

Mammoth Lakes— Trailing behind

By Lara Kirkner
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It's interesting how it takes the Town of Mammoth Lakes more than six months to get a conceptual Mobility Plan out to the citizens of the town, but it took a group of dedicated community members only one-third of that time to come up with something tangible.

Last week, the Town's Community Development Department presented its Mobility Plan to the public at a special joint meeting of the Planning Commission, Tourism and Recreation Commission and the Public Arts Commission. The plan is a good tool, but only "conceptualizes" in what direction the town needs to move forward. Moreover, this plan has been shown to different Town commissions since the beginning of the year without any changes.

About two months ago I received an e-mail from Mammoth local John Wentworth. It was a call to action for concerned citizens to begin cataloging all the public access trails in town. What's more, these volunteers studied peer resorts that already have a trails system in place.

The group presented their findings at last week's special meeting. Their Mobility Plan Resource is titled "Mammoth Lakes Trails and Public Access." The well-researched document is one-inch thick, with a color trailhead photo and pertinent information about each trail and descriptions and photos of other resorts with existing trails systems.

What the group found, which is no shocker to most, is that Mammoth Lakes is about 20-30 years behind other resort areas when it comes to a trails system.

How could this be, I thought as I sat through last week's special meeting. For one thing, our town seems to like to talk a lot. Many times we have wonderful meetings with many great ideas, but then progress stalls.

As if reading my mind, Tourism and Recreation Commissioner Tony Colasardo stated, "We have talked about a trails system for many years, but somehow someone always seems to drop the ball."

Of course, talk is not all bad, especially when meetings like the one last week pull out members of our community like Carla Mendoza, who came to speak on behalf of the Hispanic workforce, and voiced their fears and concerns about Mammoth's future and whether they will be able to continue to afford to live here. Or when Jim Hasenauer, a member of the International Mountain Bicycling Association, showed up to offer the association's help in Mammoth's future planning.

But talk goes bad when it becomes repetitive and results in no concrete action.

We are a town that wants to work together: that was proved by Wentworth's group of volunteers and the volume of people who showed up at last week's meeting. It's just that after all the talk, someone needs to take the lead in actually getting things done.

Gordon Alper made a very poignant point at the special meeting when he reminded everyone that the General Plan, the People at One Time (PAOT), the white paper study, and much more still need to be determined.

"The mobility plan should jump to the backburner until we settle these things first," Alper said.

Again, these projects have fallen victim to lots of chatter with no finalizing of decisions. The Town must work hand in hand with groups like Wentworth's if we are to take any steps in creating a sustainable future. The Town needs to take the lead in making things happen, otherwise Mammoth will continue to be lost in everyone else's dust.



PHOTO COURTESY JOHN WENTWORTH

Mammoth Lakes continues to fall behind other resorts when it comes to things like a Trails System. Could it be because we can't stop talking? (Photo taken in Whistler, BC)

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