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North Hills Selling Off Open Land to Developers for Cash

Lost in the attention to the intended Deepdale Golf Course takeover by the Village of North Hills is the real issue which our organization has been fighting for over a year: The North Hills mayor and the board of trustees are selling off ecologically sensitive open land to developers in return for cash incentive payments.

Many residents and established conservation groups like the Long Island Drinking Water Coalition, the Long Island Pine Barrens Society and the North Shore Land Alliance have been fighting in court to stop the Village of North Hills from overturning a conservation easement on an old growth forest in North Hills (which had been permanently set aside and dedicated as open space). North Hills residents should drive by the site and view the destruction of the 300-year-old forest that was there until bulldozers demolished it last December just hours after the Temporary Restraining Order we had obtained was lifted.

The real issue we are concerned with is the fact that the village is allowing these developments in the North Hills Special Groundwater Protection Area, a state-designated water aquifer recharge area which state, regional and county hydrologists have advised not be developed in order to protect the area's water supply.

The conservation groups fighting this issue are not part of the Coalition to Save Deepdale Golf Course, which the mayor would have North Hills residents believe is only interested in saving their private club.

Of course, most residents have none of this information nor was it offered by the mayor at the recent public hearing. The mayor was eager to allow the Ritz Carlton developer to use the public hearing as a sales forum for his pet project. Our fight is not with the developers or with the throngs of burly construction workers bused in by Ritz Carlton to provide applause at Wednesday night's hearing.

Our fight is with the mayor and the board of trustees of North Hills who are blatantly failing to protect the natural resources remaining in their village and who are ignoring the expert advice of those who have become increasingly alarmed at the continued degradation of the aquifer by the siting of high density developments in the Special Groundwater Protection Area.

When North Hills residents no longer have clean water to drink, they may remember that many concerned people tried to stop the village from heedless destruction of the last open space in North Hills. Mayor Natiss may not be able to water his newly acquired golf course. Perhaps then he'll take notice.

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