

Letter: Questioning parking lot at Kirkwood

Publisher's note: *This letter is addressed to Julie Saylor with El Dorado County and was sent to Lake Tahoe News.*

Dear Julie,

I request that my comments be read, and made available, during the TC-TAC [Tri-County Technical Advisory Committee] meeting (Item G.1) on May 8, 2015.

To Whom It May Concern:

I have owned a home, and adjacent lot, on Dangberg Drive in Kirkwood since 1987 and am very opposed to the large parking lot being proposed. I am co-founder of the Friends of Kirkwood Association and spent several years, working more than full time, on the Kirkwood Specific Plan and the Mountain Master Development Plan (MMDP) for the Kirkwood Ski Resort. During this time, I attended countless public meetings and became well versed in the public planning process, CEQA and the environmental review process for federal lands. Friends of Kirkwood Association has hundreds of members who support thoughtful development and preservation of Kirkwoods' natural environment. I am concerned, and I am certain that hundreds of other Kirkwood "regulars," are concerned about several aspects of this significant proposal, which would create long term, irreversible, negative impacts to the Kirkwood area.

Simply put, there is no good reason to allow a parking lot on the School Site. "Saving" (i.e. not cutting down) the large trees would still allow the area to effectively become solid pavement. Please let's not destroy the incomparable beauty of Kirkwood by believing the statement, set forth by the project

proponent, that trees will be "saved."

The current plan for development in Kirkwood should be followed. This Specific Plan was put into place by the county Boards of Supervisors for the Kirkwood area after several public meetings seeking public input, hundreds of thoughtful letters from the public, a few rounds of CEQA reports, and dozens of other meetings. This occurred during a several year period.

The Kirkwood Specific Plan, if I correctly remember, specifically states that the School Site is to remain undisturbed if not used as a school. Further, the Kirkwood Specific Plan calls for multi-level parking structures on existing parking lots. Therefore, this type of structure should be built before allowing a new parking lot to sprawl out onto a relatively undisturbed natural area.

Please remember that the CEQA review for Kirkwood involved several parking and traffic studies – and that various parking options were considered. Many other environmental impacts were considered and reviewed including, but not limited to: water quality run-off from paved/developed areas, air quality, visual impacts to public lands, among many others.

The truth is that we (the public) were promised by the Kirkwood developer/ski resort that parking would be sufficient, when we raised traffic and parking concerns during the public planning process, about building multi-family units on the then-existing Timber Creek parking lot. The Kirkwood ski resort ("Project Proponent") assured us there would be enough parking and that traffic problems would be limited to a very few ski days.

However, now that the project proponent has made profits (millions?) by selling the Timber Creek parking lot

for development, it is asking to re-zone a couple acres to effectively replace the Timber Creek parking lot.

Instead, the Kirkwood Specific Plan should be followed and the profits made by selling the Timber Creek parking lot should be used, if truly needed, to build multi-level parking in existing parking lots. The public should not have to pay for this by enduring diminished environmental quality at Kirkwood.

Further, the need for additional parking should be firmly demonstrated by the Project Proponent, before *any* additional parking is approved, considering the well-known and documented down turn in skiers days, likely caused in part by record low snowfall the past several winters.

The piecemeal approach to planning is strictly forbidden by CEQA. Approving a zoning change for the School Site would definitely constitute such an approach. Let's not start down that path.

If additional parking is truly needed: it should be accomplished by multi-level parking, thoughtfully done. More not-well-thought-out construction and "improvements" should not be allowed. Let's not allow, as the popular folk song by Joni Mitchell goes, "They paved over paradise, put up a parking lot!"

Sincerely,

Reid D. Bennett, president Friends of Kirkwood Association