

Nevada working to bring major sporting events to the state

By Richard N. Velotta, Las Vegas Sun

With the U.S. Olympic Committee giving up on a U.S. bid to host the 2022 Winter Olympics, a coalition of winter sports enthusiasts will focus instead on attracting other sports competitions to Nevada, including the possibility of bringing a curling event to Las Vegas.

Lt. Gov. Brian Krolicki, who heads the Nevada Tourism Commission, said a group composed of several members of the Reno-Lake Tahoe Winter Games Coalition have met twice informally to explore strategies once the U.S. Olympic Committee officially agreed not to pursue the 2022 Games.

“It was always part of our conversation that the journey was well worth the effort, regardless of not capturing the Olympic dream,” Krolicki said after Wednesday’s Tourism Commission meeting.

“While the U.S. Olympic Committee has made decisions to postpone bidding efforts, we thought it was terribly important to stay on this path of securing sporting events,” he said.

The fledgling sports commission is expected to be a private nonprofit organization dedicated to bringing elite international sporting competitions to Nevada. Initially, the group, comprising primarily winter sports boosters, would focus on winter events in the Lake Tahoe area, but it would expand to include summer events in the future, he said.

The state has hosted Junior Olympic cross country skiing events, and resorts also have worked to lure downhill competitions to the state’s ski slopes.

Krolicki said he couldn't give details, but at the commission meeting said there are efforts being made to attract a major curling competition to Las Vegas.

Curling is an Olympic event in which players slide stones across a sheet of ice to a target. After a curler slides a 38- to 44-pound stone across the ice, two "sweepers" with brooms attempt to alter the state of the ice ahead of the stone to speed or slow its movement.

The marketing of winter sports in Nevada dominated the meeting, and the commission received several reports on strategies to attract ski enthusiasts to Lake Tahoe.

The Winter 2012-13 media strategy is part of a \$1.5 million marketing plan within the state's controversial \$3 million contract with Burson-Marsteller of New York.

The Tourism Commission will work with Burson-Marsteller to leverage social media posts and amplify content from outdoor recreation and travel sites.

It also will work on target audiences with a household income of \$100,000. Commission officials said their primary market will be Southern California winter sports enthusiasts.