

Douglas County's master plan takes control from TRPA

By Anne Knowles

MINDEN – The Douglas County Commission approved an update to the county's 15-year-old master plan, paving the way for the county to take over permitting in its portion of the Lake Tahoe Basin from the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency.

"The TRPA wants to get out of the permitting process," Douglas County Commissioner Nancy McDermid, who also serves on the Governing Board of the TRPA, said during the Jan. 5 commissioners' meeting. "And as chair of the (TRPA's) local government committee, I'm telling you it's going to happen."

The revision calls for the county to work with the agency on the update of its long-awaited Regional Plan and ordinance codes and "explore the feasibility" of taking over permitting responsibility through a memorandum of understanding.



With Douglas County taking more control of permitting in the Lake Tahoe Basin, it may have more of a say of what

Edgewood
Companies does
with its land
in Stateline.
Photo/LTN file

Some of the work to update the county's local plans cannot be completed until the TRPA delivers its Regional Plan update, promised by year-end. That's because any plans for the Lake Tahoe Basin must comply with the TRPA's yet-to-be-completed plan, said Candace Stowell, planning manager for the county, during a presentation to the commission.

"Well, yes and no," McDermid said. "The city of South Lake Tahoe has adopted a plan and say they will comply" with the TRPA update after the fact, once the plan becomes available.

"We can't make changes until the TRPA comes out with a plan," Stowell replied.

Brandy McMahon, senior planner for the county, added that she has been working closely with the TRPA Planning Director John Hester and Regional Planning Coordinator Arlo Stockham, but said local plans can only be updated after the TRPA plan is finished.

"The message we get from the TRPA is different than what they tell the staff," McDermid said.

South Lake Tahoe adopted its updated General Plan in May 2011, with the caveat that it would change the plan where necessary in order to comply with the TRPA Regional Plan update. A month later, the League to Save Tahoe filed suit in U.S. District Court, claiming the city plan was out of compliance with the TRPA Regional Plan. In December, South Lake Tahoe City Attorney Patrick Enright said he expected Judge Garland Burrell to rule on the case in early January. There has been no ruling to date.

Douglas County's master plan update also calls for the county to assist in the completion of the Stateline-to-Stateline Bikeway and to work with South Lake Tahoe, Caltrans and others in the planning and implementation of the Highway 50 Stateline Corridor/South Shore Community Revitalization Project.

The Highway 50 revitalization project will get more attention at the Jan. 10 meeting of Douglas County Planning Commission, when the commission gets status reports on the master plan changes and TRPA Regional Plan, according to Jo Etta Brown, chair of the commission.

Brown and fellow planning Commissioner Kevin Servatius were reappointed to the commission by the board of commissioners during its meeting. Public comment was unanimously in favor of reappointing the pair. Some spoke about the lack of representation of the lake on the board, but agreed that it was more important to keep people already up to speed on the complex issues facing the county. Bob Cook, project coordinator for the Chimney Rock chapter of the Nevada Fire Safe Council, had also applied.

"Bob lives at Stateline and we live in the valley, but there's no requirement to have someone from the lake and there never has been," Brown told *Lake Tahoe News*. "We know Lake Tahoe needs our help. And 90 percent of the problems at the lake are problems here in the valley, too."

The commissioners also added an action item saying the county would work with other stakeholders in the completion of the South Shore Vision Plan, a \$70 million project to overhaul traffic routes, both pedestrian and vehicular, around the casinos. The item, proposed by Zephyr Cove attorney Lew Feldman, was approved but not before being changed to read that the county would incorporate the plan rather than adopt it.

Other master plan update items affecting the lake include

changes designed to increase affordable housing throughout the county and development of green building codes.