

Commission denies Martis Valley West project

By Kathryn Reed

In a split vote, the Placer County Planning Commission said no to the developer who wants to build 760 units on 6.6 acres near Brockway Summit.

Sierra Pacific Industries owns the land, with Mountainside Partners the developers. The development would be just outside the Lake Tahoe Basin.

Commissioners on July 7 voted 5-2 to deny the project. Their biggest issues were traffic and evacuation plans in the event of a fire or similar emergency.

This meeting was a continuation of the June meeting that was also standing room only and a bit contentious. People had signs that read "Deny Martis Valley West."

Only the developer, their reps and county staff spoke in favor of the project.

"The Martis Valley West project reflects a truly unique combined conservation and development plan that relocates future development to an area adjacent to existing development, significantly reduces the amount of allowable development and serves to complete a remarkable conservation vision," Blake Riva, managing partner with Mountainside Partners, told *Lake Tahoe News*. "We believe the project should be approved based on its merits. We look forward to the Martis Valley West project proceeding to a vote of the Placer County Board of Supervisors later this summer."

The ultimate decision will be up to the Board of Supervisors. A meeting date has not been set.

"Today's vote is great news for everyone who loves Tahoe" Tom Mooers of Sierra Watch said in a press release. "It's not necessarily the end of the road for the project, but it's a clear indication that it has no place in North Lake Tahoe."

This has been a closely watched project by people in Lake Tahoe even though the project is in Truckee's boundaries. Highway 267 is a link between the two areas and is already congested.

Besides more vehicles on the roads, air quality is another concern. So is the ability to get to safety in the event of an emergency.

First responders who spoke had some concerns about the ability to get everyone out.

"There's no question in my mind that first responders can pull off an evacuation of any area in the basin if they were called to do so," said John McEldowney, program manager for the Placer County Office of Emergency Services. "I'm not saying it's going to go perfectly, but I have full confidence in our first responders to get it done."

The League to Save Lake Tahoe has come out against the project.

"A vote to approve this project is a vote against the lake," Shannon Eckmeyer with the League to Save Lake Tahoe told commissioners.

Many would like the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency to weigh in even though it is outside its jurisdiction. This is because the project will impact the basin.