

Developer Fields Questions On Williston Project Plans

By DON MELVIN

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WILLISTON — A developer who plans to build about 500 homes on the Robert Ezerman farm on both sides of Old Stage Road faced questions Tuesday night from Williston residents about problems of vandalism, pollution, children, dogs and runoff the development might cause.

The developer, Douglas Littlefield, responded to sometimes hostile questioning by sticking to a soft-sell, glad-you-asked-that-question approach. He said the project is only in the "concept stage," and stressed that he welcomed residents' comments and suggestions.

A public hearing was not required at this stage of the process.

Many of the 30 residents at the meeting raised specific questions, but the underlying mood may have been best expressed by adjacent property owner Elwood Hempstead, who said, "I'd rather see some cows munching out there than a bunch of houses....The old grayheads aren't going to be able to accept it anyway."

"I think we ought to go and

take up a collection and buy the damn farm and that would be the end of it," one woman called out.

Ruth Painter said new residents of Williston have been assimilated "so we all grow together," but she questioned whether that would happen with a development of the size proposed by Littlefield.

The developer responded that growth is inevitable, and a proposal such as his offered the best chance for planning that growth. He reminded Painter the development is scheduled to be phased in over 15 to 20 years.

About 45 or 50 percent of the homes would be condominiums, about 30 percent would be "zero lot line cluster homes" — separate homes either touching or close together — and the remainder would be traditional single-family houses, according to Littlefield. Some of the homes would offer views of Mount Mansfield and Camel's Hump.

That did not please Lorraine Martel, who called condominiums "shanty towns."

Hempstead said he has an excellent well near the property which he would not allow to be

ruined by runoff.

"I'm glad to know where your spring is, because that's a very important consideration," Littlefield said.

Others at the meeting were concerned about the number of children and dogs that might be housed in the development — and the damage they might do to neighboring farms. Littlefield quoted a South Burlington School District study as saying they had only one child for every four condominiums.

"There are going to be costs to the town for this project," he admitted. He promised to donate 10 acres to the Williston Central School for possible expansion.

One man, concerned about pollution, said, "Every morning at 7 o'clock, at least 500 people are going to turn their cars on."

Littlefield said the advantage of a developer like himself — who would bring the project before the Planning Commission in stages — is that "At the next set of hearings, you can really crucify me. You can just say, 'Goodbye, fella.'"