



Donner Summit Association (DSA) Core Action Team Meeting
Thursday, January 8, 2026 5:00-6:00 PM
In-person meeting in the Snowshed Room, Village Hall, Sugar Bowl



Village Hall, Sugar Bowl (DSCN8953.JPG).

Motions and votes are given in *italics*; action items are in **red bold**. For various reasons, the minutes below do not reflect the strict chronological order of discussions during the meeting.

1. Welcome:

Pat Malberg called the meeting to order at 5:02 PM. Chris Parker set up a Zoom connection a few minutes later.

Core Action Team (DSA Board) Attendees: Tom Denzler, Elissa Hambrecht, Pat Malberg, Bill Oudegeest, Chris Parker, Dick Simpson, Mike Spain, John Svahn (via Zoom), and Beth Tanhoff.

Others: Steve Carle (Serene Lakes Property Owners Association), Shavati Karki-Pearl (Recreation, Nevada County) (via Zoom), Sven Leff (General Manager, Truckee-Donner Recreation & Park District), Bridget Legnavsky (President and CEO, Sugar Bowl), Helen Lummis (DSA Admin Asst), Erik Marquis (Recreation Manager, Bear-Yuba Land Trust) (via Zoom), and Kimberly Parker (Nevada County Economic Development Office).

2. Approval of the Agenda:

Alecia Weisman (South Yuba River Citizens League) had asked (by e-mail) for a letter of support for a grant request to support trail building in Van Norden Meadow; Pat suggested adding this to the agenda in section 6. Pat also asked to add a report on a North Tahoe Truckee Leadership Program in Section 6.

Bill moved to approve the amended agenda; Tom seconded the motion, and it was carried unanimously (MSC-U).

3. Approval of Minutes from the December Meeting:

MSC-U (Bill/Chris) to approve the December meeting minutes.

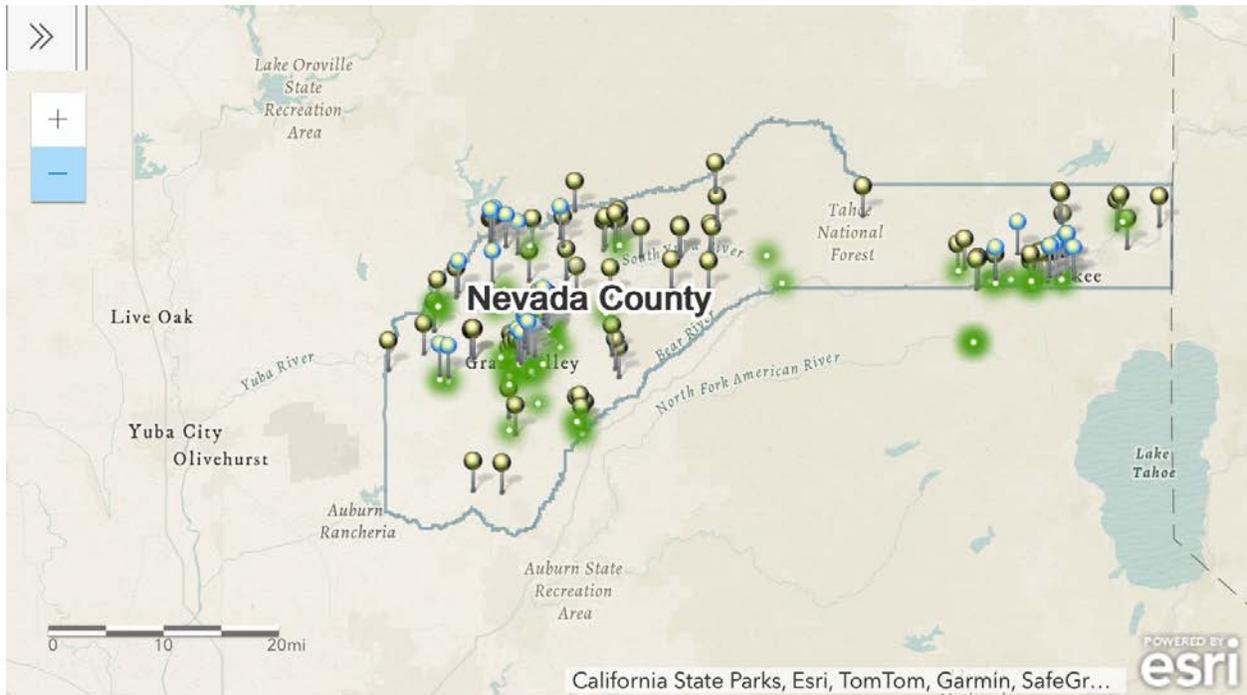
4. Financial Report (Tom):

