

REVISED PLANS FOR CALAVERAS PARK UNVEILED

Park proposed for Valley Springs

Park advocates are reviving a more-than-decade-old effort to build a regional park that would include baseball fields, an amphitheater and equestrian center on land in Valley Springs owned by Calaveras County Water District.



Proposed park plan



Source: Tanner Consulting Group

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By **Dana M. Nichols**

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VALLEY SPRINGS - Buoyed by hopes of better times ahead and the support of Calaveras County's leading parks proponent, Valley Springs activists have revived a drive to create a regional park with ball fields, an amphitheater and an equestrian arena close to the heart of town.

More than 40 people met in the Rancho Calaveras clubhouse Wednesday night in the first of a series of community outreach meetings to discuss the plans for a 50-acre site on Hogan Dam Road.

Dave Tanner, a golf course designer and Valley Springs resident, reviewed plans he drafted that show the layout of the proposed park and explained that the design has been driven by the need to give the park a way to cover the cost of its operations.

"It's a true economic development piece for our community for the future," Tanner said. "Most of the facilities are designed for tournament play."

Clay tennis courts, for example, could provide the only such tournament-quality clay court site in the region. Similarly, the amphitheater would provide a concert venue, and rodeos and equestrian contests could use the arena.

And the most recent revision of the plan includes a 1.35-acre skate park added in response to the demand for it among county youths.

Proponents say the plan is viable because the Calaveras County Water District, which owns the land, is willing to let it be used as a park. What the water district needs in return are assurances that it can dispose of treated wastewater there in the future by irrigating lawns with it.

The park could also be designed to improve the flood control capacity of Cosgrove Creek by providing room for that creek to spread before its waters flow to downstream subdivisions, such as Gold Creek and La Contenta.

The vision Tanner and others described is one in which various entities ranging from sports associations to the Army Corps of Engineers would all contribute something to getting the park built.

Such ideas have been around for more than a decade, but they have not proceeded due to a lack of funding.

Now, however, the effort to obtain permits, sign the needed agreements and get funding is being revived in part because of the involvement of Pat McGreevy of Glencoe. McGreevy is a founding member of the Calaveras County Parks and Recreation Commission and has been a leading voice for organized parks in a county with no countywide staff or agency to manage parks.

Despite that, McGreevy has played a key role in improving public access to parks and channeling hundreds of thousands of dollars in grants as well as mapping out possible routes for a countywide trail system.

Now, the hope that the U.S. economy may be improving means that funding may start flowing again to human needs, such as recreation, McGreevy said.

He asked those with expertise in the various components of the park to provide him "shovel-ready" plans. "We've got to be ready to jump when the time comes," McGreevy said.

Zerrall McDaniel, president of Foothill Parks and Recreation, said her nonprofit organization recently revived itself after having been dormant.

She said the group would meet again in late February to discuss the recruitment of new board members and other steps toward making the park a reality. The outreach came and after she and other board members met with McGreevy in December to discuss the situation.

McGreevy said that a county the size of Calaveras, based on its population, should have five regional parks. "This would be the first one," he said of the proposed site in Valley Springs.

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