

Homewood resort's makeover delayed – again

By Kathryn Reed

A court decision this month most likely will delay for a year the ground breaking of Homewood Mountain Resort's slopeside hotel. Owners were slated to begin construction in summer 2016 on the hotel that is almost a replica of the old Tahoe Tavern.

San Francisco-based JMA Ventures owns the West Shore ski area. For years it has wanted to turn the area into a destination that would welcome guests year round.

When the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency approved the project in 2011, JMA expected to spend about \$500 million to build a boutique hotel, condos, townhomes, grocery store, restaurant, retail spa and pool. The latter being on-mountain and open to the public.

Ongoing litigation keeps stalling the project.



Homewood owners remain committed to developing the West Shore resort.

“What surprised us, quite candidly, is the court focused on this particular issue. It’s not a straightforward issue. The question is what impact does Homewood have on an evacuation by adding a couple hundred units,” Art Chapman, principal of JMA, told *Lake Tahoe News*. “You would think on the surface it would be easy to analyze, but there are so many variables.”

Among other things the factors to consider include the size of the wildfire, if it occurs on a weekday in shoulder season or a holiday, and which way the wind is blowing.

In the next few weeks Chapman expects his team to decide whether to comply with the court order or to appeal it.

It was California Clean Energy Committee that appealed the decision allowing Homewood to move forward. The Third District Court of Appeals on Dec. 22 ruled in favor of Homewood in five of the six issues. Most had something to do with energy consumption. The evacuation challenge was a couple sentences in the appeal.

This energy committee is based in Davis. Attorney Eugene Wilson appears to be the sole member of the committee.

The three judges sent the case back to Placer County Superior Court. If JMA wants to comply with the appellate court, it would mean getting Placer County to create an addendum to the environment impact report regarding evacuation plans, there would be a 30-day comment period and then the court would need to sign off on it. This would likely be a faster course of action than appealing the decision.

The evacuation issue involves CEQA, which would not affect any of the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency permits. However, until the current matter is resolved it is impossible for Placer County to issue building permits.

Chapman called the decision ironic because he said the project has components in it to make the area safer in regards to

fire. Those don't happen until the project is built. They include facilities at the base that would allow people to shelter in place, snowmaking guns turned into fire hoses, and water shuttles at the West Shore Café (which JMA owns) to get people to safety.

A different lawsuit was settled a while ago that reduced the number of units by 13 to a total of just less than 300. The overall square footage, though, on the 1,200-acre parcel will remain the same. That settlement also calls for monitoring traffic for 20 years – twice as long as originally proposed, and notifying neighbors when snowmaking will occur because of the sound involved.