

# Some say there's gold in them thar tunnels

*Two transients were found gold mining in a tunnel under Old Town Auburn*

**Tricia Caspers-Ross, Auburn Journal, 10-21-15**

There's a long tradition of gold mining in Auburn, but two transients took that tradition a bit too far when they mined inside a tunnel below Sun River Clothing and Cafe Delicias in Old Town Auburn.

"This is a first for me," said City Manager Tim Rundel. "In a lot of cities, people will use the storm drains as navigation, but it's highly illegal and highly dangerous because ... of the possibility of mudslides."

Local business owners had been hearing racket below the street for some time before reporting it, according to Director of Public Works, Bernie Schroeder. Auburn Police Department and Public Works staff located the miners and escorted them out, she said. Though the miners were trespassing, they were not arrested.

"I'm not sure who owns the mineral rights there," Mayor Keith Nesbitt said at yesterday's community "Meddlers" meeting. "They may be guilty of grand larceny."

Director of Public Safety John Ruffcorn could not confirm that the transients were mining, but they did tell officers that they'd found gold, though no one saw the booty.

"I think they were just exploring, and one of them got the wild idea that, 'Hey, this is an old gold mining community. Let's look for gold,'" Rundel said. "There are much more safe and legal ways of looking for gold."

Digging for gold under Old Town is not only dangerous for the individuals, but for the community as well, Schroeder said, as it could undermine the city's foundation. Over the years, the city has worked extensively to improve the tunnels and prevent flooding. After last week's mining incident, there was some work to be done.

"A Public Works crew went down there to re-secure the sidewalls ... (add) Riprap and cement bags to re-stabilize the banks," Schroeder said.

They were lucky to repair the damage before a major storm, she said. Entrances to the tunnels were blocked to prevent further trespassing as well.

"We will be monitoring (the tunnels) on a police level and (through Public Works)," Rundel said. "You make a natural assumption that people would use common sense, but sometimes common sense is not utilized."