Roundabout: Minden meeting

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Ross Chichester said the town has asked the state three times to schedule a meeting for the public about the controversial $500,000 roundabout.

"We met with them in October and told them they needed to come down and sell it to the town," Chichester said Wednesday.

"We met in February and told them the same thing. Finally, in March, we asked again."

State officials have been meeting with small groups of officials and some residents to answer questions about the roundabout which has been roundly opposed by residents who have lobbied for a traffic light.

Town officials began putting aside money to pay for a traffic light 10 years ago, but, according to the state, the intersection didn't meet warrants.

The state offered the roundabout as an alternative.

Fred Droes, chief safety/traffic engineer for the state Department of Transportation, said Thursday officials were eager to meet with residents.

He said the smaller group format allowed people to ask questions in a more informal setting.

"We always intended to go to a larger format. We're hoping to see a large number of people on March 29," Droes said.

At the smaller meetings, Droes said he's attempted to clear up misunderstandings and misconceptions about the proposal.

"Safety is our No. 1 priority and we believe the roundabout is the safest way," Droes said. "We're going to provide information why the department believes the roundabout is an appropriate safety improvement we can make for the town of Minden and travelers in the state of Nevada."

Droes said after his presentation, he will answer all questions.

Department spokesman Scott Magruder said calls to his office indicated more people were in favor of the roundabout.

"We're starting to hear a more positive swing," he said.

He cited statistics from around the United States that indicate once a roundabout is installed, 75 percent of people who were opposed come to favor the device.

The busy intersection serves Douglas High School, Carson Valley Swim Center, the Carson Valley Meetinghouse of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, a fitness center, the county library, a Montessori school, dance studio, several office buildings and the East Fork Fire and Paramedic Districts station.

"This roundabout we have under design is going to be constructed in a way that will work. It will be wide enough for the hay trucks and the emergency vehicles," Magruder said. "We're not reinventing the wheel."

Droes repeated the department's position that the roundabout will not be forced on the community.

"The position from my director's office is that we need approval to go ahead from the county commission. The county commission made it clear that they are relying on direction from the town board," Droes said.

Chichester made it clear the decision is to be driven by the citizenry.

"It's the state's job to convince the people who live here, not mine, not the town board's. If that's what the people want, that's what we'll do," Chichester said. "I think it's more important than just a Minden issue. I think it's a state of Nevada issue."

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ON THE WEB

Nevada Department of Transportation officials recommended several Web sites for information about roundabouts similar to the proposal for the intersection of Highway 88 and County Road in Minden.

Federal Highway Administration
www.fhwa.dot.gov/rnt4u/ti/roundabouts.htm
New York State Department of Transportation
www.dot.state.ny.us/roundabouts/round.html
Kansas State Department of Transportation
www.ksdot.org/burTrafficEng/Roundabouts/roundabout.asp

Schools: Tahoe closure

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before Kingsbury Middle School opened in 1976.

Several board members voiced appreciation for the involvement and temperament of parents.

"I couldn't be more proud to represent them," said trustee Cindy Trigg, the Lake Tahoe representative on the board.

Most of the eight rows of plastic chairs in the library of Kingsbury Middle School were filled by interested parents, and some students, regarding the issue.

Whittell junior Ryan Bivens asked the board if the cost savings of roughly $800,000 of a school's closure could help fund a new track at the high school.

"We've got the worst track in the entire state," he said during a break in the meeting. "I haven't been to a worse track."

Parent Chris Sullivan hoped to maintain academic programs.

"We just need to be able to see that we won't lose anything" other than a school, she said.

Sixth-grade student Sabrina Swoger wanted to know if both academic and athletic programs would be enhanced.

In his answers Superintendent John Soderman said the cost savings would address whatever needs schools in the district possess. He referred to the $1.5 million profit from a sale of a swath of land near Piñon Hills Elementary School with about $600,000 of that sale available to modify the existing lake schools for the consolidation change.

As for academic programs, Soderman said certain areas could be improved. His example was the drama program, which was discontinued at Whittell because of lack of interest but prospering at Kingsbury.

