

Residents renew attempt to build regional park

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Efforts to build a regional park in Valley Springs with baseball/softball fields, clay tennis courts and other recreational amenities are re-gaining momentum.

More than 40 people met last week in the Rancho Calaveras Clubhouse to resurrect plans to increase the community's recreational opportunities. Once envisioned for federal property at New Hogan Lake, the latest effort is looking at working with the Calaveras County Water District to utilize 55 acres in the heart of Valley Springs at State Route 26 and Hogan Dam Road.

Valley Springs resident and golf course designer Dave Tanner rolled out a preliminary plan for the proposed park at the Jan. 29 meeting that shows space for four diamonds, four soccer fields, six tennis courts, an equestrian center, children's playground, dog run park and amphitheater.

There is enough property to also include a skateboard park and other facilities desired by the public, Tanner said.

"We want to make sure we are addressing what the community wants in a park," Tanner told the Valley Springs News.

CCWD purchased the property for spray field use when its storage ponds were reaching capacity, Tanner said, but is now utilizing La Contenta Golf Course for that purpose.

Instead of keeping the land idle, CCWD is willing to lease the property for recreational purposes, he added, but wants to keep the option open to use it for additional spray fields if the need arises.

Ironically, providing water to the proposed park is a major hurdle at this time. Treated water would be too expensive, along with running pipelines with raw water from New Hogan Lake.

"We're looking at alternatives," Tanner said, and the most affordable at this time is drilling an agricultural well.

Another hurdle is funding for park improvements and park maintenance.

With an active group of about 40 people, they are forming committees to look at funding sources such as grants and sponsorships, he said, and charging use fees for events such as tournaments could also generate revenue.

Organizations such as the U.S. Tennis and National Rodeo associations might have grants or sponsorships available that can be obtained to build some of the facilities, Tanner said.

Establishing a developer fee program for new construction is also being investigated, he added, but the group right now does not intend to look at collecting money through a property tax.

He does not foresee a problem with the new development fee.

“A nice park would help property values,” Tanner said. “It would make the area more desirable and encourage people to live here so developers could easily pass the fee along by charging a higher price for their homes.”

Future meetings are in the works to receive additional input from the community.