Hawaii council nixes impact fees

By Peter Blais

The Honolulu City Council has unanimously overridden Mayor Frank Fasi's veto and adopted a golf course development policy that rejects the mayor's suggested $100-million impact fees.

Instead the policy encourages developers to integrate the golf course project into the local community while setting strict social, economic and environmental requirements. Bill 129 establishes guidelines for judging among the numerous proposals submitted for review annually on the island of Oahu, where at least 60 courses are in preliminary planning stages.

But critics complain the ordinance still fails to address how many more courses should be allowed on the island or where they can be located. One of the primary concerns is near already crowded Kaneohe Bay on the northeast side of Oahu, where another 14 courses have been proposed and residents are concerned about the bay's water quality.

"The ordinance is rational and scientifically based," said Stuart Cohen of Environmental & Turf Services, a Wheaton, Md., based firm that has done environmental risk assessments in Hawaii. "It takes the proposals, provides a rational basis for decision making, and requires that good people are available to manage the turf."

Cohen, who testified at an August workshop concerning Bill 129, agreed the number of courses and where they should be located are important issues that still need to be addressed on Oahu. Continued on page 34

Sherman Hollow dealt a blow by Vt. board

By Peter Blais

The Vermont Environmental Board has denied the latest attempt to obtain a building permit for the Sherman Hollow Golf Course in Huntington.

But course developers, who have spent seven years and hundreds of thousands of dollars seeking approval for the multimillion-dollar resort under the state's strict Act 250 development law, are not giving up. They feel the board made "substantial mistakes" and are asking it to reverse its ruling, according to Sherman Hollow President Paul Truax.

"It's a step we had to take within 30 days of the board's decision," said Truax, who submitted the appeal on the final day of the one-month deadline. The board denied the latest reconsideration for a land-use permit — which included the developers' promise not to use chemical pesticides or fertilizers — because of problems regarding waste disposal, streams, water supplies and soil erosion. Continued on page 12

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THE NEWSPAPER FOR THE GOLF COURSE INDUSTRY

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Avg. public playing fees/1990

Source: National Golf Foundation

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USGA puts rebuffed TRACS on hold

By Peter Blais

The U.S. Golf Association Green Section has temporarily shelved plans for its new construction consulting service after receiving complaints from golf course architects and builders that it represents competition and unnecessary oversight.

Green Section Director Jim Snow still hopes to establish the program, but will delay its launch until some "unfortunate misunderstandings" are clarified.

Snow announced the introduction of Turf Renovation and Construction Services in mid-November.

Headed by Mid-Continent Section Director Jim Moore, TRACS is designed as a
Honolulu City Council nixes impact fees with

Displace agricultural uses and disrupt rural lifestyles; increase land and home prices while the island is suffering from a lack of affordable housing; potentially harm the environment; and use large amounts of the city's limited water supply.

The ordinance's social and growth criteria encourage open space that can be enjoyed by the community and be seen from public roadways and other areas; discourages displacement of people or land uses without adequate compensation and/or relocation plans; discourages development of land rated "A" or "B" by the land study bureau classification, although it does not forbid it; encourages public play at reasonable rates; discourages concentrations of courses that cause traffic problems; and discourages impacts and inaccessibility to archaeological, cultural and historic resources.

Golf courses should be compatible with surrounding uses and provide an appropriate buffer between incompatible uses (i.e. separating residential and agricultural uses), potentially incompatible levels of intensity for similar land uses (i.e. single-family residential and medium- or high-density apartment uses), and dangerous conditions or areas (i.e. blast zones or flood-prone areas).

Economically, the chief planning officer can require investors to develop a forecast of the project's impact on land values and property taxes, which can be used for comparing various proposals.

Golf courses should not have any serious environmental consequences, according to the ordinance. Projects will not be approved unless every effort is made to reduce the use of pesticides, herbicides, fungicides and fertilizers. Applications, storage and disposal must comply with state and federal laws.

The chief planning officer will also judge proposals on how effectively they:

- Encourage training and hiring local residents on the project; public play at affordable rates and convenient times; junior golf programs; availability of clubhouses and other amenities to the public; hiking, biking and jogging paths; and considering local suppliers to provide developmental, operational and maintenance materials.
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Jury awards $3M to businessman in Hawaiian court

HONOLULU — Tokyo businessman Misuru Shirai has won a $3 million jury verdict in state court in Honolulu over a proposed golf course development.

The verdict, against Haseko Realty Inc. and Sun Mari Corp., sided with Shirai's failed attempt to buy 2,400 acres in Waialua on Oahu from Castle & Cooke Inc.

Allegations included misappropriation of funds, failure to keep records, breach of fiduciary duties, self-dealing, conflict of interest, and concealment.

ASGCA targets misconceptions

Overcoming misconceptions surrounding golf and the environment is the purpose of a document the American Society of Golf Course Architects hopes will be ready for publication by its annual convention in May.

ASGCA President Tom Clark of Kensington, Md., is sifting through comments made on a preliminary draft during November's Allied Golf Association meeting and December's ASGCA executive committee gathering in Chicago.

The final document, which Clark hopes will run about a dozen pages, will be made available to local zoning and planning boards, state and federal regulatory agencies and people interested in golf course development.

It will use case studies involving development and maintenance practices at some of the country's best-known older courses, such as Cypress Point and Pine Valley, and newer courses built with the environment in mind, like the Ocean Course at Kiawah Island, S.C. and Old Marsh Golf Club in Palm Beach Gardens, Fla.

"We want to help lay people see what a golf course is and how it can interact successfully with the environment," Clark said.

"Too many people have negative views of golf courses. We are paying a high price in permitting costs and time delays and those extra expenses are being passed on to golfers. They should be aware of that."

Clark called publicizing that golf benefits the environment "one of the most important things the ASGCA has ever undertaken."

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