweek, November 29, 2004

And a foiled hunt

A group of dolphins may have spoiled a great white shark's snack off the coast of New Zealand. Four lifeguards were on a training swim when a pod of dolphins herded the humans into a circle, keeping them there for about 40 minutes, until a rescue boat neared and the shark took off.

~ CBC News, November 24, 2004

Maybe it should cede

"If Wal-Mart were an individual economy, it would rank as China's eighth-biggest trading partner, ahead of Russia, Australia and Canada," Xu Jun, Wal-Mart China's director of external affairs, told China Business Weekly.

~ Business Weekly, November 30, 2004

Siller Ranch Gets Another Tentative Approval

Placer County Board of Supervisors:
Bill Santucci
Robert Weygant
Harriet White (current board chair)
Ted Gaines
Rex Bloomfield

December 7, 2004
 ~ from Kathleen's notes

Siller Ranch, the largest housing project planned for Martis Valley to date, yet again failed to receive final approval at the December 7 Placer County Board of Supervisors meeting held in Auburn.

At the meeting, the board once more tentatively approved the controversial project, with one caveat. Placer supervisors want their planning staff to meet with Truckee officials to discuss the county's recommendation that DMB/Highlands Group (Siller's developer) provide 124 employee housing units as part of the project. Truckee officials say this number is way too low — they believe the developer should be required to provide 278 employee housing units.

When Siller Ranch was originally approved June 24 by the county's Planning Commission, the Town of Truckee and a group of five environmental organizations appealed. At the October 5 Siller Ranch appeal hearing, the Placer Board denied the appeals and tentatively approved the Siller project, requesting that staff come back with a plan for affordable housing, and that the staff work cooperatively with Truckee officials on that plan.

However, Truckee officials said they were never able to meet with the Placer Planning Staff, nor did they receive the staff's report on Siller Ranch employee housing until December 6, the day before the board meeting. A more limited preliminary document had been sent to Truckee officials 10 days before that.

"The [Placer Planning] Staff and the board failed to engage in the spirit of cooperation" that was promised at the October 5

meeting, Truckee's Vice-Mayor Beth Ingalls said. Even if Truckee officials accepted the Placer Planning Staff's determination of the number of workforce housing units needed, "this project is still devoid of an employee housing plan" for the type and location of the units, Ms. Ingalls said.

Fred Yeager, planning director for Placer County, presented the staff report. Mr. Yeager said he tried to meet with Truckee officials as the report was being developed but schedules never meshed.

Truckee Mayor Craig Threshie said: "We're once again stunned by the recommendations presented by the [Placer Planning] Staff." He added that the number of employee housing units for the Siller project "has been reduced each time it's been presented."

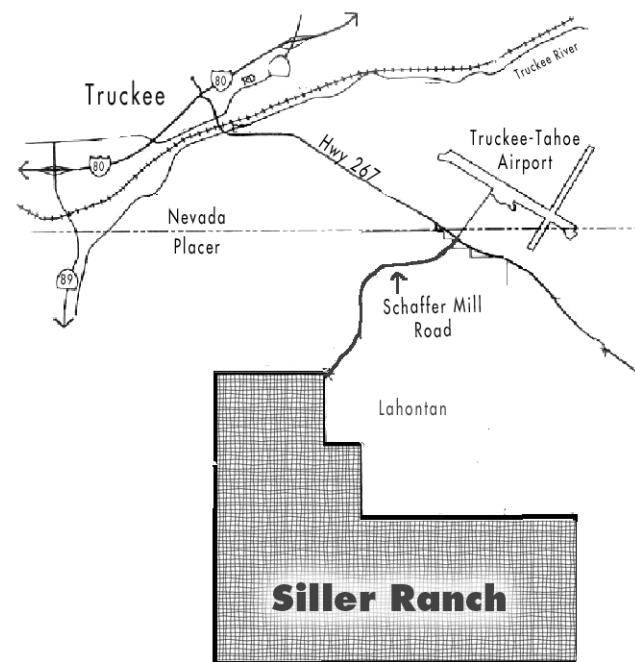
On December 2, the Workforce Housing Association of Truckee Tahoe (WHATT) sent a letter to the Placer Board, commenting on the Planning Staff's workforce housing findings. In the letter, WHATT Executive Director Rachelle Pellissier said, "Our community needs your help now more than ever. Do not allow Siller Ranch to understate its employee generation impact."

Truckee officials and WHATT want the Placer Planning Staff to use the Placer County Draft Employee Housing Ordinance as its guide for determining how many employee-housing units should be built as part of Siller Ranch. But the Placer Planning Staff has developed its own formula for the employee housing requirements for this project.

Board Supervisor Robert Weygant encouraged greater collaboration with the Town of Truckee on crafting a formula for determining workforce-housing requirements for development projects. Other board members were clearly tired of the process. "I think we did everything we had to do and I'm ready to move forward," Supervisor Bill

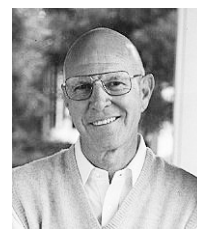
Santucci said.

As part of the October 5 tentative approval, the board also had asked staff to come up with a way to provide public access to Moonlight Meadow (located on the eastern side of Siller Ranch) and a plan to accommodate the proposed multiuse trail from Truckee to Kings Beach. Planning Staff addressed trail access questions to the board's satisfaction at the December 7 meeting.



The Siller Ranch project proposes a gated community consisting of 726 units on approximately 2,177 acres and includes an 18-hole golf course. The plan assumes nine phases of build-out, with projected project completion in 2023.

The Placer Board directed staff to convene with Truckee officials on the workforce housing matter in the next 60 days. They then scheduled the next board meeting for February 22 at 1:30 p.m. At that time, the board will try again to certify the EIR, adopt the statement of overriding considerations and proposed findings, approve the use permit and approve the tentative subdivision map for Siller. The February 22 meeting location and agenda will be posted on the Placer County Board web site at www.placer.ca.gov. Contact the board at 530.889.4010.



Bill Santucci

TTUSD: Fixing Muddy Fields and Charging for the Yellow Bus

Tahoe Truckee Unified School District Board meeting, November 17
 from Mayumi's notes

- The Tahoe Truckee High School playing fields need work. "The East-West field is like a pond at times," said Chris Cooper, the district's maintenance director, at the November 17 meeting. Compelled by a loud cry for help from parents, coaches, and student athletes, the district is looking at how to revitalize, maintain, and possibly redesign the fields. "Once we have the

numbers, then we can sit down and figure out how to get the funding," board president Cindy Gustafson said.

One funding idea in particular was discussed at length during the meeting. For four years, parent Gary Lewis has been researching the possibility of a sponsored billboard. "I've seen this program work in high schools across the nation," he said.

Our staff has said they "have concerns" about the billboard proposal, but they haven't elaborated on what those concerns

are, board member Karen Van Epps said. "I want the questions answered."

The board directed staff to further research the proposal.

- In an effort to further trim the district budget, TTUSD examined the possibility of charging a fee for students riding the yellow bus. A proposed program, based on other districts, could bring the district an estimated \$100,000, according to Tom Miller, the district's director of transportation. "I don't see the cost savings worth hurting community good will," Ms. Van Epps said.