

Elks back out of American Legion deal



By Kathryn Reed

Because the top brass of Elks nixed the local branch's desire to be housed in the same location of the American Legion, it's back to square one.

The American Legion building across from Meek's Lumber in South Tahoe is more than 60 years old. The Elks' building was razed a year ago after the California Tahoe Conservancy bought the land.

American Legion Post 795 was given the land by Stella Van Dyke Johnson, one of the early settlers of Tahoe and whose descendants are still in the area.

Both nonprofits wanted to erect a building that could seat 200 people to be used for community events, wedding receptions and other activities.

Now the American Legion hopes to build a hall behind the current structure. Architects are working on the plans. It's likely to cost about \$120,000 and the Legion has \$40,000 in the building fund.

Once the hall is erected, renovating the current structure will be next on the to-do list.

Currently, the American Legion hosts an open mic night on Mondays. Bands play periodically. The parking lot is used June-October each Tuesday for the farmers market. Crafts fairs are a regular in the lot, too.

The Legion hopes the current recruiting drive will keep the local chapter viable for years to come. It has 120 members. The veterans group does not want the local chapter to be disbanded like the Veterans of Foreign Wars was. That occurred earlier this year because membership had dwindled so significantly.

Legion Cmdr. Blair Clark said one issue with his group is the aging membership. Many are from the World War II generation, some from Korea, a few Vietnam and a recent vet from the Iraq conflict.

Not all veterans qualify for American Legion membership. A service member "current or honorably discharged" needs to have served during a time of conflict.

The American Legion was formed by Congress in 1919, a year after World War I ended. Worldwide there are 3 million men and women in the Legion.

The Legion also has the Auxiliary, which is mostly female spouses of members, and the Sons of the American Legion.

Someone is onsite at the Highway 50 facility starting at 4pm Thursday-Sunday to answer questions about joining the Legion or using the facility. For more information, call (530) 541.8788.