

Queenstown Harbor— Regulatory Nightmare to Dream Course

by Lex Birney. This is a portion of Mr. Birney's article on the history of the course.

Golfers have the capacity to recall nuances and details of golf courses and can conjure them up at watering holes after every game.

Queenstown Harbor Golf Links will create more than its share of memories. It plays along rivers and creeks, through mature forests, and hop-scotches across wetlands.

Seems simple doesn't it? Build a golf course. But even Lord Baltimore (original owner of the land), with all his hardships could not have imagined the Kafkaesque scenario that was to unfold for the next seven years.

Every government agency and citizens group since time began got involved in the process. This

included forty-three public hearings and involved at one time or another county agencies of planning and zoning, liquor board, public works, sediment control, environmental health; state agencies of department of agriculture, department of environment, fish and wildlife, sediment and stormwater resources, water resources and administration, the Maryland Historic Trust, forest service; and everyone's favorite federal agency, the Army Corps of Engineers.

At times the rules changed faster than the processing. Wetlands laws changed twice and the inspectors' philosophy became one of non-opinion. It was easier to procrastinate because no one knew whether or not tomorrow would bring new rules.

New agencies seemed to be created just for the project. The

Maryland Critical Areas Law was passed, creating a one-thousand-foot line from mean high water that overlay existing county and state zoning requirements with stringent new development limitations and mandates. Agriculture suddenly became a protected use in spite of the harm that unrestricted fertilization techniques can do.

Finally, logic prevailed, and Washington Brick was able to prove to even the most rabid critics that a properly managed golf course with an Integrated Pest Management program, and groundwater, pesticide and fertilization monitoring wells was an excellent use for an environmentally sensitive site such as Queenstown. Trading with the Indians must have been easier.

After many design changes, the course was built in less than one year (a miracle in itself, but that's another story).

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