

Higher lodging fee to fund Stateline event center



Edgewood Lodge once completed will add to Douglas County's bed tax revenue. Photo/LTN

By Kathryn Reed

STATELINE – It is going to cost a little more to stay at a Stateline lodging property beginning May 1.

Douglas County commissioners on Feb. 16 agreed to increase the lodging license fee from 3 percent to 4 percent just for properties at the lake. The additional revenue will be for the sole purpose of planning, building and maintaining an events center.

Because this is a fee and not a tax it does not need to go before voters. It will bring the total hotel tax to 14 percent. This is the same rate tourists pay in the redevelopment area of South Lake Tahoe.

Based on last year's lodging revenues, an additional 1 percent would have brought in \$600,000. With the Edgewood Lodge expected to open in late spring, that will be additional revenue that has not been part of the mix.

The added fee will affect all short-term rentals, not just traditional hotels.

Since 2010 an effort has been under way to create a year-round event center. The goal is to be able to attract conventions that are too big for the casinos, bring in entertainment year-round, and have indoor athletic events.

The current proposal is for the event center to be built at the corner of Highway 50 and Lake Parkway in MontBleu's parking lot.

Tahoe Douglas Visitors Authority would own and operate the facility.

TDVA in October approved the lodging fee. That entity is responsible for spending the lodging fees and taxes collected by the county at the lake. The money is for tourism – including helping fund Lake Tahoe Visitors Authority, putting on the two fireworks shows on the South Shore, contributing to the celebrity golf tournament, outdoor concert series and other events.

At Thursday's meeting the 11 people who spoke were all in favor of the proposal, including reps from LTVA, Harrah's-Harveys, MontBleu, Ridge Tahoe, and Edgewood Tahoe.

This was the first reading of the ordinance, with one more to come. Then a business impact statement will be prepared.

Assuming those get approved, then TDVA will go forward with environmental documents and all associated studies. That process could take two years.