

Edgewood Lodge wants to be driver in high-end market

By Kathryn Reed

STATELINE – With a history in Lake Tahoe that dates to 1896, the Park family's Edgewood Companies is poised to build the first high-end lodging establishment on the South Shore.

Thursday marked the final day people could comment on the draft environmental impact statement for the Edgewood Lodge. Testimony was taken during the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency's Governing Board meeting, to which only people in support of the 154-room hotel spoke. There will also be 10 fourplexes, or casitas.

The League to Save Lake Tahoe had submitted a letter on June 27 praising the environmental improvements that would accompany the project if it were to be permitted. But the League does have concerns.



Edgewood Companies expects the TRPA Governing Board to vote

on the lodge project in September.

The letter says, "... the League remains concerned with the expansion of the urban boundary that was necessary on recreation land to allow development such as the proposed project."

Lew Feldman, the attorney representing Edgewood, told the Governing Board there would be no impact to the urban boundary.

"We absolutely disagree it is a legal issue," Feldman said.

It's possible the final EIS will be released in late July, with the Governing Board taking action in September. If the green light is given, Edgewood Companies could start by rerouting hole 9 on the golf course and working on the other affected holes.

The hotel will take two construction seasons, so the earliest anyone could book a room is fall 2015.

Patrick Rhamey, vice president of real estate for Edgewood Companies, told *Lake Tahoe News* the other factor is obtaining financing and making sure the economy is ready for what his company wants to deliver.

For the area, it is expected to bring in \$24 million a year to the local economy from what guests spend, \$1.7 million a year in sales tax, and \$2 million annually in hotel tax.

"I hope this becomes the model for our community as we go forward," Carol Chaplin with Lake Tahoe Visitors Authority told the board.

She said NBC is ready to highlight the project during the American Century Celebrity Golf Championship that is at Edgewood Tahoe each July.

Bill Chernock, who used to have the job Chaplin has but is now head of the Carson Valley Chamber of Commerce and Visitors Authority, said, "The hole in Tahoe's tourism product is the lack of high-end lodging. It's what separates Tahoe from the Aspens, Montereys and La Jollas of the world."

Gone will be the parking lot with a view of Lake Tahoe.

"I call it the world's most scenic parking lot. It needs to go," Rhamey said at the June 28 meeting.

At the lodge will be parking. Plus, there will be a few spaces for day use.

Of all the thresholds TRPA deals with, noise is the only one this project will not address.

Environmental gains include stopping a half million pounds of sediment from reaching Lake Tahoe and stopping fertilization on 24 acres of turf. Edgewood Creek will flow into Lake Tahoe naturally, not via a pipe. This will improve the fish habitat. It's estimated the amount of nitrogen reaching the lake will decrease by 13 percent and phosphorous by 26 percent. Those two elements contribute greatly to the loss of clarity.

The beach at this Stateline property will be open to the public – which it isn't now. No retail, other than sundries for guests, is planned. A spa, though, will be on site.

Expansion of the current clubhouse is also in the works.