Olympic Valley wants to be its own town

By Kathryn Reed

Olympic Valley – it might be California's next town.

More than enough signatures were gathered this month for Placer County's Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCo) to have to look into the viability of making Olympic Valley a town. Twenty-five percent of the registered voters needed to sign the petitions; 30 percent did so in three weeks.

The town boundaries would be the same as the Squaw Valley Service District, which provides fire, water and parks to the area. If incorporated, it is possible SVSD could become the new town's public works department. The town would go from ridgeline to ridgeline, include the Truckee River corridor south almost to Alpine Meadows and then a little north of the road that leads to the valley.

"A small group started in spring 2013 with the idea we were really frightened by the large-scale proposed expansion of the village," Fred Ilfeld, chairman of Incorporate Olympic Village (IOV) board, told *Lake Tahoe News*. "We realized it was possible by incorporating we could get local control of land use planning and other things."



Residents of Olympic Valley

want to incorporate the town. Photo/LTN file

Squaw Valley Ski Holdings, a subsidiary of KSL Capital Partners, runs Squaw Valley and Alpine Meadows ski resorts as well as the village at Squaw. In 2012, the company proposed a massive overhaul of the village that would include more housing, a water park and other features that residents balked at. While those plans have since been scaled back, residents still desire having local control instead of deferring to Placer County supervisors who make most of their decisions 80 miles away in Auburn.

About 1,000 people call this area home; of those 560 are registered voters.

Next up is what is likely to be a five-month dual process to have revenue neutrality negotiations between IOV officials and the county, as well a comprehensive fiscal analysis. The latter will be done by an independent agency hired by LAFCo and paid for by IOV.

Public hearings will be scheduled after those two items are completed.

LAFCo officials will then decide whether the issue of incorporation will go before the voters. The decision is supposed to be made based on fact, not emotion. The main facts are whether the town could be fiscally viable and not a liability to the county.

Incorporation proponents would like the voters to be casting ballots in November. The first question would ask if they want Olympic Valley to be incorporated. If yes, a subsequent election would be conducted to elect the town council.

IOV already had to put up $25,000 with its application to LAFCo to become a town. To date, $56,0000 has been raised for the incorporation process. It’s estimated $155,000 will be

needed to complete the process.

“This is something we should have done years ago,” Ilfeld said. “We don’t want more of the valley to change at the whim of private developers with the support of county supervisors who have a base of representation 80 miles away and 500 feet lower who are not in the same universe.”

That doesn’t mean IOV supporters don’t want the ski resort or others to be able to grow and do new things. What they want is a more direct say in the process.

Proponents also want more of a say as to how the hotel taxes are spent as well what goes on with public transportation. The people of Olympic Valley say they want to govern themselves, to preserve their history, culture and future.