Monthly Report: Tom distributed his report before the meeting. There was a \$250 donation, and there was a reimbursement of \$1,590.26 to the Donner Summit Historical Society for brochure printing. **Tom will send Pat contact information, and she will thank the donor.**

5. County and Other Reports:

Nevada County: Shavati said the Board of Supervisors will host a 3-day workshop on January 29-31 to set County priorities. Economic development will be discussed on the second day between 10 and 11 AM; streaming will be available for anyone wishing to follow the discussion.

Truckee Convene, Champion, and Catalyze Forum: Pat said the last meeting included a report by Eliza Tudor, Executive Director of the Nevada County Arts Council (and its Culture Forward program). The program is encouraging youth participation in the arts in schools. California has designated Truckee and Grass Valley/Nevada City as two cultural centers (see map of County cultural assets on the next page). There will be a California Creative Economy Town Hall in Nevada City on January 22 1-4 PM (<https://arts.ca.gov/event/ca-creative-economy-town-hall-nevada-city/>). In other news, CCC is doing analytics on forecasts for lodging in the Truckee area; and Kimberly discussed the design effort for a visitor facility at the west end of Summit Meadow.



Low resolution version of Nevada County's cultural asset map (<https://gonevadacounty.com/music-arts-culture/>).

Placer County: There was no representative from Placer County, so there was no report.

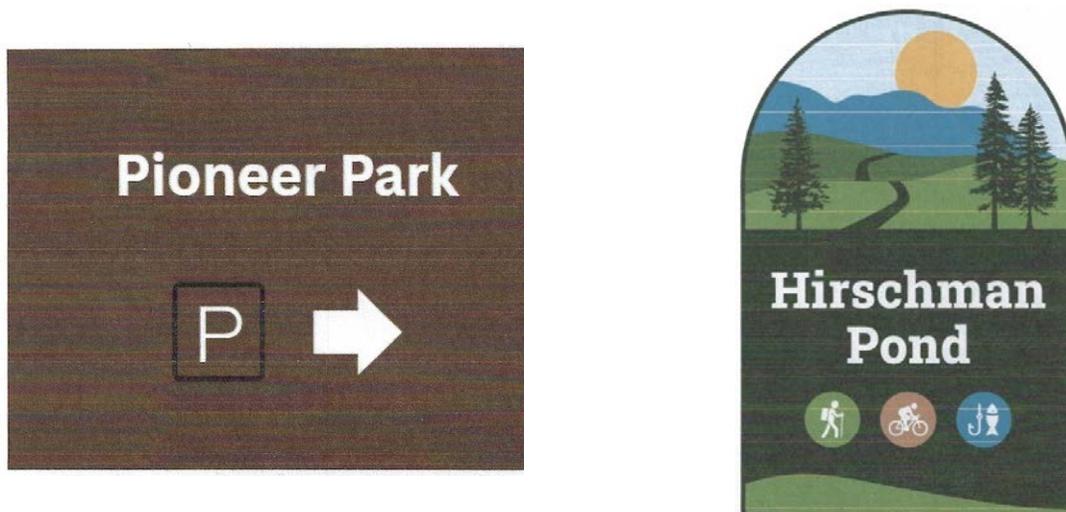
6. Ongoing Projects

Gould Park: The next meeting regarding Gould Park improvements will be with Placer County Parks staff, DSA representatives, and JK Architecture and Engineering personnel on January 14.

West Van Norden: Alecia Weisman (SYRCL) is drafting a funding request to support construction of a loop trail in Van Norden Meadow. The request will be submitted to the Sierra Nevada Conservancy's recreation program and will ask for approximately \$500K (SNC's maximum). Alecia's estimate for building the 4.95 miles of trail — including the boardwalk/puncheon section, viewing platforms, new trail building on the south side of the PG&E road, trail improvements on the wagon road, and one short pedestrian bridge over Lytton West — is \$1,325,000. About \$950K of this is the bridge and puncheon/boardwalk section (just under one mile), which is the most important part because it highlights the meadow without damaging it. Alecia will approach Erika Seward in hopes that Placer County can make up some of the shortfall. In the meantime, she is asking for a letter of support from DSA for the SNC grant. She will provide DSA with a template letter, including an updated trail map, next week. There was little discussion since DSA has supported the larger Van Norden restoration and improvements for several years.

