Vermont

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Vermont project back to the District 4 Commission for a decision, meanwhile outlining corrective steps to assure the project complies with regulations.

At that time, the board unanimously opposed further deliberations on the project. Huntington area residents, banded as "Citizens for Huntington's Future," led to reconsideration—a review restricted to town of Huntington, citizens and Sherman Hollow.

Some more detached observers disagree. "This so-called favorable ruling has a hole in it the size of a money bag," said one skeptic. "It was obtained at frightful financial cost to developers."

Kenneth W. Pillsbury, a Huntington resident who is an agricultural teacher in Connecticut and close project follower, sides with that view. "Apparently the board failed in what might have been the original goal: Stonewall the project long enough to discourage or abort it because of dwindling bankroll," said Pillsbury.

He pointed to a geological survey demanded by the board at an estimated cost of $35,000. "That's nonsense, totally unnecessary," several geologists have informed Pillsbury.

Reginald Hathorn, until recently a Huntington selectman and long in the forefront of Sherman Hollow support, was more vehement. "Truax was dealt a low blow," declared Hathorn. "If society — read that self-styled environmentalists — is permitted to make autocratic determination of a person's property and inflict financial hardship without comparable responsibility, where will it all end?"

And what if one person is threatened in such high-handed manner, all are threatened. Somewhere along the way, individual rights have been sacrificed to 'gazetteers.'"

"It's becoming much more difficult to gain redress through the courts and judicial system, almost no way short of costly litigation."

Hathorn expanded on what he sees as discrimination against developers. "About 85 percent of single-family builders proceed unimpeded. Their septic tanks may be out of whack, but there isn't similar scrutiny, such hawkish surveillance. When objection is raised, it's likely to be on far- fetched grounds."

Hathorn cited a recent home-builder's dilemma. "Hallway through the building process, to 'Save The View' cry went up. The builder was faced with costly adjournments."

"No self-respecting developer is going to take a second look at Huntington or, for that matter, Vermont, after Truax's harsh experience," said Hathorn.

Sherman Hollow isn't alone in the Vermont golf course battlefront.

Developers of the Tamarac Golf and Country Club had been pursuing permission to build 435 housing units in Stratton and Jamaica along with an 18-hole golf course and clubhouse.

Rather than being continually confronted by the District 2 Environmental Commission, developers scaled back to 180 housing units, said Hathorn. The clubhouse and the smaller part of the 18-hole layout would remain in Jamaica.

Several Vermont golf courses are concerned with such "compromise." Golf course superintendents, PGA and amateur association officials, course builders and developers have been meeting monthly to create a united front to resist what they feel is a "divide and conquer" strategy.

Sherman Hollow made this statement: "The decision (to toss the ball back to the consumer) is very disappointing in light of the continuing position of the board to disallow, ignore or overlook substantial testimony which Sherman Hollow had made part of the record. We feel strongly that, as the process exists, it is impossible to receive fair and equal treatment under the law."

"The decision also appears to set a precedent for many other types of projects, including subdivisions, industrial parks or anywhere turf is used. If equal treatment is applied, it could affect the price of low-cost housing, or development, and they could have a potential to place the cost of golf beyond the average Vermont golfer."

"The board has in effect said by its decision that the key state Environmental Board will make technical decisions independent of the experts in the various state agencies. It also implied that Integrated Pest Management (IPM) can not be approved in Vermont. It is unbelievable that the IPM program, aimed at improving and protecting the environment, would be prevented from happening."

"Golf will not only keep America beautiful, it will give people a chance to enjoy nature," said Farmer. "We need to keep golfers and others from doing too much damage to our environment."

"I'm pleased that the board, the Vermont Environmental Board, has shown me what can be done with the right people and the right money."