

To Irv Christensen, Member of Sierra County Planning Commission

Dear Irv,

I have spent a great deal of time exploring the Sierra Hot Springs Resort and Retreat Center Masterplan. I've read and reread the entire mitigated negative declaration proposal that I had sent to me by the county because I live in Sierraville and love this community for the unique rural qualities it has that are irreplaceable. I have also spent much time reading the Sierra County General Plan because the hot springs proposal would fall under the requirements of the general plan. Let me copy here a small but extremely important part of the general plan:

“Based upon these issues, the Planning Commission formulated the following five fundamental goals which serve as a basis of all the Plan's provisions. Each of the goals carry the same weight, no one has precedence over another. However, the first goal sets the stage for each of the following goals.”

“1. It is the County's most fundamental goal to maintain its culture, heritage, and rural character and preserve its rural quality of life.”

The importance of this cannot be overstated and is key to the understanding that this project as presented does not follow the key goal of the SC general plan. This resort, if completed as designed, would completely change the culture and rural character and rural quality of life in Sierraville and nearby rural areas. The main reason for this is the size of the complex which will include a sixty room two story hotel. If I am correct, there is no other hotel or “lodge” this large in any of the rural counties to our north on the eastern side of the state. In addition to this sixty room lodge will be an additional eleven separate housing units for visitors and 40 employee housing units plus more housing for managerial staff, a restaurant and store and a 50 space campground. This is not a modest expansion of a historical facility. It is replacing a historical landmark with a major hotel resort complex similar to those in the Truckee Tahoe area to the south. This does not fit the guidelines set forth in the general plan. Please read again the most fundamental goal of the plan.

In addition I have some real concerns with the process the county is following and I will try to explain them here.

First, I see a major difficulty in that you and others who are making the final decision on the proposal may not take the time to study the full Mitigated Negative Declaration but instead only read the public relations booklet of 42

pages which does not list the many negative impacts this project would create for the Sierraville community.

Secondly, I live near this project. I walk the roads and trails near this project almost daily. I read the mitigations of the negative impacts of this project and the mitigations are wholly inadequate to rate a grade of “no significant impact with mitigations” as judged by the assistant county planner who lives and works far away from the project. Let me be specific:

Traffic: vehicle trips generated by resort on a busy summer day would increase from 340 to 1140, a net increase of 800 trips PER DAY through our small community! P. 98, Sierra Hot Springs Masterplan Proposal (SHSMP). If you continue reading this part and you are a local you will be surprised to see that the gravel road to the resort if properly maintain would suffer no adverse impact, according to the proposal. This is not true today and would certainly not be true with 800 more vehicle trips. The road was deeply rutted and potholed within one week of maintenance gravel work this past summer. And even more important is the proposal’s lack of dealing with the noise, congestion, air pollution that our community would be dealing with on our previously calm, pedestrian friendly roadways.

Project Population: P. 32. This estimated population growth of only 135, going from current pop. of 394 to peak pop. at resort completion of only 529 defies believability. Remember, you are going from a lodge that currently houses ten to - at resort completion - a hotel that has 60 rooms, 11 guest cottages and 40 employee units. These estimated numbers do not make sense and make me wonder about the credibility of the entire study.

Wastewater disposal: P. 68. This section is truly interesting for its “flexibility”! 15,900 gallons of wastewater per day would be generated. We don’t know for sure how we’ll deal with but we’ll check it out when the time comes! Really? Somehow we’ll make it work!?

I could go on with many more mitigations that have serious flaws but before you give up on reading my letter, let me explain one of my biggest concerns with the process: The 20 year plus timeline that the county would agree to.

We must disregard the twenty year suggested time frame.

The developer states that the construction of the project may take 20 years to complete. This, in my opinion, is supposed to calm serious concerns that this project may inspire in community members. After all it may never happen in my

lifetime they think. However, the only way we can fairly evaluate the project is to assume it will be completed as soon as possible given the time constraints of the construction process. If we approve something now that only will be completed twenty years in the future when we don't know what those conditions will be, we are robbing those future decision makers of the chance to make choices based on conditions that exist in twenty years. We will be committing the county to decisions made before all the facts were in. So my thoughts on the project are based realistically on the immediate impact the completed project will have.

The idea of a twenty year plus time span to create a resort of this size in a piecemeal "we'll see what happens as we go" approach is not something that the county should even consider as anything more than suggestion until the developer can show it has the funds available to complete the project.

The idea of a greatly scaled down expansion that could be completed in a reasonable time limit is the type of proposal the county should insist on, in my opinion.

Sincerely,

Lynn McKechnie
Sierraville

P.S. Please call or email me if you have any questions. 530-414-8630
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