

DeVilbiss favors plan for

By PAUL STUART

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BUTTE — "It looks to me like he's got it together," Mat-Su Borough District 1 Assemblyman Larry DeVilbiss said Sunday.

DeVilbiss was referring to developer Victor Trygstad's plans for a \$15-million, four-season resort — including an 18-hole golf course — in the Butte.

But some unanswered questions about the project were still hanging in the air.

DeVilbiss said he talked with Trygstad about a month ago, and was favorably impressed with both the planning and the money already available to back the project. The proposed resort is located in DeVilbiss's assembly district.

DeVilbiss said he has so far had only about a half dozen calls from constituents regarding the project.

There was one part of the plan that bothered DeVilbiss. He said Trygstad was interested in the borough's trying to swap other land for land owned by Eklutna Inc., adjacent to the 320 acres of public land he is seeking to buy, so he could deal entirely with the borough.

"I nixed that idea," DeVilbiss said. "We're going to be under close enough scrutiny as it is."

At an earlier meeting with Mat-Su Borough Manager Don Moore, Trygstad also proposed a land swap. Moore said at the time Trygstad wanted the borough to give Eklutna Inc. the 320-acre tract in exchange for a like amount of Eklutna land elsewhere in the borough. Moore told Trygstad he did not favor public-land swaps, and the purchase should be a cash-only deal.

Moore said it was at that meeting he recommended Trygstad talk to the Butte Com-

munity Council and with DeVilbiss.

Trygstad subsequently brought up the idea of a land-swap arrangement again with DeVilbiss.

But on Monday, Trygstad said since the time of application to purchase the borough land — weeks after his conversations with Moore and DeVilbiss — it has been his intention to make this a cash-only deal, involving no land swaps.

Eklutna officials Monday did not return calls.

Trygstad was apparently successful in negotiating with the owners of needed privately held land adjacent to the borough parcel, because he told the Butte Community Council last week he has firm options on all of the additional land he needs. Borough planning official Jill Parson said it is her understanding that the 320-acre borough parcel would be less than

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half the total land needed for Trygstad's project.

At the Butte session, the community council voted 25-0 to oppose Trygstad's application to buy the 320-acre parcel of borough land that would form the core of his proposed complex.

The community council's opposition stemmed from what it regarded as insufficient information, concerns about impact on wildlife, and testimony from soil scientist Ted Cox that much of the land was unsuitable for the uses being proposed. The action by the council was to be forwarded to the borough planning department as an official reply to an invitation for public response.

But the council's vote is advisory, and not binding on the borough. The next steps will be a review by the Agriculture and Forestry Board, followed by a vote of the Planning Commission whether to recommend the land sale. Finally, the process would have to win approval by

the assembly. The earliest likely date for an assembly vote is late January or early February.

The price would be set by a qualified appraiser, but is likely to be in the \$250,000 range, according to borough planning officials.

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Trygstad added there would be no problem with snowmachine use on adjacent land. Trails, including the much-used Plumley-Maud Trail, cut directly through the borough parcel in question. These would be relocated and improved by his company in the process, Trygstad said.

Palmer City Manager Tom Smith Friday confirmed he spoke with Trygstad about a month ago, and the two agreed that having Trygstad's golf

course so close to Palmer's municipal golf course could work in favor of both, with mutual promotions.

DeVilbiss indicated Sunday it was the Jack Nicklaus national company, designers of more than 100 golf courses, interested in the golf-course portion of the resort. An on-site approval in person is necessary before famous golfer Nicklaus puts his stamp of approval on a course bearing his name.

However, Trygstad indicated his over-all project is still open to small investors, as well as other major financial participants.

In a far-reaching vision, Trygstad told the Butte council he could foresee a time when a well-designed resort would so enhance Palmer as a tourist destination town that the Alaska Railroad would be bringing glass-domed cars to the historic downtown depot.

Trygstad also saw his resort as a general boon for the economy. He foresaw not only year-round jobs, but a spill-over to existing hotel and motel accommodations in the Palmer area.

Trygstad said he would be planning day trips for his guests to every attraction in the Valley within a day's ride. This, he predicted, would spell a major increase in tourist-shopping in the Palmer area.