

WNBZ
April 28, 2011

Interest groups continue tug-of-war over ACR design

As the debate over the Adirondack Club & Resort marches on during public hearings at the state Adirondack Park Agency this week, participants continue to differ drastically on how the largest resort proposal in the history of the Adirondacks should be designed.

A local economic development group believes the resort developer's existing plan to spread 650 units over several thousand acres near a ski area in Tupper Lake is well thought out and should not be tampered with by the environmental groups attending the hearings.

"We feel that the Adirondack Council sold the village out on Tuesday," said Jim LaValley, chairman of ARISE – Adirondack Residents Intent on Saving their Economy, an economic lobbying organization based in Tupper Lake that has been a chief proponent of the Adirondack Club & Resort.

LaValley is critical of the alternative plans presented by the Adirondack Council during public hearings. The plans call for a more densely-packed development with shops and restaurants clustered around the base of the ski area.

LaValley called that idea a betrayal of existing businesses in Tupper Lake.

"It's as if the Adirondack Council did a 180-degree turn from what they were trying to promise the village two years ago," he said. "An effort to try and revitalize the downtown economy gets turned around when the Council's lead witness is saying, 'forget about downtown, in order for the resort to be successful you've got to pull together a new hamlet and a new business center at the bottom of the ski lifts.'"

"Any elected official within the village and any business person in the village should be extremely upset by the finding," LaValley added.

The Council maintains that its plan to contain development in a smaller footprint would protect critical resource management lands while improving the resort's marketability to second homebuyers.

Harry Dodson is a Massachusetts-based landscape planner and one of the key witnesses brought in by the Adirondack Council.

During a hearing on Tuesday, Dodson called for an alternative plan that included a densely clustered "village center" with a mix of commercial, residential, restaurant, and shopping uses at the base of the ski lifts. He pointed to similar successful designs at other ski areas such as Stratton in Vermont, and Mont Tremblant in Quebec.

Dodson said these resorts are successful because they feature “a compact, walkable, and dynamic village-style development.”

He pointed out that the resort developer, Adirondack Preserve Associates, has already planned amenities including a coffee shop, a bar and lounge and a restaurant.

He conceded that a few more businesses would need to be added to help create that village feel; something he insists is critical to the resort’s curb appeal.

The hearings resume again at 10 a.m. today and again at the same time on Friday of this week. APA spokesman Keith McKeever said discussions would focus on engineering and specific building site requirements.

For a complete schedule, or to watch a live webcast of the hearings, visit the APA’s website at www.apa.state.ny.us.

-George Earl, 4-28-11