

Trygstad's resort

By PAUL STUART

Frontiersman reporter

PALMER — If low score won in public testimony, like in golf, developer Victor Trygstad's proposal for a \$15-million resort and golf course in the Butte would have walked away a winner — with a score of zero.

But what the proposal garnered Monday night was zero support at a public hearing of the Mat-Su Borough Planning Commission that lasted about two hours. And in the end, action was post-

poned until Jan. 20 — because Trygstad was absent due to illness.

About 50 Butte area residents and others packed the borough assembly chambers for the session, and nearly half of them gave testimony. Not one person favored the proposed complex, slated to include a resort, golf course and residential subdivision.

One individual after another cited environmental threats, including encroaching on fish and game, overtaxing the water table, and the dangers of pollution from fertilizers and insecticides associat-

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't is put on hold

ed with maintenance of a golf course.

The Butte Community Council, which several weeks ago voted 25-0 to oppose the plan, was represented by its president, Jim Stocker, who blasted Trygstad for evasiveness. Stocker produced a bound version of a plan for the resort that he said came in the mail to him in a plain wrapper. The commission members said they had not seen the plan before, and requested copies be made for the official record.

Stocker also said Trygstad refused to meet with Butte residents again in any

public forum. Stocker said Trygstad told him he would talk with residents only privately, without the press present.

And area soil expert Ted Cox, testifying as a concerned private citizen, was on hand again, and gave the commissioners photos, wetland maps and soil charts of the parcel in question, arguing the exhibits show the land is not suitable for the use proposed.

Near the end of the session, more official weight was thrown behind the

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growing opposition to the resort proposal, when Valley Alaska Center for the Environment (VACE) executive director Dori McDannold testified against it.

McDannold asked the commission members to consider what is the best and highest use of the land. She maintained that appeared to be public recreation.

Protection of trails and hunting and fishing grounds were mentioned by many of the speakers in opposition.

McDannold got the only laughter of the evening, when she suggested maybe Trygstad should buy the Palmer Municipal Golf Course, instead. McDannold also asked the commissioners to consider what they would have considered the best use of the land, given the testimony, if there were no pro-

posal for a \$15-million resort and subdivision. She said she guessed the answer would be to keep it for public recreational use.

Butte resident Laurie Courtney was unimpressed with the borough administration's latest plan to convey the land in a lease with an option to buy, instead of an outright sale. Performance milestones would be built into the lease terms. Courtney predicted the residential subdivision would be built first in order to support the golf course.

She added she would not expect the house would then be bulldozed down if the land transfer were canceled for later performance failure.

Courtney said she believes Trygstad is trying to seduce the borough assembly with the carrot of a \$15 million golf course and resort, in order to profit by selling off subdivision housing

on land acquired cheaply from the borough.

Palmer resident Bill Collins complained that he had been handled less delicately by the borough when he sought to buy part of the land in question for a home site and horse ranch. At the time, Collins said, he was advised of an unresolved survey dispute between the state and federal Bureau of Land Management that made conveyance impossible.

Collins, who said he pursued solving the survey problem at his own expense, said he was told he would have an opportunity to apply for the land later. But then Trygstad got a higher priority, he added.

Commission chairman Tim Anderson told Collins he still might have a chance.

Anderson said even if the land transfer is approved, the commission or the assembly often add that competitive bid-

ding must be allowed.

In postponing action until Jan. 20, the commission declined another part of Trygstad's request — to postpone even the public testimony.

Planning Director John Duffy said Trygstad called him late Friday afternoon to say he would be unable to attend the planning session because of a medical emergency. Duffy later clarified that to mean that Trygstad was ill.

Trygstad requested the Monday hearings be postponed entirely, Duffy said. But with more than 200 notification letters mailed out to interested parties, Duffy advised against that.

Commissioner Mae Tischer opposed any continuance at all, saying Trygstad should have sent someone else to represent him.

But the motion to continue the hearing carried 6-1, with only Tischer dissenting.