

Courthouse dispute pits city v. county

By Kathryn Reed

Back room discussions are going on regarding the El Dorado County courthouse in South Lake Tahoe, with the public being kept in the dark.

Marjorie Springmeyer, whose family donated the land for a city hall that never got built, pleaded with the council this month to come clean.



Marjorie
Springmeyer

“I have asked for a complete accounting on the government center,” Springmeyer said. “You sued me for city hall and then you abandoned it. I’m going to ask again or have my attorney ask for a chain of title on the government center.”

Now in her 80s, Springmeyer wants this resolved. Documents dating to the 1970s when the transaction occurred are not complete and much of what was agreed to was done verbally.

The Johnson-Springmeyer clan expected a city hall to be built where the government center is. Instead, a courthouse is there.

Another issue is a 5-acre land swap between the city and county that may not be complete. The city believes the county

still owes it that acreage. Springmeyer also asked for that issue to be addressed.

Councilman Hal Cole, who owns property with Springmeyer, said he would like to accommodate Springmeyer and also wants the chain of title to be made public.

Adding to the confusion of the whole property matter is the 2002 Trial Court Facilities Act that mandates all California courthouses owned by counties become state property. The land becomes the state's as well if the county owns it.

In the South Lake Tahoe case, the deed for the land remains the city's. The portion of the building used as a courthouse will go to the state.

Even though this was supposed to be a simple transfer, the city in the last year has neglected to signoff on the transfer because of reasons that are discussed behind closed doors.

City officials want the 1972 land agreement resolved before signing anything. The county contends one has nothing to do with the other.

The topic was discussed in closed session by the City Council on Oct. 20 and is expected to be back there again on the Nov. 3 agenda. It's possible when the Board of Supervisors has its once a year meeting in Tahoe on Nov. 10, it will be on the agenda.

"We haven't heard anything from the city," Supervisor Norma Santiago said in an Oct. 21 email.

"At this time, I am unable to provide you with information regarding this matter. I am sorry that I cannot be of more help at this time," City Manager Dave Jinkens said in an Oct. 22 email.