

Need for new park called into question



District 1 Supervisor Cliff Edson's town hall meeting turned into a lively discussion about the necessity of a new park.

By Nick Baptista/ The Valley Springs News/March 21, 2014

Whether the Valley Springs area needs a new park offering baseball and soccer fields, tennis courts, a playground and amphitheater became a point of contention at Tuesday's town hall meeting organized by District 1 Supervisor Cliff Edson.

Members of Foothill Park and Recreation and the Calaveras County Parks and Recreation Commission outlined a proposal for a regional park on Calaveras County Water District property located off Hogan Dam Road near the intersection with State Route 26.

County Parks and Recreation Commissioner Pat McGreevy made a slide presentation with a chart showing recreational facilities in the county and the Valley Springs area have been lagging behind the growth in population.

Peter Racz of Rancho Calaveras said the figures did not take into account recreational facilities in his subdivision and Michael Wietrick of the Jenny Lind Veterans Memorial District Board of Directors labeled the information "false" because it didn't take into consideration his district's 37 acres of undeveloped parkland.

"Give me the truth, not a lot of false facts," Wietrick said.

Zerrall McDaniel, Foothill Parks and Recreation president, responded to Wietrick by saying her group was in the beginning stages and “we’d love to work with you.”

Weitrick said the area would have had two more lighted soccer/football fields through state Proposal 40 funding if the county had followed through on the project.

Public funding for the proposed project also came into question.

Foothill Park and Recreation organizers realize little or no public funds are available at this time. They have advocated the county begin charging a park development fee on all new construction and they will pursue grant funding. Park rental would cover upkeep and maintenance costs.

Ron Randall of Valley Springs questioned why CCWD is offering the property as use for a park. He said CCWD probably purchased the property through its rates to customers and if the district no longer needs the property, it should sell it and return the money to rate payers.

CCWD is offering to lease the property for a park because it still would retain the right to use the property as a spray field, Foothill Park and Rec officials told Randall.

Supervisor Edson voiced his support for a new park and economic development.

“Things are happening in other places, but they’re not happening here,” he said. “There’s no opportunity here and nothing to do. We can sit in a room divided and keep going the way we’re going, or change and try to do something new.”

He attributed the area’s drug problems to a lack of activities and the loss of industry and business over the years.

If people continue to say “no” to new ideas, new businesses, new development and manufacturing, “that will stop us,” he said.

The meeting also included presentations by Calaveras Consolidated Fire Protection District leaders explaining the fiscal and employee challenges they face to maintain a high level of service to the community and what’s new in local garbage and recycling services.

In addition, several organizations and agencies such as the sheriff’s office, Economic Development Corporation, Cal-Waste Recovery Systems and Mother Lode Job Connection, staffed tables to provide information to the public