With the additional grade levels at Whittell in the 2008-09 school year, drama could again thrive at the high school.

The decision to close a school was prompted by curriculum and instruction.

Whittell is anticipated to drop to 149 students by the 2013-14 school year from 232 students this year.

Kingsbury, at 160 students, is anticipated to level off at 105 students in eight years.

And enrollment projections for Zephyr Cove Elementary, at 234 students, is at 210 students beginning in the 2010-11 school year.

Overall total enrollment at the three lake schools has declined from 942 students in the 1997-98 school year to 626 this school year. In eight years its projected at 464 students.

"(Enrollment projections) don't get any better in any forecasting we've been able to do," Soderman said.

Because of the continuing attrition and cost savings of a closure, board trustee Sharla Hales questioned the timing of the closure, wondering if it would be better to shut down a site after next school year.

But Trigg and Assistant Superintendent of Business Services Rick Kester didn't see that move as prudent.

Kester said the timeline should stay on course because it was the year given to parents and staff members and the schools need the time to plan.

But he also added the decision was up to the board.

Trigg, whose voice choked up and eyes watered, said she wanted the consolidation to be an event that parents and students would look forward to and not something to berate.

"We knew it was coming," she said about the consolidation.

"It just didn't seem it would get here that fast."

Rotary: Musicians to regionals

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Maytan Music. He plans to beef up his composition for the finals.

"I didn't think the music would be all classical," Dowell said. "For the finals, my brother will back me on guitar again but we'll probably add more to the beginning — some classical music."

Alice Sady won $100 for the Minden Rotary's second-place prize in the area music competition. The Carson Valley Middle School ninth-grader played the piano piece, "Nocturne," by Samuel Barber.

Sady, 15, is in the honor and all-state choirs at Douglas High School and has been taking ballet for 13 years. She is involved with the theater program at Western Nevada Community College and has performed in "Carousel," "Beauty and the Beast," "Fiddler on the Roof" and is in the dance troupe for WNCC's production of "Grease."

Sady takes two honors classes and a college prep class and piano lessons with James Winn at the University of Nevada, Reno, every Saturday.

"I don't watch a lot of TV," said Sady

Although she said she will continue with piano, she might consider taking acting and dancing in college.

"You never know," said Sady. "My opinion will change in the next three minutes."

The best high school instrumentalists from different Rotary districts will perform no longer than eight minutes for the chance to win $1,000 in prize money.

The Rotary-sponsored final music contest will be May 6 at John Ascuaga's Nugget in Sparks

Rules: New dog ordinance

Continued from page 1

very passionate, because I have to go into the euthanizing room twice a week, where there are puppies and sweet dogs that never had a chance."

Givens said she has rescued about 600 dogs in the 4½ years she has been doing this work. Many, including a border collie she calls Race, have gone on to become stars in herding competitions.

"When I rescued him, I couldn't find a home to take him because he was very rambunctious. Then I found out his father is a top-of-the-line dog from England," she said. "So I put him on some livestock and now, I have a room full of ribbons."

She said Douglas is the only county in Nevada that doesn't have a variance for people providing this kind of service, which defrays some costs at the county-funded animal control.

"I brought the county manager a 4-inch stack of bills I paid to vet, neuter and place these dogs," she said. "There has to be a way to solve this."

Despite claims to the contrary, Givens said the problem is acute for all breeds. Shelters might shift the dogs around, but dogs are ultimately killed to make room.

"That's why internal staff scrambles to call rescues," she said. "I've taken in boxes of puppies in groups of 8 or 10 left at the side of the road."

One litter of puppies was drenched in concentrated urine, because they hadn't been cleaned and were deprived of water, Givens said.

"One dog was dragged behind her truck until her toenails were completely worn down," she said. "I couldn't let her go. She herds sheep and she's awesome in a competition.

"We have so many trainers working with us, to help work the kinks out so these dogs are adoptable," she said. "Then we work hard to find the dog a good home. It gets a little crazy."

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