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## Council presents alternative resort plan

By JESSICA COLLIER - Staff Writer

RAY BROOK - Expert witnesses for the Adirondack Council presented alternative plans Tuesday for the Adirondack Club and Resort that they called more viable than the plans on the table at an adjudicatory hearing this week and next.

Harry Dodson, a landscape architect hired by the Council, presented three alternative arrangements for the resort that would pull housing units closer to the ski area, creating a denser, "village center" area. He testified that the spread-out plan being presented by development group Preserve Associates, which includes great camp lots on up to 770 acres, is not what customers are looking to buy these days, and his plan is closer to what the market would support.

"For a resort to be successful ... it needs to start with a center," Dodson said. "The center is the identity of the project, and these days there's a much greater market success of walkable, compact-use development starting with some kind of center.

"There's got to be a 'there' there."

Dodson's plans include starting construction with the center of the resort and working out, as opposed to starting on the edges and working in, as Preserve Associates are proposing. He presented photos of several other successful ski areas that follow his model, including Mont Tremblant in Quebec and Stratton in Vermont.

The Adirondack Club and Resort, as proposed by Preserve Associates, would overhaul the Big Tupper Ski Area and build 651 luxury housing units around it, plus various amenities including a spa, a marina and an equestrian center. It's currently under review by the state Adirondack Park Agency, and Tuesday was the first day of a second set of adjudicatory hearing sessions that are part of that process.

Dodson's first alternative would use the same number of units as the ACR plans but keep all of them west of Read Road, which he said would avoid all resource-management land and what Dodson called steep slopes in the Lake Simond Road area. The APA's Mark Sengenberger said in pre-filed testimony presented earlier Tuesday that Preserve Associates' plan doesn't include development on any severe slopes.

The second and third designs would keep some housing east of Read Road. The second would keep all the great camps clustered. The third would keep each great camp on its own lot but shrink the size from a 30- to 60-acre range.

All these alternatives keep development closer together, which Dodson said would create a more interesting, attractive center for the resort that has more character. He also testified that his plan

would be cheaper to build and maintain because it involves less infrastructure and would require less traveling.

In cross-examination by ACR attorney Thomas Ulasewicz, Dodson said he had not done any sort of comparative fiscal analysis between his plans and Preserve Associates'.

Joel Russell, a land-use planning consultant who has been involved in developing the field of cluster development, also testified for the Council, agreeing with Dodson that his alternatives would be more marketable than the current plans for the ACR.

The most controversial element to Dodson's alternatives is that the "village center" area of his plans would include more retail and restaurants than the ACR would.

Tupper Lake Chamber of Commerce representative Jon Kopp asked Dodson in cross-examination why he would want to create a whole new business district outside of the village of Tupper Lake when the business community is supporting the project in hopes that it will revive the existing one. Don Dew Jr., whose family owns a hotel neighboring the property, also questioned the idea.

Dodson said the current plans have some retail elements already. According to June 2010 APA application materials, those elements include a coffee shop/snack bar, a bar/lounge and a restaurant. Dodson said those could be spread out through different buildings in his "village center" area to create the atmosphere he's looking for, though he said his plan would add a few more businesses.

He argued that if the project is successful, business would spill over into the existing shops in Tupper Lake.

"If it brings in a lot of people with a lot of dollars, it's good for the economy as a whole," Dodson said.

Lead developer Michael Foxman echoed the same concerns in an email. He said Dodson's alternative plans "flushed the village down the drain." Foxman said the added retail and restaurants would keep ACR guests from spending in the village.

"When Dodson said eventually the surrounding area (the village) will benefit, he was saying let the existing village businesses go bankrupt unless they can hold out for 10 years or so," Foxman wrote. "It appears the Council wants the village (to) be 'vibrant but' just as it 'supports' the ACR 'but.'"

Foxman was not at Tuesday's hearing session because his wife is still recovering from surgery, but he's hoping to make it to some sessions in the current group of hearings, Ulasewicz said.

The hearing sessions are set to run from Tuesday through Friday this week and next week, then start again on another set of issues in late May after a two-week break.