MSC-U (Bill/Dick) to approve sending a letter of support endorsing SYRCL's grant request to SNC.

Wayfinding Project: Erik Marquis said the Nevada County 'wayfinding' project has been going for about a year. It encompasses both roadside and trail signage. Discussions have included coordination with the many entities involved in recreational signage — CalTrans, adjacent counties, local park districts, USFS, etc. Truckee opted not to join the project; DSA was a late addition. Most of the design differences have been resolved and two design types are expected to receive approval tomorrow (January 9) — white-on-brown for signs along roadways (below, left), which meet CalTrans requirements, and a more 'artistic' design for signs within 'parks' (below, right). Special symbols — for example, 'P' for parking — will indicate specific amenities or expected activities.



Pat said new signage along Donner Pass Road where visitors access the PCT and the old railroad tunnels — is the highest priority for DSA. Erik noted that the DSA area straddles the boundary between Nevada and Placer Counties; he hopes an encroachment permit from Placer County will be sufficient to resolve any remaining jurisdictional questions. Outstanding questions remain about whether these designs are consistent with PCT and UPRR specifications and whether accommodations can be negotiated with Truckee Donner Land Trust and U.S. Forest Service. Chris noted that Sugar Bowl has adopted the TDLT design.

Bill asked how easily it would be for DSA to plug into the project. Shavati replied that there is a timeline, and a lot of work has already been done. After the January 9 design approval, the next question is which signs to fabricate and install and how many; there are budget limits, and the project ends this summer. Chris asked about materials and mentioned that

DSA's Recreation Plan (<https://www.donnersummitca.com/project/summit-recreation-plan/>) lists some examples and local conditions that need to be considered. Erik said the roadside signs will be aluminum on CalTrans posts; the recreation sign materials will be determined later and may depend on location. Pat noted that not many signs will be installed around Donner Summit until after snow melts. John added that too much signage can be confusing. **Chris offered to review DSA's recommendations by February and forward those to Erik.**

Economic Development: Pat said she had been contacted by Jessica Penman, President and CEO of the Truckee Chamber of Commerce, about submitting a project proposal to the North Tahoe Truckee Leadership Program. Selected projects would be supported by small teams seeking successful outcomes within six months. Pat completed the very brief Google application form, saying that DSA would like to create an economic development plan for Donner Summit, including collection of input from local business owners. Selections will be made tomorrow (January 9). Pat asked whether Helen would be willing to work with the leadership team if DSA is chosen, and **Helen accepted.**

Review: After the November meeting (and its discussion of Summit economic development issues, Kimberly created a chart showing possible projects, their impact, status, and partners. Some are already in progress, such as the visitor hubs and OASIS infrastructure extensions. She also noted that there are increasing requests for permission to film — prompted by 100% tariffs on imported video. She hopes to launch Nevada County initiatives in the next year for senior leadership, corporate retreats, and similar projects.

Internet: Elissa asked what the timeline is for OASIS; **Kimberly doesn't know but she can find out from Kari Sinoff.** Beth said AT&T has been given a grant to connect Soda Springs and Tahoe City with fiber; so there is infrastructure development in addition to the OASIS initiative.

Donner Summit Lodge: Chris said that DSL was originally constructed in the 1920s; the 3-story restaurant structure was added in the 1940s. The lowest level is common space for Sugar Bowl employees who live in DSL, and there is a workshop. The top level is loosely characterized as residential. The commercial (middle) level of the building is not occupied. If that were to be reopened for food service, the kitchen would need a complete overhaul (potentially a \$1M expense). Chris and Bridget said Sugar Bowl would like to develop “community” space at DSL to improve the environment for Sugar Bowl employees; a restaurant is one possibility, and a brewery has also been suggested. Sugar Bowl would prefer to lease DSL rather than develop it on its own. Past experience suggests that any commercial operation at DSL will be difficult; the most recent restaurant struggled to pay rent and utilities.

