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Adirondack Council ready for resort hearing

Officials from an influential environmental group say updates to the Adirondack Club and Resort project aren't much different than the plan put forth during negotiations last summer.

Developers outlined updates to the proposed resort at a meeting of the Tupper Lake Planning Board earlier this week.

According to ACR developer Michael Foxman, a total of 48 structures have been removed from the site-plan for the massive project, while the total number of structures is still around 600.

"We believe these changes address the concerns that have been presented to us," Foxman told WNBZ.

One of two wastewater treatment plants and the Orvis shooting range have also been eliminated from the plans.

But Adirondack Council spokesman John Sheehan said Thursday these changes aren't anything new.

"I'm not sure how different it is from what we heard a year ago at this time," Sheehan said. "It sounds awful close to what we heard a year ago."

Although the developers have been in negotiations with several environmental groups for years, Sheehan stresses it's not green groups holding up the process – it's the state.

"We have done everything we can to get the hearing moving forward. The hearing is necessary before they can get permission from the park agency. One of the things the park agency asked them to do was to get the other permits in line. Until that happens, we don't really have a role in the process," Sheehan said. "We want to make it very clear that we are not holding up the project, we're waiting for something to happen."

Aside from local zoning board approval, the ACR project needs permits from the state Department of Environmental Conservation, the state Department of Health and the Adirondack Park Agency.

DEC has jurisdiction over any potential stream issues that could arise from the massive project, while APA handles wetlands. The health department must approve of the wastewater treatment systems.

Jim LaValley is president of ARISE, a Tupper Lake-based community development organization.

“The DEC, although they have the right to hold a separate adjudicatory hearing, they are going to run parallel with the park agency,” LaValley said.

APA officials said parallel DEC and APA adjudicatory hearings could begin as early August. Foxman said he plans on holding a pre-hearing meeting with state regulators in early June.

In an apparent show of goodwill, ACR’s developers have offered to hold for sale the 700 acre Oval Wood Dish property to environmental groups for eventual inclusion in the Adirondack Forest Preserve.

But Sheehan isn’t so sure this gesture has more to do with practicality than appeasement.

“In terms of the Oval Wood Dish property, it didn’t appear that development would be very easy or even possible,” Sheehan said.

He did note that part of his organization’s mission is to increase the size of the forest preserve and that such an offer is worth considering.

Connie Prickett, spokeswoman for the land acquisition powerhouse the Nature Conservancy, said she had no knowledge of the property’s availability.

The Oval Wood Dish abuts the TNC-owned Follensby Pond tract.

Some local officials have quipped that the project’s hold-up may have as much to do with the down real estate market as it does with state regulators or concerned environmentalists.

-Jon Alexander, 4-30-10