

Zephyr Cove tennis facility being elevated



Becky Darrow returns a shot while practicing at the Zephyr Cove courts May 2. Photos/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

Douglas County is about to redefine what public tennis courts are all about.

County commissioners at their May 15 meeting are expected to sign a contract for the Zephyr Cove Tennis Club Foundation to operate the six courts in Zephyr Cove for the next five seasons.

“Overall, it will make for a better tennis facility,” Scott Morgan, who runs the county’s recreation facilities, told *Lake Tahoe News*. “Money from the contract will go back into the courts. The tennis operator saves us money.”



A back section of the library will become the pro shop.

The county has had a tennis professional operate the facility for the last 15 years. And while a pro was one of the two to bid on the concessionaire contract, it is the foundation (which is awaiting its official nonprofit status) that the county staff is recommending be the operator. Morgan said part of the reason to do so is the foundation intends to hire a pro, plus do much more than what a pro has done in the past.

Rob Wheatley is set to return as the pro. The foundation is expected to execute his one-year contract after the commission meeting.

“This kind of operation on public courts is unique, but successful,” Brian Fitzgerald, with county parks and rec, told *Lake Tahoe News*.

The contract calls for the foundation to pay the county \$3,000 this year, \$3,500 in 2015, \$4,000 in 2016, \$4,500 in 2017 and \$5,000 in 2018.

Like in years past, the foundation will charge a seasonal use fee, or people may pay by the hour. Here is the list of court fees.

While people at times gripe about paying to play at public courts, property tax dollars don't fund Zephyr Cove Park. It is hotel room and sales taxes that pay for it.

Improving the facility

The operation and look of the facility will be more like a traditional tennis club.

Morgan said the physical upgrades should be complete in the next two weeks.

Already gates have been put in on the right side of the courts, on the library side. This is because the library is going to have another purpose – it is going to be a clubhouse of sorts for the tennis foundation.



Spectators will be among the trees, with better views of more courts when improvements are complete.

This means players will be more apt to congregate there instead of by the shack and slab of concrete on the other side.

Paths, built with a permeable material, are being created that will lead to the courts so people aren't tromping through manzanita.

"We are adding a viewing area that will add much better viewing for play," foundation President Carolyn Wright told *Lake Tahoe News*. "It will be an elevated area where the sun is behind you."

Seating will be the next item to be installed.

"It's a beautiful facility that we are enhancing," Wright said.

Besides no longer having to sit in the dirt to watch play on the upper courts, the new area should allow spectators to see more courts at once as well as a sliver of Lake Tahoe.

The backboard on court two will be moved to the other end so it blocks the shack. The shack will remain for storage. This is also where the ice machine will go. It can't go in the pro shop area because there was not a water line that would work.

A little remodeling is taking place at the library so a pro shop will operate there. It will carry basic tennis supplies, food and beverages. The county negotiated a deal with the library folks to make all of this work.

Whenever the pro shop is open, players will have access to the library bathrooms. Hours have not been set, but will most likely be at least from 8am-noon.

The foundation

An 11-person board is in charge of the foundation.

As with so many things, it was a simple idea that then led to the creation of the 501(c)3 and subsequently the desire to be the operators of the tennis courts. Players just wanted something other than the nasty port-a-potties, which were overused when beach-goers would stop by.

With eight USTA teams playing out of Zephyr last fall, it was getting embarrassing to have such rank bathroom facilities for locals, and especially for the teams traveling to the South Shore to play. (This reporter plays on a USTA team at Zephyr Cove.)

Wright, along with Ross Rittiman and Bob Beutenmiller, were

the three main people responsible for working with the county and getting the foundation off the ground. They are all board members.

(Other board members are Grant Thompson, Bob Green, Holly Rittiman, Joyce Youngs, Neil Trebotich, Ray Fugitt, Sheryl Herschman and Hersch Herschman.)

Membership allows people to vote on the foundation's board of directors. Members will serve for two- and three-year staggered terms. Everyone is a volunteer. Committees are set up to handle fundraising, operate the facility and put on events. The season kickoff party is May 24.

The foundation will now run the annual Tahoe Tennis Classic tournament in August.

The contract with the county mandates two youth events be put on each year, and a certain amount of free play time allowed.

Foundation documents call for all proceeds to return to the facility.

"The foundation will keep the courts in better repair than what the county can provide," Wright said. "The long-term goal is indoor courts for year-round play."

The county has talked about this for a number of years.

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Notes:

- Douglas County Commission meeting is May 15 at 1:30pm, 169 Highway 50, Stateline.
- Zephyr Cove Tennis Club is online; memberships are available online.
- Questions about the club or foundation may be emailed to zctennisclub@gmail.com.

- The club is also on Facebook.