



**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF
NORTH TAHOE REGIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL
June 9, 2016**

Pursuant to notice given, the regular meeting of the North Tahoe Regional Advisory Council (NTRAC) was held on Thursday June 9, 2016 at the North Tahoe Event Center in Kings Beach, California

1. Call to Order

DRAKE called the meeting to order at 6:02 PM. A quorum was established.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Roeder, Lutkemuller, McFadden, Drake, Chillemi, Jewett, and Fulda

MEMBERS ABSENT: Hill and Kupec

STAFF PRESENT: Kastan and Friedman

2. MAC Member Introductions

Everyone introduced himself or herself.

3. Approval of Agenda

CHILLEMI/LUTKEMULLER/UNANIMOUS

4. Approval of Minutes of May 12, 2016

ROEDER/MCFADDEN/Carried with abstentions from Jewett, Chillemi, and Fulda

5. Supervisor / Tahoe Field Representative Reports

KASTAN reported the Planning Commission met earlier today to consider the Martis Valley West proposal. There were about 250 people in the audience. Forty people spoke during Public Comment and all but one were opposed to the project. The Commission continued the item to a future date and asked for more information from Caltrans regarding traffic issues and the local fire districts regarding evacuations.

KASTAN announced that in Tuesday's election, SUPERVISOR MONTGOMERY was re-elected as District 5 Supervisor.

6. Community Reports

RON CARSON, Public Information Officer for North Tahoe Fire Protection District, reported the District is preparing for what could be a big fire season and doing public outreach about defensible space. A five acre fire at Sagehen Creek was contained quickly yesterday. NTFPD is hosting a Fire Safe Barbecue on June 11. The event is free and open to the public. Information will be available on topics including defensible space, fire awareness, and evacuation.

7. NTRAC Member Reports

JEWETT announced music at Kings Beach begins next week.

DRAKE announced the Truckee Roundhouse Maker's Fair is Sunday June 12 from 11:00 AM to 5:00 PM at Truckee Tahoe Lumber on Church Street.

LUTKEMULLER announced the Achieve Tahoe fundraiser at Squaw this weekend as part of the Art, Wine, and Music Festival.

8. Public Comment

There were no comments on items not on the agenda.

9. Information Non-Action Items

- A. The Alpine Meadows/Squaw Valley Base to Base Gondola – proposed project spans 13,000 linear feet from the Alpine Meadows Ski Resort to the Squaw Valley Ski Resort. The gondola is an eight person gondola with a capacity to carry 1,400 persons per hour in each direction. It is for winter operation only. The project area crosses private lands owned or leased by Squaw Valley Ski Holdings or the United States Forest Service, and is adjacent to, but does not cross into the Granite Chief Wilderness Area – Heather Beckman, Associate Planner, Placer County Planning Services, Jim Spenst, Squaw-Alpine Project Manager and Adrienne Graham, Environmental & Planning Consultant**

HEATHER BECKMAN introduced the project. She reported both Placer County and the US Forest Service are conducting separate, but concurrent, environmental reviews because the project is on lands owned by both agencies.

JIM SPENST described the project in detail, using site maps and renderings showing various components of tower locations, the two mid-stations, and the terminal on the Squaw Valley side. The gondolas have the capacity to carry 1400 people per hour in each direction using 8 person passenger cabins. He described the avalanche control measures, using a GazEx system. SPENST said the plan is to slightly relocate Cushing Pond to accommodate the terminal on the Squaw side. The pond will be full of water in the spring and summer, but drained and filled with snow in the winter. The purpose of the project is to connect Squaw and Alpine ski areas using an alternate means of transportation so skiers do not need to use their cars or the shuttle to ski both in a single day. SPENST reported skier days have been flat. This project will help the areas remain competitive by increasing destination skiers, but not necessarily skier days.

BECKMAN reviewed the environmental review process and how public comment has been taken since the scoping meetings. Twenty-three written and 9 verbal comments have been received from individuals, agencies, and organizations. Environmental issues being reviewed include traffic, air quality, greenhouse gases, and land use compatibility, particularly give the project area is adjacent to the Granite Chief Wilderness. BECKMAN showed a site map indicating the land owners in the project area. The question of “attraction versus amenity” is one being considered. Cumulative impacts need to be studied. It was noted this project is not included in the Village Specific Plan, although the County considers this to be an “independent utility” because it could be built whether or not the Village project moves forward. Also, the Gondola project came forward three years after the Specific Plan. The question of setting a precedent has been raised if there is ever a future sale of the land. Comments also raised questions about alternative ways to get skiers from resort to resort and moving the project further away from the Wilderness Area.

Simulations showing the Gondola towers, lines, and stations from different vantage points were displayed. Shed analysis for summer and winter is being conducted. BECKMAN closed the presentation by discussing the timeframe for the on-going environmental reviews.

The Council asked questions clarifying the presentations, including the location of the project. CHILLEMI expressed disappointment that the Alpine Meadows General Plan dates back to 1968, but there are many projects being considered in the area. A more current “road map” is needed.

ROEDER asked how the need for aerial transit versus the current shuttle system is being determined. SPENST said traffic studies suggest this will take 100 cars off the road each day during ski season.

In response to a question from MCFADDEN, SPENST said the gondola will be ADA compliant.

FULDA asked for clarification on the GazEx system being used for avalanche control.

