

Olympic Valley residents end bid to incorporate

By Kathryn Reed

Proponents to incorporate Olympic Valley have given up the fight to do so.

“All eight members of our board voted unanimously to withdraw our petition. Given the impasse with LAFCO combined with opposition by Placer County, plus stiff and heavily funded opposition from Squaw Valley Ski Holdings, we saw no way to continue moving forward,” Fred Ilfeld, board chair of Incorporate Olympic Valley (IOV), said in a statement Dec. 1.

The process to incorporate started in spring 2013. It was a reaction to the large-scale development proposed at the base of Squaw Valley ski resort, and a desire to have a louder voice and control in matters that affected the residents. The county seat is Auburn – where supervisors make the decisions.

Squaw Valley Ski Holdings, a subsidiary of KSL Capital Partners, runs Squaw Valley and Alpine Meadows ski resorts as well as the village at Squaw. **In 2012**, the company proposed a massive overhaul of the village that would include more housing, a water park and other features that residents balked at. Those plans have since been scaled back.

The company has spent at least a half a million dollars to stop incorporation.

“The decision by IOV to withdraw their petition for incorporation is a step in the right direction for the future of Olympic Valley. Creating a new town would have been a risky proposition, not just for the people and businesses of Olympic Valley, but for the community of North Lake Tahoe. We now have the opportunity to move forward in a positive way, and to work

together as a cohesive community to maintain our mountain culture and have a dialogue on how we can join together in tackling some of the challenges and concerns that prompted this initiative," Andy Wirth, president and CEO of Squaw Valley Ski Holdings and representative of Save Olympic Valley, said in a statement.

About 1,000 people live in what would have been the city of Olympic Valley. IOV wanted to take the issue of incorporation to the voters. There are about 560 registered voters.

Backers believe they have the financial wherewithal to be a viable city, citing data from the state Controllers Office. However, the Placer County LAFCO board had to OK the idea before it could go to voters. That office has been adamantly against incorporation.

"Although IOV has suggested that the proposed town of Olympic Valley would be financially viable, the facts simply did not support that conclusion," said Matthew Newman, co-founder of Blue Sky Consulting Group. "In their effort to show that the town could work financially, IOV proposed to capture all of the benefits of development in the form of higher tax revenues while simultaneously seeking to avoid the increased costs that new development would bring in the form of increased law enforcement services and more work for planners and the community development department."

While this latest round is over, the larger fight for greater representation is not.

"Although the petition withdrawal marks the end of the current chapter of the incorporation effort, it introduces the possibility of the next chapter of community building and regional self-governance," organizers said in a press release. "Hopes and expectations remain high that a broader community effort will compel Placer County to address the needs of North Tahoe region and respond to the call for more local input and

autonomy. In this regard, IOV board members are open to sharing their recent experience with their neighbors and to exploring such a possibility for regional self-determination.”