

Developers watching Vt. ban

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Huntington Selectman Reginald Hathorn, gaveled into silence by Jan S. Eastman of Peacham, who chaired the two previous meetings at which five of the nine Environmental Board members unanimously ruled against the Sherman Hollow project, couldn't be denied expression outside the meeting site.

Carpenter Hathorn hammered away at what he termed the board's "shotgun approach" and "running scared" philosophy regarding pesticides. "Too many give lip service to the benefits attending golf courses, then oppose on questionable grounds," declared Hathorn.

Stopped "just short of being escorted from the meeting" by the embattled Eastman after slamming to the table a packet of envelopes containing pro-project petitions from Huntington residents, Hathorn later lamented "lack of board courtesy" in not permitting townspeople's feelings to be made known.

"We're not going to sit back and await a decision. We're going to set in motion legal machinery, and bring our case to the attention of state legislators," said Hathorn.

He said, "The Huntington Zoning Board of which I was a member debated the local permit extensively and at times hotly. Nine public hearings involving an average of seven-member panels consumed 50 hours.

"Somehow, Sherman Hollow is being equated with a nuclear waste site, rather than a golf course, a facility seen in the rest of the country as a land benefit."

"The February ruling won't be the closing chapter," observed Hathorn. "This is an unfolding story. We realize that, because the board has taken such an arbitrary and inflexible posture, it will be difficult to grant a permit. And attorneys may tread lightly around what we believe to be the board's blatantly biased position.

"Any reasonable group poring over the reams of evidence would come to the same conclusion."

Eastman, who several times at the Jan. 11 meeting warned against disturbing the proceedings, maintained that the board had stipulated that additional evidence not be allowed. Board members felt developers couldn't prove the project would not harm the environment.

"The board makes decisions on the basis of evidence presented to it," Eastman pointed out.

Board members had been under mounting pressure from Vermont's general public, Huntington residents and golf course superintendents and architects to reconsider.

Truax terms the ruling "dangerous to the golf course industry nationwide."

"Ours was an exhaustive attempt at safeguards. If the wealth of

scientific evidence and support we submitted can be ignored, what can happen to planned course expansion in the rest of the country?" he asked.

Declaring that "the future of golf in Vermont is at stake," members of the Vermont Golf Course Superintendents Association met Nov. 28 and voiced strong association backing for the Sherman Hollow project.

The District 4 Environmental Commission originally rejected

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— Paul Truax

the golf course project in October 1987. The Environmental Board concurred. The Environmental Commission and the board considered the proposal under Act 250, the state's main development-control law.

The debate spilled over into the political arena. While not questioning the integrity of Gov. Madeline Kunin, Truax termed her administration "anti-growth and anti-development." Truax added that had the board made known its

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Management termed crucial

Jim Colbert, president of Colbert Enterprises, stresses the importance of quality managers to the success of golf courses.

"We must provide them all the management tools and make it easy for them. But this game is a management game. You can take a facility that's losing money, bring in the same amount of revenue, improve the quality dramatically, and make a profit strictly through management expertise."

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