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Park backed despite flak

By Sekhar Padmanabhan -- Bee Staff Writer - (*Published August 31, 2003*)

Directors of the Cameron Park Community Services District are urging construction of the proposed Bass Lake Regional Park, despite criticism of the plan by residents near the lake.

By a 4-0 vote Aug. 20, the board said it will send a letter supporting the park to El Dorado County officials and indicating a preference for the park's Phase 1 to include one baseball diamond and landscaping with lighting.

The preference was the second of three project alternatives being studied by the county's Division of Airports, Parks and Grounds.

The county's other alternatives are to drop the project but study additional uses for the site, or to build the park's first phase but not add lighting. These alternatives are all being presented as the county prepares its draft environmental impact report for the park. The comment period ended Wednesday.

Alan Clarke, board vice president, said Wednesday that the district in the mid-1990s gave 16 acres off Durock Road to the county with the understanding that the long-proposed regional park would be made larger.

"This was done with the understanding that the Cameron Park and El Dorado Hills residents could use the park, as well as all of the sports teams," Clarke said. "We are drastically short of ball fields."

He added that people bring the shortage of fields up at district board meetings, saying, for example, how they would like to avoid driving to Folsom or Fair Oaks to play softball.

Having lighted ball fields will allow players to use the facilities later into the year, Clarke said, and it will be better to put in lights before the area is fully developed. "And they are not (designed) as the mega-lights now," he said.

County parks project coordinator Gary Hyden said a potential fourth project alternative that could put more fields in the park -- but without lights -- didn't make sense because of the increased traffic flow during peak hours. Hyden said he expects the draft environmental impact report to be ready by early January.

At past meetings on the subject, neighboring homeowners -- most of them with residences off Bass Lake Road -- had worried that lights and accompanying night use of the park would intrude on the quiet enjoyment of their property. Others said that while they weren't against a park, it should be scaled down from the proposed 41-acre plan.

People on both sides of the issue fretted about the safety of walking or bicycling on narrow, winding Bass Lake Road.

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 nearby planned Hollow Oak subdivision must widen Bass Lake Road from Highway 50 to near Stone Hill Road.

Up to Bass Lake, which is directly south and west of the proposed park, the developer will be required to realign the road farther west to connect to Serrano Parkway, county transportation officials said.

The park is proposed north and east of Bass Lake about 2 1/2 miles north of Highway 50 in El Dorado Hills.

About the Writer

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