



43 NEW Bargains in Today's CLASSIFIEDS!



THE UNION

Friday, April 19, 2013

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WEATHER MAN



H: 73°
L: 46°

See full forecast, Page A9

Partly cloudy

NEWS BRIEFS

Former Consolidated Fire chair served recall papers

Keith Grueneberg, who stepped down as chairman of the Nevada County Consolidated Fire District earlier this year, was served with papers prior to Thursday evening's district meeting that notified him of an intent to circulate a petition to recall him from his seat on the board.

The former chairman has been at the center of a swirl of controversy, and much was listed on the notice of intent.

Grueneberg has violated the trust of the District's constituents, the notice states.

"First, he did not adhere to the intent of the use of funds from the 2012 Tax Measure. He negotiated and gave back an unbudgeted amount of approximately \$20,000 worth of concessions to the firefighters," the notice states.

"Second, against the intent of the 2012 Tax Measure, as lead negotiator, he has negotiated the proposed January 2013-June 2014 firefighters union contract to give a significant increase to Salaries and Benefits, \$81,000-\$100,000.

"Third, Grueneberg has violated the District's Discrimination and Harassment Policy, Electronic Communication Policy, State and Federal Labor Laws as they relate to protected class. He circulated a video with racial overtones by email to the Firefighters Union President, who then forwarded to other members of the District. The email was disparaging and derogatory as well as insulting to the administrative staff it was directed toward.

"Lastly, Grueneberg has publicly stated his aversion to keeping the public informed of Board decisions and actions as outlined in California's state constitution requiring transparency."

Check back with TheUnion.com today and see Saturday's print edition of The Union for more on this developing story.

— Matthew Renda

Images of suspects in Boston bombing

BOSTON — The FBI released photos and video Thursday of two suspects in the Boston Marathon bombing and asked for the public's help in identifying them.

— Associated Press

Scan this QR code with your smart phone or go to TheUnion.com.



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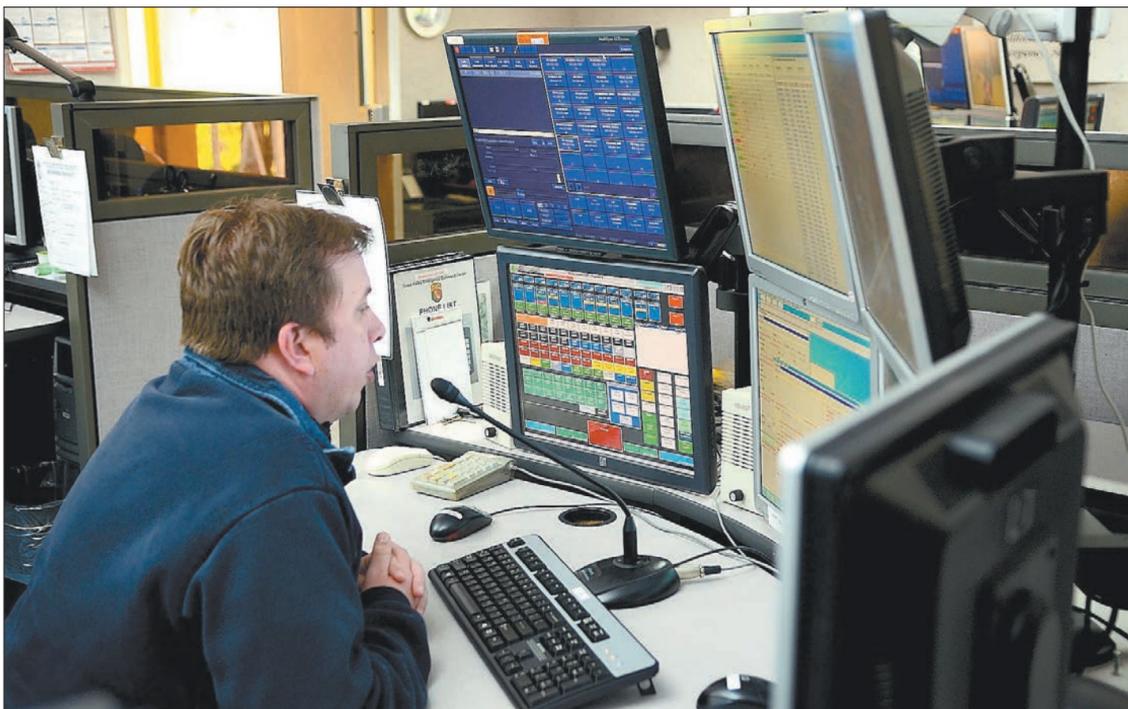
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Staying on top of the curveball



Steve Bradley dispatches for the Nevada County Fire departments Wednesday at the Grass Valley Interagency Command Center on Loma Rica Drive, near the Nevada County Airport, in Grass Valley.

