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ous owners left off, but planning board Chairman Gary Donoghue said the board doesn't know much about the details or changes the new owners are planning.

"On Thursday, we're trying to get an overall sense of what their game plan is and also the timing of what they're trying to do," Donoghue said.

Before they were forced to sell the resort to cover their debts, Walter and Al Endriunas had submitted plans for a major expansion that included a 200-room hotel, 600 slopeside condominiums and a 33,000-square-foot water park. The \$5 million loan was supposed to help pay for the initial expansion plans, which were scheduled to be completed over 15 to 20 years.

Planning Board member Bernie Golden said the board had reached a preliminary agreement with the Endriunas that they could develop up to 790 housing units, including a 200-room hotel. No formal authorization had been given, and Golden said the board may have to reevaluate the number because RMR-Pacific has no plans to build a hotel.

The board will also look at whether the plan is financially viable, what the impact would be on traffic, how many of the new homes would be purchased by families with children in the school system, and how the expansion would affect small-town life in Danbury,

Golden said.

"As a homeowner and a resident and a planning board member, I don't want to see Ragged turn us into another Killington," Golden said, referring to the Vermont resort town. "To the extent that it can be done in a way that doesn't conflict with the small-town, rural culture, it's a good thing for the town."

Golden and his wife are longtime Ragged patrons and retired to Danbury to be close to their favorite ski resort. As a skier and a golfer, Golden said he is thrilled the new owners seem to have enough resources to turn the resort into a thriving business again.

"I mean, they get it," Golden said. "They understand what wasn't done over the last several years, they understand what's pushed people away from Ragged, and they're working feverishly to correct those issues and get Ragged back to where it was several years ago."

That means shooting for at least 75,000 visitors this season – closer to the attendance numbers that Ragged Mountain had pulled in several years ago, Fries said. The resort offered a \$199 deal on season passes until Labor Day, and is still offering a \$349 deal on passes until November 1. The resort's winter Web site is almost ready to be launched.

And if Mother Nature cooperates, Ragged will open the day after Thanksgiving.

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# Ragged Resort Presents To Danbury Planning Board

By Kate Davidson  
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The new owners of Ragged Mountain ski area offered more details about plans to expand the resort at a Danbury Planning Board hearing last night, where they also addressed concerns from residents and officials from neighboring towns about the project's impact on traffic and roads, the environment, and the town's character.

The project planners are working off the expansion plan submitted by the previous owners, and many of the concepts remain the same, said Dwight DeMay, one of the project's main architects. The resort will focus on improving the ski and golf areas, establishing a "village core" near the base lodges, building condominiums and single-family homes in clusters throughout the mountain, and selling empty lots where homes may be built.

The plans are still in the design-review phase, and no applications for a site review or subdivision have been submitted to the [Danbury] Planning Board, Chairman Gary Donoghue said. But if all goes well, DeMay said the resort would like to begin the first phase of the expansion – including redesigning the golf course, preparing 25 lots for sale, and building 30 cabins – in spring 2008.

The entire project, which could also include a fitness center, a new day lodge, expanded ski trails, hiking trails, and other four-season amenities, could cost more than \$10 million and take five to 10 years, the owners have said.

Resort president Bob Fries said he hoped to see at least 75,000 visitors to the mountain this year – a long way from the estimated 40,000 visits the resort had last year. When the project is complete, the resort could see as many as 120,000 visitors a year, or up to 3,500 visitors on a good day.

But Danbury residents and officials from Wilmot, Andover, and Hill still have some reservations about the plans.

Susan Hollidge McFarland of Andover was the first to speak up after a presentation from DeMay and Gerald Jackson, one of the new owners. McFarland questioned the results of an environmental assessment by the developers that found the project would have minimal impacts on the environment.

"I can't imagine a development project of this scale that cannot have a significant effect on wildlife," she said.

Jackson said the initial assessment was completed when snow was still on the ground, and a second assessment of

the environmental impacts is already under way. He said the owners also plan to complete a wildlife management plan and possibly establish conservation easements on land that is undeveloped.

The resort owns about 2,000 acres, but Jackson said the residential expansion would only take up about 20 percent of that land. He said the developers would have to submit a final report on the environmental impacts to the [Danbury] Planning Board.

"The side constraints are just as important to us as they are to you," he said.

Ed Lovering of Danbury asked Jackson if they planned to build another access road to the resort, which is only served by one, two-lane paved road. A second, dirt access road travels in from Route 4 through Wilmot, which borders Danbury to the southwest. But that road, New Canada Road, is already inadequate to serve Ragged's patrons, said Charles Thompson, the chairman of Wilmot's planning board.

Thompson said Wilmot has no reason to pay for improvements to the road because there are only three houses on it within the town limits, and the rest of the road frontage is conservation land. But if the Danbury board approves the expansion, Thompson said the road will have to be widened and paved, the bridge repaired, and provisions made for plowing, sanding, and maintaining it. An additional police presence may also be necessary, and Wilmot residents would likely take steps to avoid the burden of these costs, he said.

"We recognize there are limitations on the existing infrastructure, and we'll look to correct that so we don't have any negative impacts on the town," Jackson said. Although the previous owners had already completed a traffic study, Jackson said a new one was already underway to look more closely at the possible affect on neighboring towns.

Tim Esty, who has lived in Danbury for 18 years, asked a question that the project representatives couldn't quantify – how will the "townies" get along with the new homeowners?

"We're gonna butt heads," Esty said. "Depending on the size of the population, we could have all kinds of social upheavals that we're not thinking about."

But longtime Danbury resident Andy Phelps, along with a few other residents, said they liked what they've heard so far. "I think this is a plus in the right way," Phelps said.

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