

WNBZ
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Witnesses present alternative resort plan during ACR hearing

Witnesses hired by an environmental group testified during a state Adirondack Park Agency hearing Tuesday that a large resort planned for Tupper Lake should be redesigned.

Harry Dodson is a Massachusetts-based landscape planner and one of the witnesses brought in by the Adirondack Council. He presented a plan that would reduce the scale of the Adirondack Club & Resort – the biggest development ever to go before the APA.

Dodson said he grew up skiing at the Big Tupper ski area where the resort would be built and he emphasized his interest in seeing a successful development there. But he said existing plans for the resort ignore market trends toward more densely planned ski resorts.

Resort developer Michael Foxman was not present at the hearing Tuesday, but has repeatedly insisted that the resort's expansive layout and secluded lots are crucial to attracting wealthy second home buyers.

But Dodson's testimony contrasted sharply with that view. Instead of spreading lots over more than 6,000 acres, he said the resort would be more attractive to second-home buyers if houses and resort amenities were packed into a much smaller area.

He called for a design that would create a central, village-like presence at the resort while still retaining the number of lots and many of the applicant's original building sites.

Walking communities are selling better in today's market, Dodson said, and in his plan, ski lifts, restaurants and other amenities would all be within a short stretch.

Other successful ski areas, including a Quebec resort called Mont Tremblant, have built vibrant communities around similar design strategies, he said.

Dodson also contends that his plan would be more consistent with APA guidelines for resource management lands. "This is a perfect opportunity for the APA to get it right," he said.

Joe Russell, another Adirondack Council witness with development planning expertise, gave similar testimony.

Hearings will resume at 10 a.m. today and every day this week until Friday. 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, 4-27-11