

Douglas County Parks and Rec tries to do more with less

By Kathryn Reed

Even though nearly \$1 million has been cut from the Douglas County Parks and Recreation budget in three years, expansion and improvements are always being considered.

Kahle Community Center in Stateline would like to develop its open attic space that is sitting unused. This would add about 2,000 square feet to the 22,000-square-foot gym.



Kahle
Community
Center is busy
most hours of
the day.
Photo/Kathryn
Reed

Different ideas have been talked about through the years, including a dance or boxing studio. More recently, having a commercial grade Wii fitness area has been bouncing around.

“We’d like to convert it to a specialized fitness facility,” said Scott Morgan, director of the parks department. “It would be a significant enhancement.”

Like most things, funding is the issue.

Morgan believes the clientele exists on the South Shore for such a facility that might appeal more to teens and young adults.

Even though part of the multi-level facility is 15 years old, and another section is 10, it looks in good condition. In the middle of the day people are playing basketball, running on the indoor track and pumping iron.

A few years ago Ray Sidney with Big George Ventures paid to have a lid put on the 800-square-foot gymnastics area.

Morgan said the number of users at Kahle has not changed much as the area has been hit by a sagging economy. In fact, he said, "Business is booming."

Still, the parks department is taking a \$350,000 hit for the next fiscal year. The department lost \$300,000 for the current year and the same amount for the previous year.

"Mainly you see a reduction in service levels in our park facilities," Morgan said. "No longer is there a nighttime ranger in all of our facilities."

That person was responsible for making sure lights came on when they were supposed to and sprinklers weren't soaking a field where people expected to play.

Hours have been cut, including at Kahle.

Eighteen people are expected to lose their jobs in the next fiscal year, with 3.3 full-time positions cut. In the 2009-10 budget Morgan had to cut 5.4 full-time jobs and 7.4 in 2008-09.

Tennis courts are not getting their regular maintenance. However, a \$10,000 donation from the Zephyr Cove Tennis Club will allow for a crack and color coat on those courts once the snow is melted.

At Lake Tahoe, the parks department runs Kahle, Zephyr Cove Park, the park at the top of Kingsbury Grade, and the Round Hill bike path. There are 14 facilities in the Carson Valley.

Douglas County has until May 17 to finalize its 2010-11 budget that begins July 1. Commissioners last week could not decide how to trim more than \$2 million.