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## Country club expansion headed for council

*Delays mean expansion, pool renovation likely to miss 2009 swim season*

by **Becky Trout**  
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Shepherding a country club expansion through the Palo Alto Process has frustrated Palo Alto Hills Golf and Country Club President Stephen Pahl, a land-use attorney himself.

Pahl and the club's 550-or-so families applied to add a fitness facility, a tennis court, a new pool and other renovations to the 50-year-old Alexis Drive club in December 2006.

Neither the city nor the club could find its old use permit, however, and after it had secured nearly all city approvals this spring, next-door neighbor Sal Giovannotto threatened to sue over a project that planners admitted would seem gigantic from his house.

After beefing up the project's environmental review, the 17,000-square-foot project, which includes underground parking, returned before the Planning and Transportation Commission Wednesday.

On a 5-1 vote, with club member Karen Holman recused and Commissioner Susan Fineberg voting no, the commission approved a new use permit and environmental review for the \$9 million to \$10 million project.

"I think its time to move this project along," Vice Chair Samir Tuma said. "Twenty-one months is a period of time that in my view is long."

The sparsely attended meeting didn't attract the legion of eager club families that have filled the chambers at past sessions.

The new use agreement limits the number of members to 425 families with unlimited golfing privileges and 200 "social" members. The club must make an effort to reduce traffic and keep all parking on site. It must also prevent light pollution at night, the agreement states.

Previously, the city had mandated the club lower the height of its addition to comply with a 25-foot height limit.

The project will also reduce the amount of water runoff that affects neighboring properties by channeling it to a basin near the golf course and reduce the amount of impermeable surface on the 125-acre site, planners said Wednesday.

The City Council is expected to review the project Sept. 15.

"We are reservedly hopeful," Pahl said Wednesday.

The club could still face a lawsuit, although in his Wednesday correspondence, Giovannotto's attorney Stephen Velyvis, with Miller Starr Regalia, did not comment specifically on the revamped environmental review, instead reiterating his dissatisfaction with the lack of permeable surface and requesting "story poles," which illustrate the shape of the building on site, be installed.

Originally, the club had hoped to open its new pool for the 2009 season for the 200-member swim team to compete, Pahl said. But construction is expected to take 12 to 14 months, he said.

It cannot host official tennis matches or diving due to the inadequacy of its facilities, Pahl said.

He likened the club's current appearance to that of Whiskey Gulch, a rundown East Palo Alto section replaced by the Four Seasons hotel and an office complex.

Fineberg said she couldn't support the project because she didn't think the public had an adequate chance to review the use permit and that the traffic changes expected had not been analyzed thoroughly.

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