Vermont

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

That move was a strong softening of attitude from the stance the board took Nov. 9. At that time, the board unanimously opposed further deliberations on the project.

But a groundswell of protest from Huntington area residents, banded as "Citizens for Huntington's Future," led to reconsideration — a review restricted to evidence on the record.

Truax and his associates in the project, which would embrace luxury condominiums, hotel, conference and sports center, theater and chapel, say the decision "can only be interpreted as a victory for the town of Huntington, citizens and Sherman Hollow."

Some more detached observers disagree.

"This so-called favorable ruling has a hollow ring more attuned to Pyrrhic victory," said one skeptic. "It was obtained at frightful financial cost to developers."

Kenneth W. Pillsbury, a Huntington resident, former vocational 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 when one person is threatened in such high-handed manner, all are threatened. Somewhere along the way, individual rights have been sacrificed to 'gang' mentality.

"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 95 percent of single-home builders proceed undisturbed. 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. "Halfway through the building process, a 'Save the View' cry went up. The builder was faced with costly adjustments.

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

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

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, all in Stratton. The clubhouse and the smaller part of the 18-hole layout would remain in Jamaica.

Several Vermont golf groups 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 commission) 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, and may have the potential to place the cost of golf beyond the average Vermont golfer.

"The board has in effect said by its decision that the lay 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."

Adds Karl H. Deubert, University of Massachusetts professor:

"It is unfortunate when the presence or absence of pesticide residues (the original chief board objection to Sherman Hollow) is used as a political weapon. Instant pesticide residue experts take advantage of hysteria caused by the mass media."

A final footnote to Sherman Hollow or, when it rains, it pours.

Because of the lack of snow, the resort never was open for skiing.

And what of board sentiment? A discreet silence. After all, it remains in the catbird seat, said one observer.

Pest management crucial in future

Integrated Pest Management (IPM) is a relatively new term and tool in golf course terminology. Golf course superintendents may have used IPM practices the past 20 to 30 years, but such programs weren't titled.

Its suddenly important stature was spotlighted in the recent Vermont struggle between the state Environmental Board and would-be golf course developers. Home lawn care is addressed, but the regulations apply equally to fairways and greens.

Here's a rundown of its meaning and application from Dr. Richard J. Cooper and Professor Patricia J. Vittum of the University of Massachusetts:

- Turf Integrated Pest Management is an intensive maintenance program that uses cultural, biological and chemical methods to reduce the need for pesticides to control turfgrass pests.
- Time and rate of maintenance applications is most important to improving the health of your lawn and reducing pests before they threaten your turf.
- Healthy turfgrasses not stressed by drought, low fertility, etc., can outgrow pest activity more vigorously than a nutrient-starved, drought-stressed "anemic" lawn.
- Raising lawns according to the season by providing a well-balanced diet — and using the lawn mower — are keys to durable turfgrass lawn with little or no pesticide input.
- Lawn care in the spring will determine how well it will be able to tolerate summer insect and disease activity. Most turf pests are active as the weather warms up and lawns go drought-dormant.
- Disease and insect pest potential are present in every lawn, but they require specific conditions (weak grasses, desirable weather, etc.) to infest and devastate a lawn.
- One crucial aspect of an IPM progam is monitoring the area for pest activity. Normally, a expert is hired to check the area regularly and observe the level of weed, disease and insect activity. The expert then decides whether any corrective action is appropriate. This decision varies, depending on the level of pest infestation, the level of maintenance demanded by the homeowner, and the kinds of action the homeowner is willing to take.

For example, some insect populations cannot be controlled once they reach a certain state of development, so the only alternative is to provide optimum turf-growing conditions. This will enable the targeted area to tolerate some insect feeding without major effect on its vigor.

A pilot scouting program conducted by the University of Massachusetts in 1986 provided researchers with valuable information about the presence and prevalence of some turf pests and permitted concentration of research efforts.

- Turf IPM also includes appropriate watering practices and careful selection of turf species and cultivars.
- Some biological control agents that reduce the activity of the Japanese beetle occur in the Northeast. There is a bacterium which, when applied to the soil, can kill Japanese beetle grubs. However, some local conditions (soil temperature in the summer and winter, soil pH) appear to reduce the effectiveness of this organism.

An IPM program sometimes includes judicious use of pesticides. University researchers have conducted pesticide screening trials to identify materials most effective under a variety of conditions and identified proper application techniques for a variety of pests.

USGA

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useful contributions to the game of golf."

Farmer, of Los Angeles, especially pointed to NuMex Sahara, a seed-propagated bermudagrass developed by Dr. Arden Baltensperger of New Mexico State University.

Common bermudagrass has been the only form of seeded turf-type bermudagrass in the world, but NuMex Sahara will be made available in August, according to Mike Hills of Farmers Marketing Corp. of Phoenix, Ariz., which is handling distribution of the seed.

NuMex Sahara is highly drought-resistant, is denser and lower growing than normal, has faster spring green-up than common, has a shorter internode, darker green color, reduced regrowth after clipping, and resistance to a bermudagrass stunt mite.

Although NuMex Sahara is not as fine-textured as many of the hybrid or vegetative-propagated varieties of bermudagrass, it is less prone to scalping and thatch buildup, according to Baltensperger.

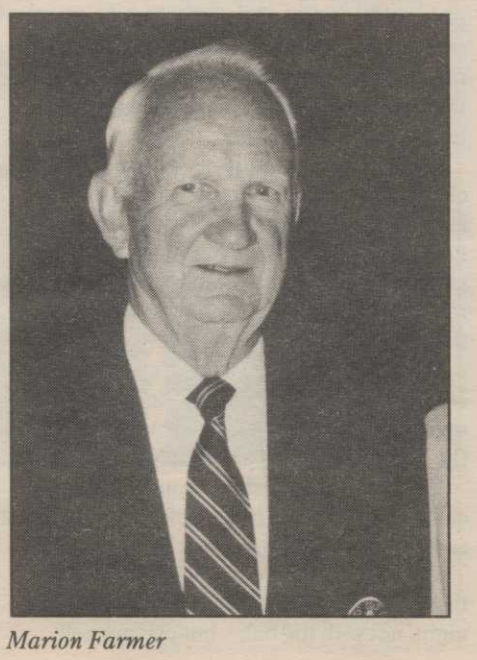
NuMex Sahara "has also proven to be an excellent seed-provider, which is important for the success of any new grass," Farmer said.

Baltensperger's research is one of many turfgrass projects supported by Green Section funds ($600,000 in 1989 alone). Others are also producing results for golf courses.

Farmer mentioned that "several new and improved buffalograsses ideal for fairway use will become available in limited quantities this year.

"Developed by Dr. (Terrance) Riordan of the University of Nebraska, these buffalograsses have exceptional drought tolerance in playing surfaces," he said.

Creeping bentgrasses that withstand high temperatures, wear well, resist thatch development and have good commercial seed productivity are being bred, he said.



Marion Farmer

He also reported "a major breakthrough" with development of Zoysia grass that has "unbelievable ability to rapid recovery," and resists scarring and injury.

Farmer said the Green Section will play an important role in the continuing growth of golf.

"As you well know, the U.S. is experiencing a tremendous growth in golf course development and demand is not limited to this country," he said. "Germany, France, Spain and Italy all have intensive new course development underway... The Green Section has long played an important role in new course construction...

"Today the Golf Course Builders of America and USGA Green Section have an opportunity to serve the game better than ever before, and on a worldwide basis.

"Golf will not only keep America beautiful," he said, referring to the Green Section theme, "but perhaps the world as well."