

Clarity emerging in future of STHS softball field

By Kathryn Reed

“When I took this job three years ago, I was told it was called the Field of Dreams. I think it’s a Field of Nightmares.”

That is what Steve Kolesnik, South Tahoe High School softball coach, told the Lake Tahoe Unified School District board of education Sept. 11.



Consensus was found Sept. 13 about the STHS softball field by a diverse group. Photos/Kathryn Reed

While it may never evolve into what Kolesnik wants, movement came Thursday during a meeting where a diverse group assembled to find consensus. After two hours it was agreed by all in the room that the high school’s physical education program and athletic teams are what matters most when it comes to who uses that field and how it is used.

Also agreed to was erecting a 6- to 8-foot portable fence 200 feet into the outfield and that the staff restroom being built in the concession stand can be used by the public.

LTUSD Facilities Director Steve Morales, at the direction of the group, has been tasked with finding out what the cost of a second restroom, which could contain more than one toilet, would cost. He is also going to evaluate whether putting it next to the concession stand or inside by the restroom under construction or by the portables would be more feasible.

Softball, baseball and tennis have access to the restrooms in the newly built Student Union because they can be locked off from the main building. But there are those who believe walking 140 yards is too far during a game.

It was decided that incorporated into the rental of the field will be the price to erect and dismantle the fence. Mostly likely it will remain up for the high school team from the time snow melts to the third week of June. This will also allow for ASA to finish the spring season.

At the Sept. 13 meeting that was facilitated by STHS Principal Ivone Larson were Morales, Kolesnik, Don Borges (former athletic director at STHS and current PE instructor), Joann Allister (PE, former softball coach), Doug Russell (AD), Julie Cain (PE), Kevin Hennessee (PE), and Marilyn Breisacher (JPA fields committee, ASA softball).

They all signed the paper Larson was writing the agreement on so no one could say later that they disapproved.

Ball field improvements, who uses them and who pays for them has been the subject of much discussion since the South Shore (California side only) Measure R was approved a year ago that changed how Measure S funds could be distributed. Compromise, until Thursday, has been lacking.

Several factors have created the critical mass situation:

- Improvements to the high school softball field – including dugouts, backstop, concession stand, scorekeeper's booth – were built without the athletic director or softball coach

being asked to give input.

- The state Office of Civil Rights involvement because of Title IX equity issues. Those are legally supposed to be resolved this fall – at least a plan for equity is supposed to be completed.
- The Fields Advisory Committee of the South Lake Tahoe Recreation Facilities Joint Powers Authority plays a role because it will recommend to the JPA board how to spend \$500,000 in taxpayer money. (This is the Measure R money.) The committee is meeting Monday to discuss funding, but the school district won't have its request in by then.
- The LTUSD board at the Sept. 11 meeting tabled the item that originally called for \$52,300 from Measure R dollars to pay for installation of a PA system, portable outfield fencing, concrete asphalt walkways, and walkway to Student Union. The board told those who spoke about the softball field to get together and come up with another recommendation in time for a special board meeting Sept. 25. (That is how the Sept. 13 meeting came about.)

More issues about the high school field remain outstanding – definitively where batting cages and bullpen go.

And there is no guarantee the fields committee will recommend to fund improvements at STHS or that the board that ultimately makes that decision will do so. The JPA board is slated to meet in January to distribute a portion of the money.

The Office of Civil Rights needs to sign off on plans as well.

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Things to know:

- The fields committee next meets Sept. 17 from 4-6pm at Lake Tahoe Airport.

- LTUSD board next meets Sept. 25 at 4pm at the district office.

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