

# Lights on South Tahoe High football field to be permanent

By Kathryn Reed

Sam Borges won't be at the dedication of Viking Bowl next year when the South Tahoe High School football team takes the field on its lighted artificial turf field. But his three sons – Don, Dave and Dwight – likely will be, along with his widow, Rosie.

Sam and Rosie Borges talked for a decade about putting lights on the gridiron. Unfortunately, Sam Borges died earlier this year before the dream was realized.

Speaking to the Lake Tahoe Unified School District board of trustees on Tuesday, Don Borges became choked up talking about his parents' dream. As athletic director of the school, he will be instrumental in pulling off this endeavor.



Don Borges, right, holds a rendering of the football field while architect Brett Long talks about

it.

Photo/Kathryn

Reed

On Oct. 12, the board voted 5-0 to go forward with the nearly \$1 million project that could be completed by the 2011 season.

Temporary lights have been brought in twice this season. The inaugural event drew out about 1,000 people, and last week's romp over Sparks saw about 800 in the stands.

Principal Ivone Larson read an almost poetic account of how those two games have brought the school and community together, and then delved into what a renovated, permanently lighted facility would mean to the school and town.

Besides being a moneymaker at \$6 a ticket, the vision is the field could be rented to outside interests.

Chuck Leonard, president of the local Pop Warner association, said he has had calls from semi-pro leagues wanting to have games in South Lake Tahoe. Today, no field can accommodate them.

What the board approved Tuesday will allow Leonard to say "yes" in the future when people call.

Leonard spouted figures of 22 weekends a year being available to athletic teams wanting to use this as a football or soccer field that could infuse \$150 million to \$175 million into the economy.

The turf and lighting are expected to cost about \$1.057 million. The district has a donor lined up to contribute \$120,000, and will work on a match of \$120,000 from the community. Until the agreement is signed, the donor's name is not being released. This brings the cost to the district for phase one to \$817,000.

The plan is to do phase one and two simultaneously. Phase two includes a concession stand that is likely to be LEED certified with ADA compliant restrooms. Spectators now use bathrooms at Mount Tallac High or the new building on STHS' campus. But the American with Disabilities Act compliant facilities were going to need to be built sooner rather than later, which is why the district wants to expedite that aspect of the plans.

The anonymous donor has pledged \$180,000 toward phase two.

Total for the district for the two phases would be \$988,050. The money would come from developer fees. Those dollars can only be spent on construction projects. Less than \$1.5 million is in that account now.

The third phase, which does not have a timeline, would get rid of the current bleachers. It would provide 1,000 seats on the home side, and 500 for visitors at a cost of \$407,000.

Brett Long of Brett T. Long Landscape Architecture had a rendering of what the field could look like – including the Viking logo in midfield.

The footprint would encompass about 95,000 square feet. The oval would not be a regulation size track, but could be used for training – not meets.

School officials envision the artificial turf providing more opportunities for physical education classes because the field could be plowed in early spring. Plus, spring sports would now have a place to practice instead of going to the Carson Valley.

When it comes to raising money from the community, the plan is to sell blue and gold bricks (school colors) for \$100 and \$200, respectively, that will have the donor's name on it. They will be incorporated into the design of the revamped stadium.

When the track and field at South Tahoe Middle School was constructed a few years ago about \$700,000 in cash was raised and roughly \$400,000 in in-kind services provided. District officials realize that kind of giving isn't likely to happen in these economic times, but they are confident the town will come through with \$120,000 to seal the deal.

To donate, call Angie Keil at (530) 541.2850, ext. 225.