Sugar Bowl has tried to find a new tenant, but commercial real estate brokers have failed to turn up anything viable. Kimberly is happy to work on any idea; she doesn't think a brewery is easier than a restaurant since breweries usually want to serve food.

Cannabis Dispensary: Chris noted Nevada County has identified Soda Springs as a potential location for a dispensary; is Donner Summit Lodge an appropriate location? Kimberly believes there will be at least one application from Donner Summit, but she doesn't know where. She also doesn't think a dispensary necessarily needs a lot of space.

DSL Picnic Area: Pat views the acreage behind DSL as "wasted space". She wondered whether Truckee Parks would be able to put a picnic area there. Sven is not familiar with the property, but he is willing explore possibilities when the snow is gone. A Google Earth image could be useful now. Sven said parks, if starting small and backed by a public agency, have a lot of liability protection built in. Chris said Donner Summit Fire used to hold annual fundraisers in that area. After Donner Summit Fire was absorbed by Truckee Fire, the Donner Summit Area Association (a predecessor to DSA) did the same. The property is 5 acres, including a parking area. Sven said 5 acres could have a lot of potential; he's willing think more about this. Shavati may be able to help. Any improvement could be incremental (start small and increase if successful).

Soda Springs 'Mall': Pat mentioned that the building which used to house the Soda Springs General Store is now largely vacant except for the post office. Sierra Soups started remodeling in the westernmost space but then ran into permitting and inspection problems. There is no information on other potential tenants. Kimberly said Nevada County has no funds to get a business started; but the County can help find funding. The Small Business Administration will be opening an office in Nevada City shortly, and Kimberly hopes they can help. But finding tenants is not a one-dimensional activity; Kimberly knows of a property in downtown Nevada City that is vacant because the owners apparently have little incentive to rent. They are counting on the property's appreciation (capital gain) and aren't too concerned about a revenue stream.

EV Charging Stations: Kimberly knows of an entity that just received funding from the California Energy Commission for full installation of three EV charging stations. Truckee and Donner Summit are candidates.

Lodging: Kimberly said the Guesthouse Lake Tahoe (in Truckee) (<https://www.forbes.com/sites/kimwesterman/2025/04/01/guesthouse-lake-tahoe-to-open-in-downtown-truckee-in-late-2025/>) is an example of a new type of lodging — private, for members only. It offers luxury accommodations for family or (small) professional gatherings. Is there a candidate "guest

house” at the Summit? Dick mentioned that Rainbow Lodge offers similar arrangements, albeit for larger parties.

Chris wondered what the next move is for the ski clubs with lodges on the Summit? Some are “old and weird”; several may be on the verge of folding. Is there a way DSA can help them attract more customers (building on their “old and weird” characters; or, alternatively, facilitate the transition to a newer, more attractive type of lodging.

Film: Chris said Sugar Bowl used to receive a lot of requests for film support but not so much recently; John said TDLT is receiving a lot. Kimberly said one company wants to do a car commercial; they want a snowy road (but not Donner Pass Road) for two days. Lincoln Highway or Old Donner Summit Road are possibilities; the latter is already partially plowed by Sugar Bowl. A second filming group (out of Redding?) showcases unusual places. They do three videos, then make a “hero” video. They would be in the area for a couple days of shooting and could contribute as much as \$4K to the local economy — not a lot, but possibly the first of more.

Summary: There is some interest in DSL (for a community facility, but potentially requiring a lot of investment); there is more interest in its back yard (at less cost, and possibly developed incrementally). **Sven will investigate the latter; Chris will send coordinates and more information.** The Truckee Chamber of Commerce training program may lead to something. **Beth will provide Kimberly with contact information for the owners of the Soda Springs Mall building; Kimberly will talk with them.**

7. Internal Matters

Admin Support: Dick included a contract for an Administrative Assistant in the agenda packet. Tom and Helen have both agreed to its terms.

MSC-U (Bill/John) to approve the Administrative Assistant contract.

Helen and Pat signed copies of the contract after the meeting.

Logo¹: Dick included a copy of the application for service mark registration in the agenda packet. It would register the “Donner Summit Association” mark in two service classes — business advertising and commercial services, and community events, education, and recreation. Elissa reviewed the application and handled two rounds of ChatGPT review, which Dick judged to be very helpful. The application may still be rejected, but he expressed

¹ DSA’s service mark is the circle enclosing a bridge, water ripples, and snow-capped mountains and the words “DONNER SUMMIT ASSOCIATION” at the top of page 1 of these minutes.

some confidence that it would go through. The application fee turned out to be \$145 , rather than the \$70 authorized during the December meeting.

