

Opinion: Imperative STHS improve athletic conditions

To the community,

As a coach of youth athletics at the elementary and middle school ages, for over 25 years, coaching Little League Baseball, Pop Warner Football, Bobby Sox Softball, Soccer and as a previous head coach of our local ski resort, Heavenly D-Team, I have had the pleasure to witness firsthand how important and instrumental athletic programs have benefited the development of the youth in our community.

As a member of several of these youth athletic organizations, board of directors and a full-time resident of South Lake Tahoe for the past 23 years, I have enjoyed watching the many benefits that these athletic programs have provided thousands of young boys and girls in our community during their very influential years.

The renovation of Viking Bowl to Viking Stadium will complement the recent additions to our local high school campus which have been completed in recent years, and those that are currently under construction today. These projects are making South Tahoe High School a world class academic facility and hopefully it will soon be considered one of the best schools in our state.

The completion of the Viking Stadium renovation plan will not only provide a much needed addition to our local high school campus, it will in turn help promote the city of South Lake Tahoe as more than just a tourist destination.

The renovation of Viking Stadium will prevent many families who may be thinking of leaving our community, because of inferior school facilities, to stay in South Lake Tahoe and allow their children to complete their high school education

here as opposed to the various schools in our neighboring communities which currently offer better school and sports facilities.

I unfortunately have seen firsthand many families leave our community and move to Minden, Gardnerville, Carson City, Reno and Sacramento partly because of the condition of the athletic facilities at South Tahoe High School. This new athletic field and stadium will help prevent additional families from moving "off the hill" and also will attract new families to our city and to call South Lake Tahoe their home.

The completion of this renovation project will provide revenue for our school district, our city and in turn provide much needed income to the many small business owners who are currently struggling to stay open. The more businesses that close and the more families that leave South Lake Tahoe, the less revenue this our city obtains.

This facility when completed will attract families and students who participate in other sports programs in neighboring towns. It will allow for other high schools, colleges and possibly professional sports team to come to South Lake Tahoe and use this facility for high altitude training. The stadium could be rented for many different types of sports programs, activities and other events, and in turn bring much needed revenue to the many restaurants, motels and other businesses in our town who are struggling to stay afloat.

Athletics and academics go hand in hand. Athletics promote school and community spirit. For those that attended one of our two "Friday Night Lights" football games last fall, you already know the huge success this was for our high school and for the community of South Lake Tahoe.

If temporary lights on a field mostly covered in mud, without bathrooms in the near vicinity for its spectators, a proper

snack bar, bleachers that are rotting and are a safety hazard and without simple access for the disabled, can attract the type of numbers that those two games did, the possibilities that this project when completed could do for our city and our community are incredible.

Over the past few months, many business owners and families have provided financial contributions to the Lake Tahoe Unified School District to assist with the completion of this project.

We have done so as we realize the wonderful impact that this sports facility will have on thousands of youth in the city of South Lake Tahoe for years to come. Creating a place where the students of South Tahoe High School can be proud, a place where the younger boys and girls in our town will look forward to playing sports as they grow up and to provide a school that they look forward to attending, will have immeasurable impact on them, their families and our entire community.

It is mine, the many families and children of South Lake Tahoe who currently play youth sports and the current and future student body of South Tahoe High School sincere hope, that the city of South Lake Tahoe considers this proposal and helps fund and become a part of a project that is certain to benefit all of us who call South Lake Tahoe our home.

Tony Gooding, South Lake Tahoe coach, parent, business owner