

# Opinion: Martis Valley West is a bad idea

By Ann Nichols

It was a full house, around 250 people attended the Placer County Planning Commission meeting at Granlibakken on June 9.

Placer County staff requested approval of the contentious Martis Valley West project, which consists of a gated community of 760 units (1,900 new folks at least) and 6 acres of commercial plopped in the forest on top of Highway 267.

Never mind that the Truckee Tahoe Airport, Tahoe Area Sierra Club, Mountain Area Preservation, North Tahoe Preservation Alliance, Friends of the West Shore, Sierra Watch and the League to Save Lake Tahoe all requested denial of the project.

Forty members of the public spoke, but only two said they were in favor: the wife of the developer and Eugene Roeder, who is a member of the North Tahoe Regional Municipal Advisory Council. Additionally, over 5,000 petition signatures have been collected and delivered, requesting no Tahoe basin or ridgeline development.

To paraphrase:

The meeting lasted 6.5 hours, yet around 100 passionate Tahoe lovers stuck it out the entire time. Yes, it was painful especially when the developer's attorney and other representatives had the final word after public testimony.

The spin narrative was continued and they failed to answer the Planning Commission's legitimate concerns: Oh, no sir, you won't see Lake Tahoe from 75-foot-tall condominiums on the Tahoe basin boundary line.

Right commissioner, we won't build affordable housing on site,

we'd rather contribute money into a fund to build it somewhere else.

The project site isn't appropriate for affordable housing. Absolutely, we will pay into a fund to add two more lanes on Highway 267 that is currently inadequately funded. No worries sirs, there is a plan to evacuate the east side of Placer County ... everyone leaves on Highway 267.

Once again the developer, Mountainside Partners, formerly East-West Partners, downplayed its current additive application for the 550-space adjacent [proposed] Brockway Campground. Which, when you add the 550 spaces (870,000 square feet of soil disturbance) to the 760 units (11 million square feet of disturbance) there really is no reduction in potential development.

June 9 was a red flag day for fire danger, and conspicuously absent at the meeting were representatives of the fire departments. The evacuation study by LSC claims 1.3 to 1.5 hours to evacuate the project in case of fire; however, the document doesn't consider in the mix if Kings Beach and Incline Village have to evacuate at the same time.

The questionable emergency preparedness study done by Mountainside Partners also claims everyone evacuating will be directed by their staff turn left from the project toward Truckee. Their staff will have to be extremely brave souls. The emergency preparedness study by Mountainside Partners assumes just one fire scenario and doesn't consider a wind-driven event, which makes their plan useless.

At the end of the hearing, the commission elected to delay approval until they could have a hearing attended by Caltrans, U.S. Forest Service and the North Tahoe and Northstar fire districts.

They considered not allowing public comment. Wow. Larry Severson, commissioner, tried to orchestrate an approval anyway

which deferred the issues of fire evacuation and traffic congestion until later subsequent project approvals.

Luckily for Lake Tahoe/Truckee, that idea didn't succeed. These significant environmental impacts must be sorted out now.

By the way, Mountainside Partners claims it won't consider a smaller project. They must build 760 units or the project won't be financially feasible due to high infrastructure costs.

Hmmm, maybe the project concept of building in the middle of the forest on a ridge far from any existing development or infrastructure is a bad idea. What do you think? There's a concept for you.

Contact Gov. Jerry Brown, maybe he'll listen if Placer County won't:

Subject: Martis Valley West Project

Governor Jerry Brown, c/o State Capitol, Suite 1173, Sacramento, CA 95814; phone – 916.445.2841; fax – 916.558.3160; email – <https://govnews.ca.gov/gov39mail/webmail.php>

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