



# THE TAOS NEWS

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## TSV unveils summer construction plans

By Elliott Martin

*The Taos News*, 4/10/2014

Demolition is scheduled to begin next Monday (April 14) at the base area of Taos Ski Valley as renovations get underway. Construction fences are about to go up, and Taos Ski Valley, Inc. held an open house Tuesday (April 7) to discuss the summer plans with community members and address any concerns.

As it is the beginning of a multi-year project, a large portion of this summer's work will concern utilities and improving other aspects of the area's infrastructure.

According to Robert Daniel Jr., principal with the Gateway Management Company, water, sewer and gas lines are to be brought up to standard, electric and telecommunication lines will be upgraded in partnership with Kit Carson Electric and Centrylink, and water quality issues in the R'o Hondo will be addressed.

Of the several parcels to be fenced off for construction, the initial demolition will take place at the site of the old Thunderbird Chalets. The site, which abuts Thunderbird Road, will become the location of temporary facilities for TSV operations and businesses that will be moved when the building which is currently housing the ticket office is torn down later in the summer. Temporary is a relative term as the businesses and TSV offices to be moved in October before the start of the 2014-2015 ski season, will remain at this location for a number of years.

Due to the age of the buildings to be razed, Daniel explained measures will be taken to properly control hazards such as asbestos. A licensed environmental remediation firm will have personnel in protective suits containing the substance.

Another major part of the planned construction for the summer is addressing what has been dubbed as "the moat." The moat is the gap between the "snow beach" at the base of lift one and the face of the base area building. The idea of filling in the moat is to create a continuous deck, a level walking experience from the snow to the ski area facilities. Brian Cruz, senior project superintendent with the contracting firm Jaynes Corporation, said he foresees this as one of the summer's bigger challenges.

The base area renovation project is not Cruz' first time working in the valley. He was on the 1994 project which constructed the children's ski school center. "You can't go to a better place in New Mexico and work, especially in the summer time," he said, highlighting the laid-back mountain atmosphere. "Working with the community is going to be great. That's the easy part," said Cruz.

As Daniel and Cruz presented the planned summer's projects to the crowded room of attentive community members, they emphasized the importance of flexibility and patience when it comes

to dealing with the construction mess and changes to traffic flow. They said safety is of upmost importance, and traffic circulation will always be maintained so emergency vehicles can properly respond.

“Stuff happens in construction. We will do everything we can to keep you informed,” said Daniel, noting there will be construction information posted on the TSV website, starting in a few weeks. Cruz said he will post signage weekly detailing what they are doing. “This isn’t our first rodeo,” said Daniel, further encouraging members of the community to come forward throughout the process with questions or concerns.

Cruz explained work will be ongoing from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m., but they won’t start the “big noise” until 8 in the morning. At the height of the construction, Daniel anticipates 75 to 100 construction workers on site, potentially providing an economic opportunity for local businesses. He also mentioned they are first looking locally for workers and subcontractors and moving out from there. Along with the gross receipts tax, these factors have the potential to boost the local economy, but the construction is going to be messy. “This year is going to be disruptive,” Cruz said.

Nonetheless, the members of the community seemed to maintain a positive attitude. “I think it’s all good. I’ve been here most of my life and I’m ready for something else,” said Ken Gallard, who used to live in a uninsulated cabin with no running water when he first moved to the valley. “We need to get back on the radar. We’ve got about 60 years of bandaids up here,” he said.

“I’m encouraged by this meeting and the communication. You can’t ignore the people who have been here,” said Kathy Humphries, the manager of the St. Bernard condominiums, after the open house. She has concerns about the dust from traffic on Twining Road which passes by the condos. She has had issues with the dust in the past and now the number of vehicles are to increase on the road due to how traffic will be routed because of the construction.

For Gordon Briner, chief operation officer at TSV, a positive community relationship is crucial. “It’s a big thing for us and it’s so important that we’re connected to the community,” he said. “What’s so gratifying is that the community is coming together on this. Most people recognize that it’s been a long time since Taos Ski Valley had done a significant upgrade.” Briner also clarified that despite the construction, most summer time activities will continue as normal, such as hiking, Big Al’s horseback riding adventures, scenic chairlift rides and music events.

While the meeting focused on the base area construction, Briner mentioned the construction of the new lift to Kachina Peak. The bullwheels for the new lift have arrived and are sitting in the parking lot. He said a snow road is currently under construction which will be used to take a bullwheel to the top of the peak, preventing the need to construct a permanent road. He also said chainsaw crews are to begin work soon to clear the site for the lower lift terminal so excavation can start at the beginning of June.

As the American made lift is being manufactured in Salt Lake City, Utah, the parts are to be shipped to TSV as the are completed. A helicopter will be used to fly in concrete for the project. Due to popular interest, Briner said they will let people know about scheduled helicopter flights. He also explained there will be no spring TSV administrative shut down this year because of all the work, so calling the office is a good way to get information.

The summer’s construction is only the first part of a long-term plan. “The strategy is to be doing something every year for the next 10 years,” said Chris Stagg, vice president of Taos Ski Valley,

Inc. While the Ski Valley has world class terrain, he said the resort needs to be brought to a place where it is competitive with other resorts. “The experience here in the village needs some upgrading,” he said.