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Residents want safer road before park is built

By Sekhar Padmanabhan -- Bee Staff Writer - (Published July 27, 2003)

A large and sometimes boisterous group of El Dorado Hills and Cameron Park homeowners has let El Dorado County officials know it wants Bass Lake Road made safer before the adjacent 41-acre Bass Lake Regional Park could be built.

The message was delivered by about 100 residents who came to Faith Episcopal Church last week to get more information on the plan and to ensure that their opinions were heard.

In addition to road safety, questions from the Bass Lake Action Committee about lighting and noise also were high on the list. Some just wanted the proposed park scaled down.

The park would be directly north and east of Bass Lake, about 2 1/2 miles north of Highway 50.

A developer of a subdivision east of Bass Lake Road is paying to widen and realign the roadway south of the lake in an area covered by the Bass Lake Hills Specific Plan, but the work will not resolve the concerns of the action committee and others at the meeting.

A planning official explained that because further developments in the area can't be approved until an overall infrastructure plan is in place, some road improvements will be on hold. In addition, other projects are in limbo until the county has a new general plan.

The completed park would include turf areas and soccer fields, ball fields and basketball courts, a disc golf course, children's play areas, a 6,000-square-foot community center, trails, a nature center and even a 1-acre off-leash dog park.

At Monday's meeting, nearby resident David Eaton told officials he has spent \$50,000 to improve his back yard in the Sierra Crossing subdivision north of Bass Lake. He asked county parks project coordinator Gary Hyden how the park would affect him.

Hyden said acoustical engineers were examining the noise issue, and the light standards -- even at 60 to 70 feet tall -- could be arranged without spillover from the fields.

John McKenney, who lives off Bass Lake Road, was more concerned about how children and bicyclists will navigate the narrow, winding two-lane road unless it's widened before the park is built.

"Is there a legal way to stop construction?" McKenney asked. "It is a deathtrap walking down that road."

The crowd had little patience with Supervisor Rusty Dupray, who represents part of El Dorado Hills, after he was asked about fully improving the road before building the park. His response -- "We have a shortage of ball fields (in the county) ..." -- was cut off with a chorus of boos.

He managed to add, "I am not opposed to putting in road infrastructure ... but maybe not concurrently."

In an interview Wednesday, Liz Diamond, assistant director of the county Department of Transportation, emphasized that plans for Bass Lake Road may change based on the results of a traffic

study being done for the park.

"We don't even have an approved (park) project yet," she said. "There are still a lot of unknowns. I don't think the county has any interest in opening a park that isn't safe."

The Bass Lake site was selected for a regional park more than a decade ago. County recreational planners describe it as a good, flat place to build ball fields -- a rare find in the hilly county. And as the county grows, they say, more parkland is required.

The developer of the Hollow Oak subdivision must widen Bass Lake Road from Highway 50 to near Stone Hill Road. County supervisors approved the final map for the subdivision Tuesday.

The 32-foot-wide road will have two 12-foot lanes and two 4-foot shoulders. Up to the lake, the developer will be required to realign the road farther west to connect to Serrano Parkway, Diamond said.

Senior county planner Pierre Rivas said Hollow Oak is the first subdivision to be approved in the Bass Lake Hills Specific Plan area, which begins south of the lake and Serrano Parkway. Hollow Oak's tentative map was submitted and approved before the specific plan was approved in 1995, Rivas said.

Language in the specific plan requires a public facilities financing plan -- a strategy for meeting infrastructure needs -- to be created before any subsequent area developments can be approved. That financing plan has not come together.

Even before the meeting, the comment period for the notice of preparation of the environmental impact report was extended to Aug. 27 because of the level of residents' concerns.

Officials said they will present a revised plan for the park at 7 p.m. Aug. 11 in the Board of Supervisors chambers, Building A, 330 Fair Lane, Placerville.

About the Writer

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