MSC-U (Bill/Pat) to authorize reimbursement of \$145 for the service mark registration.

Future Meetings: Elissa offered her home at Sugar Bowl for the February 19 meeting; but Bill did not want to walk 5 minutes on snow to reach it. Instead, he offered to host the next meeting at the Nancy O Gallery and Glass in Soda Springs. The Board accepted his offer.

8. Announcements:

SNOW Museum Fundraiser: Elissa said Sugar Bowl will host a fundraising event on Friday, February 6, to support construction of a new Sierra Nevada Olympic Wintersports (SNOW) Museum (<https://www.thesnowmuseum.org>). The new museum location is pending USFS approval; it will not be at Sugar Bowl, which already has its Rathskellar Display. The fundraiser begins with coffee and pastries at Sugar Bowl's Lodge, includes discussions by historians and a tour of the mountain, and ends with lunch back at the Lodge. 30 tickets are available at \$200 each. This is the first fundraiser; Mt. Rose will host the second, Palisades will do one later. It is hoped that all resorts in the North Tahoe area will have hosted by the end of this winter. For more information, go to <https://www.thesnowmuseum.org/ski-history-day-at-sugar-bowl-resort/>

Speed Limits: Pat announced that the speed limit on Soda Springs Road from Cascade Road to Serene Road will be reduced to 25 MPH. This had been the objective of a multi-year campaign by the Serene Lakes Property Owners Association.

Fuels Reduction: A fuels reduction project within the Summit Canyon area of Donner Memorial State Park (at the west end of Donner Lake) has been approved. This will presumably take place in 2026.

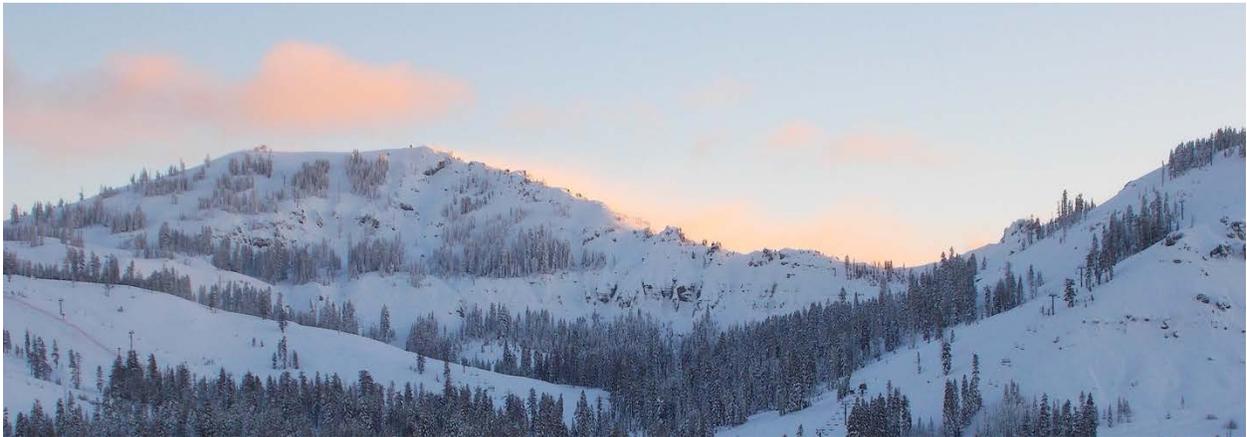
Voices of the Valley: Chinese American Stories: On Friday, January 23, starting at 6:30 PM there will be a free community movie night and panel discussion at Pocket-Greenhaven Library (7335 Gloria Drive, Sacramento). There will be three short films exploring Chinese-American heritage and lived experiences in small-town California.

9. Adjournment:

There being no other business, Pat adjourned the meeting at 6:26 PM.

Minutes approved by the DSA Board of Directors at its meeting on February 26, 2025.

signed by DSA Secretary, Richard Simpson, _____



Snow being blown from the ridge between Mts. Lincoln and Disney prior to the DSA Board meeting (DSCN8943.JPG).



Board members and guests engaged in informal conversations before the meeting began (DSCN8956.JPG).