

Rec board delays decision to ask voters to revise Measure S

By Kathryn Reed

At the end of a 2½-hour meeting Thursday, the main thing decided by the recreation board overseeing Measure S was to have another meeting.

With it being nearly the eleventh-hour in terms of figuring out whether to put an initiative on the Nov. 8 ballot, the three-member panel has set July 13 as decision day.



The recreation
JPA board of
Norma
Santiago, Hal
Cole and
Deborah
Henderson
listen June 30
to comments.
Photo/Kathryn
Reed

El Dorado County Supervisor Norma Santiago, South Lake Tahoe City Councilman Hal Cole and Tahoe Paradise Park board member Deborah Henderson are being asked whether a ballot measure is

the correct course of action, what the wording of the measure would be, and what the ballot language would be.

Aug. 1 is the deadline to come up with the ballot language. That's the same deadline for people who would want to submit a rebuttal to what is being dubbed Measure R.

The board could also wait until 2012 when there are three elections – February, June and November – to ask voters to revise the initiative.

The JPA board on June 30 decided to allocate \$35,000 for the November 2011 election if the board goes in that direction. This is the taxpayers' money via Measure S. Nearly \$17,000 was spent on the failed Measure B rewrite two years ago.

The actual cost of the election is not known until all special districts having elections are accounted for.

At issue is whether the 2000 voter approved Measure S bond measure should be rewritten as Measure R so the \$18 a year collected from homeowners could be spent in different ways than originally intended.

Nineteen people spoke (some twice) at the June 30 meeting of the joint powers recreation authority. About 40 people attended the meeting at the county library in South Lake Tahoe.

The ball field proponents brought in enough youth baseball players to field a team, though none of them spoke. Cycling advocates were the first to point out it would be a good idea for adequate trails to be in the ground so those players could get to their games.

While it is Little League advocates like John Cefalu, Carl Buchholz and Steve Noll who spoke in support of Measure R, no one was at the meeting talking about softball fields.

While baseball and softball may seem like the same sport in

many ways, the dimensions of the fields are not. It is softball fields that are in most demand on the South Shore – on both sides of the state line, though Measure S/R only encompasses the boundaries of Lake Tahoe Unified School District. Mostly it is adult leagues using the softball fields.

The softball fields are in worse shape than the Little League diamonds.

The language of R in its latest form does not specify baseball over softball, but the backroom maneuvering and plans are for the Little League fields to get the money.

All of the fields are on LTUSD property except for the one built with Measure S money at Lake Tahoe Community College. No one from the district is on the JPA, nor does anyone from LTUSD ever speak at these meetings. All facilities built on school district property are supposed to meet state education construction standards.

The other discussion not being had in the open is talking about a comprehensive recreation plan for the city, county or entire South Shore. Without that big picture approach, it's hard to analyze where best taxpayer money should go.

The Tahoe Regional Planning Agency has a master bike-pedestrian plan, but no entity has a plan for other sports (except at individual ski resorts) or a vision for recreation in Tahoe.

The room Thursday was split fairly evenly between those who support how Measure R is written and those who don't.

As proposed, Measure R would give a maximum of \$500,000 to ball fields for various improvements starting in 2013 and continuing until the full amount has been received. That date is estimated to be August 2016.

The language used regarding ball fields says, "... 50% of JPA funding available in July 2012 will be directed to this project."

When the board was asked whether bikes or ball fields would get funding first, the board said that had not been decided. But clearly that is a lie because the language gives a time line.

In regards to bike paths, it says 50 percent of JPA funds available in July 2012 will go toward maintenance of trails built prior to the passage of Measure S. Then, after the ball fields receive their full half million dollars, "the JPA is authorized to direct up to 100 percent of available JPA funding to pre-September 19, 2000 separated bicycle trails rehabilitation." It goes on to say, "To the extent funding is available, El Dorado County will have the flexibility to use funds received from this source to maintain and/or rehabilitate both pre and post September 19, 2000 Class 1 and Class 2 bicycle trails."

Paying attention to the words is more important than the intent because that is how lawyers will argue it if people don't get what they thought they were getting. Words like "will" are definitive actions.

The July 13 meeting will be at 1pm in the Creekside Room (by the cafeteria) at Lake Tahoe Community College in South Lake Tahoe. Meetings are also planned for July 29 and Aug. 10, with times and locations to be determined.