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Grow.

Borough rejects

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Frontiersman reporter

PALMER — It was no sale for Homestead Resort Properties.

The Mat-Su Borough Assembly Tuesday voted 4-3 not to sell a developer 320 acres of borough land to build a multi-million golf resort. If approved the sale would have replaced a conditional lease-purchase agreement.

An hour of public testimony and two hours of assembly debate led to the vote, one nod shy of passage, with Assemblymen Doyle Holmes, John Hartrick and Jim Turner favoring the land sale.

Holmes sponsored the plan to do away with the lease-option plan, which was unanimously approved by the assembly last summer. The lease includes conditions to guarantee development of the golf course and upscale neighborhood, among them requirements that developer Victor

man

ing with Alaska's Mat-Su Valley since 1947

land sale

Trygstad provide development plans and proof of financing before he can buy the land outright.

Trygstad told the assembly the lengthy lease agreement developed by the borough administration kept him from acquiring financing. He added he would view defeat of the measure to change the lease to an outright sale as a request from the assembly members to withdraw his ap-

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plication for the land altogether. Hartrick and Borough Mayor Darcie Salmon also warned assembly members that voting against the sale would kill the entire project.

Yet, after the measure failed, Trygstad said he would work with the administration to negotiate the lease, given the assembly's apparent support of his project.

"I think we're evolving and developing new rules for a new game," Trygstad said.

Wednesday, Assemblywoman Jay Nolfi said she knew Trygstad was bluffing when he said keeping the lease plan would derail the project.

"Doyle Holmes tried to go in

the back door and found it was locked," Nolfi said.

Land management representatives say they have requested meetings and information to negotiate the lease with Trygstad for months, with no response from the developer. This lack of response troubled Assemblywoman Janet Kincaid and Nolfi, who voted against the sale. They were joined in opposing the sale by Jim Colberg and Larry DeVilbiss, who would only support a competitive land sale open to the public.

"We're objecting to a lease that the gentleman has never officially objected to," Nolfi said.

But Turner said the lease is so obviously unworkable, it



Victor Trygstad

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seemed destined to fail. He proposed amending Holmes' unconditional cash sale to require a non-refundable cash deposit and proof-of-work agreements with the Jack Nicklaus golf course design firm. The amendment failed.

"The message we're going to send is you better not ask for the borough's help because the borough's help is poison," Turner said.

Some people in the Butte opposed the land sale. Though

they originally opposed the lease as well, it came to be viewed as an acceptable compromise, Butte Community Council President Ted Cox said. Going back on the agreement after extensive public participation further erodes public support, Cox said.

Other people have applied to purchase the same land or portions of the parcel Trygstad wants to purchase. If a lease cannot be worked up that all parties agree to, a public land auction may be the only other option, DeVilbiss said Wednesday.

"I came away with a good feeling that we finally are moving toward a consensus. We are in a mood to push the administration to work in the right direction, instead of the lease being used as a tool to stop the plan," DeVilbiss said.