

# Reno-Tahoe 2022 Winter Olympic Games?

By Susan Wood



The Winter Olympics is a hot ticket for those who are enthusiastic about cold weather sports. That's why the Reno-Tahoe Winter Games Coalition has not given up hope on hosting the world-renowned event again.

The group led by Chief Executive Officer Jon Killoran is so motivated to bring the Games back decades after Squaw Valley hosted them in 1960 that the board has agreed to engage in a game of chess in determining what year to bid for.

As it stands, the 2014 prospect once dreamed about by the late Reno Sports Commission Chairman Jim Vanden Heuvel moved to 2018. It was more recently bumped to 2022 once Chicago lost its bid for the Summer Games in 2016.

Killoran is still hopeful – especially since patience is the name of the game.

"I don't think there's a better North American region to host them than us. Mother Nature brings us this great skiing in close proximity to the Reno and Sacramento airports," Killoran told *Lake Tahoe News* shortly after Chicago lost its bid.

He further explained how the International and U.S. Olympic committees evaluate the strength of the bid based on the prospect of mass ticket sales. The population bases of the San Francisco Bay Area, Sacramento and Reno provides that potential.

"We feel we stack very well against any other region with this," he said.

And now, the USOC has a new chief executive officer, Scott Blackmun, who has expressed more interest in getting the Winter Games back in the United States in 2022.

The local coalition has been using the Winter Games in Salt Lake City in 2002 as a model for calculating the bottom line. Its budget came in at \$3 billion with a \$76 million profit. This was also just five months after 9/11, so people were not traveling.

Venues built for the Games are recognized for bringing in revenue long after the athletes and organizers have packed up. The budget for the Games scheduled in Vancouver in February is set at \$1.6 billion.

Killoran said enthusiasts shouldn't lose hope since the region has had them before.

"In the modern Olympics, 50 years is a long time," he said. "They don't tend to return to a region too quickly."

He could have a point. The United States hosted them twice at Lake Placid, N.Y., in 1932 and 1980. Innsbruck, Austria, is another two-time location.

Whatever the case, the bid would represent a far-reaching effort – with organizers acknowledging widespread support would be necessary from the ski resorts and local government groups.

Transportation and environmental issues represent the top concerns for hosting the Games here. Most agree a mass transit system would need to be put into place and environmental watchdog groups would need to be behind it. As former South Lake Tahoe Mayor Tom Davis put it when the idea circulated in 2001: "That's going to be our biggest hurdle."

In the meantime, the coalition will focus on more short-term goals such as the West Coast AAU Junior Olympic Games. This event received joint support from the Nevada Youth Sports Commission and Reno-Sparks Convention and Visitors Authority.

For now, the latter has developed no economic impact report for hosting the 2022 Winter Games but pledges marketing support, according to RSCVA officials.

“We’re more involved on the periphery for now,” spokeswoman Jill Stockton said.

Truckee Mayor Carolyn Dee, also Squaw’s director of business administration, summed up the quest with a familiar Olympic theme: “Time will tell.”

Other attempts have been made to bring the Games back to the Tahoe area. A group from Squaw tried for the 1976 games and a South Shore chamber of commerce had talked of going after the 1996 Games.