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Alternate plans for resort further probed

By JESSICA COLLIER - Staff Writer

RAY BROOK - Green groups and Adirondack Club and Resort developers continued all day Thursday to battle over the Adirondack Council's alternative plans for the project.

Earlier this week, the Council presented conceptual designs for the resort by landscape architect Harry Dodson that pull the 651 luxury housing units and other amenities to a compact area around the base of the Big Tupper Ski Area, rather than spread them out as development group Preserve Associates is proposing to the state Adirondack Park Agency.

The LA Group's Jeffrey Anthony and Kevin Franke testified Wednesday that Dodson's design wouldn't be able to get a permit from APA.

They laid out his designs on several of their maps of the project site, and Anthony said he found that there were at least 64 too many principal buildings on land classified as resource management, at least 27 structures on or too close to wetlands and 87 buildings on slopes with grades of 25 percent or steeper.

"That's my problem with these alternatives, that's my exact problem with these alternatives, is that they're painting a picture that's going to go in front of the (APA) board of commissioners, they're going to see it, they're going to believe it and they're going to believe testimony that says these are permissible," Anthony said Thursday. "They're not."

Anthony and Franke argued in cross-examination that from conceptual designs to site plans, buildings may sometimes move a building by a few feet or the layouts could be tweaked, but moving that number of structures would be extreme and unusual. They got their conceptual design approved by the APA before moving to site plans, and the buildings didn't move much from one to the other.

But they said in cross-examination by Council attorney Meave Tooher that they didn't think Dodson had met with the APA while drawing his conceptual designs, as they had when they were creating theirs.

Protect the Adirondacks attorney John Caffry established through a line of questioning that at least some of the units could be moved onto the about 1,200 acres of land on the project site classified for moderate intensity use, off slopes and away from wetlands.

But Franke and Anthony argued that they didn't know what Dodson's concept was when he was drawing up the designs, so they couldn't say for sure whether any of the moves would be acceptable.

Dodson's compact, walkable "village center" concept is a good idea but not what the LA Group was going for when it designed the plans for the Adirondack Club and Resort, Anthony said. He said the ACR was patterned after Sundance Ski Resort in Utah, which has a more pastoral-type central area at the base of the ski mountain, because that's the vision lead developer Michael Foxman communicated to project designers.

"Mr. Dodson's village could get built exactly the way he showed," Anthony said. "However, it's not what we want to build."

Defending plans

Toohar made a motion at the end of the day Thursday to be able to bring Dodson back in for more questioning to defend his designs.

Caffry established through questioning that the LA Group's overlays were complete before Dodson testified Tuesday and Wednesday, but the exhibits weren't given to him or Toohar until Anthony and Franke were presented as rebuttal witnesses after Dodson's testimony was complete.

This didn't give Dodson an opportunity to defend his plans and explain why he did the things he did with his design, Toohar said.

Administrative Law Judge Daniel P. O'Connell told Toohar he didn't feel like he had enough time at the end of the day Thursday to make a decision on the motion, so he asked her to bring it back up this morning for a ruling.

Flooding

Several parties to the hearing were concerned Thursday that the road from Tupper Lake to Saranac Lake would be closed, with water threatening to overtake part of state Routes 3 and 30 near the Crusher.

APA attorney Paul Van Cott suggested today's hearing session be canceled if Tupper Lakers couldn't make it due to road closures. He planned to notify hearing parties this morning.

As of 10 a.m. today, the road was still open. The hearing was scheduled to resume at 10 a.m. in Ray Brook with continued cross-examination of the APA's Mark Sengenberger.