LUTKEMULLER asked questions about the consultants hired by the County for the environmental documents. She suggested alternative fuel shuttles be considered. LUTKEMULLER referred to SPENST’S comments that the gondola would only be used during the winter and noted how unpredictable ski seasons have become. She asked for

clarification on SPENST'S comments that each side (Squaw and Alpine) could be operated independently if one side is on wind-hold. Regarding GazEx, SPENST explained any impacts from the gas will be part of the environmental analysis, but it uses a gas that dissipates upon explosion. LUTKEMULLER questioned the ability to maintain the character, i.e., "vibe and feel," of Alpine Meadows when plans are to bring many more people to the top of Sherwood. She feels there is a financial relationship between this project and the overall Village proposal, in spite of each being considered independently.

Questions continued to be raised regarding other possible development in the area, including White Wolf, the alignment proposed and options considered.

The topic was open to public comment.

CHASE SCHWEITZER from Sierra Watch referred to a letter submitted during the scoping period. The main issues he spoke to were 1) this is piece-mealing; this project and the impacts should be considered as part of the larger Village development; and 2) the problems associated with constructing permanent structures on land adjacent to wilderness areas.

MAYA BORHANI expressed concern that given the unpredictability of recent winters, attracting destination visitors is a dead end. She said given this borders wilderness areas, structures should not be allowed. She asked for clarification on the consultant selection process used by the County and the Forest Service for the environmental analysis. BORHANI agreed with comments about changing the "vibe and feel" of Alpine Meadows ski area. She also agreed this project is being considered piecemeal and should have been part of the Village consideration. She questioned whether this is a legal process under CEQA.

In response, BECKMAN clarified who the consultants are for this project. The applicant selects the consultant from a list of qualified consultants approved by the Board of Supervisors. Discussion followed.

Public comment was closed.

ROEDER feels that replacing rubber on the road with aerial transit is a good idea.

JEWETT asked if the analysis will consider if there is truly a need for the gondola. BECKMAN said it will. Existing conditions will be considered and "attraction versus amenity" will be quantified, as well as traffic impacts. She explained the Forest Service cannot purchase "improved lands," which this would be if towers are built.

DRAKE asked if other alignments could be considered. As a skier, he likes the idea of the project, but is concerned about it bordering wilderness area. He suggested a condition of approval be that summer operations cannot be considered.

LUTKEMULLER asked for clarification on seasonal operations. BECKMAN explained the project has been presented as a winter-only operation. Both the County and USFS are analyzing impacts based on that. If the applicant wants to operate the gondola in the summer, the permitting process would require new environmental reports. LUTKEMULLER said the project impacts the American River watershed, the endangered yellow-legged frog, and the "vibe and feel" of Alpine. She has serious concerns about how this project relates to the surrounding wilderness area.

FULDA reached out to residents of Alpine Meadows and received about 3 dozen emails, one-third of which oppose the project. One-third responded that they could get behind the project, but have serious concerns about the impacts, given the currently pristine location, and proximity to the Five Lakes trail. FULDA acknowledged this is a business decision on the part of Squaw, but the cultural and visual impacts need to be carefully considered. He read some of the comments he received urging a higher level of analysis to balance the needs of the business, the users, and the environment.

CHILLEMI's concerns have to do with so many projects being considered to increase summer activity at ski resorts and that approval of this opens the door to another request being submitted for summer operation of the gondola.

LUTKEMULLER asked for clarification on access to the area for construction. SPENST said he expects the bulk of construction on the Alpine side will be done with helicopters and low-pressure vehicle access from the Squaw side. That is being analyzed in the NEPA process.

B. Placer County Tahoe Basin Area Plan Update – receive a report on Area Plan refinements, as well as the status and upcoming release of the Area Plan Draft Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Impact Statement – Crystal Jacobsen, Principal Planner, Advanced Planning, Placer County Planning Services

CRYSTAL JACOBSEN presented an update of the Area Plans. She gave the timeframe for environmental review of the Plan and said the Placer County Board of Supervisors is expected to adopt the Plan in December and TRPA will consider it in January 2017. The Plan is designed to implement the TRPA Regional Plan Updates (RPU).

JACOBSEN explained refinements made to the Tahoe City Area Plan, given changing conditions since the updates were begun, including the Highway 89 Realignment Project and the proposed Tahoe City Lodge. Also, many transit studies have been completed including the Tahoe City Mobility Plan and TART Systems Plan. Public input has been considered for all the North Tahoe Area Plans. Changes to the Kings Beach plan include consideration of the Mixed Use Waterfront Recreation Special Policy, which addresses the Kings Beach State Recreation Area.

A section regarding Streetscape and Roadway Design Standards has been added. JACOBSEN answered questions from the Council regarding the process for developing, analyzing, and adopting the Area Plan, how it relates to the TRPA RPU, and TAU allocation.

The topic was open to public comment. PAT DAVISON from the Contractors Association of Truckee Tahoe (CATT) read a letter commenting on the plan with regards to the need for moderate income/workforce housing and second units in the area. TRPA only allows second units in parcels of greater than one acre. CATT is advocating that all residential parcels be allowed to have second units. CATT recommends second units have some sort of occupant and employment deed restrictions.

10. Future Agenda Items

- A presentation on the Tahoe City Ice Rink
- A presentation from the Placer County CEO's office on Tahoe Services and Economic Incentives Plan

11. Date and Time of Next Meeting – July 14, 2016 at the Tahoe City Public Utility District Board Room, 221 Fairway Drive in Tahoe City, California

12. Adjournment

There being no further business to come before the Council, the meeting was adjourned at 8:15 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Judy Friedman, Recording Secretary