Proposal would rejigger TAU, CFA allocations

By Kathryn Reed

KINGS BEACH – Encouraging the removal of development from stream environmental zones is the impetus behind a pilot program that will give more value to tourist accommodation units.

For months the Regional Plan Implementation Committee of the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency has been working on what the pilot program should look like. The members further discussed the project on Wednesday, gave staff direction, but still have not finalized the program.

The TRPA in a quest years ago to control growth made tourist accommodation units (TAU) and commercial floor area (CFA) commodities. This is instead of doing what the rest of the world does – implement zoning regulations and let the free market dictate demand.

What is being proposed is to allow hotels that are removed from a stream zone to have three times its normal TAU value. Those TAUs could then be converted to CFA at a rate of one TAU equaling 454-square-feet of CFA.

The Regional Plan update from 2012 already allows for bonus conversions of TAU in stream zones, but that supply is said to be limited. And the pilot plan has the CFA equation as part of the deal.

There will be a maximum amount of conversions allowed in a limited amount of time. The three-year plan is expected to benefit one project.

The program could benefit South Lake Tahoe and Placer County the most. This is because the city has an excess number of TAUs and Placer is in need of them. The city likes having CFA to incentivize redevelopment like it did with the Ski Run Boulevard-Highway 50 parcel. And having a bank of CFA allowed developers at Heavenly Village to buy the commodity from the city to build an entertainment venue.

Finalizing the pilot program could take a few more months. Staff on May 27 was told to start an initial environmental checklist to review for possible environmental impacts. Once the committee signs off on the program it will ultimately have to be approved by the entire Governing Board.