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Green Meadow Golf Club in Hudson, NH Final hearing set on redevelopment

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Hudson, N. H. » After nearly a year of meetings, a resolution appears to be around the corner.

The only certainty is Green Meadow Golf Club continues to be open for play, weather permitting. But for how much longer?

Last spring, it was announced that the 36-hole club, owned by the Friel family, was under agreement to be sold to Hillwood Investment Properties, which has plans to build three distribution facilities totaling 2.6 million square feet on the site off Lowell Road.

On Wednesday, the last meeting for public input is scheduled to be held at the Hudson Community Center. The public may attend in accordance with town policy and CDC guidelines.

The seven-member Hudson Planning Board will then vote on the proposal. It's not clear if the vote will be held that night.



Some golfers enjoyed an unseasonably warm day at Green Meadow Golf club in Hudson, N.H., earlier this month. Courtesy Barry Scanlon.

A neighborhood group has opposed the Hudson Logistics Center. Online retail giant Amazon has agreed to lease two of the three buildings. One consists of one million square feet. The third building doesn't have a tenant.

Hillwood says the project would create 1,400 direct jobs (employees would make \$15-17 an hour) and 900 indirect jobs. The Dallas-based company said the Hudson Logistics Center would generate up to \$5.1 million a year in tax revenue. Green Meadow Golf Club generates about \$85,000 in annual gross property tax revenue.

Opposing the plan is SaveHudsonNH.Org, a group of over 1,000 concerned Hudson residents, many of whom live adjacent to the course. The group says it also has the support of approximately 5,000 more local residents.

On Tuesday, the organization sent a letter to Gov. Chris Sununu. The letter asks him to meet with concerned citizens regarding the massive project and to visit the site.

“We hope to discuss and share concerns ranging from the way this project is being presented to the public and town, the treatment of the public, concerns regarding the developers, traffic, environment, location and impact on resident abutters, and concerns on the quality of life and significant impact this will have not only in our town but the surrounding region,” the letter said in part.

Phil Friel opened nine-hole Green Meadow Golf Club in 1960. Soon after, nine more holes were opened. Later, a second 18-hole course was constructed.

After Friel died in 2000, his three sons, Philip III, David and Tom, have owned the property. Green Meadow was bustling with activity last Friday as temperatures reached into the 60s in the afternoon. The parking lot was nearly full with golfers. Due to wet conditions from melting snow, only nine of the holes on the Prairie course and nine on the Jungle side were open.

The course was closed Monday and Tuesday due to cold temperatures. “We still own the property. We’ll keep the golf course open as long as we own it,” David Friel said Tuesday from Florida. “It’s still going through the approval process. It’s a very long process.”

Friel said the course is being maintained as usual. He admitted to being frustrated by the duration of the proposed sale.

An employee last Friday said the course is open on a “week to week” basis.

Jim Dobens, who lives near the course, has been a vocal opponent of the project. “I believe the town he would love to put this in, honestly,” he said. “I think the town is looking at it from the perspective of a financial windfall. But I hope common sense prevails. I think this would be a catastrophe for the town.”

The New Hampshire Department of Transportation has approved the traffic mitigation plan. All told, Green Meadow Golf Club consists of 380 acres. Just down the road sits a driving range and the Golf & Ski Warehouse. Owned by David Friel and his wife, they are not part of the proposed sale.

“Throughout the process we have provided evidence that has proved the Hudson Logistics Center’s community benefits will far outweigh impacts, including more than \$5 million in new annual tax revenue, thousands of good news jobs with benefits, solutions to the traffic concerns on Lowell Road and many millions in contributions outside of the tax revenue to benefit education, conservation, recreation and safety initiatives,” said Gary Frederick, the senior vice president, Northeast market leader at Hillwood.

Hillwood has pledged to permanently preserve 120 acres of open space. The Conservation Committee voted Jan. 25 to recommend the Planning Board approve the project.

“We believe we have provided compelling evidence, which has been reviewed by the town’s independent peer reviewers, that demonstrates we meet or exceed the the 22 separate criteria

required to gain project approval. We look forward to additional public input and responding to any final requests for information,” Frederick said.



Green Meadow is still open for golf. The question is for how long? Courtesy Barry Scanlon.