

Pot sales hit record in March

By Geoff Dornan
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Nevada legal marijuana sales hit a record in March, topping \$41 million.

Taxation Director Bill Anderson said that pushes total marijuana tax revenues to \$48.97 million through the first nine months of the fiscal year. That total is just shy of the total projected tax revenues for the entire fiscal year.

Anderson said \$18.5 million in tax revenue was generated by the wholesale marijuana tax that's paid by cultivators of both medical and recreational pot. The lion's share was generated by the retail marijuana tax that comes from sales of recreational marijuana — \$30.47 million. That means taxes generated by recreational sales have already exceeded the total projected for

the fiscal year by \$4 million.

For March alone, tax collections were \$7.09 million, significantly higher than the second largest month of collections in February, at \$5.95 million.

"March numbers continue to point to a strong likelihood that Nevada will close out the fiscal year this June with much more robust marijuana revenue collections than anticipated," said Anderson in a statement released Wednesday.

Through nine months of the fiscal year, Anderson said total pot sales were \$385.99 million.

The wholesale tax rate is 15 percent and revenues from that tax along with fees, penalties and assessments go to local governments and the state K-12 education budget. The retail tax is 10 percent and those revenues go into the state's Rainy Day Fund.

NV Energy CEO criticizes Energy Choice amendment

By Geoff Dornan
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MINDEN — The president and CEO of NV Energy told a business luncheon on Wednesday while energy choice should be good for major electric customers, it likely won't be for residential customers.

"Our company thinks this is a really bad idea, not so much for us and our employees but for the state of Nevada," Paul Caudill told the Northern Nevada Development Authority luncheon in Minden.

He said he wasn't talking about protecting NV Energy, which serves 90 percent of electric customers in Nevada.

"Our company will be fine," he said.

He said his concern is the 1.2 million residential customers and "the jury is out on whether residential customers as a group will benefit."

"Major customers commercial and industrial will likely have the opportunity to save some money," he said. "Residential customers kind of take the brunt of this transition."

In addition to the potential for higher residential rates, Caudill said the Public Utilities Commission report on the Energy Choice Initiative identifies \$3.5-\$4 billion in costs to accomplish the transition to an open and competitive market. To cover those transition costs, he said the state of Nevada could stand behind a bond issue that all customers would pay for. That PUCN report, he said, estimated the average residential customer would pay \$20-\$27 a month more on their electric bill for the 10-year life of the bonds.

He said it could also have a dramatic impact on those 30,000 customers with rooftop solar systems.

The state of Texas, which deregulated, he said, doesn't require energy providers to provide net metering. Nevada's law mandating NV Energy provide net metering would be superceded by the constitutional amendment and customers with rooftop solar have agreements with solar providers to pay off the systems with what NV Energy pays them for their solar generation.

If NV Energy no longer has the ability to provide net metering through its monthly bills, "the state is going to have to figure a way to satisfy that obligation or they're going to have some pretty unhappy people."

"Right now there's no clear answer to net metering," Caudill said.

The Energy Choice Initiative, Question 3 on the November ballot, is up for a vote for the second time. If voters approve it again, it would put deregulation of electric utilities into the Nevada Constitution.

"I think at this stage of the game, there's not another, more important decision the state of Nevada will make in the next 20-30 years," Caudill told the audience of more than 60 people.

If approved, he said the proposed amendment would require NV Energy to divest itself of all its generating facilities — 66 of them statewide. He said the utility would no longer be allowed to generate and sell retail power. But, at present, he said NV Energy has the generating power to cover its electric needs even during peak hours in August.

Carson school board OKs budget, capital fund projects

By Charles Whisnand
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The Carson City School Board approved a \$67 million budget for 2018-19 and also approved more than \$14 million in capital projects at its meeting on Wednesday.

A deficit of nearly \$2.2 million is projected in next year's budget. While revenue is projected to be more than \$65 million, expenses are projected to be more than \$67 million.

Even with the projected deficit, the district still has a healthy reserve. The reserve is projected to fall from about \$12.8 million to \$10.6 million, which is 15.7 percent of the budget, well above the required 8.3 percent.

Andrew Feuling, district director of fiscal services, said he expected the projected deficit to be lower by the end of next school year. He also noted about \$1.1 million in curriculum costs that's a one-time expense adds to that deficit, so if that expense wasn't there the deficit would be cut in half.

The other big hit to the budget comes in special education. Feuling said while special education revenue makes up 4 percent of

the budget, special education expenditures take up 10 percent of the budget.

