

Second lawsuit filed against Squaw project

By Kathryn Reed

Did Placer County violate California's open meeting law, the Brown Act?

A lawsuit filed by Sierra Watch says that is exactly what happened last year at the meeting where Placer County approved KSL Capital Partners' development plans at Squaw Valley.

The development was approved on a 4-1 vote Nov. 15.

The conservation group contends the county added things to the agenda at the late minute. Per state law the public is supposed to have access to agenda documents at least 72 hours before the meeting.

The lawsuit also contends that Placer County failed to give notice in the agenda that the Board of Supervisors would be considering a different version of the proposed project's development agreement.

"People can't participate if they don't know what's on the agenda, and they can't express an informed opinion if the background materials aren't available," Sierra Watch attorney Isaac Silverman said in a statement. "When our government acts like this, it's more than just a really bad way to run a meeting—it's illegal."

Placer County could not comment on the lawsuit because according to DeDe Cordell, director of communications and public affairs, the county has not been served yet.

Squaw, though, has strong opinions about the latest lawsuit.

"The fact is there was no Brown Act violation. The development

agreement was on the agenda, and the DA was publicly available to anyone who wanted to review it. What is rather striking is that Sierra Watch would attack a voluntary commitment to pay an air quality fee of \$441,000 to the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency," Whit Manley, environmental attorney at Remy Moose Manley LLP on behalf of Squaw Valley Ski Holdings, told Lake Tahoe News. "If Sierra Watch's latest claim is designed to intimidate the county, we doubt it will work. The county has very able planning and legal staff, and we are sure they will provide a thoughtful response to this misinformed claim."

Andy Wirth, president and CEO of Squaw Valley Ski Holdings, told Lake Tahoe News, "There was a vigorous public debate about the project. We had our say. So did Sierra Watch. So did everyone else. Then the board made a decision. This claim by Sierra Watch is unfounded, and is simply another attempt by that organization to mislead the community."

This is the second lawsuit Sierra Watch has filed pertaining to the Squaw's plans. The Dec. 14 lawsuit centers on California Environmental Quality Act, specifically issues with the environmental impact report.