

Opinion: Placer County ignoring residents' concerns

By Alexis Ollar

The May 12 North Tahoe Regional Advisory Council hearing was a testament to how the public process can fail.

The Martis Valley West Parcel project was on the agenda and the room was packed with community members from Truckee and North Lake Tahoe. Placer County presented the project and made the assertion that MVWP is surrounded by existing development, placing it in a totally different context.

In reality, it is an isolated landscape adjacent to Brockway Summit with no development touching its property lines. This is a clear indication of how poorly this project is being presented to the public and our decision-makers.

The project applicant kept their presentation to a generalized level, choosing to focus on the merits of the Martis Valley Opportunity Agreement, rather than on the project specifics and necessary mitigation for the environmental impacts the 760 unit residential development would create.

The MVOA outlined a process by which two conservation groups, Sierra Watch and Mountain Area Preservation, would work with the business groups, Mountainside Partners and Sierra Pacific Industries, to negotiate a transfer of land use designations and preserve the last large landscape in the Martis Valley.

The agreement specified that the land on the east side of Highway 267 would be preserved as open space, to be purchased by or donated to the Truckee Donner Land Trust and Trust for Public Land in exchange for the development of the west side.

What the agreement did not outline was a specific project, nor

the proposed Brockway Campground. A key component of the MVOA was negotiation through the public process.

Unfortunately, this is where the agreement fell apart. Despite attempts by MAP and other environmental groups to get clarity on the proposed MVW project, provide alternatives and suggest mitigation, the project proponent made minimal changes to the Specific Plan and the Final Environmental Impact Report.

The FEIR was released on May 3, 2016, and blatantly dismissed significant and unavoidable impacts to the Lake Tahoe and Truckee region.

The NTRAC hearing requested the council provide a recommendation to the Planning Commission on the proposed project and final environmental impact report, only nine days after the release of the 2,000-plus page legal document.

This approach to land use planning is an affront to a reasonable public process. We are in the midst of reviewing the FEIR for Squaw Valley, and the public and decision-makers are forced to review another project of epic scale on what appears to be a fast tracked schedule.

In a room full of people, there was not one voice, other than the project applicant, in support of the MVWP project. There was great concern and opposition raised by MAP, Sierra Watch, League to Save Lake Tahoe, Friends of the West Shore, Sierra Club, members of the public and, most important, the community advisors for North Lake Tahoe.

NTRAC members asked critical questions and voiced numerous concerns regarding traffic, visual impacts, greenhouse gas emissions, workforce housing, night sky protection, project access from Highway 267, cumulative impacts from the adjacent Brockway Campground proposal and the limited amount of time to review the FEIR.

NTRAC members struggled with how to move forward, and finally

voted to request the Planning Commission postpone their action on this item for 30 days to allow ample review of the FEIR, and that the Planning Commission be aware that there are serious concerns with the project, whether development is on the east or west side.

Based on my conversations with the county, this recommendation was ignored by Placer County; MVWP will be up for a vote on June 9 by the Planning Commission. This demonstrates a total failure by Placer County to honor the voice of the advisory council and dilutes the public process for a major land use proposal in Martis Valley.

What is the purpose of these advisory councils if their recommendations are not upheld? Furthermore, why is Placer County allowing for more public review time on the Squaw Valley Village proposal and FEIR released in April, which will go to the Planning Commission on June 23?

There are far too many questions floating around as to the purpose of expediting the MVWP project with many unresolved impacts to the region.

Attend the Placer County Planning Commission hearing on June 9 at Granlibakken and make your voice heard. We support the preservation of the east side; however we cannot support the current proposal for the west side or the Brockway Campground.

Alexis Ollar is executive director of Mountain Area Preservation.