

## Group says Asylum Lake golf course means loss of pristine space

BY MICKEY CIOKAJLO  
KALAMAZOO GAZETTE

A Kalamazoo environmental group with a history of sparring against Western Michigan University over land use on the city's west side will oppose construction of a golf course near Asylum Lake.

Retiring WMU President Diether Haenicke last month revealed architectural drawings for an 18-hole golf course near Asylum Lake.

Although the university contracted with renowned architect Arthur Hill in fall 1996 for the drawings, any decision to proceed with a golf course would be up to the next president and WMU's board, said Haenicke, who retires July 31.

In recent years, the city's west side has been a battleground between environmentalists and WMU, which owns the area's last remaining significant greenspace.

The Asylum Lake Preservation Association last week passed a resolution opposing a golf course on the 270-acre Asylum Lake property and adjacent 54-acre Colony Farm Orchard.

The group in recent years has successfully opposed WMU's plans to build a research and business park in the area at Drake Road and Parkview Avenue.

"The golf course is a much tougher battle because a golf course is, technically, a recreational use," said Cal Mastin, immediate past president of ALPA, in reference to state deed restrictions on the Asylum Lake property.

The group is concerned about the effect of fertilizers on the water and wildlife and the loss of pristine open space if a golf course is built, Mastin said.

Haenicke has said the course could use fertilizers that do not harm the environment.

"What they have to understand is this is the university's property. It was specifically given to the university for recreational purposes," said WMU Trustee George Franklin. "Basically they have no say in this."

Franklin said the board supports using the Asylum Lake, Colony Farm Orchard, and adjacent Lee Baker Farm properties for sports and recreation. He said he personally supports exploring the feasibility of a golf course, especially since WMU is considering formation of a women's golf team.

"If we have a women's golf team, I don't see why they shouldn't have an appropriate place," he said.

The state in the 1970s deeded the

Asylum Lake and Colony Farm Orchard properties to WMU with the restrictions that they be used for "public park, recreation or open space," according to the ALPA resolution.

Mastin said the group is hopeful new President Elson Floyd won't want to proceed with the estimated \$6 million course. However, ALPA is willing to take legal action if construction starts, he said.

If that were the case, Mastin said, the group would ask the courts to decide whether a golf course falls within the deed restrictions. The group has sent its resolution to WMU trustees and also plans to read it Monday before the Kalamazoo City Commission.

The Environmental Concerns Committee, a City Commission advisory board, plans to discuss the golf course at its meeting next week, said Chairwoman Patricia Klein, who also is treasurer of ALPA.

"I don't want to go on record before the ECC has an opportunity to comment on it," Klein said Wednesday. "Let's just say that certainly as a board member of the Asylum Lake Preservation Association, I support their position."

Staff writer ED FINNERTY contributed to this report.



WAYNE ANDERSON / GAZETTE

An architect's proposal for a golf course at Asylum Lake shows 14 holes south of the water and four holes on the Colony Farm Orchard west of Drake Road. An underpass would connect the two sides.

© 1970-2004 KALAMAZOO GAZETTE.

All rights reserved.

Used with permission of KALAMAZOO GAZETTE