

Cove East, Keys Marina to get more free parking

By Kathryn Reed

Increasing the allowable coverage by 33 percent for parking at Tahoe Keys Marina will require shifting the entrance of Cove East about 20 feet closer to the Upper Truckee River.

The California Tahoe Conservancy board on Dec. 12 agreed to allow the marina to cover up to 60,000-square-feet of the nearly 1.5-acre parcel. In January 2011, the coverage allocation was 45,000-square-feet. And at that time the entrance to the popular Cove East walking path that leads to Lake Tahoe was not going to have to be altered.



The land behind the fence is destined to become parking at Tahoe Keys Marina-Cove East. Photo/LTN

The marina plans to build the parking lot this summer. It is designed to be free parking, though there is a caveat in the lease agreement that allows for the marina to charge if it wants to. The Conservancy would receive 20 percent of any revenue generated from paid parking.

“This doesn’t affect what the city is doing and that seems to

be changing year-to-year," Bruce Eisner, with the Conservancy, told the board.

South Lake Tahoe implemented paid parking on Venice Drive, the road to Cove East and the marina, this summer. Now the meters are gone, which the city said was always the plan so they would not be damaged by snowplows.

Councilman Tom Davis, the city's rep to the CTC board, could not make the meeting for personal reasons so he could not enlighten everyone what the city might do with Venice in the future, especially considering a new free lot is going to be built.

Additional parking by the marina owners is allowed in the master plan that has been approved by the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency. The plan allows for 303 total parking spaces. The new lot will add 120. The spots are designed for marina and Cove East users, not Fresh Ketch patrons.

Eisner said the parking situation would be reviewed annually to ensure people using CTC land have adequate access to the parking spots.

Marina owners must build the lot and bathrooms, a lane for watercraft inspections and then maintain the area per the 30-year lease. Two unisex bathrooms on the north end of the lot, which is closer to the marina, will be constructed.

The parcel is between the current parking area for the marina and the trail. It's vacant land. The dirt is fill from when the Tahoe Keys was developed in the 1960s.

Laurel Ames with the Tahoe Area Sierra Club was the lone member of the public to talk to the issue.

"It's the wrong kind of public access in the wrong place," Ames told the board. "It's the wrong time to be adding pavement at the lakeshore."

She believes it would have been more prudent to wait to see what comes of studies on the nearshore that might say what is contributing to the decline in clarity, and questions the increase in vehicle miles traveled. That then becomes an air quality issue.

And the Conservancy anticipates more people will come because parking will be less of an issue and the lot will put people that much closer to the trail.

From the lot there will be links to the Cove East trail so people won't have to walk back to the entrance on Venice Drive.