

Butte resort put on hold

By PAUL STUART

Frontiersman reporter

PALMER — If Victor Trygstad had brought with him a concept drawing and documentation of basic financial solvency, he might have walked out of Monday night's Mat-Su Planning Commission meeting with a favorable recommendation for his proposed golf course and resort in the Butte.

After a public hearing and subsequent debate that ran until nearly midnight, that seemed to be all the planning commissioners wanted. But they weren't willing to settle for the "swirls" Trygstad offered to make on an aerial photograph he had on display. The commissioners wanted something on paper, prepared in advance.

Trygstad offered two short videotapes promoting Jack Nicklaus golf course construction, and a short talk on the merits of his own plan. A lengthy public hearing followed.

Then, after a back-and-forth exchange between the developer and the commissioners that was frustrating for both sides, the commission finally postponed action on Trygstad's request for land reclassification and purchase or lease until its Feb. 3 meeting.

The commissioners then voted unanimously to give Trygstad until Tuesday, Jan. 28, to bring the concept drawing to the Planning Department. Planning Director John Duffy said that would give him time to look over the plans and

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write a comment, then get a package into the hands of the commissioners for at least a couple of days of review before the February session. There will be no more formal public hearings.

After the meeting, Duffy said he would advise Trygstad to also include some kind of statement showing the commission he has financial ability to begin the project. Trygstad said Monday night he was not able to disclose the name of Alaska investors, because they wished to remain anonymous.

The next step in the process would be for Trygstad's request to go before the assembly. But the planning commission delay means the assembly will not see the issue on its Feb. 4 agenda.

Trygstad is seeking to buy or lease 320 acres for Homestead Properties, a company

which he described as new, to add to more than 500 acres he has already purchased or obtained options on. Trygstad says he wants to begin as soon as this spring to construct a \$15 million-plus destination resort, including a lodge, 18-hole golf course and residential subdivision.

Borough Manager Don Moore has made it plain he wants a lease plan with an option to buy, and not an outright sale, if the conveyance does win approval.

The lease would have a timetable of performance requirements built into it, to prevent other use of the land and to avoid the parcel's being tied up, as in the case of the 11,000-acre parcel leased by the state to the Hatcher Pass Development Corp.

With few exceptions, Trygstad has encountered weeks of strong opposition from large numbers of Butte

area residents, including a formal resolution opposing the action from the Butte Community Council. Monday night the crowd for the public hearing swelled to more than 150 at one point, spilling over into the hallways of the assembly chambers.

But unlike at the Jan. 6 planning commission meeting, when action on the request was postponed because of Trygstad's illness and absence, there was also considerable testimony in support of the proposed Homestead Resort at Monday's session.

Besides some public testimony in favor, Trygstad's proposal drew a formal joint resolution of support from the Greater Wasilla and Palmer chambers of commerce. The Mat-Su Convention and Visitors Bureau also went on record in favor of the project, and Sally Weiland testified that the Palmer Economic Develop-

ment Authority endorsed the plan.

Commissioner Mae Tischer said she was swayed by both sides. The other commissioners also indicated understanding of the arguments by those in favor and those against. It was apparent by the end of the night, the biggest stumbling block was Trygstad's inability or unwillingness to provide what the commission wanted.