

Real deals

By Dawn Wotapka Hardesty

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In North Hills, mayor considers going green

Marvin Natiss, mayor of tiny, tony North Hills, wants a golf course for Village of North Hills residents.

And the picturesque 175-acre Deepdale Golf Club, often ranked as one of the nation's best, has long been in his sights.

So the village hired a planner and a real estate appraiser to determine if using eminent domain to take the property is feasible, said Village Attorney A. Thomas Levin.

None of the reports are back, so a decision is months – if not years – away.

"This whole thing has been much ado about very little," Levin said. "The village has done nothing more than decide to think about taking the property."

But, should North Hills decide to exercise eminent domain, it might have found a way to fund at least part of the seizure.

Midtown Equities is in contract to buy more than 17 acres, where it aims to build the 244-unit Ritz-Carlton Residences, North Hills. The condo units will likely command hundreds upon hundreds of thousands of dollars – if not millions — each. It would be a project unlike anything on Long Island.

"I'd be astonished if anything here were under a million dollars," Levin said.

Nassau may be densely developed, but it's not exactly Manhattan. So plunking this down in an upscale residential community needs special permission.

For that, the developer is willing to cough up \$21 million worth of community amenities or put that amount into a trust fund to provide or improve amenities such as parks, Levin said.

The course falls into that category – though Levin maintains Ritz-Carlton and Deepdale are separate issues.

Daniel Pfeffer, president of Midtown Equities LLC, agreed.

“We are not connected or linked to the Deepdale eminent domain discussion whatsoever,” he said.

Still, Deepdale is worried. In March, the club – whose membership roster includes New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg – filed federal and state lawsuits. The goal is to halt Natiss from exercising eminent domain, which the U.S. Supreme Court endorsed last year to reinvigorate blighted communities. (Deepdale members contend that a public course doesn’t match that purpose.)

“It is really a bad, bad plan that’s taking the village down a risky road,” said Mark Mulholland, with Ruskin Moscou Faltischek, lead counsel for Deepdale on the state case. “We’re looking to pull the plug on the mayor’s funding scheme.”

Just after the suit was filed, Natiss accused Deepdale of “making it ugly.” Since then, the case was mocked on Comedy Central’s “The Daily Show” with Jon Stewart.

As for the Ritz-Carlton, approval is moving forward.

In April, it was shipped to the county, which will make a recommendation. If the village wants to override the county, four of the five village board members must support the project.

There’s another hearing on the matter May 17.

Anyone can pitch a development, Levin pointed out, but “that doesn’t mean they’re going to get it.”