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Editorial

Hornbeck appointment to APA stalled for now

Senator Betty Little and other political and business leaders in the region have been working hard in recent weeks to squash the nomination of preservationist Peter Hornbeck to a place on the Adirondack Park Agency's board of commissioners.

Mr. Hornbeck, an Olmsteadville canoe-builder, has close ties to most of the preservationist groups in the park and has loudly gone on record in opposition to the Adirondack Club and Resort project, as currently proposed. Replacing Lake Placid businessman Art Lussi on the APA board (Art deserves a second term) with Mr. Hornbeck would give the preservationists a fourth vote on the APA commission (four of five in-park commissioners) and enough to kill the Adirondack Club and Resort project.

After weeks of negotiation with her fellow Senators on the senate finance committee (which must first approve the Hornbeck nomination before it moves to the Senate floor for a full vote), Senator Little said Thursday she has been told there are not enough votes to move it out of committee.

Senator Little said many of her colleagues, both Republican and Democrat, have shared her concern over the conflict of interest Mr. Hornbeck's nomination posed. As a leader of the new Protect the Adirondacks (the result of the recent merger of the Residents Committee to Protect the Adirondacks and the Association for the Protection of the Adirondacks) he was closely tied to the lawsuit against the Town of Tupper Lake that was aimed last year at stopping the planned development district that was needed for the ACR development. How Mr. Hornbeck, as a new commissioner, could bring an unbiased view to the ACR permit discussions later this year is a mystery.

Many people must be thanked for getting the Hornbeck nomination stalled and first among them is Senator Little. Helping her was a north country neighbor who represents constituents in Jefferson and St. Lawrence counties in the 48th state senate district-Senator Darrel Aubertine. Other upstate Democrat representatives in the upper chamber who serve on the finance committee and who helped were Senators Stachowski and Valesky.

Their work together is strong evidence of bipartisan recognition across our region that the economies of the Adirondacks and entire upstate area are in crisis. The regulation in the park must henceforth be balanced with economic opportunities for the 138,000 people who call this place home. The APA in its original mandate from the state legislature had an obligation to move the economies of the park communities forward- and up to now it's done a darned poor job of it.

Bringing Peter Hornbeck on board will only insure that the stagnant economy of the Adirondacks remains status quo.

Thanks is also due a good friend of the Tupper Lake community, Franklin County Democrat Party Chairman Joe Pickreign, who firmly pressed upon the Governor's top aides his opposition to the Hornbeck nomination. Joe also accompanied an ARISE delegation on a recent visit to Albany to support the ACR project.

While we hope Senator Little and her colleagues have stopped the Hornbeck nomination, we have witnessed too many twists and turns in the politics of Albany over the years to feel completely comfortable.

You can be sure the preservationist lobbyists are camping out in Albany these days doing whatever they can to pry the nomination out of the finance committee.

In a release from the Adirondack Council this week spokesman John Sheehan said that Senator Little's announcement Thursday may have been premature. "Committee staff have told us they are 'investigating' the nomination, but that no decision has been made."

The preservationists will be looking to people like Chris Walsh, a key aide to the Governor on the legislature's "second floor" to push the Hornbeck nomination forward. People here may remember Mr. Walsh when he represented the department of economic development on the APA board in recent years. He was as economically backward as anyone who has ever served on that board- and thought the park's answer to tourism in the winter was the promotion of snowshoeing.

The effort of the preservationists to move the Hornbeck nomination forward shouldn't be discounted in any fashion. They remind us of ground hogs. You flush them down one hole, and they pop up another.

We would encourage our readers to continue to write short letters to Governor David Paterson urging him to abandon the Hornbeck nomination completely. Letters should also go to Lt. Governor Richard Ravitch, who carries a lot of influence among the "second floor" aides. Letters for both should be sent to the State Capitol, Albany, N.Y. 12224.

-Dan McClelland

Letters to the Editor VICs important for local tourism

To the editor:

As an Adirondack businessman who relies on tourism for his livelihood, I am asking the New York State Adirondack Park Agency to keep its Visitor Interpretive Centers in Paul Smiths and Newcomb open, not close them at the end of 2010 and lay off its nine employees as planned.

I served the State of New York as the Senior Public Information Specialist at the VICs from 2001 to 2009, and I have seen firsthand what a difference these facilities make in regard to tourism and environmental education. In 20 years, both buildings have hosted almost two million visitors and educated about 75,000 students. Parents who attended educational programs at the VICs in the early years are now bringing their children back to learn about the natural history of the Adirondacks. The VICs and their not-for-profit partner, the Adirondack Park Institute (which pays for programs), have achieved their goal of "Teaching a Generation to Care." Why does the state think it is okay

to stop with only one generation?

Privatizing the VICs is an easy way to pawn off environmental education on the private sector, which is a backwards approach. Educating the public about why it is important to protect the Adirondack Park is the state's responsibility.

Moreover, the loss of these facilities would adversely affect the economy in Essex and Franklin counties. The Town of Brighton, home of the Paul Smiths VIC, already lost jobs in 2009 when the state closed the Camp Gabriels correctional facility. Two more correctional facilities, Moriah Shock and Lyon Mountain, are slated to be shut down. The state wants to close the John Brown Farm and Crown Point State Historic Sites. What's next?