Local emergency command center dispatches for dozens of agencies

BY LIZ KELLAR
Staff Writer

The unassuming tan building tucked into the U.S. Forest Service compound next to the airport could arguably be the most important structure in Nevada County.

It's from here that a team of Cal Fire emergency medical dispatchers handle 911 calls for 31 separate agencies, including all of Nevada County's fire departments, as well as portions of

Placer and Yuba counties.

The Grass Valley Emergency Command Center also dispatches for Sierra Nevada Ambulance.

Specialist Lynne Tolmachoff of the interagency center off Loma Rica Drive.

The Nevada-Yuba-Placer

"A lot of people don't know we're here, and they don't know what we do."

— FIRE PREVENTION SPECIALIST LYNNE TOLMACHOFF

"A lot of people don't know we're here, and they don't know what we do," said Fire Prevention

Unit's emergency command center is probably the most diverse in the state, she noted.

"We dispatch all the Cal Fire resources in our unit," said veteran dispatcher Tony Peard, adding that those consist of 20 engines, three dozers, five hand crews from Washington Ridge Camp, one air attack plane and two air tankers from the Grass Valley Air Attack Base.

But the center's personnel wear a lot more hats than that, Peard said.

They are responsible for

See DISPATCH A7

■ NEVADA CITY

CalPERS presses for 'permanent' police chief

BY CHRISTOPHER ROSACKER
Staff Writer

Little more than a year after Nevada City hired a new part-time police chief, the state's employee pension agency is forcing the town to initiate a process to seek a more "permanent" police chief — a move that could see Chief Jim Wickham replaced a lot sooner than originally expected.

"(CalPERS) is absolutely the problem," said City Manager David Brennan.

"PERS does not care about a local government's financial situations. They are only concerned with getting as many people paying into the system as possible."

The matter comes on the heels of the city's previously fledgling budget being propped up by a 3/8-cent sales tax increase approved in 2012 that put its overall sales tax at 8.50 percent.

The increase was approved by more than three-fourths of voters in November and took effect at the beginning of April with first revenues expected at the end of July.

Part of the city's justification for needing close to \$400,000 extra in the first year alone was that the city had lost \$487,000 in tax revenue from 2008-09 levels — forcing the city to staff some of its most prominent positions with part-timers, including the city manager, city attorney, city engineer and the police chief.

These positions were staffed with retirees, able to subsist on their part-time incomes thanks, in part, to their pensions. As long as they didn't work more than

See CALPERS A6

Gold Country Lenders trial postponed to September

BY LIZ KELLAR
Staff Writer

The jury trial for Gold Country Lenders CEO Philip Lester and CFO Susan Laferte has been postponed yet again, this time to mid-September.

The complex fraud case, which is expected to last at least six weeks and involve more than 50 witnesses, originally was set for April, then moved to June 4.

Nevada County Superior Court Judge Candace Heidelberger granted a motion to continue the trial in court

Thursday but warned the attorneys that she "would not look kindly" on any further requests for postponement.

Laferte and Lester were indicted by a criminal grand jury for allegedly defrauding investors of millions of dollars over a period of eight years.

The charges allege that Lester issued fractional deeds of trust secured by property that he either owned outright or in partnership with other developers, and Laferte solicited money for projects that was used to pay investors on other projects in a

risky shell game.

On many of the projects, investors allegedly were not informed that Lester was the property owner, partner, developer, appraiser and/or borrower, as well as the loan broker.

Read more on the Web at TheUnion.com

Lester allegedly had no money of his own to fund the projects or pay the investors.

The criminal complaint filed by California Deputy Attorney General Maggy Krell originally

also named Lester's wife, Ellen, and Jonathan Blinder as co-defendants.

Krell dismissed two felony counts of conspiracy and securities fraud against Ellen Lester in November and dismissed four felony counts of securities fraud against Blinder in March.

Ken Tribby and Greg Klein — the court-appointed public defenders for Philip Lester and Laferte, respectively — indicated in court Thursday they plan to file a motion to dismiss the information and possibly a motion to set aside the grand jury

holding order.

But Klein told Heidelberger he was "weeks away" from that filing, even though they have brought Jenny Darlington-Person in to help write the motion.

"The more we work on it, the more it becomes a sinkhole," he said.

Tribby agreed, noting the transcript from the grand jury indictment was 831 pages.

Krell expressed some frustration with the slow pace being set

See COURT A6

■ NATIONAL LIBRARY WEEK

Community support important to libraries

BY JESSICA HUDSON
Special to The Union

As you have "heard" me say throughout this week's series of articles, your support matters to the Nevada County Library system.

The public library system is available to support the educational, recreational, economic development and enjoyment needs of our community. I hope that you have had a chance

See LIBRARIES A7

EDITOR'S NOTE

This is the fifth and final installment in a series of stories about the Nevada County Library system in recognition of National Library Week.

A donation envelope has been inserted into today's edition of The Union, with which we encourage you to show your support for our libraries, which serve such a vital role in our community.

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