

Placer County Board of Supervisors informational meeting - July 21st

The Placer County Board of Supervisors held an informational meeting on July 21st regarding the proposed Squaw Valley Village project. The speakers were Alex Fisch, Andy Wirth, and Chevis Hosea. While most of this was re-hash of information we already knew, some new bits did come out. A few questions were taken from the public.

Alex Fisch, Project Manager for Placer County

Alex summarized the history of the various proposals that have been made, starting from the summer of 2011, up until the revised Specific Plan of Jan 2014. We know that Appendix B (the Design Guidelines) section of the Specific Plan is undergoing significant change, and we learned that it should be completed and sent to the County in about 30 days (perhaps late August). We also learned that the administrative draft version of the draft EIR is projected to be complete by end September and given to the County. This means that the draft EIR should be made available to the public by late Dec or January 2015. Jennifer Montgomery asked that the public comment period following the dEIR release be on the longish side, at least 60 days.

We also learned that there will be two financial analyses included in the dEIR. One will be an analysis of the costs to the County of servicing the proposed Village. The second, a financial impact analysis (FIA), will look at other competing, market driven developments with similar user profiles of accommodations and offering similar guest services and what impact this project might have on them. This will include Tahoe City, Truckee, Northstar, and others. While Alex said that this FIA “might” be dEIR, Jennifer Montgomery requested that it “definitely” be included.

In response to a question, Alex discussed the Development Agreement that eventually gets negotiated between the applicant and the County. Normally that agreement will allow for the entitlements granted to be active for some period of time, and here it probably will be for as long as 25 years. But it could be that there are provisions in the agreement to have extensions granted beyond that time.

Andy Wirth, CEO of SVSH

Andy summarized the organization and relationship of KSL to SVSH and SVRE, which we have learned before. A not previously public fact was that KSL Fund II, from which SVSH is funded, has 82 investors. He talked about the over 300 meetings that have been held in outreach to the community, emphasizing that “SVRE has been listening”, evidenced by the changes in the plan that have occurred.

Perhaps most interestingly, he revealed that flights into Reno have dropped 42%, and that perhaps has been a predominate cause of a 45% decline in resort long term stays in the Tahoe area. He said to look out for some new announcements in the area.

He also acknowledged that they had made a mistake initially in giving the impression that the Village build out would be done relatively quickly. This is not going to be the case, as he said that it could take 15 to 25 years to complete the build out, depending on the number and length of the economic cycles, of which 3 to 4 are anticipated over that long a time period.

Chevis Hosea, VP Development, SVRE

Chevis also started out with some summary information, including that there have been 7000 people through BaseCamp. The goal, he said, was to make Squaw a 4 season resort. Redesign is winding down, with the remaining issues still being finalized being (i) Design Guidelines (App B), (ii) building scale, and (iii) the Mountain Adventure Center (“still a mystery to folks”).

With the completion of the Appendix B revision (which will see some changes to building orientation, separation, etc), SVRE will release a 3D virtual model in perhaps 60-70 days. They will also re-build the higher resolution mockup model (perhaps Q1).

He also said some things we had not heard before or may not have communicated

- (i) the Village Core – Neighborhood area on the west end of the Valley will be connected to the Village Core –Commercial area by some sort of lift or light rail to minimize transit time. The longest projected walk/travel to the Funitel from anywhere in the new Village would be 10 minutes (though perhaps not in ski boots).
- (ii) the East Parcel will have a 4,000 to 5,000 sq ft market, will provide employee housing, and contain a shipping/receiving facility to reduce large truck traffic beyond the Valley entrance.
- (iii) as there will be no underground parking in the VC-C, the pedestrian level will be 10 feet above the pedestrian level of the existing village. They are working on how to make the elevation transition ‘seamless”
- (iv) there will be a 12,000 sq ft ballroom, which will also be used for conference and a community meeting room, as well as being utilized as a performing arts center
- (v) the MAC will be 90,000 sq ft under roof, with about 30-40,000 sq ft of wet amenities, and the remainder being dry amenities.
- (vi) there were images of some of the buildings being projected on a big display, and they showed two 2-story parking structures – one on the left and one on the right of the parking lot as you enter the Village over the main bridge. Previously the plans had included only one.
- (vii) as the Resort at Squaw Creek has been non-committal, there will be no vehicle (EVA = emergency vehicle access) path around the south side of the meadow included in the final submission. Furthermore, the fire chief says it is not needed for safety.
- (viii) there will be an emphasis on smaller buildings (“boutique hotels”), but height will be maintained (up to 108 feet for tallest building)

Chevis then talked about Parks & Recreation features, which perhaps is still under discussion with the County. At present there is sort of “potpourri” list of things to decide upon. Among the items being evaluated are

- (i) bike trail through the village connecting up to the Shirley Canyon trailhead
- (ii) taking over the snow removal and maintenance of the bike path through Squaw Valley
- (iii) Interpretive stations along Squaw Creek
- (iv) trail heads at Shirley Canyon and Granite Peak, including parking and rest rooms
- (v) connection trail between 5 lakes and western states trails
- (vi) improvements (including flush toilet restrooms (i.e., sewer connection) at the Squaw Valley Park.
- (vii) \$1.5M to the rehabilitation of Squaw Creek
- (viii) additional sport/multipurpose courts at the Squaw Valley Park at the east end of the Valley

Mike Geary - General Manager, Squaw Valley Public Service District

Mike focused on the Water Supply Assessment, which was just recently made public. He explained how the study was completed, and how it has been independently reviewed. He stated that the completed Village project, and other possible projects within the District, will increase the need for water within the Valley by 28% by the year 2040. Demand estimates were made by Alex Fisch of Placer County; supply capacity was calculated by new input in to the ground water “virtual” model.

The source for water in Olympic Valley is a primarily a small aquifer under the valley. The aquifer is refilled by runoff from rain and melting snow, which has been enough to refill the aquifer each year, even in the driest years studied over the past 20 years.

In analyzing “margin of safety”, the criterion has been adopted that the average saturation level in any of the existing or proposed wells should never drop below 65% saturation to maintain a healthy system. In fact, the numerical models run against 20 existing or proposed wells showed the average well height would never drop below 80% saturation, using the 2040 demand against ground water data over the past 19 years. The worst single well would drop to 70%.

In discussing the “perception” that water was always a tight commodity, Mike explained that Cushing family was never willing to work with the District to allow wells to be drilled on Squaw Valley property, except within a very tight area around the existing wells. SVSH has been working with the District to put wells where they need to be, regardless of ownership of the property. This means that the District has much more access to the aquifer than ever before, and SVSH has a vested interest in making that happen.

Mike ended up by saying that there would be presentation to the PSD board on July 29th of the “final” WSA, with emphasis on the changes from the first presentation (mostly an executive summary), and a

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summary presentation to the Squaw Valley MAC on the WSA on Aug 7th. The WSA will be part of the draft EIR.