Recreation dollars being spent on fields, bike trails

By Kathryn Reed

Improvements to South Lake Tahoe ball fields and bike trails will be in the ground by the time the building season is over in the fall.

The upgrades all have to do with the transformation of Measure S into Measure R. South Shore voters on the California side decided the recreation measure was too limiting and that by changing the language more money could be spent on some critical items.

An update on what the fields and bicycle advisory committees are doing was given at Friday's South Lake Tahoe Recreation Facilities Joint Powers Authority board meeting.



Crews work July 26 on Sierra House Elementary School's field. Photo/LTN

John Dalton, chair of the fields committee, explained how the revamping of Sierra House Elementary School's field is the big project this summer. It looks a bit like a construction site now with all of the heavy equipment moving dirt.

Before work began the field was full of holes and seemed

dangerous when running on it.

It was also a field, like Bijou Community School, that when designed had its first priority be about Tahoe Regional Planning Agency erosion control mandates and not the functionality of a play field. This meant there was a slope to the field to catch runoff from the hard surfaces. That much water on turf is not a good thing.

This project is coming in under bid, with the expectation there could be a savings of $5,000. The field committee recommended the JPA board dedicates any leftover money to help fix the Babe Ruth field.

“It was vandalized in the spring and needs repairs on the field,” Dalton told the board July 26.

He said kids broke into the shack and trashed the place by using baseball bats on equipment. Babe Ruth officials have taken care of the snack shack vandalism, but need help with the field.

The board voted 3-0 to give any “extra” Sierra House money to Babe Ruth.

The JPA board is chaired by Norma Santiago representing El Dorado County, JoAnn Conner from South Lake Tahoe, and Judy Clot from Tahoe Paradise Resort Improvement District.

The fields committee is also in the process of planning improvement for the Al Tahoe fields. The goal is to add a field that youth baseball and softball could play on.

Shay Navarro, who heads the bike committee, told the board how next week the city is expected to go out to bid on the trail improvements. The goal is that they would be in the ground before the grading season is over.

The sections of trails will be pulverized, with that material becoming the base. Then new asphalt will be laid over that.

This should prevent the monstrous cracks that have developed.

Portions to be upgraded are the trail behind McDonald’s at the Y, part of the area behind Motel 6, behind Meek’s in the city, and from Tulare Avenue to Los Angeles Avenue.

Also to be replaced are the bridges over Trout Creek and Upper Truckee River where the bike route parallels Highway 50.

The bike committee has $17,000 left to spend and asked the JPA board to keep that in case there are cost overruns with the projects the city will be in charge of. The board agreed to this.

The bike committee is also working with the Lake Tahoe Bicycle Coalition to provide informational signs so cyclists know where they are and where they could go.

In other news:

• The JPA board in January will make two appointments to the field committee, and probably three to the bike. Applications will be available in December.

• The state is now considering the JPA a special district, which requires more audits be done. The county auditor-controller will be tasked with that job.