

Reno-Tahoe Olympics' economic boon touted

By Stephen Ward

INCLINE VILLAGE – It might be gold medals athletes would be after, but it's green in the form of cash that organizers of the Reno Tahoe Winter Games Coalition are after.

"This is something that could benefit everyone in the region," Joe Killoran, CEO of the Reno Tahoe Winter Games Coalition, said. "We have an opportunity to market ourselves to the world in a short period of time."

Killoran stressed that the impact the Olympic games would have on the region would be enormous.



Joe Killoran talks Feb. 4 about bringing the Olympics to Reno-Tahoe. Photo/Stephen Ward

Killoran conducted a presentation Friday meant to inform residents about his organization's aim to have the 2022 Winter Olympics in Lake Tahoe.

The majority of the PowerPoint slideshow at the Tahoe

Environmental Research Center at Sierra Nevada College referred to the ways in which Salt Lake City prospered from hosting the 2002 Winter Olympics. Killoran cited the city's \$100 million operational profit and the 35,000 jobs created. The city's infrastructure, business community and tourism numbers have also improved significantly in past decade.

"(Tourists) want to be on slopes where Olympians are," he said.

That wealth, according to Killoran, could come to Lake Tahoe – again.

In fact, the region's rich Olympic legacy was a centerpiece in Killoran's vision for obtaining a competitive bid for the region. The 1960 Winter Olympics in Squaw Valley were the first time they were conducted in the Western United States, were the first to use artificially refrigerated ice surfaces, and the first to use fully automated timing.

It will take an estimated \$1 million annually now through 2013 to fund research studies about the economic and environmental impacts the Winter Olympics would have on the Lake Tahoe Basin.

The money would also help bring competitions and events to the region in order to stir economic activity and prove the area would be a credible Olympic host.

Although the Nevada Legislature has assisted the planning organization in the past, Killoran said the group didn't ask for assistance in the previous session.

"If we can't raise the money from private investments, we're all wasting our time in this room right now," he said.

Despite a few logistical questions, the roughly 50 people in attendance showed little sign of skepticism about the venture.

"I came in here a real skeptic, not about what happens between

now and 2022, but what would happen after that,” Michael Durand, a 60-year-old Incline Village resident, said. “The buildings built could go to housing seasonal workers in South Lake Tahoe and dormitories at (Sierra Nevada College). I feel much better after hearing the presentation.”

Other attendees said they were convinced, so long as the environment remains a top priority.

“The key is better public transportation,” Al Bulf, a 67-year-old retired railway businessman, said.

For more information about the Reno-Tahoe Winter Games bid, go to the website.