

Mount Snow first to gain Vermont's approval to build

BY MARK LESLIE

Mount Snow Resort in West Dover has won the first state approval in years for golf course construction in Vermont.

Coming in the wake of the rejection of the years-old Sherman Hollow golf course proposal in Richmond, Vt., Mount Snow's victory may mean a breakthrough for others interested in building courses in the state.

Since Act 250 took effect more than a decade ago to control development, Vermont has been one of the most difficult states in which to win approvals.

Mount Snow Director of Golf Jay Morelli attributed the resort's success to Joe Laubenstein. The Scien-

tific Turf Inc. of Scotia, N.Y., consultant developed an extensive Integrated Pest Management program for the nine-hole expansion.

"Joe Laubenstein is on the cutting edge of new construction methods. His program includes a lot of organics ... plus very localized pesticide use," Morelli said.

"What Joe did was prove a golf course can be built and opened with no runoff at all... Hats off to Joe. He was our hired gun, the expert.

"But, it was also very important — from a practical standpoint — to have our new superintendent, Tim Madden, at the hearings. The board wanted to make sure the guy on-site knew what he was doing. Tim had the depth and background to

answer their questions."

Morelli also said one advantage Mount Snow had over Sherman Hollow was complete community support. He said there was no opposition at all in West Dover to the addition to Mount Snow's 18-hole course, home to one of the largest golf schools in the country.

Sherman Hollow had local supporters, but it also ran into vocal community opponents.

Two different five-member Act 250 boards handled the Mount Snow and Sherman Hollow applications. Morelli said those "board members are not professional agronomists, and that's where the problem lies."

For his part, Laubenstein pointed

to his IPM proposal. It is the culmination of eight years of work, for which a patent is pending, he said.

"We start from scratch," he said, "and classify areas of the golf course into seven to 15 categories: greens, tees, primary and secondary landing areas, primary and secondary roughs, out-of-play areas, buffer zones in case of lakes or ponds, wetlands, et cetera.

"We set fertilization rates and develop parameters for measures to fight pests or disease. The first is cultural control. Second is biological control. Pesticide use is the last resort."

Laubenstein said his program can be used anywhere in the country.

"There's no generic IPM out

there so that you can take it and rubber stamp it," he said. "The threshold levels vary and what pesticides can be used varies. The procedure, though, will be standard."

He said the pressure is minimal in Vermont, where a short growing season means less time for grubs to infest and for such things as pythium blight and other diseases to take hold.

He said using the IPM thresholds, the superintendent monitors conditions with data from three weather stations and checks disease or insect outbreaks. Each of the seven to 15 categories on the course has a different IPM strategy.

Laubenstein said the program could reduce maintenance costs at existing golf courses.

N.J. utility ensures land to remain open space

Rivervale Realty Co., a subsidiary of United Water Resources, has reached two agreements to sell a total of 198 acres of golf course land in Haworth, Oradell and Emerson, N.J. The properties will continue to be used as golf courses.

MY International, Inc., which operates Haworth Golf and Country Club, has agreed to buy about 74 acres of the club now leases from the realty company, adding it to the 71 acres it already owns. The entire course is in Haworth.

Also, the entire golf course leased to Emerson Country Club by Rivervale Realty will be sold with the absolute assurance of continued operations, forever, as a golf course. This includes 113 acres in Oradell and 10 in Emerson. The prospective buyer of the Emerson Club property has asked not to be identified publicly until the sale is concluded.

Haworth Mayor John D. DeRienzo said: "The consolidation of the entire Haworth Country Club

in the ownership of MY International adds another element of permanence to this club. The country club is a prized resource of green, open space for our community and an important recreational amenity for many Haworth residents."

Fred Laurino, Rivervale Realty's president, expressed the hope that both transactions could be completed by the end of this year.

Laurino said the prospective buyer of the Emerson Country Club property is the same one that hopes to acquire a nearby 160-acre site in the Borough of Emerson to build a new golf course. The sale of the site for the new golf course hinges on state approvals pertaining to about 28 acres.

Laurino said the new golf course addresses the public's desire for more green, open space, but added that approved plans for an office and condominium complex on the site serve as a safety net in case the

golf course plan fails to win the required approvals.

United Water Resources Chairman Robert A. Gerber said several of the firm's real-estate holdings have attracted strong market interest for golf course use, contrasting favorably against the soft general real estate market in New Jersey and New York.

The Emerson and Haworth golf courses were transferred in January to Rivervale Realty from Hackensack Water Co., another United Water Resources subsidiary. The transfer also included 97 acres in River Vale and Harrington Park which is leased to the Pascack Golf and Country Club.

As part of its Evergreen Formula, the utility placed permanent deed restrictions on the land before transferring it to ensure its preservation for golf courses and related country club uses. The deed restrictions require future owners of the golf courses to follow environ-

mentally responsible practices in managing storm drainage and the use and storage of chemicals. The restrictions also limit the amount of impervious surface (roof surfaces or paved areas other than golf cart paths) permitted at each site.

The Evergreen Formula was written to help meet the recognized need for more green, open space in northern New Jersey.

"Already this year, through Evergreen and related initiatives, Hackensack Water and Rivervale Realty have played a key role in preserving more than 600 acres of recreational open space," Gerber said.

"We're now working with county and state officials on a second stage of the Evergreen plan, which could save or upgrade hundreds more acres of open space for public parks in Bergen and Hudson counties."

The Evergreen Formula's second stage established a fund earmarked to benefit water company

customers. The utility proposed that the money be used to acquire new public open space in counties served by the water company. Water company officials are working with state regulators on a plan to enable each customer to decide whether to have his share of the money used to offset his water bills or used to preserve additional open space.

Consisting of half the net proceeds of the 1990 land transfer and a long-term golf course lease, the fund is approaching \$10 million because of accumulating interest.

The sale of the Haworth and Emerson country club lands will end a provision of the 1990 land transfer that could have reduced the acreage protected by the permanent golf course deed restrictions if certain other Rivervale Realty properties were condemned.

The provision, which has not been invoked, pertained to the land only while it remained in Rivervale Realty's ownership and would have expired in 1995.

As soon as the transactions are consummated, this provision will be removed and the property will be permanently deed restricted as open space as golf courses.

California

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Seventy percent opposed CAREFUL, which called for more government-sponsored research and education on the effects of pesticides rather than an immediate ban.

While pleased with the outcome, Davies said he firmly believes environmentalists and pesticide users can find a common ground.

"Hopefully both of us can have input next time into something that will benefit the environment and not devastate the economy," Davies said.

"The trouble has been that environmental extremists have been proposing the laws. But they're the last people you want writing legislation. If they would just come down off their pedestal, we could come up with something to take care of everyone."

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