

Future of Fallen Leaf Lake up to voters

By Susan Wood

Even after the tourists have left and operations have shut down for the season, Fallen Leaf Lake residents are continuing to make waves â€” with some citizens taking their dispute over who runs the marina and general store to the ballot box.

A petition was certified by the El Dorado County Elections Office challenging the Community Services Districtâ€™s earlier decision to run the marina and general store in 2010, essentially ousting its longtime operator John Rich.

When it will actually be put before the voters of Fallen Leaf Lake has yet to be determined.

The petition needed signatures from 10 percent of those who voted in the last district election, which was less than 100 people. Double that qualified the petition.

The referendum will be discussed at a meeting slated for 11am Sunday at the Fallen Leaf Lake firehouse. The agenda item starts at 1pm.

The controversy that has dragged on since April involves the district seeking to take over the marina operations because a contract could not be met between its board and the Rich family, which has run the hub of the lake for 14 years. The district claims it needs more rent and accountability over operations practices from Rich. But a vocal segment of the community wants to keep things in his hands.

A last-ditch effort to find common ground was unmet. So, the board insists its Sept. 5 motion stands. It declares â€œshould an agreement in principle not be reached between (board)

directors (Mike) Kraft and (Terri) Thomas and Fallen Leaf Landing by Sept. 19, 2009, the CSD will proceed to execute their decision made at the April 25, 2009, board meeting or submit to the registered voters of the district at the next regularly scheduled district election. A special election could be called to settle the dispute since it's too late to make the Nov. 3 ballot.

The residents who support the Rich family aren't buying the changing of the guard and the district's flimsy figures and plans to hire a general manager under the direction of the five-member board. They cry foul.

"This is disappointing to all of us who have been involved that it had to come to this. We were hoping our elected officers would listen to the people they represent. Unfortunately, this was our last resort," Fallen Leaf resident Debra Barnes said.

At earlier meetings and encounters, shouting matches and threats ensued. The last CSD meeting was standing room only and ran on for hours.

Rich claims he would still like to work for the district.

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