Another area Feuling hopes will reduce the deficit is nutritional services. The budget projects a \$250,000 deficit in nutritional services, but Feuling said he hopes the program can break even, thus reducing the deficit by \$250,000.

Staff salaries and benefits make up 76 percent of the budget which is about normal for a school district.

Feuling noted total per pupil revenue in the district has increased by just less than \$900 since 2007 from \$7,560 in 2007 to \$8,432 for 2018-19.

"We don't have an expenditure problem, we have a revenue problem," he said.

When talking about the capital projects in 2018-19, Feuling said the money "will just be spent in dramatic fashion" as he referred to the more than \$14 million to be spent. The capital projects are funded by the district's reserve capital fund and bonds.

Two of the major projects to be completed next school year will be a 10,000 square foot building at Pioneer Middle School and

a science, technology and math lab at Carson Middle School. It's expected the CMS lab will be completed close to the start of next school year.

The building at Pioneer will include biology, career technical education and chemistry labs, a library and a multipurpose area. Two buildings have already been remodeled and a classroom added at Pioneer.

Projects finished this year included the addition of classroom space at Fritsch Elementary School. Other major projects at Fremont and Mark Twain will be completed next school year.

Carson High School will also receive a new PA system at a cost of \$87,000. But district officials said the field turf at the CHS stadium shouldn't have to be replaced until about 2022, which would cost about \$500,000.

But Feuling noted if the district wanted to build another elementary school in the next year-and-a-half, the cost would be about \$40 million and the district only has the bonding capacity of about \$20 million to build a school, so the district would be able to build just half a school.

Airport Authority approves budget of \$468,980

By Anne Knowles
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The Airport Authority approved its final budget for fiscal year 2019 and crafted language for a bill draft request for the next legislative session.

The final budget projects \$468,980 in total income and \$412,490 in expenses, for net ordinary income of \$56,490.

The airport also will have \$413,634 in other income, including \$361,134 in Federal Aviation Administration grants, and total other expenses of \$397,084, for a total net income of \$73,040.

The authority also decided

on how it wanted to amend the Airport Authority Act of Carson City, which will be submitted as a bill draft request by Assemblyman Al Kramer.

The changes include allowing members to serve two consecutive four-year terms, instead of a single term. Some of the other language, which established the Airport Authority, was outdated and removed, and some other sections on employees was deleted to be incorporated into an employee handbook instead.

The members discussed reducing the seven-member board to five members to try to streamline some processes, but the authority decided against it.

Chair Linda Law said she opposed the change because it would mean a subcommittee of three could not be formed because it would constitute a quorum, which is not allowed under Nevada's open meeting law.

"I vehemently oppose reducing the member from seven to five. There are unintended consequences," said Michael Golden, owner, Mountain West Aviation, and one of the fixed base operator representatives on the authority.

Next, Steve Tackes, airport counsel, will take the proposed changes to the Board of Supervisors for feedback before Kramer submits a draft request to the Legislative Counsel Bureau.

BRIEFLY

Supreme Court candidate Leon Aberasturi to be Dems luncheon speaker

Leon Aberasturi, a candidate for Nevada Supreme Court, will be the featured speaker at next Monday's Democratic luncheon. A former Lyon County District Attorney, Aberasturi is a judge for Nevada's Third District Court in Yerington. He was first elected to the court in 2006, and was re-elected in 2014. He's running for the seat currently held by Justice Michael Cherry, who's termed out.

This event is scheduled for 11:30 a.m. Monday at Round Table Pizza, near Starbucks in the Walmart retail complex, just off of College Parkway. All-you-can-eat lunch buffet available. All are welcome.

Sponsored by the Democratic Men's Committee, these fundraisers help defer expenses at Carson's Democratic HQ while affording the community an opportunity to engage with candidates, office holders, subject matter experts and public policy advocates in an unstructured, open-ended and informal atmosphere.

Donations of \$5 or more will be accepted. Contact Rich Dunn at 775-434-8783 or richdunn@aol.com.

Free celebration of dolls planned at Nevada State Museum

World Doll Day is on the second Saturday in June, and a Carson City celebration — offering a display of dolls, giveaways and other

festivities — is in the works at the Nevada State Museum.

Aimed at keeping the love and collection of dolls alive, the event will run from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. June 9 and include a display of dolls courtesy of the Carson Doll Club.

The event will also provide information about the history of dolls and the chance to take photos with them.

The free event will take place in the museum's Dema Guinn Concourse, 600 N. Carson St.

Additional doll exhibits and festivities will be available with the price of museum admission — \$8 for adults and free for members and children.

For information, call B.J. at 775-434-7024.