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Youth sports leaders back Bass Lake park -- others have doubts

By Sekhar Padmanabhan -- Bee Staff Writer - (Published August 13, 2003)

Youth recreation enthusiasts strongly backed the Bass Lake Regional Park on Monday night, packing an El Dorado County meeting with players in various uniforms.

"You can come up with any reason not to do something," said Chris Codioli, immediate past president of the Foothill Girls Softball league, which serves more than 400 players in an area from west Placerville to El Dorado Hills. "But this is, and always has been, a regional park."

Codioli told the meeting of the county Division of Airports, Parks and Grounds that about 4,000 to 5,000 children will use the park once it's opened and fully built, and once the lighting technology is good enough that it won't harm neighbors' quiet enjoyment.

The 41-acre park is proposed north and east of Bass Lake about 2 1/2 miles north of Highway 50 in El Dorado Hills. It could 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, trail system and even a 1-acre, off-leash dog park.

The youth recreation leaders' concerns about a lack of places to practice and play contrasted with the misgivings many had about safety, noise and lighting at a meeting organized by neighborhood activists last month. Some still feel the park should be scaled down so it doesn't become a "megaspports complex."

Based on the comments, Gary Hyden, county parks project coordinator, is working on a compromise plan that could put more fields in the park -- but without lights. In an interview Tuesday, Hyden said he would pitch the idea to his bosses later this week.

There are three other alternatives: no project at all but further study of another use; building Phase One of the park with one baseball diamond and landscaping with lighting; or building Phase One without lighting. Starting small may keep traffic levels below "trigger points" that require the county to make road improvements developers otherwise might make, officials said.

A large portion of the crowd in the Board of Supervisors chambers agreed that 8 p.m. was a more reasonable time for the lights to be turned off than 10 p.m. Many said they were not opposed to having a park in that spot. Others said safety, given the winding nature of Bass Lake Road, was still a major concern.

David Glazier of the Bass Lake Action Committee -- which held last month's community meeting -- said the park "doesn't fit, and doesn't work" in its proposed configuration.

In urging improvements to be made to Bass Lake Road before construction begins, Glazier said, "How many kids are going to have to die to get over there?"

A developer of a subdivision east of the road is paying to widen and realign it south of the lake in an area covered by the Bass Lake Hills Specific Plan. 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 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 last month.

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, county transportation officials said.

About the Writer

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