

Golf Course lease a no go for Seven Devils

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After reviewing the findings of a finance committee, the Town of Seven Devils rejected, once and for all, the idea of leasing the golf course property from the Cottoms. At over \$100,000 a year, a twenty-year long-term lease would cost over 2 million dollars. According to Golf Course advocate Noble Hendrix, a lease is just not feasible- even if it were reduced to \$50,000.

It's about collateral, Hendrix said. Since the Town does not have the money for the lease up front, they would have to apply for a loan. A lease does not give them collateral to use for a loan, therefore, funding would be a major issue with any lease. Even without the finance committee's findings, the lease idea looked grim. Lenny Cottom repeatedly said that he needed a benefit from the agreement- like flexibility in ski slope expansion. Cottom told the board he feels like he's being "railroaded."

Cottom feels as though the Town is telling him to comply with its wishes or face the threat of eminent domain. Options remaining include a private purchase and eminent domain. Several citizens did not understand why the Town is still pushing for the golf course when a lot of the facts continually show it is not financially feasible. The Town is considering spending \$6,000 on an expert financial feasibility study, and this caused even more controversy. Many did not want the Town to invest any more money in something that the Cottoms closed because it was not making enough profit. According to Mayor Bob Dodson, there's more to the issue than money.

Historically, the Town was built around a golf course, he said. Golf even has a place on the Town's seal. It's about tradition as much as profit. The issue has a long way to go before a resolution is reached.