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El Dorado supervisors make cases for their pet projects

By Cathy Locke -- Bee Staff Writer - *(Published April 29, 2004)*

With more recreational needs than financial resources, members of the El Dorado County Board of Supervisors recently found themselves vying for dollars to serve their districts.

Supervisor Jack Sweeney last week sought to have \$300,000 of the county's \$1.2 million in funds from Proposition 40, a statewide park bond measure, allocated to assist Placerville in renovating and expanding its municipal swimming pool. His effort led fellow supervisors to stake claims to a portion of the money as well.

"I know for a fact that 60 to 70 percent of the people who swim there are from (supervisorial) Districts 2, 3 and 4," Sweeney said in presenting his case to fellow supervisors. "So I thought it would be a good thing to help the city out. I think it's District 3's turn."

The Placerville City Council this month trimmed some amenities from the swimming pool project after bids came in \$350,000 to \$500,000 above the \$1.6 million the city had budgeted for the project.

The new pool complex is to be built in City Park at Benham and Pacific streets, the site of the current municipal pool. It will feature a lap swimming pool, an attached recreational pool with a 15-foot-high, figure 8-shaped slide and a separate wading pool with children's play equipment.

Sweeney's request to assist the city, however, prompted Supervisor Charlie Paine to quickly speak up on behalf of his constituents in District 4. Paine said he planned to ask the board in May for \$280,000 in Proposition 40 funds to help the American River Conservancy purchase the remaining parcels of the Cronin Ranch near Pilot Hill.

The purchase would secure a key link for the American River Trail, serving hikers, bicyclists and equestrians. Paine said he would like to see an equestrian center established in the area.

In addition, he said, the Georgetown Divide Recreation District seeks funding to build a Little League ball park in the Cool area.

Board Chairman Rusty Dupray and Supervisor Helen Baumann also cited funding needs for the Bass Lake Regional Park and Pollock Pines Park projects in their districts.

Dupray noted that the county has given the city of Placerville \$210,000 toward the swimming pool project. "With the budget limits we have and the projects we have, I'm concerned about giving additional funds ... I'm concerned about this particular expenditure at this time," he said.

Laura Gill, county chief administrative officer, said the funding debate highlighted the importance of one of the board's goals for the coming year: to develop a comprehensive capital improvement program.

Baumann said the county had contributed \$300,000 toward the swimming pool at Union Mine High School, also in District 3, adding that the high school pool should relieve some of the burden on the city pool.

"So are you telling me if I want to do a project in District 3, I shouldn't do it in the city because that makes it ineligible?" Sweeney asked.

Dupray and Paine argued that Placerville, as a city, could apply to the state for Proposition 40 funds and need not rely on the county. County funds, they said, should be directed toward projects in the unincorporated areas, which have no other source of revenue. The board opted to take no action on Sweeney's request but referred the matter to the county Parks and Recreation Commission.

About the Writer

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