

Developer to turn public course into shopping mall

By ANDREW OVERBECK

CANTON, Conn. — Instead of re-opening this spring for its 72nd season, Canton Public Golf Course will be turned into a shopping mall. The \$4.77 million deal closed March 31, five years after the Lowell family put the 130-acre, nine-hole course on the market. W/S Development of Chestnut Hill, Mass., started work on the site in April.

According to superintendent Heather Garvin, whose great-grandfather and grandfather opened the course in 1932, the time had come to sell the property, which is in a developing area 12 miles west of Hartford.

"My Dad owns it with his two brothers and they knew they couldn't pass it on to the next generation," she said. "I am the fourth generation working here. It has been fun, but it is the way progress is going to go and it is part of life."

Garvin, who was recently

named superintendent of the year by the Connecticut Association of Golf Course Superintendents, grew up on the first tee and started working at the course in 1985 after a brief career as a legal secretary. Her husband, Dana Garvin, is the assistant superintendent and mechanic at the course.

While the community will gain a shopping mall, and the town will enlarge its commercial tax base, a venue for learning the game of golf will disappear. "Juniors played free after 6 p.m. on Saturday nights and before 7:30 a.m. on Monday mornings," said Garvin. "It's a

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The fifth hole and barn at Canton Public GC, which sold in late March for \$4.77 million.



Pellucid says industry down, but not out

By DEREK RICE

BUFFALO GROVE, Ill. — Golf participation was down nearly a million golfers from 2001 to 2002, according to preliminary results from Pellucid Corp.'s second annual golf consumer survey, released in late March.

Pellucid founder James Koppenhaver presented these findings at a panel discussion on growing the game initiatives at the Urban Land Institute's conference on developing golf courses and communities in Naples, Fla.

Koppenhaver told conference attendees that participation was not flat, but that retention continues to be public enemy number one for the golf industry, which he said lost almost 40 percent more golfers than it acquired in 2002.

"This is the first industry-independent survey of participation over multiple years which goes beyond participation rates to the growth/decline components and includes Pellucid's consumer franchise methods, such as rounds per capita, attraction rates and the lost/acquired golfer ratio," Koppenhaver said.

While these findings are definitely bad news for the industry, Koppenhaver was quick to point

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Bill would allow tax-exempt bonds for reservation courses

By DEREK RICE

WASHINGTON—In late March, Rep. Dave Camp, R-Mich., introduced a bill that, if passed, could open the door for more golf course development on Indian reservations.

The Tribal Government Tax-Ex-

empt Bond Fairness Act of 2003 is a slimmed-down version of a similar bill Camp introduced two years ago. The bill proposes amending the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to allow Indian tribal governments to act as state governments in issu-

ing tax-exempt private-activity bonds for projects located on reservations. Camp's prior bill called for allowing projects within a 20-mile radius of the reservation.

At present, tribes may issue tax-exempt government bonds only if 95 percent or more of the proceeds are used to fund essential government functions. Camp's bill would allow tribes to use the bonds to finance such non-essen-

tial projects as golf courses and convention centers.

Golf courses in particular would seem to be the target of this bill. The Internal Revenue Service announced last year it would conduct audits of Indian bond issuances as a result of questions about whether proceeds were being used to fund essential government functions. According to The Bond Buyer, in a heavily redacted field-service memo dated

Aug. 12, 2002, the IRS said bonds issued for a golf course with a commercial purpose that "causes it to be other than a governmental function" could be taxable. The memo also concluded that there is no cookie-cutter method to determine whether Indian tribes can issue tax-exempt bonds for golf courses.

Camp's bill would allow tribes to issue bonds to fund any facility located on a reservation – including for-profit ventures such as golf courses – and not only for essential government functions.

The only exclusion to the bill, which has been referred to the House Ways and Means Committee, would be casinos or other gaming facilities.

Pellucid: Industry down, but not out

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out that it is not too late to turn things around.

"This isn't necessarily doom and gloom for the industry, but it cannot be interpreted as a positive indicator on one component

Key preliminary findings in Pellucid's Golf Customer Franchise report:

- Participation measured as both a percent or as a total number declined in 2002.
- The industry lost almost 40 percent more golfers than it acquired in 2002.
- The percent decline of female golfers was three times that of male golfers.
- The number of junior golfers remained constant against adult segment declines.

of the consumer franchise," he said. "If the frequency component holds steady or goes up, then we'll start to see the wisdom in Pellucid's approach to measuring the industry in rounds per capita rather than just participation rates."

One way the industry can turn things around, Koppenhaver said, is to work on retention as hard as, or harder than, it has worked on bringing new players to the game.

"Those who do not study history are doomed to repeat it," Koppenhaver said. "These preliminary findings suggest that perhaps the key to grow the game initiatives lies not in opening the front door wider, but simply closing the back door."

Pellucid's full report was not available at press time. Koppenhaver said Pellucid would release its industry report on the golf customer franchise, which is based on a survey of 130,000 U.S. households, in mid-April. ■

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