Instead of helping residents improve their lives by boosting the economy, the State of New York is taking away jobs and making it tougher to stay here. We only have about 135,000 residents in the Adirondack Park, which more than doubles in the summer, and we host

more than eight million tourists each year. With these closures, New York would be driving people away from the Adirondacks- residents and visitors- and hurting its taxpayers.

By saving money at these free facilities, tourists are able to spend more in the community: at restaurants, shops and other fee-based attractions. If the state keeps taking away its Adirondack Park attractions, many tourists will undoubtedly decide to go elsewhere for their vacations, and the state will lose money in sales tax revenue. Why would the state take away from that revenue stream and hurt small businesses that rely on tourism dollars to sustain their livelihoods?

The State of New York created the Forest Preserve, the Adirondack Park, and the Adirondack Park Agency; forced land-use restrictions on property owners; and used taxpayer money to buy millions of acres of land and land easements within the Adirondack Park. The state is therefore responsible for fostering a balanced

economy inside the Adirondack Park because its creation of the Park and the Park Agency burdens the local economy by restricting economic development.

The Adirondack Park is a special place. At six million acres, it is the size of the State of Vermont, and there are many natural communities that make up the complex Adirondack ecosystem. Seen from space, the park is unusually green compared to the gray shades of development that surround it on all sides. That's a lot of land to interpret. And you simply can't do it with a PR department of one employee, which is what the APA has decided is feasible.

I encourage you to stop by the Newcomb and Paul Smiths VICs and find out for yourself why keeping these buildings in state operation is essential to New York and its citizens. Please put pressure on the APA and the governor to come up with a plan to keep both centers open.

Andy Flynn
Owner/Operator of Hungry Bear Publishing
Saranac Lake, NY

Town board continues to mull electric heat moratorium issues

by Dan McClelland

For the third time in as many months the town board Monday afternoon tabled several issues officials have with the village board's renewed moratorium on the installation of electric heat.

Among the things town officials worry about with the ban on the heating method are remote home sites in the town where fuel delivery is not available. There are a number of water-access only cottages and camps where oil

or propane would have to be transported across a body of water, because there is no road access to the place.

"My thought was that if our code enforcement officer felt there was a hardship" for an owner of a remote parcel to get conventional fuel, there could be an exception made on the moratorium, so electric heat could be installed, Supervisor Roger Amell said that evening.

CEO Paul O'Leary said that transporting bulk fuel across a frozen lake or river isn't advisable from a safety standpoint. "We also wouldn't want to jeopardize the quality of our lakes!"

Mr. O'Leary said that anyone who installs electric heat in most communities now has to prove there are much higher "R" values of

attic and wall insulation present. "The new state building code is pretty darn strict when it comes to electric heat!"

He wondered how, if people managed to have an electric line run to their property, there wasn't a service road to it.

Mr. Amell said in some cases in the township homebuilders move their construction materials to the site over the ice in the winter. Submarine electric cables service some properties.

New Councilman Jerry Fletcher said that Fred Schuller has a camp on Mt. Morris that isn't accessible by truck, but an electric line could be run to it.

Councilwoman Kathleen Lefebvre said she recently contacted an official

with the Municipal Electric Utilities Association, of which Tupper Lake is a member, and was told that of the 40 plus members, only about a dozen communities have imposed an electric heating moratorium.

She suggested using an electric audit to determine if homes were insulated enough to qualify for electric heat.

Mr. O'Leary said energy audits are usually done after a house is completed. "If a house owner doesn't pass the audit after the electric heat is installed, what do you do then?" he asked the board.

On the advice of Supervisor Amell, the board tabled the moratorium issue and agreed to revisit it again next month.



ARISE "good news" campaign

Watertown Daily Times Reporter Martha Ellen was at Big Tupper Ski Center Sunday, Feb. 28 on the invitation of the ARISE board member Dan McClelland. In the photo above Martha, who covers southern St. Lawrence County for *The Times*, was interviewing ARISE Chairman Jim LaValley, after he had completed a couple of runs that day (his first, in fact, after knee surgery last year).

Martha also interviewed many of the Big Tupper patrons and volunteers that day, who spoke with enthusiasm of the great skiing conditions and the return of Big Tupper.

Inviting journalists to the mountain this month is part of a campaign by the ARISE board to spread the good news about the rebirth of the ski area. Part of the ARISE message too to the various regional and downstate media representatives is the need for the Adirondack Club and Resort project to be permitted to move forward to insure Big Tupper remains open in the future.

The ARISE leaders are committed to run the ski center here with volunteers for several more years, and only until the ACR plans can come to fruition.

ARISE officials know that many of the preservationist organizations in the park are working hard these days to undermine the ACR project and the economic prosperity it will bring to this region. (McClelland photo)

Editor's Note: Martha's story and two color photos appeared in the *Times* on Monday, March 1, 2008.



Plant's days are numbered on Pleasant

The days for the Graymont batch plant on Pleasant Ave. are numbered. This week plant manager Ed Whitman with help from other company employees are beginning the dismantling of some of the buildings on site as part of their relocation this spring to the town's industrial park off Kildare Road. Removing metal siding from the buildings is the first task. All of the concrete-producing equipment including the hopper and mixing bins will be disassembled at the current site and reassembled at the one off Kildare Road, under the current plan.