

Tahoe Paradise park fights to stay independent



A walking path goes along the edge of Lake Baron at Tahoe Paradise park. Photos/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

TAHOE PARADISE – “Tahoe Paradise Park is currently operated by the Tahoe Paradise Resort Improvement District, and at some point in the future, El Dorado County is scheduled to take over operations. This change in management should increase options for re-development and management.”

Those sentences come directly from the draft of the South Lake Tahoe-El Dorado County Recreation Master Plan. The draft is expected to be released to the public Aug. 8.

However, no one is publicly taking ownership for putting those lines into the document. And it wasn't until this last week that the bulk of the TPRID board even knew the language was in the document.

El Dorado County Supervisor Norma Santiago is on that board and has been instrumental in the recreation master plan. By

the end of the meeting she was visibly upset because another one of her ideas had backfired and came to light before she wanted it to.



The board wants to put in more permanent bathrooms this summer.

Santiago never brought up the language in the draft master plan to the TPRID. Board members found out about it elsewhere.

“When it says we are being taken over in the future by El Dorado County, that is a concern of the board, members of the community and the district,” board member Judy Clot said.

Clot brought up the fact that the TPRID was initially invited to participate in the rec master plan, but then the process went forward without them.

At the meeting it was decided the board would write a letter requesting the language quoted above not be included in any future recreation master plan versions.

This is not the first time the park has been left out of a conversation. It was brought up at the board meeting and the next night at the Meyers Area Plan meeting that the TPRID board has not been consulted about plans to extend the greater Meyers trail network into the park, which would bring more users.

Vickie Sanders, county parks manager, was at the June 25 TPRID board meeting at the request of Santiago.

Sanders later told *Lake Tahoe News*, "I was always told we were supposed to take over that park, but I've never seen proof of that."

Tahoe Paradise RID was created in 1965. It includes 2,200 residences, 4,400 parcels and is 10 square miles. The park gets its money from renting the facility – mostly for weddings, grants and \$50,000 a year from Measure S/R. Steve Dunn, who is the park manager, lives on site; with the free rent being part of his compensation package.

Keeping the park looking presentable has been an issue for eons. Driving in, Dunn's residence is on the right, and then it looks like a maintenance yard and not a park. To the left are three tennis courts, with the fence on the first one being mangled and that court unplayable. The clubhouse looks nice from the outside. It backs to open space and Lake Baron.

Money has always been issue and will become greater once Measure R sunsets in 2030. Another issue facing the district is the state and others want to do away with resort improvement districts.

"What the Legislature said a few years ago is let's convert them to a more modern version of local government so they have more modern laws and modern tools," Jose Enriquez, executive director of El Dorado County Local Area Formation Commission, told *Lake Tahoe News*. He used the analogy of going from a 1988 Yugo to a 2014 Camry. "It does the same things, but it's more modern."



Day use area at the park.

He believes Tahoe Paradise's best option would be converting to a parks and recreation district. Having to adhere to the Brown Act – the open meetings law, and coming under Proposition 13 are some of the changes that would occur.

It's up to the TPRID board to ask for the conversion.

Senate Bill 1023 was passed in 2010, revised in 2011 to allow for the conversion to go forward faster. Enriquez said all Tahoe Paradise would gain by doing this before the bill expires in 2018 is cutting off about three months of the process.

Bill Cherry, who is on the TPRID board, said LAFCo has spoken to the board and the board said no to the conversion.

"LAFCo said an advantage of a park and recreation district is that it would be easier for the county to take it over," Cherry told *Lake Tahoe News*.